



# THE *Branch*

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

April 2024

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### Women's Spring Gathering April 6

"Open our hearts-Listen, Be Kind and Pray!" is the theme for this year's Spring Gathering that will be held at Luther Memorial, 1162 Mohawk, Syracuse, NE. Registration and coffee at 9:00 am, followed by a brunch and closing at 3pm. The speaker will be Dr. Mark Adler, superintendent of Ralston Public schools, who lost his son to suicide. His message is one of spreading hope and kindness. Registration forms available in the narthex.



Dear Church,  
As the Easter season begins, here's something to contemplate, courtesy of Philipp Nicolai, a pastor and hymn writer in the generation immediately after Martin Luther: What is the use of eternal life? Having been given so great a gift in Jesus's death and resurrection, to what end is this new life directing us? With our righteousness and justification before God secured by Jesus's cross, Body, and Blood—what now? To paraphrase another great theologian and a seminary professor of mine, Craig L. Nesson, from justification and the promise and joy of eternal life

grows vocation—our calling out into the world. And the sole focus of that calling is to love our neighbors. It's as simple... and as complex as that. Because loving our neighbors can look so deceptively simple. Many of us love neighbors every day who look like us, speak like us, think like us—even reside in the same house as we do! And the home is, indeed, where neighbor love begins. But as we go out into the wide world, we will encounter plenty of neighbors who are nothing like us—neighbors who think differently, who live differently, who may even be antagonistic to us. And yet, these ones are our neighbors, too. And in all that we say and do to our neighbors, we are preaching Christ's Gospel. That is our vocation, first and foremost. Now, what does all this have to do with the promise and gift of eternal life? With that promise, we are freed from all the strictures that would hold us back from loving our neighbors: race, ethnicity, political party, religion or lack thereof. We are freed from worrying about our personal holiness before God. We are freed to live lives of service to and for neighbor. And indeed, we are freed to see that the Kingdom of God in the life of the world to come is the reconciliation of all things—all neighbors—in God, by Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. As Philipp Nicolai writes: "We would learn to guard ourselves against all ungodly hatred, envy, enmity, and devilish works, which are contrary to love and belong not in heaven but in hell. [...] Who loves God and neighbor and grows and increases in such love leads a life of paradise on Earth and has a heavenly conduct, even though still making the pilgrimage and journeying in the flesh." Neighbor love is the Kingdom of God—both now and to come. And assured of the Kingdom to come, we are freed to work here in the Kingdom now, that it might resemble the one on the way. The Kingdom, again in the words of Craig Nesson, becomes "the Kin-dom." Welcome to it.

With a Mighty Shalom,

# Council Corner

## Highlights/ March 2024 Meeting

### Board Reports

#### Christian Education:

- Sherri Wilson reported that First Communion will be on Maundy Thursday.

#### Witness & Fellowship:

- Robyn Stubbendick reported that they will continue to serve coffee and cookies after Lenten services.

#### Property Board:

- Report presented by Josh Stubbendick that there was a fire in the tower from the neon light caused by a spark and a scorched area was present in the tower. Nebraska Neon fixed the problem
- Electrician added a couple outlets in the corner of the Parish Hall.

#### Stewardship & Social Ministry:

- Emily Iske reported that loose offering during Lenten Services is dedicated to the school lunch fund.

A complete set of minutes is available on the kiosk in the narthex

# GO AND...

Jesus isn't in the tomb anymore - God is on the loose! God is active and up to something! The story of Easter is an ongoing one, similar to the story of our own faith. Our response as disciples is to Go and.... to go out, go share, go proclaim, and to go tell the story.

#### Questions to Consider:

- What is one of your favorite Bible stories?
- Is there a prop or tangible item you might use to help you tell the story?
- How will you GO and tell the story?

**Prayer:** Master Storyteller, your stories seem almost unbelievable. Open us to recognize your patience, deep love, and grace. Help me be a storyteller. Amen.

**Suggested Song:** I Love to Tell the Story (ELW 661)

Learn More at [www.nebraskasynod.org](http://www.nebraskasynod.org)

TELL THE STORY



# Leader's Spotlight

Council Vice-President *by Jeff Panko*



We are about to change the seasons again. Spring is trying to appear and the hope of warmer weather has most people excited. In a couple of months, college and high school seniors will be graduating and we will all hope for their bright futures. We are about to celebrate the Resurrection of our Savior, which brings us the hope of everlasting life.

As we move forward into a new season, think about perhaps changing a season in your own life. Maybe you've always wanted to be a worship assistant on Sunday morning or during another special worship service. Give it a try. You might just find it rewarding and we could certainly always use the help.

Just as we needed the help of Christ's Crucifixion, the church could use your help in spreading the word and in a variety of activities. Our worship carries us out into the world to love our neighbors. So if you're an usher, think about how you are ushering in God's Word, Jesus, to the lives of other people. If you serve as a reader, think about how you, too, are preaching and teaching the Word out in your daily life. If you are a communion assistant, think about how you are giving bread and Jesus's very Body and Blood to those who hunger and thirst for it. In the changing of the seasons, think about finding a way to have a change of season in your worship and daily life.

