

# Living Connected...

## TO GOD & EACH OTHER

January- March 2024



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#### Sunday Worship:

8:45 & 10 AM

YouTube & Facebook Live  
(All Age Worship)

#### Pastoral Staff:

Bonnie Wilcox  
Senior Pastor  
Jill Bergman  
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The Caller Newsletter is

Published by First  
Lutheran Church.

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### *Praying Changes Us...* by Rev. Bonnie Wilcox

At this time, many of you know that I am having brain surgery on Jan. 9. It is a benign mass, but it shows signs of irritation in my brain and needs to come out. My family and I will post updates on [caringbridge.org/visit/bonniewilcox](http://caringbridge.org/visit/bonniewilcox). I will be on medical leave for 4-6 weeks following the surgery, until sometime around Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14 this year).

My surgeon calls this a "happy accident" -- that I went in to be checked for a concussion (which was mild) and found that I required major surgery to avoid future danger.

If you grew up memorizing Bible verses as I did, you know some of the verses we use in times such as these:

- \* *All things work for good for those who love God.*  
Romans 8:28
- \* *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*  
Psalms 46:1
- \* *Pray without ceasing.*  
1 Thessalonians 5:17

I am touched by how many have told me that they are praying for me and my healing. But I don't believe that my healing will be solved by the

"prayer points" I rack up! If that were true, I know many whose community prayers did not prevent death or complications of medical treatments. And too many in our world live in unsafe conditions, where violence, disease, war and poverty make life far too fragile. There is no "prayer lottery" which grants a payout based on numbers.

Instead, we are called to pray to be in continual conversation with God. Rather than getting stuck in the notion that whether or not we pray makes no difference in our lives, Martin Luther emphasized God's command for us to pray and God's promise that our prayers are heard.

In baptism, we were called to respond to the needs of the world. Prayer orients us away from daily worry and *preoccupations* toward the large, beautiful, and trustworthy realm of God, to paraphrase Rev. Dr. Melinda Quivik.

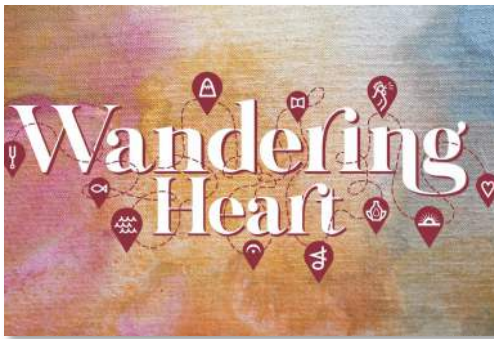
If, as Luther said, God is going to do what God is going to do, even without prayer, then the only one being changed when we pray is us—and that's a very good thing.



We do not pray for God to grant wishes. We pray to be open to seeing what God is doing in the world. In my case, I'm newly aware and thankful of the creative minds that can perform brain surgery, and who created the MRI, and the skills and compassion of so many in our healthcare system. I'm grateful for friends who quietly paint and pray with me these days before surgery. I am moved to hear that I am loved.

We pray because we want to be involved in how God is at work in people's lives. We pray because we want God to be the center of our lives instead of ourselves. To "pray without ceasing" changes us, shapes us, and creates a better world around us.

*In Christ,  
Pastor Bonnie Wilcox,  
Senior Pastor*



## Lent Begins Ash Wednesday *"A Wandering Heart"*

**Ash Wednesday**  
Feb. 14, Worship at 7 PM

**Lent Sundays**  
Begin Feb. 18

**Lent Wednesdays**  
Worship & Soup Suppers begin Feb. 21  
*Watch for details closer to Lent*

**Easter Sunday**  
Mar. 31, Worship at 8 & 10 AM

## LENTEN PODCAST!

Plan to listen to our Lenten podcast daily beginning on Ash Wednesday. You can find our podcast on your favorite platform by looking for First Lutheran Church Columbia Heights.



## MUSIC AT FIRST CONCERTS

### Bella Lumina Treble Ensemble

**Saturday, Feb. 3, 7 PM**

Join the Bella Lumina Treble Ensemble in a concert entitled *Let Peace Begin with Me* at First Lutheran. Bella Lumina, directed by Michelle Gehrz and accompanied by Jeffrey Patry, is a treble vocal ensemble based in the Twin Cities. Their mission is to spread light, hope, and joy through the power of song. Please join them for an evening of spectacular music! More info can be found at [www.bellaluminachoir.org](http://www.bellaluminachoir.org).



