First Out Loud

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

OCTOBER- 2025 NEWSLETTER

Siblings in Christ,

I am utterly amazed at our congregation's generosity! When Harry Hunt announced that an anonymous donor couple had offered to match donations 2:1 up to $600,000 to pay off our building mortgage, I was excited to see how the members of this congregation would respond. First Lutheran Church, you have exceeded all expectations! As of the time of writing this article Karen Smithers informs me that we have received 58 pledges totaling $423,000! Thanks to your generosity, and that of the anonymous donor couple, we will be able to pay off our building mortgage and put money into a building fund for future needs. Thank You for your amazing generosity!

We have worked very diligently to pay off this debt. We have succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. Now, we continue the ministry that our forebears began in 1857. That mission is to spread the love of God through Jesus Christ to our neighbors in St. Peter, and through the ministries of our Southwestern Minnesota Synod and our ELCA denomination, to the larger world. There are many people who do not know that God loves them tremendously. There are many who have a very distorted view of the Gospel. We are here to witness to the love of God for ALL people and to be Christ's hands and feet in service to those we meet. I look forward to the creative ways we will continue to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we grow in our Christian faith and live out our mission statement: "God's Work. Our Hands. To serve ALL people."

Thank you again for your generosity and steadfast support!

Pastor Christopher S. Culuris

Wow!, Just. Wow!!

As of the time of this writing, I understand we have raised enough funds to drastically reduce, if not pay in full, our remaining mortgage! I'll let the Stewardship and Financial Committees do all the math, but it appears that with the incredible support of an anonymous donor, the congregation was able to raise the remaining funds. First, I'd like to offer my most heartfelt gratitude to the donor who made all this possible, but I'm also incredibly proud of everyone for committing to our church and our future. This will undoubtedly set the tone for our financial situation for years to come. What an incredible congregation we have!!

The mortgage situation is so overwhelming, I'm almost at a loss for what other news to share… we continue to assess the water damage to the sanctuary and plan for repairs, fall programming on Wednesday evenings has recommenced, and Christmas and the Live Nativity are right around the corner. Have you considered participating in the Live Nativity? It's such a fun event for the whole family. On a similar note, I'd also like to echo Pastor Chris's urging for volunteers during worship. We're always in need of ushers, communion preparers & servers, and bread bakers. When was the last time you assisted during worship? The signup sheet is in the Gathering Space. Lastly, as we approach the end of 2025, I invite everyone to consider serving on church council as several members complete their terms at the end of year.

Sincerely,

Mark Roemhildt

Fall Stewardship Campaign Update - "**You have heard it said…**"

Every fall the Stewardship Committee plans a campaign to encourage FLC members to make a pledge or "Estimate of Giving" for the coming calendar year. The Finance Committee uses the total from the responses as guidance when they draft a budget for the coming year. Our theme this fall comes from Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel "Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth where moth and rust consume and thieves break in and steal; rather store up for yourselves treasure in heaven… For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:19-21). A stewardship mailing was sent to all member homes in early September with a color brochure and a Stewardship Commitment Card. Please return your pledge for 2026 giving by Celebration Sunday, October 12. While "mortgage payment" will no longer be in the 2026 budget, our property insurance premium has seen a significant increase, and we want to increase "Mission Support" (benevolence) giving to our SWMN ELCA Synod in 2026 and expand our ministries, so be GENEROUS. Thank you to all who have already submitted your card!

Mortgage Retirement Campaign Update

As of September 22, commitments of $349K in cash, plus about $70K in stock certificates, had been received from 51 giving units. THANKS be to God for your GENEROSITY! The mortgage on our building at the end of July was $947,454. A FLC member couple (who desire to remain anonymous) extended a very generous offer to make a 2 to 1 matching gift of up to $600,000 to help get the FLC mortgage paid off by the end of the year. The Stewardship and Finance Committees subsequently put together plans for a Mortgage Retirement Campaign. In August Leadership Gifts were solicited from congregational leaders in order to "prime the pump" and inspire others to be generous as well. Wow, what a response there was!!! An every-member letter was sent on September 11, announcing that we already had $275K in Leadership Gifts toward the $300K needed to get the matching funds. The campaign was formally launched on Sunday, September 14, with the goal of fully paying off the mortgage by December 31, 2025. THANK YOU to all who have submitted your commitment card and helped us reach our goal! This means that the $600K matching funds are on their way!!! If you have not yet submitted a Mortgage Retirement Campaign commitment card, you are encouraged to still do so. Any money or gifts received beyond what is needed to pay off the mortgage will go to the FLC Building Fund, to be used for future needs – tuck-pointing, etc.

