



THE *Branch*

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

November 2022

Highlights

Pastor's Article	1-2
Leader's Spotlight	2
Council Corner	3
Worship News	3
Giving Opportunities	4
Church News & Events	5
Advent & Christmas News	6



Come Give Thanks Wednesday, November 24 7:00 p.m.

Our Thanksgiving Eve Worship with Holy Communion celebration will set the tone for a blessed, fulfilling Thanksgiving Day. Be sure to attend. The Thanksgiving Eve offering will go to our area food pantries.



Beloved Body of Christ, "Take more time; cover less ground." Yes, you read that right. "Take more time; cover less ground." These words, written by the American Trappist monk Thomas Merton have been circling through my brain since I first heard them late last month. They bear repeating, again: "Take more time; cover less ground."

Think, for instance, of all the time Jesus took on his travels within a very finite geographic region. He took his time to unfold his teachings in dense parables, just as we've been seeing in Luke's Gospel on Sundays. He took his time to heal the sick and suffering. He took time to explain the Kingdom of God. And he did all this on the road, going town to town, until it was time to then be on his way for Jerusalem, Calvary, and the cross.

I want to thank everyone who took their time last month to come and have their voices heard during the listening sessions regarding worship times. Based on those conversations, the Council has recommended to return to two services, one at 8:15 a.m. and another at 10:30 a.m. We would also have a single service at 10:30 a.m. on the first Sunday of each month. Sunday school will remain at 9:30 a.m. Further, during the summer—between Memorial Day and Rally Sunday—we will have a single service at 9 a.m. We welcome any more feedback you may have before a vote is taken at the Council meeting this month. The plan is to implement these revised times in the new year.

Although we are returning to a familiar pattern of worship timing, I am still hopeful we can find ways to be church together outside the confines of the building and Sunday morning. Be that in Bible studies, devotional possibilities (check out more information on a planned Advent devotional inside), service work, and other ways that we live out our baptismal vows.

I'm writing this to you from the Nebraska Synod's annual theological conference—in more recent years titled Re:Formation—in Kearney, where I have just spent the day engaging with a brilliant ministry leader, Deacon Peggy Hahn. Deacon Hahn said something that also resonated with me along the same frequencies as Merton's quotation: "What would it mean if we stopped thinking of 'church' as a noun and started thinking of 'church' as a verb? How are we

Continued on page 2

churching? Rather than going to church, we church by being sent out. In the days and weeks ahead, I encourage you to also think about how “churching” is indeed a practice, a verb. The church is the Body of Christ in motion!

As we prepare to enter this often stressful, sometimes difficult, strangely and wildly joyful season we call “the holidays,” may Merton’s words be a prayer and a mantra for you and all yours. “Take more time; cover less ground.” May they be an invitation to rest, to contemplation, to deep and abundant life—a life that unfolds within the gracious confines of God’s timing. And that timing brings to earth *Emmanuel*, God-with-us, God-in-the-flesh, the Savior of all the world, Jesus Christ, who indeed shows us what more time, less ground looks like. Jesus shows us how “to church.”

As always, my door is open, my phone is on, and I’ll see you out there on the highways and byways. God’s peace be yours.

Shalom,

Pastor Adam

Advent Devotional: Writers Needed!

Let’s put together an Advent/Christmas devotional for all the folks here at North Branch to take us through the season that is soon to be upon us.

Here’s how it’ll go. For each day of Advent and the Twelve Days of Christmas (That’s Nov. 27 through Jan. 6—41 days, total), we’ll have a word and a brief Scripture reference—maybe a verse or two. All you’d have to do is put together a brief meditation—50 to 150 words—on the word and Scripture. So, let’s say you get the word “Candle” and the accompanying verse of John 1:5: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.” Give us 50 to 150 words on how “candle” and John 1:5 speak to you, maybe even writing a brief prayer that folks can carry through their day.

What do you say? We would love to have 41 different writers for every Advent/Christmas day! Deadline for the devotional pieces would be November 21.

If you’ve done devotional writing, we would love your help. If you’ve never done devotional writing, we would most welcome and cherish your efforts! Look for a signup sheet in the Narthex.



