First Out Loud

God's Work. Our Hands. To Serve ALL People.

AUGUST 2026 NEWSLETTER

Siblings in Christ,

I hope you are enjoying summer. I hope you get the chance to rest and enjoy the warmer weather. I hope you get to spend time with your family and friends. I hope you can do whatever refreshes your soul and renews your energy.

I also hope you are navigating the stresses of life. At the time of writing this article, there's a lot going on in our world. There are forest fires blazing in the Boundary Waters and in Canada. Please pray for our firefighters and all first responders who are bravely putting their lives on the line every day for our sake and for others. Our nation is waging a war against Iran. Please pray for our fellow citizens as they serve in our nation's armed forces. Please pray for a swift resolution to this conflict and for all innocents who are caught up in the fighting. There are ongoing issues within our society over immigration, healthcare, education, and how we treat one another. Please pray for all who serve in government. Also, please make sure to stay informed and vote in every election you can. Christians belong in the public square as much as everyone else. Be informed and involved in the decisions that shape our nation's future.

Please also join me in prayer: "O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen." (ELW, page 76)

God peace be with you all,

Pastor Christopher Culuris

2 Council President Report

It is hard to believe summer is winding down and it is time to write this article for the August newsletter! I keep reminding myself we still have many weeks of summer fun left.

We have many exciting things happening at First Lutheran in the next few months.

FLC Vacation Bible School will be held August 2-6 from 5:30 pm-8 pm for preschool through sixth grade students. The theme is "Wear Love" and will be led by Shetek counselors.

First Forum August 23 will highlight an exciting opportunity to share FLC with the wider ELCA community. Read Annalise Rivas's article for more information on celebrating FLC's story!

Wednesday Faith Nights at First will resume with a similar schedule to last year. We look forward to great meals, fellowship, music, worship, and learning together.

We are looking for teachers for preschool-sixth grade, Confirmation mentors, high school advisory team members, and people interested in leading adult learning opportunities. In addition, we rely on volunteers to help with the meals. Reach out to Rachel Szybnski (rszybnski@gmail.com) or myself (kgbly3@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping with these busy nights!

Our Fall Stewardship focus will be "First Facing Out! Being Generous Neighbors." Watch for the Stewardship Campaign letter with more information including the Time & Talent Survey to identify areas you would like to be involved in the FLC community and how you can pledge your financial support for the upcoming year.

FLC's first Fall Festival will be held Sunday, October 11 from 2-4 pm. This is an exciting new church-wide event that FLC is hosting as a way to celebrate our congregation and invite others to learn about First Lutheran. Thank you to Gabriela Roemhildt for organzing the Festival! Committees and individuals are encouraged to participate. Contact Gabriela (groemhildt@gmail.com)

These are just some of the wonderful things happening in our congregation–many other events and activities are coming as well.

Enjoy your last weeks of summer and we look forward to seeing you at FLC this fall!

Kaari Bly

The Power of Generosity: ELCA Feature Story

Annalise Rivas, Stewardship Committee Co-Chair

I'm delighted to share that First Lutheran has been chosen to be a featured congregation on the redesign of the ELCA website for The Generosity Project, which was a worship experience that we incorporated during the 2023-2024 stewardship year. We focused on building intergenerational relationships and fostering a generous mindset of abundance.

Our congregation kept generosity at the forefront of our goals in 2024-2025 by focusing on "Ripples of Generosity." During the year, members of our congregation and different committees told their stories - how they saw generosity benefiting themselves and how their own generosity impacted our community. We also made a point of reaching out to the youth in the congregation through a video series called "I Like Giving."

In the next year, as we were originally focused on mortgage reduction, an anonymous gift kickstarted our Mortgage Retirement campaign. We have now paid off our mortgage and established an endowment for building maintenance. On the first Sunday after the announcement that we had reached our goal, a member of the congregation said: "This would never have been possible if we hadn't started the journey with The Generosity Project."

And now, as we look ahead to our congregational mission free from our mortgage, we are striving to be generous neighbors, reaching outside now that our walls are secure, living out the call of The Generosity Project: "to witness the Holy Spirit's powerful, transforming work in your lives and that of the generations and households gathered and sent, filled with God's grace and generosity." We invite you to join members of the Stewardship Committee for a First Forum on Sunday, August 23 to learn more about how our story is being shared throughout the church!

4 | SYNOD NEWS & PICS OF MILWAUKEE TRIP

2026 SW MN Synod Benevolences through June:

First Lutheran has given increased support to and through our Synod so far this year:

Synod Support $6,650

YAGM Missionary Sponsorship for young

lady in Hungary $1,000

Synod office remodel $500

Synod Assembly (training & formation of

lay worship leaders) $816

Synod “Good Samaritan Fund” $205

Disaster/Refugee relief $100

World Hunger $410

Total - $9,681

Serve Boldly Team—Milwaukee June 2026 FLC and Trinity Lutheran collaborative trip

For Sale from Building and Grounds Committee

4 pieces of black steel edging for lawn or garden 16 foot long with stakes

Left over from the landscaping project on the south wall of the church

For sale for $64 compare to $5 per foot new at Menard's

Also - the pine trees on the mound west of the sanctuary are

Getting too close together. If you have a need for mature trees in

A project you are doing contact Larry Kiewel or Bill Kaut.

6 SERVE BOLDLY - MILWAUKEE TRIP

From the Desk of Deacon Brenda:

Last week I attended the national Association of Lutheran Church Musicians conference at St. Olaf College. It was an excellent week with speakers, workshops and performances featuring well-known church musicians from around the country. One workshop that has me thinking this week was presented by Luther Seminary preaching professor, Karoline Lewis. She asked the question "Who is your 'go-to' character in the bible? What story do you connect with the most? Why?"

Karoline encourages everyone to think about this. Once you identify that person and/or story, then you look at what it says about your own personal theology. She writes "I think we all need a person in the Bible, that character who embodies for us what believing in God looks like and feels like. In them we see aspects of ourselves. " That personal theology can shape and frame the way we see and hear scripture in worship, sing a hymn, understand who God is and how God moves in the world.

Perhaps you all can name a favorite character or story that you rest in on days when your faith has been challenged or a memory has returned you to a person or place in your past that you miss. The story I am thinking about today is in John, chapter 20, on Easter morning when Mary Magdalene doesn't recognize Jesus, and in her grief and sadness thinks she is talking to the gardener, but Jesus turns and calls out her name, *Mary...*

God knows her by name. God knows each of us by name, so how do we live each day knowing that? *Can you hear God calling your name?*

FLC Homework: What story do ***you*** land on and why?

+God's peace, B

Notes of Upcoming activities

~ **Needed:** High School students and adults to assist with Fall programming on Wednesday nights. (We are putting together teams of people to lead classes and activities for students in preschool through Grade 6). Can you serve on a team of rotating teachers? See Deacon Brenda for more info.

~ **Vacation Bible School at FLC** - August 2-6, 5:30 pm to 8 pm. Our theme is "Wear Love" which will be led by Shetek counselors. The week of stories, crafts, service and games is fun, Fun, FUN! All students age 4/preschool -6th grade are invited to attend.Use the link on the FLC website to sign up as a participant (grades pre-K- 6th grade) or as a team leader (Grade 7-adult) or see Deacon Brenda for more info.

~**Summer Hike and Bike** ends on Wednesday, August 26 - Bring your bike or walking shoes. We will meet at the FLC parking lot and then head up to the arboretum.

~**Hymn Sing and Service Sunday** - August 30

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