

# *First Out Loud: Our Faith in Action*

*"Let your light shine before others, so that  
they may see your good works."*

*Matthew 5:16*

**First Lutheran Church  
April 1, 2021  
Newsletter Edition 4**



## **Pastor's Message: Renewing a Sense of Community**

Elsewhere in this April newsletter, you will see that we are making tentative plans to open our church for worship services by the last Sunday in this month. When I visit with lots of our members (primarily via telephone or Zoom), they express how much they are looking forward to worshipping again in our beautiful edifice. Yet, many also say that what they yearn for even more is a stronger sense of community among our membership. They have missed so much the chance to see people in person, to worship and pray together, to visit, and to serve the community side-by-side. At the same time, despite our forced separations, we have learned over the past year that we are still the church. We have still been a functioning, worshipping, action-oriented congregation. We have been reminded that the church is not the building, it is the people. It is us!

Thus, renewing our sense of community will involve much more than reopening the building. From my observations and my listening to our members, I believe that we are called to do the following: (1) We will need to continue to reach out to all of our people, of all ages. Some folks will be reluctant to return or simply can't physically come to worship. No one should be forgotten. (2) We want all our members to get in line to receive COVID-19 vaccine protection as soon as possible, allowing more people to gather safely. (3) We are called by Jesus to reach out to members who have been disengaged with our congregation, because of the challenges of the virus or because of hurts and misunderstandings among some before the onset of the virus. As God's people, we are called to love, forgive, and renew. (4) This new start for our congregation will also encourage us to reach out to members who have never been very active, inviting them to experience the joys of being active in worship, fellowship, and service. (5) We are also called to be ambassadors for our Lord and our church, letting others in the community know that good things are happening at First Lutheran, and most importantly, inviting others to join our fellowship and find spiritual renewal in their lives. At the Last Supper, Jesus expressed that his followers should be one, as he and the Father are one. He was speaking of the same yearning that each of us has to again be part of a very special, loving, supportive, welcoming, active community.

## **Pastor Bill**

### **FLC's Council President Message**

At its March meeting, the Church Council decided not to open the church to outside groups, except for Red Cross Blood Drives, until we reopen the church for in-person worship. The Health Advisory Team will be meeting to finalize guidelines for this event which, hopefully, will happen sometime in late April. We would like to caution the membership that, when we reopen, certain changes will be in place and we will not be going back to services as they were pre-pandemic. More will be coming from the Health Advisory Team elsewhere in the newsletter and prior to the reopening. Additionally, summaries of the small group discussions and written responses were handed out to council members in preparation for a yet to be scheduled special meeting to analyze these reports. The information will be used to update our Ministry Site Profile (which will be used by the upcoming call committee) and to develop an updated mission and vision for the church. As an aside, if you wish to volunteer to serve on the call committee or to suggest a possible candidate for the committee please contact Bill Kautt at [wjk111@hickorytech.net](mailto:wjk111@hickorytech.net) or 507-382-8256.

The Council also approved updated staff member job descriptions and work agreements, fiscal guidelines, decided Lenten offerings would be given to the food shelf, and discussed website improvement and the creation of a technology task force. We asking any members interested in serving on this task force to contact Harry Hunt at [hahunt@hotmail.com](mailto:hahunt@hotmail.com) or 507382-3660.

Finally, the congregation received a thank you note from the synod regarding our support for synod and church wide ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We were able to give \$40,600 which was 10% of our envelope offerings. As always, feel free to contact me or any other member of the Council if you have questions or concerns about what is happening at First Lutheran Church.

