



THE *Branch*

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

March 2024

HIGHLIGHTS

Council Corner	2
Giving Opportunities	2
Youth & Family	2
Missionary News	3
Church News & Events	4,5,6



Dear Church,
 When was the last time you picked up a Bible and gave it a good read? The question is not at all meant to be a judgment—just a pondering. For my part, I used to have a black, leather-bound Bible from which I would read, and the dust that could gather on that black cover would accumulate quickly. When you read the Bible, what are you looking for? Comfort? Knowledge or wisdom? A good story? A guide for life? I would guess that, as Lutherans, without even knowing it, you are reading the Bible with an eye toward Jesus and the justification before God and the forgiveness of sins he

brings for you. This is our Lutheran tradition’s understanding of the Scripture—that we interpret everything through the lens that is Jesus Christ. He is, after all, as St. John’s Gospel reminds us: the Word made flesh. Whatever preaches Christ, Martin Luther says, that is our interpretation of God’s Word.

Thus, the Bible is much more than a rulebook or a guide for living or a source of wisdom or even comfort. The Bible is God’s ever-living address, God’s own words to you, borne in the Body of the Word made flesh, Christ Jesus.

As Lent continues and as Easter approaches, you are invited into the great living address of the Passion, the Way of the Cross, and to ponder anew the meaning of Jesus’s crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. All this is God’s living address to you, showing you how much God loves you and all the world. With Jesus as our only means of viewing Scripture, our only lens, we are blessed to see again the promises God has made in Christ. And in those promises, in that justification, in that forgiveness, in your eternal life, there is then Jesus’s interpretation of all the world as a place and as a whole people to love—neighbors, friends, strangers, even enemies. All are included in God’s promises. All are included in God’s living address through the Word.

If you’re still looking for a spiritual practice to pick up in Lent, try just meandering through the texts of the Gospels, of St. Paul’s letters, of Isaiah or the Psalms. Here, you are most certainly addressed by the Word of God! God loves you and has given God’s very self for you! This is a great way to read one’s Bible and to again be assured of your secured future.

Shalom,



6:00 p.m.

Wednesdays thru —March 20

Join us for our Lenten services at 6:00 pm. We will be having the Holden Evening Prayer Service. We will see you there!



Sunday, March 24 Palm Sunday

8:15a.m/10:30 a.m.

Worship with Palm Processional

Thursday, March 28

7 p.m. Maundy Thursday Worship

With First Communion

Friday, March 29

7 p.m. Good Friday Service

Easter Sunday, March 30

7a.m. Sunrise Worship

8-11 a.m. Easter Brunch

8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Easter Worship

Council Corner

Highlights/ January 2024 Meeting

New Business

- In regards to the 2024 ballot, all positions have been filled, thanks to the nominating committee.
- The use of Thrivent Grants for upcoming events or fundraisers was discussed.

Board Reports

Pastor's Report:

- Installation of Mrs. Rachel Hamling as Administrator.
- New members meeting on February 4th.

Property:

- The use of cork for two rooms and cost. Pest control and cost.
- Property insurance company changed to North Star with increase in deductible.

Deacons:

- Christmas candy was well received, thanks to those that helped. All extra bags were donated to nursing homes.
- Draft of the Pastors Sabbatical will be available soon to review in February.

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

Youth and Family

First Communion for Third Graders

All third-graders—or any older children who have not yet had First Communion—at North Branch are invited to take part in an upcoming class on Holy Communion, Sunday, March 24, at 11:30 a.m., in the sanctuary. We will spend about 90 minutes talking about what communion is, why we celebrate it, and what the rite will look like when we celebrate First Communion on Maundy Thursday, March 28, at 7 p.m.

Come with lots of questions!

We look forward to welcoming our newest communicants at the Lord's Table!



Spring Forward

March 10!



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	\$9,681

Treasurer's Report

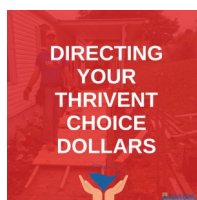
Current Fund (Pastor and Administration, Office, Building, Education, Worship)

Received through January 31: \$20,765.08

Expenses through January 31: \$17,250.00

Budgeted through January 31: \$19,837.77

January offering was enough to cover the month's expenses. We have a cushion of \$3,515.08.



Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars

Thrivent clients - Don't forget to direct 2024 Choice Dollars® prior to March 29!

If you're an eligible Thrivent client and have Choice Dollars available to direct, please keep our church in mind. For

more info or to direct Choice Dollars, visit à thrivent.com/thriventchoice Need help? Call 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" at the prompt or contact your Thrivent financial advisor - Crystal Neihoff or Glenna Bohling at (402) 269-3003.

Upcoming OSJ Activities!

March 2- 4:45 p- 7:00 p **Battle for Becky Knake Fundraiser** for all 7th-12th graders.

March 20- 6:30 p **Easter Service Practice** 6th-12 graders.

March 27- 6:30 p **Easter Service Practice** 6th-12 graders.

March 31- **Easter Breakfast** 4th-12th graders.

Please watch for the Sign Up Genius link to help with all of these activities!

It's a Boy!



Derek Blake Redding
Born Friday, February 16
19.5 in 8 lbs 6 oz

We want to say thanks for all of your prayers. Mom and Baby are both happy and healthy following the birth of our third boy. We have some proud older brothers who love to attend to Derek's every little need. They are so good with him!

