Happy New Year, Siblings in Christ!

In February, our congregation will be involved in the vitally important work of the Strategic Planning Task Force. Our Core Planning team will be meeting on Feb. 5th and 26th at 6:30pm in the Dining Hall. If you wish to share your hopes for the future of First Lutheran Church, and what goals you see we can set to achieve those hopes, please communicate them to our Church Council as well as the members from our committees who have volunteered to attend these meetings. If you serve on a committee and they have not yet identified someone to attend these Core Planning meetings, then please volunteer to help! In the end, our Strategic Plan for the life of our congregation will only be as effective as the goals we set for ourselves that will identify what our congregation really needs and how we want to achieve those goals in the daily life of our church. Please make sure that your voice is heard and pass your thoughts along to our church's leadership.

Also, in February, we transition from the liturgical season of Epiphany to the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday worship will be held at 7:00pm on Feb. 22nd. Please join us for worship, Holy Communion, and the traditional imposition of ashes as we begin this journey through the holiest days of our church year. As a part of our Lenten journey, we will be bringing back Lenten Soup Suppers. The first Lenten Soup Supper will be held on Wednesday, March 1st. Our committees will be pairing up to serve each of these suppers on March 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29. We will gather for food and fellowship from 5:30 – 6:30pm. Faith Formation and Confirmation Classes will be 6:30-7:00pm. Then we will gather in the sanctuary for our midweek worship service beginning at 7:00pm. We invite you to make Wednesday nights an important part of your Lenten journey!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor Chris

Council President – *Madame President, Mary Spear!*

It is an honor to serve as your new council president. I feel a connection with and great affection for this congregation. In a book I read recently, author and professor at Luther Seminary, Andrew Root, describes resonance as the sense of being in relationship with or connected to something outside yourself. That is what I feel for First Lutheran - resonance.

I want to thank outgoing President Garrett Paul. His leadership was faithful and assured. I also want to thank Harry Hunt, Bill Kautt, John Sylvester, and Michelle Twait as out-going council members. You have given so much of your time and energy, and I am so grateful for your dedication to First Lutheran.

And so, to the future.

We have begun the strategic planning process to help identify what God's mission is for us and how we will get there. Jeff Olson, a member of this congregation and one who has extensive experience with strategic planning, has been guiding a small group of "thought leaders" through the strategic planning logistics.

The Thought Leaders team of Pastor Chris Culuris, Steve Erickson, Harry Hunt, Bill Kautt, Dave Kennedy, and Mary Spear have been charged with identifying five strategic priority areas. These priorities will be derived from data collected in a recent survey sent out to congregation members as well as data from previous sources including small group discussions and council and staff meetings and input.

Once the strategic priorities have been established, a "core planning team" will set goals and action plans for the priorities. We have about half the people we need to form an effective Core Planning Team. Please consider being a part of this team to help chart the future course of our congregation. Call the church office if you want to participate as a member of the Core Planning Team.

The bulk of the work of the Thought Leaders and Core Planning Team will take place on Sunday evenings during February and into March. On Tuesday, March 21st, the Thought Leaders will present the Five-Year Strategic Framework to the congregational council for their approval and then we will plan to make a formal presentation to the congregation. Of course, there are many challenges ahead but that is the story of the church! We are rich with talent, full of hope, and united in Christ.

Mary Spear, 2023 Council President

Youth & Family - Out Loud!

Submitted by Calleigh Carlson, Director of Youth & Family Ministry

February Sunday School Schedule:

Sunday, February 5th **9:15am-9:55am**	***Sunday School Class!*** ***1st-2nd Grade First Communion Cup Creating (Session #2)***
Sunday, February 12th **9:15am-9:55am**	***Game/Craft Day!***
Sunday, February 19th **9:15am-9:55am**	***Sunday School Class!*** ***Sunday Worship Music Opportunity at 10am!***
Sunday, February 26th **9:15am-9:55am**	***Sunday School Class!***

February Faith Formation/Confirmation Schedule:

Wednesday, February 1st	***6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC***
Wednesday, February 8th	***6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC***
Wednesday, February 15th	***6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC***
Wednesday, February 22nd	***NO CLASS - ASH WEDNESDAY!***

February High School Youth Group Schedule:

Wednesday, February 1st **7:30pm-8:30pm**	**Our combined High School Youth Group will be gathering for food, fun, and games at Trinity Lutheran this month!**

VALENTINE'S DAY BABYSITTING YOUTH FUNDRAISER:

February 12th 5pm-7pm at FLC

Let us help you this Valentine's Day! We'll provide childcare for your children from birth to 11 years old while you enjoy a quiet Valentine's night with your sweetheart! We will play games, have a movie, eat snacks, and have a lot of fun together while you get to go out or stay home! Let us bless you this Valentine's Day! To sign up, please email Calleigh (cc.flcstp@gmail.com).