## **Bill Kautt, Council President**

### **From the Cantor: Worshipping Out Loud and In Person!**

Earlier in March, members from Worship and Arts, the Health Advisory Team, and Buildings and Grounds conducted a joint meeting to discuss our concrete plans for reopening for in-person worship! Here are the important details that came out of this discussion:

Pending the final vote of the church council at their April meeting, our first in-person service will take place on **April 25, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.**

- Anyone attending worship must RSVP to the office by Friday at noon. You will also be *required* to follow the guidelines created by the Health Advisory Team, even if you are fully vaccinated (see the next article for a complete list).
- Those who do not yet feel comfortable or are not able to join us in person will have the opportunity to worship online at 10:00 or by tuning in on SPPA as has been our practice throughout the pandemic.
- Online worship will look very similar to how it does right now. Emily will continue to line up volunteers to do the readings and musical elements. (Please help her by saying “Yes” if she asks for your assistance!)
- In-person worship will be abbreviated and will not include congregational singing or sung liturgy, nor will it include communion at this time.
- In order to help the staff meet deadlines for both types of services, there will not be Wednesday worship after Easter, but plans are in the works for alternatives.

While May is another month into the future, here are some highlights to look forward to, which we will be able to celebrate in some capacity both in person and virtually:

- May 2: Confirmation Sunday
- May 16: Rogation Sunday (a service dedicated to blessing our planting endeavors this spring)
- May 23: Pentecost Sunday

After a long and difficult year of isolation, we look forward to safely gathering this spring. Please help our community to stay as safe and healthy as possible by doing your part in following all guidelines. We are delighted that we will be able to worship together once again in our beloved sanctuary!

## **Emily Bruflat, Cantor**

### **Health Advisory Team Recommendations for “Lower risk” Return to In-person Worship**

We believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will unfortunately be with us for quite some time in some form or another. Therefore, it is important to learn how to live with this infection in our midst and reduce our risk as much as possible while still participating in society. Vaccines give us tremendous safeguards against getting COVID and spreading COVID to others, but most importantly they have amazing effectiveness against severe disease and preventing death. We also have developed several innovative immune therapies that can be deployed for persons who get COVID and have risk factors for more serious disease.

We recommend the following:

**1. We strongly encourage all members of First Lutheran Church to get their COVID vaccine as soon as it becomes available to their age and demographic group. This is an important part of our ministry to the world in helping to get control of this terrible disease. Each person's actions have a direct impact on the trajectory of this pandemic.**

**2. Anybody who feels they are in a high risk category and who has NOT yet received the vaccine or who is unable to be vaccinated should consult their physician with advice about attending in-person worship.**

3. We recommend that no more than 75 persons attend services at any one time to allow for proper distancing. After a couple of weeks, we will reassess and update the capacity numbers.

4. We strongly recommend that persons who would like to attend services in person call the church and notify staff of your attendance by Friday at noon (when the office closes). If the RSVP list is full, you will be given first priority to sign up to attend the following Sunday.

5. Universal proper mask wearing that covers the mouth and nose by all people at all times when they are inside the church building. Neck gaiters do not qualify as masks and should not be worn.

6. Double masking with a medical mask and then a cloth mask over that may be used, but we feel a high quality cloth mask with multiple layers (2-3) worn properly and fitted properly gives adequate protection.

7. Hand sanitization is recommended upon entry to the church. Hand sanitizer stations are now at the entrance to the church.

8. Keeping a physical distance of at least 6 feet with any person who does not live in your home.

9. When sitting in the nave, we recommend at least 6 feet of distance between anyone who does not live in your home.

10. We recommend a "household unit" sit at the ends of each of the center pews leaving a "social distance" space in the middle. The side pews can be used by a family unit as well with up to 4 people. We recommend that a pew be left vacant between each occupied row. Only EVERY OTHER pew should be occupied.

11. Ushers will not hand out individual church service bulletins, but paper copies will be available for you to pick up. You are encouraged to bring a smartphone or tablet to worship and to view the digital bulletin from the FLC website to help us reduce our use of paper as well as the COVID risk involved with multiple households handling bulletins. You will be responsible for cleaning up all bulletins and trash in your space; trash and recycling bins will be available outside of the sanctuary.

12. Speaking in unison while wearing a mask is permitted.

13. Singing is more difficult while wearing a mask and we are recommending that this not be done at this time until more information is available.

14. We do not recommend doing communion at this time as this cannot be accomplished while wearing a mask.

15. Bathrooms should not be used unless there is an emergency.

We will continue to update these recommendations based on best available medical evidence.

