First Out Loud

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

AUGUST- 2024 NEWSLETTER

Siblings in Christ,
Now that we have Ryan Hahn in place as our new Office Coordinator, we hope to make substantial progress on getting our church directory done and sent out. Hopefully, this process will be completed this month. Thanks to Betsy Paul and Karen Smithers who have been working with Ryan to get the various sections of our church directory done. Once you have your new church directory please pray for each member of our congregation as well as the church staff.
We are a family of faith, and it is important that we lift one another up in prayer each day.
The search continues for our open staff positions. Gratefully, Sarah Chambers has volunteered to be our Director of Handbells and Choirs. Sarah is a music teacher in the Mankato schools, and she enjoys working with youth as well as adults. If you would like to sing with our choir or try playing the handbells- you will have the opportunity to do so. The Worship & Arts Committee is going to offer a First Forum following worship on September 29. You will have the opportunity to play the handbells and see how much fun that can be. We continue to look for a church musician who can play the organ and piano to accompany our worship.
We're looking for someone to coordinate our Christian Education program. If you would like to help by teaching classes, please contact the chair of our Lifelong Learning Committee Brenda McHugh: brendakaymchugh@gmail.com. For the 2024 – 2025 program year we are moving our Sunday School to Wednesday nights. Rally Day will be Wednesday, September 11.
We will gather for dinner from 5:30 – 6:30pm. Worship, with a Blessing of the Backpacks, will be held from 6:30 – 7:00pm. This will be followed by our first classroom sessions from 7:00 – 7:30pm. Excitement is building for this new format so, spread the word and invite your family and friends to join us each Wednesday night starting this Fall! Enjoy these last days of summer.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor Christopher Culuris

One Body n Chhrist

"So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." – Romans 12:5.

This was the central theme of this year's Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly held at Gustavus Adolphus College on June 7 and 8. It was a busy and inspiring two days of events and activities. It would be difficult to encapsulate every detail of that weekend's events, but I will try to hit some of the highlights, and perhaps some of the lowlights, as well.

It is important to underscore that we, as attending members of the Synod Assembly, are not merely delegates representing our churches with our particular needs, wants and interest in mind, but that we are voting members with the responsibility of spiritually discerning decisions and actions that will both affect and lead this Synod into the

future, and that our connection one to another, each with our own special insights, gifts and talents are there to help

lead the church into this bold, new future.

Keynote speakers and inspiration were provided by Bishop Nikosinathi Myaka, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – Southeastern Diocese; Rev.Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds, Synod Minister for Mental Health & Wellness in Northwestern Minnesota; and the Rev Dr. Philip Hirsch, Executive Director of Christian Community and Leadership, ELCA. Their love and passion for the Gospel resonated loud and clear with the gathered assembly and inspired hope and joy among us. Bishop Myaka was accompanied by Mr J. Joseph Falithenjwa Mkhize, and together they helped to lead the celebration with stories and sing-alongs, including songs in their native language.

At the heart of any assembly is the sausage making process that comes with voting, deciding and acting upon resolutions, budgets and nominations. Although to be fair, much of the sausage making really happens away from the Assembly with contributions emerging from the hearts and minds of the Synod clergy and lay professionals and

at large voting members grappling with the issues of the day facing the Synod and the whole of the ELCA. At this Assembly, we voted on Synod At Large and Church-wide Assembly At Large Positions, and we installed a new Synod Minister. We also voted on a new budget for 2026, a new compensation package for clergy in 2025 and Resolution 24.03, the By-Law changes to the Synod Constitution. The resolution that presented the greatest challenge and perhaps was the most contested came on Resolution 24.02 with a recommendation to the ELCA to adopt the amended language to The Social Statement on Human Sexuality. This resolution was voted down by the requisite two-thirds vote, and will not be forwarded on to the ELCA for consideration. This allows the current The

Social Statement: Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust issued by the ELCA in 2009 to remain. The ELCA Churchwide Assembly will continue to work the Social Statement next year and in the years ahead.

We live in a time of mounting demands on our time and resources, great pressures to meet our commitments, and increased stress and strain in our relationships as individuals, families, congregations and communities. We are asked to do and provide more with seemingly less at our disposal. To only compound the pressures and stress, the U.S. Surgeon General reminds us loneliness in now an epidemic in this country. As Christians, we understand that life and faith begins with Word and Sacrament and, that in worship, we are reminded of our bond and unity in Christ. Rev. Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds, in one of his keynote talks reminded us that as the body of Christ, we are commissioned to: 1) live as one; 2) live as body; 3) live as unity, 4) live as partners, and 5) live as hope.

Mother Theresa said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other. Nothing brings home Dr. Suomala Folkerds five stages of living as a community of faith home more clearly and more importantly than Mother's Theresa's reminder for connection, one to another in Christ.

We have unfinished work, work that is underfunded and under-resourced. For instance, benevolence within the Synod is down 7.5% year over year The projected new budget in 2026 is expected to operate in the red. The challenges that face the Synod and the greater church body are monumental and will require careful thought and consideration moving forward. New clergy being called is nearly one-tenth of the number called the twenty year ago, reminding us to nurture and tend to the needs of our clergy in our midst. As you can see, the work that lies before us looms large. Let us join hands to work together, as sisters and brothers, as one family – as one body in Christ – bearing in mind Jesus' words to his disciples in the Gospel of John "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" – John 14:27

Peace,

Randy Frey-Hawkins

Church Council President

Randy Frey

BWCA 2024

Four of us ventured into the BWCA in late June. We spent the first night at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Grand Marais before traveling up the Gunflint Trail to Clearwater Outfitters. We camped on Moon Lake for 3 nights while enjoying God's nature, each others' company, and being off the grid!