Leader’s Spotlight

Witness & Fellowship

By Cathy Callaway



I recently attended a training at work called Bridges Out of Poverty, which explains why people in poverty make choices that are different from people not in poverty. One of the “aha” moments of the training for me was understanding that “people do not intentionally do the wrong thing.” In fact,

when people make a choice, they generally think they are doing the right thing based on their situation. It’s often difficult to understand someone else’s choices because we haven’t walked in their shoes.

I was recently reminded of this during the listening sessions to discuss options for making changes to our current worship schedule. Some people expressed concern with any suggestion other than going back to two Sunday morning services. For me, some of the suggestions offered would work well, and some wouldn’t work at all. However, I believe everyone who proposed an idea thinks they are doing what is right for the church, and wants a worship schedule that will reach as many people as possible. There is no one “right” way to offer worship times that will work for everyone. What works for one person, may not work for another. James 1:19 says “**Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God..**” This seems simple enough in principle, but is nearly impossible to live. Too often we are instead slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to anger.

As we continue to grow as a church, more changes are inevitable. As those changes come, whether it’s worship times or other recommendations, consider listening first knowing that we all want the same thing... to worship together, grow in faith, and reach out in love. How worship looks or when it’s offered may be different in the future, or it may stay the same. Some changes will probably work better for me than others. But no matter what those changes are, I know that everyone is doing what they feel is best for our church and I will find a way to worship together with this church family.

Council Corner

September 2022 Council Notes

Old Business:

Discussion of Sunday services. There will be listening sessions on two Sundays in October for members to voice their opinions. A vote will be held in November and hope to institute the new time in January.

New Business

- Bornemeier Internet is upgrading the internet here.
- Josh Welch has resigned as our Church Administrator

Board Reports

Education: Catechism, first meeting everyone was present. Rally Sunday: had a great breakfast by the Women of the Church and we all enjoyed seeing Pastor Adam take a cool bath.

Witness and Fellowship: New members welcomed on Sept. 2 with a reception before church. Possibly have CHOW on Wednesdays. Hanging of the Greens scheduled for November 20.

Properties: Received bid for pole barn. There is \$5,000 already donated towards shed. There is an old washer and dryer that need to be sold or given away.

Deacons: No Report

Stewardship and Social Ministry: No Report

Youth and Family: Halloween Trunk or Treat planned for October 30 after church service. Planning for 20 slots. There will also be a Sunday school Halloween Party.

A complete set of minutes is available at the Kiosk in the Narthex.

2022 Current Offering

Received through September 30: \$ 126,822.16
 Expenses through September 30: \$ 129,075.33
 Budgeted through September 30: \$ 156,296.33

Second Mile Giving		
Project	Estimated Cost	Funds received to date
Kiruweni Dispensary	On going	\$ 28,960
Rise	On Going	\$ 4,605
Peru Missionaries	On going	\$ 14,630
2nd Mile Parsonage	17,000	\$ 3,575

Worship

All Saints Sunday is November 6

All Saints Sunday will be celebrated in the worship service that day. We celebrate our sainthood that begins when we are received into God's kingdom of grace in Holy Baptism and that is fulfilled when the Lord takes us to Himself in heaven. We will memorialize the following members of First Lutheran who passed to their eternal rest in the past church year: Ruby Wilson, Alfred Warlick, Malaine Geschke, Kelli Lewton, Jerry Jacobson, Paul Kirchhoff, Ricky Schweitzer, Gladys Kirchhoff and Richard Wilson, Jr.

We will also celebrate the sainthood of the following who were baptized in the past year: Dillon, Maddux and Decker Mowry, Tilleigh Behling, Carson Collin, Holden Gartner and Hattie Rakes.

Dedication of Memorial Gifts Sunday, November 6

Thanks to the generosity of loved ones who have passed on and their families, First Lutheran Church has been named the recipient of memorial monies which has funded projects and items for enhancement of our ministry. We'll celebrate those gifts at worship on November 6. We extend our deepest gratitude to all who remembered us during times of loss.

Prayers of the People

Janet Entler...(Mother of Marci Gartner) hospitalized following surgery.

JoAnn Michel...recovering at home after surgery.

Harold Ehmke...recovering at home.