### **Youth and Family Faith - Out Loud:**

Even amidst a global pandemic, our youth and families have been busy acting out their faith and serving their community. Here are a few of the important projects from last month, March: Youth MarioKart Tournament, FLC Youth Program Donation Drive, MN Foodshare March Campaign, and Easter Card creations for our homebound members.

### **Here's what's going on in April:**

#### **First Holy Communion for 2nd Graders - Communion Cup Creation Sessions with Joel Moline**

Last month our second graders gathered to mold and create their own communion cup (session #1) as they prepare for their First Holy Communion. This month, on April 11th at 1PM, they will gather again to glaze their cups with the help of Joel Moline! Thanks for your help in this special project Joel!

## **Shetek Lutheran Ministries Summer Programming - Registration is OPEN:**

### **Confirmation Camp for 7-9th Graders (July 7th-9th)**

This is a wonderful overnight opportunity for your confirmation student. Register your child online at [www.shetek.org](http://www.shetek.org), using our Group Code (code is: Firststp) to access our groups' registration and discount. Need more information? Reach out to Calleigh at [cc.flcstp@gmail.com](mailto:cc.flcstp@gmail.com).

### **Shetek's Day Camp at FLC for 1st-6th Graders (July 26th-29th)**

First Lutheran is partnering with Trinity Lutheran for this Day Camp. You can register your child [www.shetek.org](http://www.shetek.org) using our Group Code (code is: FIRSTDAY) to save your spot! Due to COVID-19 protocol there is limited space available, so don't wait to sign up! Need more information? Email Calleigh at [cc.flcstp@gmail.com](mailto:cc.flcstp@gmail.com).

## **Calleigh Carlson, Director of Youth and Family Ministry**

### **Building and Grounds**

Members of the Building and Grounds Committee met with the Health Advisory Team and the Worship and Arts Committee to discuss reopening the church and resuming in-person worship (see the report on this meeting elsewhere in this newsletter). Upcoming projects for the warm weather include fixing the sidewalk on the east side of the church, assisting with the confirmation tree-planting service project, which was postponed due to COVID last year, removal of some trees, and completing the replanting of the courtyard.

The committee is looking for some additional members. Anyone interested would be welcome. We generally meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30. Contact the church office if you are interested.

### **Bill Kautt, Chair**

#### **Our Cemetery:** "... but time and chance happen to them all." Ecclesiastes.

Once there was a fellow in college whose English professor suggested he take a Saturday afternoon and walk the couple miles to Dundas to the old Episcopal churchyard. Although I was not that student, it sounded intriguing, so off I went, too, to wander among the old gravestones--some fancy, some broken down, and to make out their epitaphs and dates. Some marked lives cut way too short. One, unsettlingly, died the same age as I was. Another was associated with the nearby mill. I then read an assigned old poem, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," by Thomas Gray. One could imagine all those lives of common folks laid to rest, and, from then, to remember those back home. The poet made one think that what was a common life, wasn't common at all. Many years have slipped by since that afternoon, and I've forgotten most of those long-ago Saturdays. But not that one.

Sometime, you might like to drive out to Resurrection Cemetery and stroll among those silent stones. Perhaps read Psalm 23, or a treasured letter, or Gray's "Elegy...."

**Cemetery Tree Planting Project:** Would you like to help plant a tree at our Cemetery? The Cemetery Committee has ordered 28 fifteen-inch arbor vitae (cedars) for planting as a screen at a marked location along the west fence line at the north west corner of the cemetery. Sometime in April the Nicollet Soil Conservation Service will notify us when the trees are ready for pickup. If you would like to help plant a tree or two, please call our church office (934-3060) and we will notify you when the trees are ready for planting. (Please note: This is for a specific tree planting project and is not a general invitation for people to plant trees just anywhere at the cemetery.)

### **Gordon Long**

**Update from Social Justice Committee:** We have been so excited to see the response to our monthly Friday Forums. Almost 50 people have participated in our first two forums on diversity in church and community and exploring the relationship between social justice and Church. Our third forum is March 26 on Food Insecurity with Leah Mahoney from Nicollet County representing St. Peter Food Access Network. Save the date for our upcoming forums and the listed tentative topics: April 23: Housing; May 21 Refugee/Immigrant Needs; and June 18: RIC and the ELCA. Forums are open to anyone in the community.