MARK & MATT SZYBINSKI; CARL & MARY KAY BRUIHLER

Mind Your Step!

If you've been in an airport, you've probably heard those or similar words as you step onto an escalator or one of those horizontal escalators, sometimes called Travelators or Walkalators. The overhead speakers repeat the words "Mind Your Step!" or "Watch your Step!" repeatedly, over and over again, all day long. The airport management wants to help travelers get to their gate (or back home) as quickly and safely as possible. A good experience at an airport can be ruined if we take a fall and get hurt.

One might say that Christian Stewardship is called to "Mind Your Faith." I'm thankful that God doesn't blare those words at us day in and day out, but rather gives us the scriptures, sermons and various messages to remind us. As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to be good stewards, mindful of how we live out our daily lives... That includes everything from how we take care of our body, mind and spirit, to how we care for others and the world around us. Are we generous with the time, talent
and treasure that God has blessed us with? Do our schedules and expenditures reflect our values?

Yes, we could say that the role of our Stewardship Committee is to remind all of us to "Mind Your Faith." Our focus this past year has been The Generosity Project. We want all people to live generously, have a good life/faith experience, not to speed it up (it goes fast enough already in case you haven't noticed) and not to fall.

Second quarter FLC giving statements were recently sent via USPS mail from our church office. Did you get yours? Those reports are a small accounting on paper, from a financial perspective, of how we "Mind Your Faith." Thank you for your generosity in financial stewardship. Your giving allows us to have the great staff we do, as well as provide facilities for worship, service and learning opportunities.
The far more important aspect of how we "Mind Our Faith" is fully visible only to God and ourselves, and to a lesser extent to those with whom we daily live and work and spend time. How are you doing?

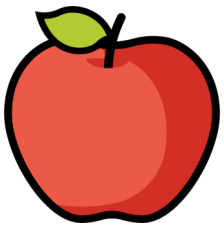
We give thanks to God for you and encourage you to "Mind Your Step!" walking faithfully with Jesus this summer and always. Let's all have a good experience in life, and help one another when we do fall.

Submitted by Carl Bruihler and Annalise Rivas, co-chairs of the Stewardship Committee

Education Registration is officially open for the 2024-2025 season!

We're excited to welcome back our familiar faces and greet all the new young minds joining our faith journey. Christian Education is a time for your child to explore the Bible, learn valuable life lessons, and make lasting friendships in a fun and nurturing environment. All education will take place on Wednesday Nights this year for PreK - Grade 9. Our first Wednesday will be September 11! The proposed schedule of our Wednesday evenings will look like this:

5:30 - 6:30 Meal for all
6:00-6:30 Children's Music
6:30-7:00 Worship
7:00-7:30 Education



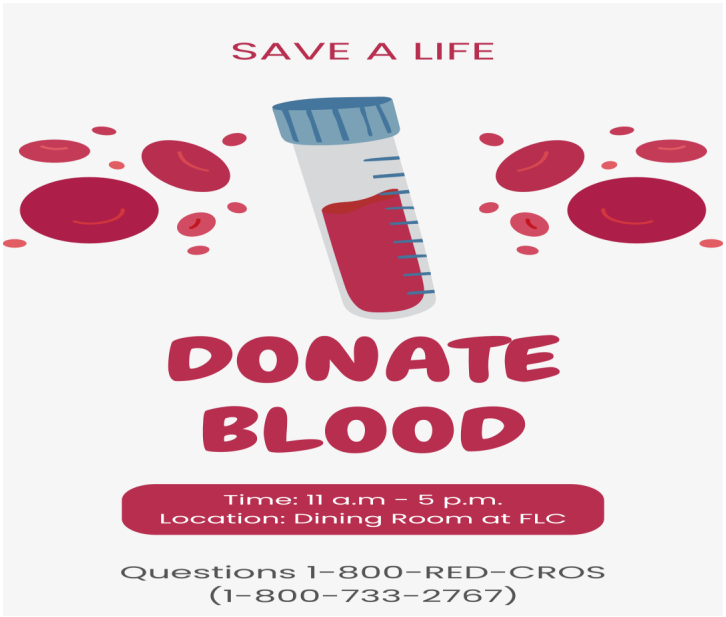
Register on line to enroll your child or volunteer to teach or help with the classes. Go to www.flcstp.org. Under the Education tab on the to of the page select Sunday School and you will find the registration link. Click on it and come join the fun!

4TH OF JULY PARADE

PRIDE PARADE PARTICIPATION

Our LGBTQIA+ siblings need our support now more than ever! Our mission is "God's Work, Our Hands, To Serve ALL PEOPLE". An opportunity to walk the walk (literally and figuratively) is coming up soon.
Mankato Pride Parade
Saturday, September 7
11:15 a.m.—12:00 p.m.
First Lutheran's Social Justice Committee is registered to participate as a unit in the parade again this year. Please join us to show that you care and promote FLC. Wear your "God's Work Our Hands" t-shirt if you have one. To join us in the parade that day, meet up with the group at 11 a.m. in the parking lot at the corner of Plum and Riverfront in Mankato. We will then walk the short parade route and hand out fun stuff. You don't have to sign up — just show up! Contact Kristy Larson at 507-382-1115 or Larson.kristy27@gmail.com if you have questions.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE



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SOUTHWESTERN MN SYNOD

Southwestern Minnesota Synod Mission Statement

The congregations and all the baptized who are the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are claimed by this mission:

God places us in cities, farms and towns together under one prairie sky.

The Risen Christ surprises us with opportunities to plant God's Word in the world.

Walking together in confidence, we cultivate life-giving congregations, nurture partner ministries, and cooperate in the life of the ELCA.

By God's grace, together we have what we need.