Children and Youth Music in Worship!

We are ramping up our Youth Music Opportunities in 2023 and have some exciting dates for you to mark on your calendar!

- First… We are bringing back our Pre-K-6th Grade Children's Music/Choir! Our *Music Time* during Sunday School class will be dedicated towards learning how to sing and play all sorts of fun instruments, along with preparing for our two winter/spring Sunday Worship leadership opportunities!
- Second… We have two Sunday School Sunday Worship offerings this 2023 winter/spring! We will be practicing for these during the Sunday School classes leading up to these dates, so we encourage you to join us for classes each Sunday!
- Sunday School Sunday Worship Dates:
    - Sunday, February 19 at 10am
    - Sunday, April 2 at 10am

Jeremiah Band for February 19!

Do you have a student interested in singing or playing keyboard, guitar, or percussion? If so, the Jeremiah Band might be a great fit for them! Join Emily and Steve for a rehearsal on Wednesday, February 15 at 5:30 in the Chapel and Sunday, February 19 at 9:00 in the Sanctuary to practice before leading worship! Sign up by contacting Emily at musicflcstp@gmail.com!

Thank you from the CCM - *Christmas Bags*

On behalf of the CCM committee, I would like to thank everyone who helped with the planning, preparation, and delivery of the Christmas Bags. Thank you to the many individuals who baked delicious breads, for Betsy Paul purchasing some of the items, to Calleigh and the confirmation students for the wonderful handmade cards, and to Calleigh Carlson, Carol Solberg and Betty Thompson for packing and delivering the bags to members of our congregation. We were able to deliver over 20 Christmas Bags - made with love. THANK YOU!

Worship & Music Out - *Lent and Holy Week 2023*
Submitted by Emily Bruflat, Director Music

seeking:
honest questions
for deeper faith

Beginning with Ash Wednesday and extending through Easter Sunday, we will begin a new series from A Sanctified Art called *Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith*. A devotional will be made available at the start of Lent both in print (black and white) and a much more user-friendly digital version in color delivered in the Weekly Heartbeat. Daily devotional posts will once again appear on our Facebook page each morning throughout the season.

Join us on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. and Sundays at 10:00 a.m. as we journey through this special season:

- Ash Wednesday: February 22 at 7:00 p.m.
- Sundays, February 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26
- Wednesday Midweek: March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
- Palm/Passion Sunday: April 2
- Maundy Thursday: April 6 at 7:00 p.m.
- Good Friday: April 7 at 7:00 p.m.
- Easter Vigil: April 8 at 7:00 p.m.
- Easter Sunday: April 9 at 10:00 a.m.

This expert from this year's theme introduction invites us to start seeking, to start asking questions:

"Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance. We are seeking our calling, the sacred, and how to live as a disciple. Throughout the turbulence of the past few years, many of us are asking big questions about our lives and our faith. If you are returning to church, you are probably returning with more questions and a critical lens. We hope this series will help us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful. Throughout this season, we hope you will continually ask yourself: what am I seeking? What is God seeking?

"This Lent, we invite you to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking. We encourage you to stay curious, open, and nimble. We hope you will soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives. We pray that these questions will create a safe space to explore—to be drawn more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God."

Sabbatical Corner- *Emily's Activites*

Interview with Pastor Caitlin Jensen. November 10, 2022

Caitlin served as First Lutheran's pastoral intern from July 2016 - July 2017 and as our Interim Youth Director through December of 2017. Many came to know and love Caitlin, and she is now one of my dearest friends made possible by her placement at FLC. I planned my sabbatical trip out to Holden to include a stay in Karlstad, MN with Caitlin and her houseful of cats, plants, and tea. I was right at home! We had the chance to talk about her ministry, and I turned it into an interview to give FLC an update on Pastor Caitlin. Here it is!

How long have you been in Karlstad and how is it going?

It will be five years on Valentine's Day (2023). Everything is going pretty well. We're getting back to a new normal and also looking ahead to the future.

What is one ministry that is special to you as a first-call pastor?

It's not so much one thing, but I've been trying to have people actively sharing their faith and telling their stories. I've done that through interviews: a Wednesday nighttime where I would interview congregation members, like a very short podcast. We share Jesus moments at the beginning of worship. I also do interactive sermons with them, which they don't love, but they step up to the plate!