Roxie & Dan Pratt...(Marlene's son-in-law) diagnosed with pancreatic and liver cancer. Under going chemo. Pray for Roxie the family as well.

Alan Reed...(Marilyn Kirchhoff's cousin) has brain cancer.

David Dickman...(Mary Jane Carlson's brother) cancer has returned.

Our Resident's at Skilled Nursing Facilities.





Giving Opportunities

Special Offering Thanksgiving Eve

Thanksgiving Eve worship offering will help support our area food pantries.



The Stewardship Board will be holding a coat and mitten drive throughout the winter months for the missions. Gently used items for Men, Women, and Youth are in great need. There will be a container in the narthex. Items will be delivered to the mission as needed.

- ◆ Hats
- ◆ Scarves
- ◆ Mittens & Gloves
- ◆ Coats
- ◆ Sweatshirts
- ◆ Heavy Socks

A Note from the Stewardship Board

Jesus reminds us to always serve others and here at First Lutheran, we are so blessed to be part of such an amazingly giving congregation. It's obvious we love to serve! With the holiday season quickly approaching, this is our time to continue to serve by helping our community members with the items they need. The Stewardship committee would like to *ask for your continued support by filling the Christmas Express* to help families with their holiday meals and also household cleaning items. The local food pantries have expressed how appreciative they are of our continued out pouring of support, so the offering from the Thanksgiving service has been designated to our local food pantries this year.

Sharing the Holiday Spirit!

Every year, as winter approaches, the excitement around Christmas grows, but for some children, that is not the case. We would like to make Christmas a little more special for area children in Otoe and Cass Counties this year, Gifts for Kids and Tabitha's Thread. Our youth group plans to go shopping for as many children as possible that are in need on *Sunday, December 11*, and we would love your help in raising funds to support their efforts. You may designate your gift on your offering envelopes, send a separate donation to the Church Office with details or make a donation in the box in the narthex. Thank you for helping us with this meaningful opportunity to bring some Christmas to those in need from First Lutheran.

All Aboard the Christmas Express!! Arrives Sunday, November 13!



This Christmas season, we are collecting for the Good Samaritan Home, the food pantries and also supporting local families in need. We will be working with Tabitha's Thread to help make Christmas special for youth in Cass and Otoe Counties. They provide clothes, toys and a stocking filled with goodies. Your donations will be greatly appreciated. The train chugs down the track on **Sunday morning, December 4**. So please deliver your donated item to the train cars.

To support a child with a Christmas gift, here is what you do:

- 1) Take a tag off the table in the narthex
- 2) Purchase the suggested gift
- 3) Securely fasten the tag to the UNWRAPPED gift
- 4) Return the tagged gift to the train car on or before the morning of **December 4**.

OR take a stocking sheet that is in the narthex and purchase the items listed and return in a bag.

If you don't feel comfortable going into the narthex please contact Kelly Stephenson for a tag at 402-639-1043 or email kellyannlamb@yahoo.com.

Food Pantries (Cash donations always welcome!)

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Green Beans | Cream of Mushroom Soup |
| Stuffing | Chicken Broth |
| Marshmallows | Canned Sweet Potatoes |
| Instant Potatoes | Evaporated Milk |
| Canned Pumpkin | Cranberry Sauce |
| Jell-O | Canned Fruit |

(Anything is appreciated, but please check labels to be sure item is not outdated)

Good Samaritan Center

- Hand & Body Lotion
- Combs & Brushes
- Greeting cards-any occasion // Postage Stamps
- Slipper socks with gripper feet
- walker pocket keepers/wheelchair pocket keeper
- CD's (polka, big band, Christmas)
- Books with different word games
- Lap desks
- Easy board games
- Shawl or cardigan (no pullover)
- Stationery
- Men's after shave or cologne // Ladies perfume
- Sun catchers (to stick to the window with a small suction cup)



Church News and Events

Funerals

Gladys Doris Kirchhoff (91), passed away October 7. Her funeral service was held here on October 11.

Richard (Rick) Edward Wilson, Jr. (63) passed away on October 8. A memorial service was held here on Wednesday, October 12.
Our sympathies to their families.

It's a Girl!!