Our committee members have also been busy making connections to other community groups including a new chapter of Isiah in southern Minnesota that is being formed. Our goal this year is to educate and build relationships in the local community so we can work toward solutions that are needed and have an impact.

**Amy Ronkvist, Chair**

## **April Events, Information & Happenings:**

**A Special Thanks from Marion Peterson;** *Thanks for all the prayers, cards, and phone calls. The good wishes meant so much during my recovery especially Pastor Nelsen for his Sunday morning calls. I look forward to being back to help fill a pew and raise the word "Amen." You are certainly a wonderful group people. Bless All – Marion Peterson.*

**Feeling Stretched as a Caregiver?** *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* is an educational series designed to provide caregivers with the tools needed for better self-care. This series will be held in-person at the VINE Adult Community Center in Mankato for six consecutive Thursdays, beginning April 15, 1:00-2:30 PM. Weekly topics include: challenges of caregiving, identifying signs and sources of caregiver stress, dealing with anger, guilt and depression, benefits of good communication, power of optimism, and making an action plan. Two trained class leaders from VINE will conduct the series. Join us and learn how to thrive as a caregiver. For more information or to register, call Joyce Kolbet at (507) 386-5583.

**COVID Vaccinations:** We continue to encourage all our members to get vaccinated for COVID-19 protection. Often, persons must get in line and make appointments through the internet, a process that can be difficult for some of our older members. Please know that you can get guidance and assistance from Nicollet County Public Health. Call 507-934-8559 to speak with a support team member.

**Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota** is offering free Emergency Care Planning service. Through Emergency Planning Service, LSS works with caregivers and their families to answer questions such as: Who would care for my loved one if something happened to me? What tasks would that care involve? What resources are available in my community to support my family in providing care? Caregivers can get connected to this LSS assistance by calling 1-800-488-4146 or visiting the LSS Emergency Care Planning service webpage at <https://www.lssmn.org/services/older-adults/caregiver-support/emergency-planning>

**Hello Friends and Family from Beth Winterfeldt;** If you are able and moved to do so, please consider donating to Partners for Housing - as part of our annual Pedal Past Poverty fundraiser. Although we are hosting an actual outdoor 'event' - - I'm trying to keep things simple (and pandemic-safe) by encouraging you to go on a walk or a bike ride on your own on April 24th! Every penny donated to Partners is carefully managed to have the greatest impact on providing housing to everyone in the St. Peter/Mankato area - a basic human right. Thank you for everything you all do for our vulnerable neighbors and community members:) To donate follow the link; [Pedal Past Poverty](#)

**Meals on Wheels:** This program is transitioning from city transit delivering meals to private individuals and because of this, volunteers are needed. Volunteers are encouraged to be in a team of two people. One drives and the other delivers the meals. Gloves and masks are worn. Volunteers supply their own cars. For those who wish, it is possible to be reimbursed. Meals are delivered daily Monday - Friday. The meals are picked up at 10:30 AM at Park View Manor. Delivery is usually done by 12 Noon. Training is provided. If you would like more information and/or volunteer, please call the volunteer coordinator Tracy Bishop at 507-317-5514

## **Calendar:**

Maundy Thursday	April 1 <sup>st</sup>
Good Friday	April 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Easter Sunday	April 4 <sup>th</sup>
Office Closed	April 5 <sup>th</sup>
In-Person Services	Apr 25 <sup>th</sup> (?)

**Sunday Mornings!** Don't forget to join us for our fellowship hour via Zoom. We begin each Sunday morning at 11:00 AM on Zoom. If you want to attend, click on the link [Zoom Coffee Hour](#) or email [flcstpoffice@gmail](mailto:flcstpoffice@gmail.com) for the information. We look forward to seeing you all there!

**First Lutheran On-line Directory;** For those that have not yet signed up for our online directory, please take the time to register, enter your information and load a photo. Register at <https://flcstp.ctrn.co/directory/index.php>

*“For just as the body without the spirit is dead,  
so faith without works is also dead.”*