Do you have a fun anecdote to share?

Chaos baptism! For each baptism, I invite the "littles" to come up and splash in the water as I am talking about God's promises. At the end of October, I had a baptism of a baby, and there were nine kids under the age of five in worship. Near the end of the long monologue, they started having a water fight in the altar area. I called them all together for the baptism. They focused briefly, but then when I prayed for the new baby, one of the littles started crawling on the communion railing, so his dad came and picked him up and carried him back to the pew upside down with his feet up in the air. It was glorious and full of joy!

What do you see as the biggest challenges for the church at large?

I think the biggest challenges are trying to figure out what traditions are working and what are not and also learning how to get outside of our church buildings. "Christendom" is not our world anymore, so as Christians we can't expect people to come through our doors like they used to. As the church, we have to show our neighbors and communities that we love and care about them–live out our Christian faith. And we need to not be afraid to tell the stories of how Jesus has changed us.

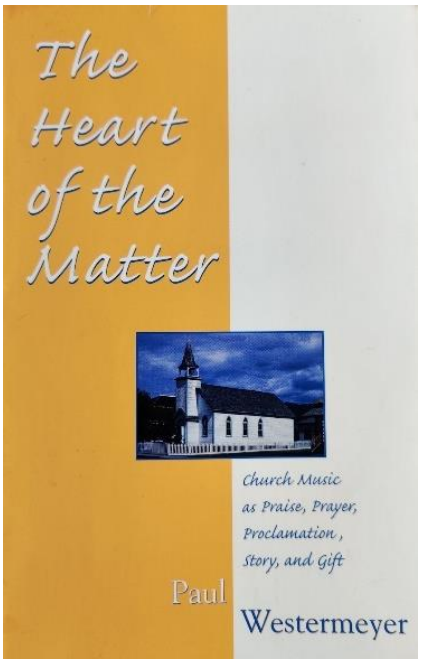
What advice do you have to accomplish this?

We have to learn how to be personal with our care for others. For example, this year my church has been giving to different charities and organizations within our community. When I asked the council if they wanted to continue doing this, a couple folks suggested that we give to individuals rather than organizations to actually care for those who are hungry, who are sick, who are hurting. As the church, the ministries we've been doing don't really have a face. We need to actually care for our neighbors and know who our neighbors are. It's safe to give to the general charities, but we're changed when we actually walk beside our neighbors.

Any last pieces of info you would like to share with FLC?

On the personal side of things, I have three cats now. Not only am I obsessed with tea, I'm obsessed with plants. Also, I've been dating a local pastor in the area, and it's been going well! As a reminder, I love you all as a community. I'm really happy for your new pastor, and I'm looking forward to where the Holy Spirit calls you in the coming years. God is faithful. - Pastor Caitlin

Books Read During Sabbatical
The Heart of the Matter: Church Music as Praise, Prayer, Proclamation, Story, and Gift
by Dr. Paul Westermeyer
Part 1: Church Music as Praise



As means of introduction, Paul Westermeyer was one of my professors at Luther Seminary and the head of the Master of Sacred Music program for over two decades up until his retirement. He instilled in me a great sense of responsibility. He writes, "[Leading the people's song] requires some work. . . Composing must be done. Choices must be made… To be expressed, the musical response of praise for God's grace needs form and shape. Someone must take responsibility for that forming and shaping. This is the delightful vocation of the church musician - the person whom I prefer to call the cantor, the chief singer among the body of singers, the one fundamentally responsible for the congregation's song and for all the choral and instrumental music that surrounds it or grows out of it." All quotations are from Westermeyer's book, *The Heart of the Matter*, and this is Part One of a five-part essay of this book diving deeper into the vital importance of church music.

His very first sentence summarizes the whole chapter: "The church's music is about the praise of God." Using many biblical references, Westermeyer explains that whether an individual is in a time of praise or a time of lament, of personal song or silence, the church's praise goes on in the community. He cites 2 Samuel 6, verse 5: "And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals."
This following excerpt is so important that I feel compelled to share a larger passage:

> *There is a deep mystery here, the mystery of praising the Triune name. That is why superficial talk about praise of God and superficial music associated with such trivial talk is so enervating and silly. Whatever we may say about this, the church's song of praise is not frivolous. It's an essential part of the church's being and our being as members of Chris's body. . . It's not something we can add on, as if we could sew a patch onto a pre-existent garment. It's part of the garment of the whole creation, intrinsic to the creation.*

If I have ever brushed off a compliment about beautiful music or lamented at applause during worship, herein lies the reason. I do not view music in the church as pretty entertainment, optional embellishment, or a music recital. Westermeyer makes it clear that music is intrinsic to worship; no matter what style a particular congregation uses, the people should worship to the best of their ability and offer their musical praise to God. He concludes, "Praise of God, to say the least, is no small thing and, therefore, worth doing well. At its heart, praise takes musical form."