Lydia Joan Stubbendick was born October 19, 2022. Her parents are Josh & Amanda. Her big sisters are Madison and Joanna, her big brothers are Henry and Caleb.
Congratulations!!

Baptized into the Family of God

Holden Robert Gartner was baptized Sun., October 9. Holden's parents are Colton & Ariel; his sponsors are Justin & Marci Gartner, Skylar Sears and Kaiden Dorn.

Hattie Lynne Rakes was baptized Sunday, Oct. 16, 2022. Her parents are John & Whitney Rakes; her sponsors are Jason Rakes, Johanna Rakes, Dayne Wilson and Morgan Brunsting.

Decker Keith Mowry was baptized Sunday, October 16, 2022. His parents are Dillon & Nicole Mowry. His sponsors are Nathan Stork and Teresha Mowry.

Thank you, Thank You!!

Thanks to everyone who gave fabric, old blankets and sheets, time and effort, more time and effort so that 121 quilts could be given to the needy (here and abroad) thus far this year. May the needy feel our love.

Margaret Stubbendick

Thank you for the scholarship, it will of great use while in college and will allow me to focus on school and furthering my education, rather than thinking about how I'm going to afford it.

Sincerely,
Tucker Crossover

Women's Fall meeting / Nov. 13 at 9 a.m.

The Outreach Committee of the Women of the Church will host a short meeting for the purpose of year-end-fund disbursements. We invite all women to join us in the parish hall for fellowship and refreshments. We scheduled it at 9 a.m. so that those of you who have children in Sunday School can join. Hope to see you there!

Youth Group News

The youth group will be going to Lincoln Laser Tag Sunday, November 13. We will leave after Church, grab lunch, and play a couple games of laser tag. Please RSVP, call or text, Kelsey 402.416.888 by Wed. November 9.

Goodie Boxes to be mailed to our College Students Monday, November 28

Please have your donations to the designated box in the Narthex by 10 am Sunday, November 27.

The Women of the Church will assemble goodie boxes to send to our 9 college students. Contributions of candy, gum, school supplies, and other goodies for the boxes are needed. You may also help by giving a cash donation to help defray postage costs. **Please keep in mind that the boxes are 6 in. x 6 in.**

Popcorn	Gum	Candy Bars
Beef Sticks	Nuts	Fruit Snacks
Suckers	Pens	Tootsie Rolls
Hot Chocolate Pkts.		Hard Candy
Cappuccino Packets		Post it Notes

Updated College Students' Addresses

Jenna Knake 1633 N 26th Rd Avoca NE 68307	Tyler Knake 5110 Mayberry St Omaha NE 68106
Madison Mueller 4630 Leighton Av Apt 224B Lincoln NE 68504	Zach Callaway 950 N 30th Lincoln NE 68503



Advent and Christmas News



Advent Bible Study *God is in the Manger*

Reflections on Advent and Christmas

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As we approach the holiday season consider joining one of our two Advent Bible studies as a way to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of our Savior. They will begin Thursday December 1, please contact Amanda Stubbendick or Pastor to get signed up or to get more information.

The Wonder of Advent

*Delighting in the Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love
Christmas*

by Lifeway Women

This study will meet at 8 pm via zoom on Thursdays from December 1-22.

Save the Date

It's hard to believe that it's almost Advent but soon we will be traveling back to Bethlehem! On Sunday December 18, following church we will head to Bethlehem (the Parish Hall) and this year we get to remember some of the amazing miracles of our Savior that was our greatest and most perfect Christmas gift.

Praises, Opportunities, and Pinches

As a congregation, we are committed to voicing our praises and "not sitting on our pinches"! To be a healthy, faithful community, we need to be open with one another about what we expect in all areas of our life together. If there is anything in our community life that brings you joy or causes you to be concerned, please share your feelings and questions. Thank you for taking the time to communicate about the ways we are doing well in our ministry together at First Lutheran, and areas that need attention.

If you would like a personal response to your praise or pinch, please be sure to sign this form at the bottom

Praises: _____

Pinches: _____

Desired Outcome Solution): _____

A specific question I would like answered: _____

Name _____ (If you would like a direct response to your Praise and Pinch)

Please return this form to the Church Office or place in the box in the Narthex

October Update: No Pinches or praises submitted this month.