Have a glorious spring and a better summer.



# Giving Opportunities

2nd Mile Giving		
Project	Estimated Cost	To Date
Global Health Ministries	On Going	\$20,870
Peru Missionaries	On Going	\$17,906
2nd Mile / Shed	\$20,000	\$9,731

## Treasurer's Report

Current Fund (Pastor and Administration, Office, Building, Education, Worship)

Received through February 29: \$41,203.44  
 Expenses through February 29: \$34,239.93  
 Budgeted through February 29: \$39,675.54

Thank you for your ongoing, thoughtful giving.



## Church News and Events

### Pies/Brownies/Yumberger Meeting!



Join us on April 2, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. parish hall

- Help us propose plans and scheduling in regards to the Church Fair Stand this year!
- Please attend if you have any interest in helping with these foods or if you love to cook! Advice requested.
- All information gathered at this meeting will be shared with the Church Fair stand committee.
- Any questions, please contact Cindy Drake  
kcqdrake@windstream.net 402-429-3752

### New Thursday Night Bible Study- The Acts of the Apostles

How did Jesus's Gospel spread? Would you believe it involved speaking in tongues, narrow escapes, jail-break, shipwreck, the Holy Spirit rushing around like a violent wind... that's the excitement and adventure of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles!

Sometimes called the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit," the Book of Acts is the story of the early days after Jesus's resurrection, and how the Apostles, prodded by the Holy Spirit's leading and direction, lived and moved around the Mediterranean, spreading news of Jesus and "The Way." Here we see Peter moved into leadership, Paul's conversion, and the sometimes harrowing tales of other followers as they stand firm in the faith.

Join us as Pastor Adam leads a new Thursday night study on Acts, starting Thursday, April 4, at 5:30 p.m.



### The Little Red Wagon April: Food Pantry Requests

Canned fruit	Noodles
Peanut Butter	Jelly
Instant Potatoes	Helpers
Canned Vegetables	Cereal
Laundry Detergent	Dish Detergent

*Reminder: please be sure to check the expiration dates.*

WOMEN OF FIRST LUTHERAN  
*Sunday Morning*  
**BREAKFAST**

• April 14  
• 9a.m.-11 a.m.  
• serving breakfast burritos, biscuits/gravy, muffins, fresh fruit & juice

FREE WILL DONATION

Location: 1434 N 30th Road, Avoca, NE 68307

THRIVENT FUNDED  
ALL PROCEEDS USED  
FOR FAMILIES IN NEED



### Meal Prep!

Join us on **Sunday April 14th** from 5-7pm. Menu coming soon! Please RSVP to Amanda Stubbendick, all are welcome!

### New Member Introductory Meeting- April 28!

Interested in formal membership here at North Branch? Join us for an informational and introductory meeting on Sunday, April 28, at 11:30 a.m. We'll share a little bit more about the Lutheran tradition, life here at First Lutheran, and get to know one another.

We will welcome new members at worship on Sunday, May 5.

## Upcoming OSJ Activities!

### Mark Your Calendars for April Events!

**April 7:** 9:30 a.m. First Communion Reception in the Parish Hall

**April 28:** Last Sunday School Classes  
10:30 a.m. Senior Recognition  
11:30 a.m. OSJ Family Event

## Let's Blast Off with VBS!

We are excited to blast off with this year's VBS June 17-21st! You can register using the QR code and please feel free to invite anyone who has a 3yo through children that have completed the 5th grade that would like to join us! This will be a week filled with space themed fun and fellowship as we learn how to shine Jesus' light throughout the world!



Again this year we will be offering a lunch to all participants so we are asking for a \$10 donation for each participant but the donation isn't required for attendance.

If you have any questions please contact Amanda Stubbendick [astubbendick@gmail.com](mailto:astubbendick@gmail.com) or 402-560-1521

**STELLAR**  
SHINE JESUS' LIGHT

First Lutheran Church-North Branch VBS  
JUNE 17-21 9-NOON

Registration open April 1st-May 15th  
Ages 3yo-finished 5th welcome

**I am a child of God**

But to all who believed Him and accepted Him,  
He gave the right to become children of God.  
John 1:12 NLT

## Youth and Family May Events

As we wrap up another wonderful year of Christian Education we would like to invite the congregation to join us in thanking the teachers and volunteers that make Sunday School possible. Please join us **Sunday May 5th** between services to say thank you and to fellowship together.

SUNDAY SCHOOL  
TEACHER APPRECIATION

# COME THANK A TEACHER

Join us Sunday May 5th at 9:30am for goodies and to say thank you to our Sunday School teachers and volunteers

If you are a mom, you have a mom, or you just like muffins we hope you'll join us on **Sunday May 12th** between services to celebrate the moms and mother figures in our lives and our congregation.

HAPPY  
*Mother's Day*

Join us Sunday May 12th at 9:30am for Muffins with Mom