I invite you into perhaps a new mentality, where music is directional. Think of an arrow ⇑ pointing to God. We certainly sing with each other and lift up our voices for those who cannot,

but the main event is our praise to God, and "music is one of the chief vehicles for expressing that praise."

Emily Bruflat, Director of Music
Join me at River Rock on Tuesday, February 14 for "Coffee or Tea with Emily" from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. for conversation and discussion!

Choirs at FLC!

Submitted by Emily Bruflat

Bonse Aba - Treble Choir!
Bonse Aba was created in 2019 as a treble (high voice) choir open to children, youth, and adults ages 10 and up with the goal of "teaching" people how to be in a choir. We are starting Bonse Aba beginning in February, and ALL levels and abilities are welcome and encouraged to join! The music will be simple and inviting to beginners, yet care will be taken to engage singers with more experience!

There is a lot of flexibility for busy schedules; come to as many rehearsals as you can to be comfortable learning any music we sing for worship. Contact Emily at musicflcstp@gmail.com for more information!

We rehearse Sundays from 11:15 - 11:45 in the Choir Room: **February 12 and 26, March 12 and 19, April 2 and 23.** We will sing during worship on **March 19 and April 30** (warming up before church at 9:15).

Holy Week and Easter Choir - Save the Dates!
Calling ALL singers to rehearse and prepare to sing for Palm Sunday (April 2), Good Friday (April 6), and Easter Sunday (April 9) 2023! We will begin rehearsals in the Choir Room on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. after Lenten worship. Attendance at at least three rehearsals will help choir members to be prepared and confident worship leaders. Rehearsal dates are **March 8, 15, 22, 29**, with a special rehearsal schedule on **April 5** to be determined. Please join us!

Worship Assistants

Submitted by Emily Bruflat

Prior to the pandemic, an assisting minister would join the pastor in worship leadership each Sunday. This person would lead much of the opening liturgy, the prayers, and the closing portion of worship. Occasionally, this person may lead the singing of the Kyrie or Psalm, but this is not a requirement of Assisting Ministers.

If you have an interest in being included on the "master rotation" of Assisting Ministers and to receive training for this role, please reach out to Emily at musicflcstp@gmail.com for more information and to get signed up. While all are welcome to sign up, women and youth (senior high) are especially encouraged to join so that we have a diversity of voices up front each week!

The Kitchen- *Feeding the Community*

Submitted by Marilyn Kochsiek

Thank you to the folks who have signed up to prepare and serve a meal at The Kitchen on January 30th. We will be serving chili, bread, raw vegetables, and fruit. First Lutheran Church will have more opportunities for service at The Kitchen on February 27th, March 27th, and April 24th. A signup sheet will be on the table in the gathering space for each of these dates. You can email The Kitchen planning committee for more information at: servingtheneed56082@gmail.com. You can also request access to "Sign Up Genius" to volunteer any Monday night.

We also have set up a Facebook page. Page name: The Kitchen at Trinity Lutheran Church. During the month of February, we are sponsoring a "Share the Love" fundraiser. We are looking for families that would like to make a financial contribution to sponsoring a Monday night meal.

The Green Committee Encourages you to Write Letters! –

Composting is Important!

Submitted by Kathryn Christenson

After worship on Sunday, February 12, you are invited to join the Green Committee at a letter-writing table, sending messages in support of local municipal pickup of compostable materials, to our City Council.

We will provide paper, envelopes, and stamps, plus the names and addresses of St. Peter City Council members. Write one or more letters to let them know that you support this service.

Gathering compost by the city has been a step in the right direction. But many residents, faithful in composting, are discouraged at driving to a remote, messy drop-off site.

Curbside pickup of garbage has been a long tradition, joined in recent memory by pickup of recyclables at the curb. The Green Committee, along with the River Valley unit of Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, believe it's time to add curbside pickup of compostable organic material.

