

FIRST OUT LOUD!

NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2023

Happy New Year, Siblings in Christ!

If you look at the liturgical calendar in the ELW you will see that January 1st is the festival of the “Name of Jesus.” As a new year begins, the church deliberately grounds us in the Gospel, the good news of what God has already done for us in Jesus. So, at the start of 2023, I want to share a devotion with you that Martin Luther wrote about how we are complete in Christ. Our theme verse is from Colossians 2:9-10: “All of God lives in Christ’s body, and God has made you complete in Christ.”

Reflecting on what this means for us Luther writes: “In Paul’s letters, such as Romans, Galatians, and Colossians, there are many passages that say God has fulfilled all the requirements of the law in Christ (Romans 10:4). Christ is the fulfillment of the law, of time, and of all things. Christ is all and has all. The person who holds on to Jesus in faith will receive forgiveness of sins. God’s laws will be fulfilled, death will be conquered, and the devil will be overcome. That person will receive the gift of eternal life. For in this one man, Jesus, all is settled. He has fulfilled everything. Whoever accepts him has everything. As Paul says here, “God has made you complete in Christ.” When I feel anxious about sin and hell, I remind myself that when I have Christ, I have all that is necessary. Neither death, sin, nor the devil can hurt me. If I believe in Christ, I have fulfilled the law; it cannot accuse me. I have conquered hell; it cannot hold me. Everything that Christ has is mine. Through him, we obtain all his possessions and eternal life. Even if I am weak in faith, I still have the same treasure and the same Christ that others have. There’s no difference: we are all made perfect through faith in him, not by what we do. For example, imagine that two people each have a hundred dollars. One person carries it in a paper bag. The other keeps it in an iron chest. Both have the same treasure no matter where they put it. Similarly, we all have the same Christ. It doesn’t matter if one person has a stronger or weaker faith than another. Both of them still believe in the same Christ and have everything through him.” (By Faith Alone: 365 Devotional Readings Updated in Today’s Language by Martin Luther)

Therefore, as we begin a New Year know that God has made us complete in Christ. We already possess everything we need to start this new year. Trust in Christ and know that in Christ, God has already given us everything we really need. Thanks be to God and Amen!

In Christ, Pastor Chris

Council President – Garrett’s Final Report

We are about to wrap up another calendar year at First. And it has been an eventful year!

The biggest event this year is when Pastor Chris began his ministry with us; he is now about to celebrate his first anniversary with us! In addition, our committees have been active in a variety of areas, from caring for the building and grounds—look at the flowers! —leading us in worship and music, changing the paraments and hangings, to working for social justice, and much more. We were represented in the Fourth of July parade. We have begun leasing our basement to Ecumen, providing both a service to the community and income for ourselves.

Perhaps most importantly at this time, we have begun the process of long-range planning with the generous help of Jeff Olson. You will hear more about this in the months to come and will have an opportunity to be heard.

We have had a successful stewardship season. Many thanks to those of you who responded to Jim Stenson’s (and my) appeal to increase your estimates of giving; we have already had several raise their estimates! There is still time to turn in your card if you haven’t already, or to increase your estimate if you haven’t done that already. Of course, some of us are not in a position to increase our giving, but many of us are. As I said at the congregational meeting, remember that most of us don’t even think twice about dining out and paying \$50 to \$100. Please keep this in mind if you are in a position to re-evaluate your estimate of giving for next year and haven’t already done so.

Perhaps it may seem out of place to talk about financial support in the president’s report, but I make bold to do so because I have faith in this congregation and know that we want to support Pastor Chris and his excellent staff.

Dr. Garrett Paul, Council President

Church Financials as of 11/30/22

Income \$362,144

Expense \$387,920

Net loss -25,775

Stewardship Update as of 12/21

Building: 81 pledges \$343,155

Regular giving:

110 pledges \$327,815



The No Stress, No Fuss Christmas Program ‘twas fun!

Youth & Family - Out Loud!

We are filled with gratitude, love, and joy as we close the chapter that was 2022!

Here's what's going on in January:

January Sunday School Schedule:

Sunday, January 1st	NO CLASS!
Sunday, January 8th 9:15am-9:55am	2nd Grade First Communion Cup (Session #1) Sunday School Class: Jesus' Baptism!
Sunday, January 15th 9:15am-9:55am	Sunday Funday!
Sunday, January 22nd 9:15am-9:55am	Sunday School Class: The Disciples!
Sunday, January 29th 9:15am-9:55am	Sunday Funday!

January Faith Formation/Confirmation Schedule:

Wednesday, January 4th	6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC
Wednesday, January 11th	6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC
Wednesday, January 18th	6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC
Wednesday, January 25th	6:30PM-7:30PM at FLC

January High School Youth Group Schedule:

Wednesday, January 4th 7:30pm-8:30pm	Our Combined High School Youth Group will meet at First Lutheran for our January Youth Group! Fun, games, devos and more!
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January Youth and Family Event:

Sunday, January 15th at 4:00pm-5:30pm	St. Peter Photo Scavenger Hunt <i>A photo scavenger hunt challenges your group to complete tasks, find unique items, or do something and photograph it as proof for the whole team to see at the end. Email Calleigh (cc.flcstp@gmail.com) to participate!</i>
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Director Of Music - Returning from Sabbatical January 3

Handbell Choir Resumes

Let's "ring in the new year" with handbell rehearsal on Wednesday, January 4 at 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. If you would like to join in the fun but are not a part of the group at this time, please contact Emily at musicflcstp@gmail.com with any questions!

Calling Singers for Epiphany

Join Emily at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, January 8 to learn a few "extras" for the Epiphany hymns and to aid in leading worship. The more the merrier! Please meet in the balcony.