2025 SWMN Synod Assembly Report
Dear friends and members of First Lutheran Church,

I wish to thank you for entrusting Pastor Chris, Deacon Brenda, Amy Pehrson, Barbara Wilkinson and me to attend the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly on your behalf. The assembly took place on Friday/Saturday, June 6/7, on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College. What follows is a brief summary of the assembly, from my perspective.

Friday afternoon was filled with opportunities to experience new worship music, engage in service projects and hobnob with representatives of various organizations and ministries related to the church. After supper, we gathered in Christ Chapel for singing (led by a terrific youth band), awards and prayer. You will be pleased to know that among pastors honored for their devoted service, FLC's Gordon Long, Paul Aasen and Paul Lutz were recognized for having been ordained for over 60 years. Hats off to those three!

Saturday morning's opening worship, again in Christ Chapel, was festive and powerful. Our own David Fienen sat at the organ and knocked the veritable socks off of a Bach prelude. Dr. Karoline Lewis from the faculty of Luther Seminary gave a moving Pentecost sermon rooted in John's gospel. Truly a memorable service!

Moving to Alumni Hall, we gathered for plenary sessions filled with reports, resolutions, introductions (including GAC's new chaplains: Ben and Alicia Hilding), video presentations and plenty of voting. Bishop Dee Pederson expedited the sessions with grace, attention to detail and gentle humor; we are blessed to have her at the helm. Besides approving the synod's budget, electing folks to various positions and approving next year's pastoral compensation package, we also authorized a proposal to fund a remodeling project for synod headquarters in Redwood Falls. In my opinion, however, the real heart of our plenary gatherings was a two-part Bible study led by Dr. Karoline Lewis, focused our assembly's theme: "That my joy may be in you." (John 15:11) Her analysis was eye-opening, erudite and inspirational. Little wonder that Dr. Lewis is nationally recognized as a foremost authority on John's gospel.

All things considered, it was a privilege to attend this year's assembly. I am hopeful that Pastor Chris, Deacon Brenda, Amy and Barb would say the same thing. It is clear that the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA is in good hands. God's hands. Thanks for letting us attend. Alan Bray

Faith Night

AT FIRST

WELCOME BACK!

The energy in our Wednesday nights is unmatched! It is great to have everyone back together and new families joining us!

Everyone is invited to join in our Wednesday nights at First. Come for the food, fellowship, and education!

Nightly Schedule

5:15-6:15
Meal & Fellowship
5:45-6:15
PreK-1 Education
Gr. 2-6 Choir
6:15-6:45
Worship
6:45-7:30
Gr. 2-Grade 9
& Adult Education

Wednesday Meals

The meals each week are so important to the success of Faith Night.

Please sign up to help serve or work the clean up crew.

September: bit.ly/flcmeals9
October: bit.ly/flcmeals10

HOT DISH COOK-OFF

Bring Your Best Dish OR Come and be the Judge!

Wednesday, October 22

Hosted by the Lifelong Learning Committee

Sign Up bit.ly/flcmeals10

ECO-FAITH AND ECO-JUSTICE: STORIES OF HOPE AND ACTION

Exploring *Religious Questions* Series *(Fall 2025)*

SERIES DESCRIPTION:

Join us **this fall** for a dynamic four-**part series** exploring the powerful intersections of justice, faith, and environmental **responsibility**. From **regenerative farming** and renewable **energy** to the prophetic calls of **Pope Francis and other faith leaders, each** session offers a unique perspective on how individuals, communities**, and faith-based** organizations **are** responding to the climate **crisis with** creativity, conviction, **and** courage. Hear from **voices** across traditions-including Episcopalian, Catholic, **Lutheran**, and **Gustavus** Adolphus College's own changemakers-**as they** share stories, insights, and **strategies** for **meaningful** action. **Whether** you are grounded *in a faith tradition or* ***simply*** *passionate about* ***sustainability*** *and justice, these sessions* ***will*** *inform, inspire, and spark fresh ideas for helping* ***people*** *and the* ***planet flourish****.*

