



## The Body of Christ Given For You ...little children too!

Heide was no more than 20 months-old when she discovered my take home communion kit in the finished basement of our parsonage home in South Range, Michigan. After having eaten several of the communion wafers, she wanted to have the wine, but was unable to open the container. So, she brought it to my husband saying, "Daddy, I need some Jesus juice." Then she handed him some wafers and said, "You can have some Jesus Chips too." My husband then called to me to come downstairs, and when I got there we shared in her excitement at her discovery, but told her that now wasn't the right time for this special meal. But on Sunday when we come together with our church family, we can all have Jesus Chips and Jesus Juice together. She has been receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion ever since.

My son Nathaniel's first communion was a little less dramatic than his big sister's. The first time he reached out his chubby baby hand during the distribution and asked for it, I placed a communion wafer in his hand and watched him eat it. He was also a yearling at the time. It was the same for Trace too.

There was a time in our Church where one received their first communion at their confirmation, roughly around the age of 14. We were taught that you had to understand what this special meal was all about before you could receive it. Many of us received the sacrament looking very sad and forlorn as our sole focus was on how unworthy we were to be at the table of the Lord. Some of us had 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 quoted to us. *"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves."* Yikes! If that was all I knew about Holy Communion, I would be afraid to come to the table. But perhaps if we understand what was going on with the Christian community in Corinth, we might come to a different conclusion.

The Christian Church in Corinth struggled a lot. They seemed to always be disagreeing with one another and just couldn't seem to get along. I know, it sounds a lot like many of our congregations today. One of their issues was on their worship practices, especially in dealing with the Lord's Supper. How they were instituting the Lord's Supper actually was very disturbing to Paul. Paul had taught them that the Supper *cont.* was part of a full scale meal, probably in the home of one of the believers. But what was supposed to be a communal meal, shared by all got a little twisted. Some of the members came early and were well fed and fairly drunk by the time the rest of the community gathered. Those who came later got the left-over scraps and went away hungry. It also appeared that those who were fed and those who were hungry were divided by socio-economic status.

Paul reprimanded the congregation and instructed them to wait until everyone has arrived and then start the meal. Paul tells the Corinthians to amend their ways and to do this by self-examining or discerning themselves as they prepare to be part of the Lord's Supper. According to the New Interpreters Bible Commentary, *"discerning the body" is Paul's shorthand way of talking about an individual's assessment of two distinguishable but inseparable matters: how well one's life relates to Christ and how well one's love ties one to others who, though many, are one body in Christ.*" pg.936

By not examining one's self does not condemn one to hell. Rather, the lack of discernment makes that person unable to experience the fullness of God's grace and glory and their experience will be God's judgment. It means they just don't get it. Without proper assessment, believers may lose track of where they are in their life of faith. By self-examining oneself, we realize that we bring nothing to the table. That everything is God's action and God's initiative. The person who thinks of themselves as better or more powerful are sadly the ones who find themselves lacking in the end.

Our experience at the Lord's Table will change throughout the ages and stages of our lives. For children, their experience is the knowledge that they are loved and accepted and that God welcomes them just as they are. You can never be too little to experience God's grace. Our children's nourishment at the table will also help prepare them and make them ready for those teachable moments as together the pastor, congregation and parents

teach our children how to self-examine themselves and discover God’s grace in their lives. And the great surprise we discover is how in return our children teach us and open to us new experiences of God’s forgiveness, grace and mercy.

As a parent, I want my children to experience God’s grace and glory. I want them to be filled with awe and wonder at the mysteries of God. At our children’s baptisms we committed ourselves to raising our children “wet”; that means living a life of faith. It involves bringing them to worship and teaching them the Lord’s Prayer, the creed and the Ten Commandments. It involves teaching them how to use their Bibles and practicing Christian service in our daily lives. At our children’s baptism, they became members of the body of Christ, received the same gifts of grace and forgiveness, as well as received the power of the Holy Spirit. Why then do we immediately excommunicate them from the sacrament of Holy Communion? How old do they have to be until they are “worthy” enough to receive? Children are like sponges. They soak up everything they see, touch, feel, hear, and experience. In our homes, our children have a place at the table...and so it should be at the table of the Lord. Especially in a world where most places are not child-friendly, where even I as an ordained pastor have experienced ageism, the church needs to take a stance and say “Come little children...there is a place for you.”