We will spend the next few weeks in Lima and Pucallpa with friends and family. Both of our parents get to come down and meet baby Derek! Then once all of Derek's Peruvian and US paperwork is complete, we will head back to the community in late March. Thanks again for all of your prayers. And thanks be to God for the blessing of another baby!

Jared and Emma Redding





Church News and Events

College Students & High School Seniors Endowment Grant Applications due March 15

The Endowment Fund grant applications for the 2024-2025 school year have been mailed. If you did not receive one please call the church office. **The deadline to turn in applications is March 15.**

Thank you!

Faith & Film Study Series continues!

After a wild ride through some great and deep movies that ponder faith and the works of God in the lives of humans, we are going to switch things up a little bit and look at the lighter side of the life of faith. Feb. 29, we will watch Albert Brooks’s 1991 comedy “Defending Your Life,” starring Brooks and Meryl Streep.

March 7 will have us delving into “O Brother, Where Art Thou” (2000), Joel & Ethan Coen’s zany retelling of the Odysseus myth with Gospel flavor and old-timey church music.

March 14, we will watch the biopic “Luther,” a 2003 film with Joseph Fiennes in the title role.

We will take a vote on what we should watch to close out the series and what our Thursday night Bible study would like to explore next with our time together.

Women’s Spring Gathering April 6

“Open our hearts-Listen, Be Kind and Pray!” is the theme for this years 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.

Thank You!

Thank you from the Men of North Branch!

Fellow Siblings in Christ,
Thank you to everyone who prepared, served, cleaned up, ate, and donated to this year’s Shrove Tuesday pancake feed on Feb. 13! What a great turnout and what a giving spirit we witnessed at this year’s event.

It was wonderful to see so many people from the surrounding community come and be a part of the festivities—you all clearly got the word spread, far and wide.

Thank you,
The Men of First Lutheran

Thank you from Harlan & Kay Hillman

Dear North Branch,
We want to thank all the caring and compassionate members of our church family who prayed for us and supported us during Harlan’s hospitalization from October through December.

All the prayers, cards, calls, flowers, and visits were most uplifting and helped Harlan every day of the time he was in the hospital and during his continuing recovery. We give thanks to God for all of you and look forward to seeing you again someday soon!

Love,
Harlan & Kay

GO AND...

BE INTENTIONAL

Jesus is on the road to the cross and is prepared for what is to come. Too often during Lent, we find ourselves busy marching down the road with a long ‘to-do’ list. The season of Lent calls to be intentional. This means showing up, being present, and diving in deep as disciples.

Prayer: The Lord’s Prayer (Use the version of your heart)

Suggested Song: Beautiful Things (ACS 925)



FIRST LUTHERAN HOLY WEEK & EASTER SCHEDULE



There will be many opportunities for worship, prayer, and meditation during Holy Week at First Lutheran. The church sanctuary will be open throughout the week for devotion, meditation, and prayer. Take note of services this year, evening prayer at 7 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, and Holden Prayer Around the Cross on Good Friday at noon and 3 p.m. Consult the schedule for additional times.

The Resurrection of our Lord Easter Sunday, March 31

- 7 a.m. Sunrise Worship led by youth
- 8 a.m.- 11 a.m. Easter Brunch
- 8:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Easter Worship



Sunday Palm Sunday, March 24

Worship with Palm Processional
8:15 & 10:30 a.m.

Monday in Passion Week, March 25

Morning Prayer, 7 a.m. Evening Prayer 7 p.m.
(Church open for prayer & meditation)

Tuesday in Passion Week, March 26

Morning Prayer, 7 a.m. Evening Prayer 7 p.m.
(Church open for prayer & meditation)

Wednesday in Passion Week, March 27

Morning Prayer, 7 a.m. Evening Prayer 7 p.m.
(Church open for prayer & meditation)

Maundy Thursday, March 28

Morning Prayer 7 a.m.
Worship with First Communion 7 p.m.
(Church open for prayer & meditation)

Good Friday, March 29

Morning Prayer, 7 a.m.
Prayer Around the Cross
Sighs too Deep for Words 12 p.m.
The Healing of the Nations 3 p.m.
Worship, 7 p.m.

Holy Saturday, March 30: Vigil of Easter

Worship 7 p.m. Lighting of the first fire and Holy Communion

BATTLE FOR BECKY BENEFIT

MARCH 2ND
KIMMEL EVENT CENTER, SYRACUSE

- 4:00 P.M.-6:00 P.M. MEAL (FREE-WILL DONATION)
- 6:00 P.M.-SILENT AUCTION CLOSING
- 6:00 P.M.- 7:00 P.M. FEUD KNOCK OUT ROUNDS
- 7:30 P.M. LIVE AUCTION
- 8:00 P.M. FEUD HEAD TO HEAD

- BE READY TO BRING THE COMPETITION!
- A FUN NIGHT OF FRIENDLY FEUD
KIDS CORNHOLE TOURNEY
- UNO, YAHTZEE AND MANY MORE GAMES!
YOU'LL FIND PRIZES, LAUGHTER AND GREAT
FOOD WHILE HELPING US SUPPORT
BECKY KNAKE AND HER FAMILY THROUGH HER
INVASIVE BREAST CANCER TREATMENTS

**CONTACT MARCI GARTNER (402-430-8324) FOR
QUESTIONS OR TO VOLUNTEER!**