DATES:

TIME: PLACE:

Monday nights October 13, 20, and 27 and November 3 ,7 to **9** p.m. (with 15-minute **break**)

Heritage Room, Jackson Center, Gustavus Adolphus College

Jodi Maas, Assistant Director of Chaplains

507-933-7001

Church-relations@gustavus.edu

EVERY MEMBER READS

Sundays October 5 and 19, 11:15 a.m. in the Conference Room

"The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural
World," by Robin Wall Kimmerer, group discussion, Sunday, **October 5.**

Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Potawatomi nation, Distinguished Professor of Environmental Biology at State University of New York, uniquely combines scientific knowledge
with indigenous wisdom. She promotes a "culture of gratitude."

Excerpts from "How Can I Help? Saving Nature With Your Yard,"
Sunday, October 19, with our Presenter, Emily Bruflat, Douglas Tallamy, Professor
of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at University of Delaware,
founded the Homegrown National Park movement.

ACCESSING the READINGS
"The Serviceberry," a best-selling book, will be available on **Sunday, October 5,** in a Library Book Bag, to use that day at no cost; or, you can buy a copy in advance through a source
of your choice or borrow a library copy.

Also available on **October 5** will be a handout of excerpts from
"How Can I Help?" as background for our **October 19** Forum.

Need a little PEACE in your life? Join us for Adult Education each Wednesday evening after supper in the Pioneer Parlor from 6:45-7:30pm. During the fall, we will explore an ELCA re-source called "Reconciled to be Peacemakers in God's World." This series welcomes anyone and everyone anytime - come for one or come for all,

FROM THE DESK OF DEACON BRENDA| 7

From the desk of Deacon Brenda:
It feels harder than ever to overcome conflict these days. I was reading a note from Duke University History of Christianity professor, author and parent Kate Bowler who interviews people from around the world about things that matter to our faith lives and our hearts. Here is an excerpt from her note she sent this week:

Across dinner tables, in our communities, even within our pews, so much of life feels strained by division. And yet, at the heart of ministry is the practice of restoration, connection, and repair. It is the holy work of ***choosing connection over separation, of building a bridge when the easier option is to walk away or let things fester.***
"Repair is the most important thing. You don't have to get it all right. You just have to be willing to go back, acknowledge the rupture, and choose connection again."
Dr Becky Kennedy, Clinical Psychologist and parenting expert

Repair is never simple. It's tender, humbling work. But it is also what keeps us human—and what keeps us the Church. We've been hearing more and more stories of estrangement, even Family Cancel Culture - parents distanced from adult children. Longtime friends slipping away. Congregations divided. And yet even in these incredibly difficult moments, there is always the possibility of repair. Dr Becky Kennedy argues for the research that shows that repair is the essential practice that sustains connection *even when we get it wrong*. You don't have to have the perfect words or the flawless strategy. You just have to *stay connected*.
Stay connected, everyone. Stay connected to your family, to our church family here at FLC to the broader community and even to people who we don't want to be connected to. We don't need perfect words or flawless strategy we just need to choose the faithful practice of connection - choosing that again and again.

Using the words of Paul the apostle "Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together." —Ephesians 4:2-3
God's peace, Deacon Brenda

KITCHEN
DELICIOUS

First Lutheran Volunteers will be serving dinner at "The Kitchen" on October 27th and November 24th. Volunteer sign up sheets are on the table in the foyer. Come join in the fun serving a free dinner to the people of St. Peter. If you would like to be on an "On Call" list for those times when we are short on volunteers, please call Marilyn Kochsiek at 612-695-6270.

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
1114 Traverse Rd.
St. Peter, MN 56082

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Peter, MN 56082
Permit #3

Live Nativity 2025
Friday, December 12
5:30 - 8 p.m.

The Live Nativity returns for 2025 and help of all kinds is needed!
ALL STUDENTS GRADES 7 - 9 AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE!

Scan the QR Code to sign up today!

Please direct all questions to Gabriela at 507-420-9566