Even at the table of the Lord there is no reason why a child can’t experience the taste of the body of Christ. They deserve so much more than a pat on the head and blessing. They might not understand what is happening in this special meal any more than the 85-year-old Alzheimer’s patient...and in the end does it really matter? I guarantee that God’s grace is sufficient enough for everyone, whether or not you understand what is happening at the time. During 5<sup>th</sup> grade Holy Communion instruction we will have plenty of time teach and learn about what is happening in this special meal and we’ll go over it again in confirmation. Small children, including infants and toddlers, know that in this meal they are welcomed, included, and part of the family of God. It is part of their faith formation and experience. They understand it in their own special way. As they grow in years they will come to understand God’s grace and their place at the table a little differently...we all do.

Pastor Katie

*“But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” Luke 18:16*

## December Financial Report

Beginning . . . . .	\$ 6,374.10
Deposits . . . . .	22,696.90
Disbursements . . . . .	– 18,451.81
Correction . . . . .	– 0.00
<b>Balance . . . . .</b>	<b>\$ 10,619.19</b>

January 10, 2017:

Sanctuary Light Project	\$ - 3,267.00
Youth Dir. Cont. Ed. . . . .	- 123.21
Actual General Fund . . .	\$ 7,228.98

## Next Church Meetings: Tues. Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>

Committee Meetings – 7:00 p.m. Council Meeting – 8:00 p.m.

## Church Council

On Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup> the new 2017 Church Council was installed at worship. We thank them for their willingness to serve FLC.

Council President: Gary Hinrichs

Vice President: Karen Buck

Secretary: Amber Hinrichsen

Treasurer: Jason Robshaw

Council members: Bob Bohms, Pam Strike, Deb Ackerman, Darlene Proeger, Mary Roland, Paul McCracken, Eric VanDyke, Kellie Larrabee, Mark Melton, Ann Deck, Vicki Ottens

We also are grateful for the faithful service of those going off council this year and give thanks to God for their wisdom and leadership.

Marilyn Melton, Kerry Meyer, Rosemary Sibley, Ian Wanklerl and Gordon Zschiesche

**Online Giving to FLC** - Please use [www.firstlutheran-ptown.org](http://www.firstlutheran-ptown.org) to give through the company VanCo. You choose the options

on your account.

## FLC January Prayer Concerns

Anna Wheat, Dick & Carole Minssen, Amber Davis, Sally Johnson, Betty Reichard, Patrick Hinrichs, Connie Johnson, Viola Powell, Scott Lyman son-in-law of Ken & Ellen Pannier. Community members: Shirley Richardson mother of Carolyn Hohenboken, Sammy Hodgett. Serving in the military: Tyler Heflin son of Judi & Chris Breitbart, Gabe Larson son of Ed & Kim Larson, Sean Pratt son of Drew & Becky Emery, Donnie Appleman son-in-law of Larry & Lynda VanDyke, Lyndsey Gardner niece of Gwen Gardner, Anna Helmkamp fiancée of Kent Olsen.

## Biblical Advice for Cheerful Givers-Stories of Faith In Action

We've been told this since our days in Sunday school: We want to give and we need to give gladly. A spirit of generosity isn't enough to guide us in our decisions. What else does Scripture have to say on the subject? Three kinds of financial giving are mentioned in the Bible: offerings, tithes and alms. Understanding what they mean helps us achieve a thoughtful, balanced plan for our cheerful giving.