Relevant Composting facts:

- 27% of people in the US. have access to compost service.
- 71% of Canadians can count on curbside compost pickup.
- Many Twin Cities municipalities provide curbside pickup of compost.
- among smaller cities, Northfield and Hutchinson do. We think St. Peter
- should join them. Please look for our table on Sunday, February 12.

Reconciling In Christ Sunday –*February 5*

Submitted by Mary Spear

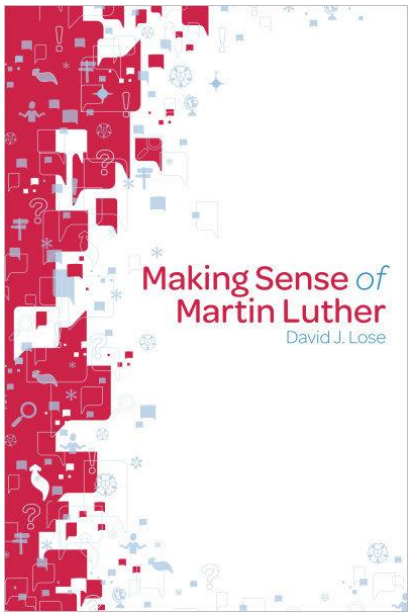
Join us as we celebrate our status as an RIC congregation and continue to work toward the kind of true inclusion, acceptance, and welcome that Christ extended. We welcome Pastor Scott Richards from Gaylord as our guest preacher!

Our Prayer of the Day from ReconcilingWorks: Loving Creator, you knit us together and created our innermost beings. You created us loved, worthy, and unique. You created us LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, neurodiverse, and physically diverse. Help us to find our wholeness in you and live into our divinely inspired purpose. Guide us to unfold your story of love. Amen.

Bible Studies - *Sunday & Monday*

Sundays: *Making Sense of Martin Luther*

Making Sense of Martin Luther uses a conversational format to explore how Luther's dynamic understanding of God's life-changing gospel informs day-to-day faith and life in the world today.



Pastor Chris will be showing a video in the Dining Hall and leading the discussion following worship on the following Sundays: February 12 & 26, March 12 & 26, April 2. Please join us to learn more about Martin Luther and how his ideas reformed the church and guide our faith lives still today!

If you want to order a participant's book, the cost is $13.99/book. Use this link to order your own copy:

https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/9781451425550/Making-Sense-of-Martin-Luther-Participant-Book

Monday Bible Study: *Hebrews, A New and Better Way*
Based on the book written by Bishop Herb Chilstrom
(Herb is a former pastor at FLC and presiding bishop of the ELCA)
Class Leaders:
Bob Stenson & Will Freiert
Meets on Mondays in 2023
Chapel for prayers at 9:30am/ 9:45 am Conference room for class
Printed Materials will be Provided for Monday Bible Study.

Faithful Giving Allows for Generous Benevolence

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, we want to **thank you** for your generosity in 2022. The following is a list of our benevolence giving for 2022—totaling over $23,000. May these gifts be a blessing to both those who give and those who receive:

SW Minnesota Synod & ELCA	$11,145
Missionary Sponsorship	$1,000
Disaster Relief	$575
The Kitchen	$1,700
World Hunger	$1,190
Lenten Offering (SPAF)	$217
St. Peter Area Food Shelf	$1,640
Holiday Baskets (vouchers)	$2,450
Giving Tree/Pastors' Discretionary Fund	$2,980
MNIPL	$500
Total	$23,397

DECEMBER 31
Financial Report

Income	430,176
Expense	440,906
	<10,730>

FLC BLOOD DRIVE
FEBRUARY 17

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
1114 Traverse Road
Saint Peter, MN 56082

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

Phone: 507-934-3060
Email: flcstpoffice@gmail.com
Website: www.flcstp.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/FLCSTP

SHARE THE LOVE

Share your love with the Saint Peter Community and sponsor a meal at
The Kitchen
at
Trinity Lutheran Church
We are looking for families that would like to make a financial contribution to sponsoring a Monday night meal. We have a few options listed below.

Please consider giving at one of the levels

Level 1 $150
Level 2 $100
Level 3 $75

We also need volunteers to help with cooking and serving the meals. Please consider a donation of your time. Send an email to servingtheneed56082@gmail.com and a link will be provided for you to sign up.

Please reach out to a church member for any questions or you can reach us at servingtheneed56082@gmail.com
Checks can be made to Trinity Lutheran with a note in the memo: "The Kitchen".

Trinity Lutheran- Sandi Francis
Church of St. Peter -Dean Peterson
Union Presbyterian- Jen Baxa
First Lutheran- Marilyn Kochsiek