Coffee or Tea with Emily

Would you like to set up time to visit with Emily in the coming weeks and months? Perhaps you want to hear more about her sabbatical or discuss one of the many essays/presentations she has prepared while on leave. Maybe you're curious about the behind-the-scenes life of your Director of Music. She will set aside some time the second Tuesday of each month for conversation at River Rock from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. No appointment necessary, but she will appreciate a heads up if you can provide it. First up is January 10th!

Submitted by Emily Bruflat

A Note from Stamps for the Wounded

Dear First Lutheran Church Members,

We very much appreciate your contribution of stamps and philatelic materials to help hospitalized and outpatient servicemen and servicewomen by providing them with stamps and other necessary tools for engaging in stamp-collecting: a successful recreation therapy which productively occupies their time, their eyes, their hands and above all, their minds. We assure you that all materials you contribute will be used for purposes related to our charitable function.

We gratefully acknowledge your kind donation of thousands of US and worldwide stamps, a cover album, and mint sheet folders for our Veterans.

Please keep materials coming through the year and recruit friends to do likewise. On behalf of the volunteer staff of SFTW, we thank you for your participation in our work.

Gratefully, John M. Hotchner SFTW Vice President

A Note from MN Interfaith Power & Light – Grateful

In October 2016, the First Lutheran Church Council voted to become a Sustaining Congregation of Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, (MNIPL) an interdenominational Creation Care organization. The St. Peter-Mankato area unit of MNIPL meets in our Gathering Space. Any member of First Lutheran is cordially invited to attend the next meeting, Wednesday, January 18, at 2 p.m., chaired by Buff Grace, who has sent us the following thanks and report:

We at MN Interfaith Power & Light are especially grateful for First Lutheran St. Peter. Thank you for offering the River-Prairie Climate Team a place for our monthly meeting and for your financial support and for engaging this critical issue of our day.

Some of what we are celebrating as 2022 draws toward a close:

We've made subject experts available through our webinars, such as the former chair of the Coalition of Legislators for Energy Action Now under President Obama, Jeremy Kalin, on the Inflation Reduction Act and University of MN's Director of Planetary Health, Dr. Terri Potter, on climate anxiety.

We convinced Rep. Ilhan Omar to lead on a petition to the U.S. State Department on a U.N. agreement for wealthy nations to assist poor nations in dealing with the loss and damage of climate change, and we sent one of our own staff to COP27 in Cairo to track the proceedings.

We've supported dozens of faith communities and homeowners to explore solar including 15 installed church systems and raising funds to completely pay for three low-income households to get solar systems.

We support racial reconciliation, such as our Indigenous-led northland tour on which 50 participants learned about food sovereignty, northland economies, rights-of-nature litigation, and other indigenous-led efforts for climate justice. For 2023 we are developing both a reparations campaign and a zero-waste campaign that aims to eliminate incinerators and the air pollution they create.

Our staff have given dozens of presentations in faith communities around the state, and we are growing our networks in St. Peter, Cook County, St. Cloud, and the Arrowhead.

I look forward to what we'll do together in 2023 and appreciate your collaboration.

Buff & the MNIPL Team

Two New Bible Studies Starting in January

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.

Introduction: Luther as Monk, Myth, and Messenger

Chapter 1: *The Reluctant Reformer—Introducing “the Monk Who Changed the World”*

Chapter 2: *Freedom! Justification by Grace through Faith*

Chapter 3: *The Present-Tense God—Law and Gospel*

Chapter 4: *The Ambidextrous God—The Two Kingdoms and God's Ongoing Work in the World*

Chapter 5: *Called for Good—Vocation, Sinning Boldly, and the Respiratory System of the Body of Christ*

Chapter 6: *God Hidden and Revealed—Luther's Theology of the Cross and the Sacraments*

Chapter 7: *Semper Simul—Sin, Forgiveness, and “Becoming Christian”*

Pastor Chris will be showing a video in the Dining Hall and leading the discussion following worship on the following Sundays: January 8 & 22, 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 Resumes January 9 (FLC Office Closed Jan 2)

Hebrews "A New and Better Way"

Based on the book written by Bishop Herb Chilstrom

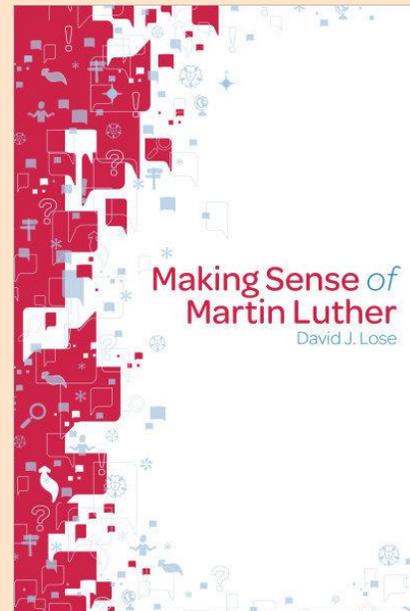
(Herb is a former pastor at FLC and presiding bishop of the ELCA)

Class Leaders:

Bob Stenson & Will Freiert

Meets on Mondays in 2023

Chapel for prayers at 9:30am/ 9:45 am Conference room for class



advent: activities & service projects.



FLC

WOMEN'S RETREAT

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH



Pastor Heather Culuris will be leading the retreat

9:00-12:30

- Refreshments and light snacks will be served.
- Register by calling the church office. Please register by Monday, January 30th.
- There is no charge for the retreat but there will be a freewill offering.
- For those wishing to continue the conversations, we will plan to go out for lunch after the retreat.

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The Green Committee met in December at the house of David and Judy Fielen to celebrate the season. Guests of honor were Jim and Laura Lindell-Dontje who were visiting from Tanzania.