**Offerings and Tithing:** *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

The faith practice of making a regular financial offering to your congregation is grounded in a "first fruits" philosophy. We might think of this giving as "business as usual." You pay the rent, you buy groceries and you contribute regularly to help carry out God's mission in the world. Your generosity isn't an afterthought; it's part of your day in-and-day-out joyful response as a child of God. These offerings first help to support local ministries, outreach and more. Your congregation then shares a portion of your offering—mission support—with your synod and the churchwide expression. *Stories of Faith in Action* is filled with examples of how mission support enables us to do God's work with our hands. Many Christians talk about their regular contribution as a tithe. This helps them to differentiate between their financial commitment to their congregation and the special offerings they designate to specific causes. Such causes may include ELCA World Hunger, a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, your congregation's building fund or a pan-Lutheran organization such as Lutheran World Relief. We encourage your designated support of these worthy causes. But we also recommend that these offerings are given above and beyond, and never in place of, your commitment to your regular congregational offering.

**Alms:** *Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys* (Luke 12:33).

Alms are our compassionate, heartfelt response to the people Jesus mentioned in Matthew 25: those "least" of our sisters and brothers who are "less" than we in circumstance only and always our equal in their humanity. This is our most personal and spontaneous kind of giving in response to people in need. Think about the homeless man you see everyday by the bus stop or the family in your congregation whose home was lost during a fire. Your outreach makes God's love for them feel very real and very immediate; your kindness reveals Christ's presence within them as well.

**Time and Talent:** It's also important to remember that when we focus exclusively on giving in terms of money alone, we lose sight of the bigger picture. God calls us to be generous in all areas our lives and invites us to explore the many opportunities to share ourselves through our time and talent. When we ground our giving in a biblical context, our financial generosity becomes an expression of our love for God, for our neighbor and for ourselves. We are new people in Christ: compassionate and eager to share. We give cheerfully because God has given us so much.

*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

## Sanctuary Ceiling

The back of the sanctuary ceiling has been redone. We thank the Property Committee for leading this improvement. This has taken some time but now it looks nice and improved with new light fixtures and speakers. We also thank everyone who has contributed to this project.

## Pancake Breakfast – February 26<sup>th</sup>

FLAG will be serving a Pancake Breakfast after worship with pancakes, rolls, fruit and drinks. Please join us for the beginning of the Lenten season. Everyone is welcome!

## Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> is Ash Wednesday. We begin our Lenten Journey. Lent is an annual season of fasting and penitence in preparation for Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday and lasting 40 weekdays to Easter.

## FLC Lent Dinners

Hello everyone! It's that time of year again when we all roll up our sleeves and get busy serving Lenten Dinners! Dinners are weekly on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. Each group will work as a team to do a whole dinner, for approximately 50 people. Here are the servers for Lent:

Mar 1: FLY/Jr. League  
Mar 8: Property/Evangelism  
Mar 15: WELCA  
Mar 22: FLAG  
Mar 29: Education/Stewardship  
Apr 5: Worship & Music

Meal lists are available in the office, and will be given to each group. Each group is responsible for purchasing the ingredients for the dinner they are listed for. Recipes needed for each meal are provided. If the group wishes to make something different, make sure the church is notified. Each group will be in charge of shopping, cooking the meal, as well as set up, desserts, and clean up. Please discuss this with your group and plan your dinner. Thanks for your support, skills and service!

## **FLC Lenten Worship Series: Luther's Small Catechism**

Join us at 7:00 p.m. on the Wednesdays during lent for worship. This year marks the international observance of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. In honor of that anniversary, our midweek Lenten series for this year is built around Luther's Small Catechism while using Holden's Evening Prayer. The Small Catechism was designed as a teaching tool of the faith, not just within the church but in the home. Luther intended for the home to be the place where faith was first shared and taught. To that end he created the Small Catechism: as simple explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments. He included basic prayers for morning and evening and suggested ways to worship, praise, and revere God during each part of our day. Join us at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays during lent for worship with one of our conference pastors leading us.

Mar. 1: Ash Wednesday Worship Service - Pastor Katie Gallagher – FLC, P-town

Mar. 8: Ten Commandments - Pastor Bob Burton – Bethesda Lutheran, Morrison

Mar. 15: Lord's Prayer - Pastor Brandon Nelson – St. Paul Lutheran, Sterling

Mar. 22: Baptism – Interim Pastor Vicki Sauter – Immanuel Lutheran, Rock Falls

Mar. 29: The Creed – Interim Pastor Dan Stalker – Trinity Lutheran, Manlius

Apr. 5: Holy Communion - Pastor Katie Gallagher – FLC

## **FLC Holy Week Services**

April 9: Palm Sunday – 9:00 a.m. First Communion for fifth graders will be celebrated followed by a reception in the fellowship hall in honor of the students.

April 13: Maundy Thursday - 7:00pm: Ecumenical Worship with Holy Communion at Methodist Church

April 14: Good Friday – 7:00 p.m. Ecumenical Worship service here

April 16: Easter – 7:00 a.m. Ecumenical Sunrise Service: Place TBD  
9:00 a.m. Worship and Communion at FLC

## **Community Lent Services**

Community Lenten services will be held at 12:00 noon on Wednesdays during lent. Following the service, a light meal of sustenance soup, bread and water will be offered. This is a simple meal for those who might be observing the discipline of fasting. The schedule is as follows:

Mar. 8: Congregational Church

Mar. 15: Leon Methodist Church

Mar. 22: First Lutheran Church

Mar. 29: Prophetstown Methodist Church

Apr. 5: Fenton Methodist Church

## **Souper Bowl of Caring**

Look on your dressers, tables, night stands. Look in your couches, cars, and pockets. What do these places have in common? Change! Gather your change together and bring it to church on February 5<sup>th</sup> for Souper Bowl of Caring! Once again, the Jr league will be taking a collection after church in soup pots to donate to a hunger related cause. Thank you for your generosity, and please help us out again this year!

## What's Happening in Confirmation

Check out what the confirmation class will be up to in February. You don't have to be in confirmation to join in on the fun. Please keep our confirmands, their families and mentors in your prayers. We meet on Wednesday nights from 7-8 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Feb. 1: Parent night - Commandments 7-10  
(Class at 5pm due to freshman orientation)

Feb. 8: How People are to be taught to confess

Tues. Feb. 14: Shadow Committee and Council night 7-9pm

Feb. 15: Mentor Night - The Lord's Prayer

Feb. 22: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

## Family Game Night

I'm sure you all have heard the phrase, "The family that plays together, stays together." The Evangelism & Social Ministry Committee would like to invite the congregation and the community to join them on Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. for a free 'Family Game Night'. Games will be geared for those, from ages 5 to 101! Snacks will be available. It's sure to be fun for everyone! Please RSVP by the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. Call Darlene Proeger at 815-520-6875.

## 2017 Information Directory

Time is fast approaching to develop the FLC directory for 2017. If you have any updated contact information: street address, e-mail, land line or cell phone numbers, please let the office know. Please remember to give us the updates for your extended family too.

## A message from Amanda

I want to thank the church and the Endowment Committee for allowing me to go to the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza in January. It was truly an inspiring event, and I learned so much! I am grateful to have a faith community that believes in me enough to send me to "parts unknown" to be able to extend my faith and knowledge in new and exciting ways. Sure, I had some fun, but when you get that many (over 600) youth workers together, there's bound to be some laughs! I look forward to sharing my new information with you, and thank you for all you do for me. Your support is what makes my ministry possible!

## Safeguarding God's Children

The First Lutheran Church 'Evangelism & Social Ministry' Committee will be hosting a three-hour training session in 'Safeguarding God's Children' on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. This three hour training session lead by Deaconess Cheryl Erdmann will cover topics such as: how perpetrators of abuse gain access to children, warning signs in adults, warning signs in children, and steps to take to keep ministries safe. The training session is offered free of charge through the Northern Illinois Synod, ELCA and is a great training tool for all who work with children in the community and congregation. You may register by calling First Lutheran Church at (815) 537-2758 or by email at: [pastorkatie2002@yahoo.com](mailto:pastorkatie2002@yahoo.com)

## Birthday Card Ministry

The Evangelism & Social Ministry Committee has begun a 'Birthday Card Ministry'. If your name and birthdate is not listed in the directory, please let the office know as soon as possible. Thanks.

## February Birthday Celebrations

We wish to send a "Birthday Greeting" to all of our members celebrating this month. A special greeting is extended to our members who are 80 or over.

Ron Meier – 21<sup>st</sup>

Please refer to your church directory for the entire birthday list of our members.

## Thank You

*To our friends at First,*

*Words cannot begin to express our thanks and gratitude for all your help. Your generous donations to help with Amber's ongoing medical expenses was over whelming. Your prayers, words of encouragement and hugs have meant a great deal to us. We still have no idea how this will end – but we know that our faith family will be there with us. Thank you all so much – we are truly blessed.*

*Ken & Ellen Pannier*

*Amber and Charlie Davis*

*I want to thank the WELCA ladies for the shawl. Thank you for the food and cards from church ladies and friends. The thoughtfulness is appreciated along with all your prayers.*

*Betty Reichard*

**Men in Mission** - On Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m. all men, members of the church or not, are welcome to join us for breakfast, bible study, discussion and how we can live out our belief in God every day in a world that seems to grow ever more secular.

## **Synod Trivia Challenge**

Please join us on February 25<sup>th</sup> for a fun afternoon of trivia! The Central Conference of the Northern Illinois Synod is hosting a Challenge Bowl to help raise funds for LSSI, and to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. Fun, food, and facts will overflow on this day of knowledge and celebration! Talk to Pastor Katie or Amanda to join a team!

## **WELCA**

The general meeting will follow a bible study on Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. at the Good Samaritan Riverview Estates. All women members of the church are invited. The hostess and Bible leader will be Rosemary Sibley.

## **Assisting in February**

### **Ushers:**

Larry VanDyke  
Randy Skelton  
Rick Woolums  
Jeff Olsen

### **Greeters:**

FLAG Members

### **Altar Committee:**

Lynda VanDyke  
Becky Emery  
JoDee Olsen

### **Assisting Minister:**

19 – Randy Roland

### **Cantor:**

Aaron Johnson

### **Readers**

5 – Drew Emery  
12 – Ken Cocking  
19 – Kerry Meyer  
26 – Dave Meyer

### **Acolytes**

5 – Jacob Malone  
12 – Connor Sandrock  
19 – Emyli Sandrock  
26 – Sabrina Soleta

## **Mission Statement**

First Lutheran Church welcomes all to worship by nurturing those in their Christian faith through Word and Sacrament and equipping them for service to others throughout their daily lives.

## **Core Values**

1. There is only one God
2. We are gathered by Word and Sacrament
3. Acceptance of ALL God's people
4. Discipleship is a lifelong faith journey
5. We are called to serve



Pastor & Staff

Pastor Katie Gallagher  
Email: [pastorkatie2002@yahoo.com](mailto:pastorkatie2002@yahoo.com)  
Parsonage: 815-537-2425  
Cell Phone: 630-200-3288  
Pastor's Office Hours:  
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday  
10:00 a.m. to Noon, or by appointment

Youth & Family Ministry  
Amanda Schanze  
Cell Phone: 309-236-1920

Secretary Office Hours  
Monday-Friday: 9:00 - Noon

Sunday Schedule

Sunday Worship . . . . .	9:00 a.m.
Epic Hour Sunday School . . .	10:15 a.m.

How to Reach Us

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