### Meditation Recital

**Sunday, Mar. 3, 3 PM**

Back by popular demand, violinist Jennifer Thomas, cellist Daryl Carlson & pianist Jeffrey Patry present another recital of meditative music. In this world of chaos and constant distractions, come and enjoy an hour of meditative music for your soul. Invite your friends, enemies, and anyone you can think of to enjoy an afternoon of music. All are welcome!



### Jeffrey Patry Recital

**Sunday, Mar. 17, 3 PM**

Bring your four-leaf clover and join Jeffrey Patry in an afternoon of Irish Music for piano and organ. You'll enjoy hearing some familiar tunes and there might even be a sing-along! You don't have to be Irish to attend, all are welcome! See you there!

## BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH

### COMMUNITY LISTENING

**SESSIONS!** The work of "What is Our Relationship to Our Building" continues.

**Jan. 14 (Sun) 9:15 & 11:15 AM**  
**Jan. 15 (Mon) 10:30 AM & 6 PM**  
**Jan. 16 (Tues) 10:30 AM & 6 PM**

You are invited to meet with our consultant in groups of 8-10 people per session. This is a continuation of the strategic planning that began last fall. A session for youth leaders will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 17.



*Shout-out (thank you) to Drew & Chris, for their continued good work as FLC A/V Team Members!*

### Town Hall Meeting:

**Sunday, Jan. 14, 11:15 AM**

We will review First Lutheran's 2023 financial results and the 2024 Budget. Community Lunch to follow.

### Annual Meeting:

**Sunday, Jan. 21, 11:15 AM**

In addition to the regular business of this meeting, the congregation will be voting to approve the 2024 budget.

### Pastor Bonnie's Sabbatical:

After seven years at FLC, Pastor Bonnie Wilcox has been approved for a sabbatical from April 8 to July 7, 2024. She plans to visit Germany and study more about Martin Luther and the Reformation of the Church.



# MINISTRY NEWS

## BIBLE STUDY RESUMES JAN. 28

*Exodus – Redemption & Servanthood*

The Bible study is offered at 8:30 & 11:15 AM (same study, in Katie Luther Room).

Whatever time you choose, please feel free to bring in your coffee or community lunch! All are welcome to join any Sunday! Questions to Michelle Edwards, 763-300-8419, [shell-lyn@hotmail.com](mailto:shell-lyn@hotmail.com)

## YOUNG AT HEART EVENT

The Young at Heart group will meet Tuesday, Jan. 23 at 1 PM in Martin Luther Hall. Various lectures: 'Living to 103'; 'Lutefisk Recovery'; 'Hymns for Aging'; 'Bingo How-to.' Bulletin board sign-up is crucial. Cost: \$5

## LUTEFISK AND MEATBALL DINNER

First Lutheran's Annual Scandinavian Lutefisk & Meatball dinner will be held on Saturday, Jan. 20, with meals at Noon, 2, 4 & 6 PM. Purchase tickets online: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/lutefisk1st/788096> or call 651-633-0679 by Jan. 7.

This year's dinner includes: lutefisk with optional white sauce or butter, carrots, meatballs, mashed potatoes & gravy, mashed rutabagas, beet pickles, lefse, julekake & rice pudding with raspberry sauce. *Yum!*

## MISSION JAMACIA

We are excited to send 10 people to serve in Jamaica between Feb. 3-10, 2024! We'll work with other missionaries in four medical clinics, to build four homes, care for children at Westhaven Orphanage, and attend to facility repairs. We are seeking donations to help supplement their needed supplies: twin size sheets, hand towels, dish rags, toothpaste/toothbrushes bar soap, non-sterile large exam gloves, paint brushes/rollers, work gloves, over the counter medications for children etc. (check supply wish list in the Commons). Donations can be dropped off thru Jan. 28. Please make cash donation checks payable to FLC with Mission Jamaica in the memo.



## FIRST LUTHERAN BOOK CLUB

The Book Club meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday at 1 PM. Join them for a book discussion, fellowship & refreshments. Contact: Char, [charzarich@gmail.com](mailto:charzarich@gmail.com)

## COMMUNION ORIENTATION, MAR. 17

If you or someone in your household would like to learn more about the sacrament of Holy Communion, plan to join our all ages class on Sunday, Mar. 17 in the Chapel during the education hour. After this class, if you would like to celebrate receiving communion for the first time or celebrate taking the class, we invite you to our Thursday, Mar. 28 Last Supper performance at 7 PM.



## THE GATHERING

The Gathering is a program from Anoka County Family Caregiver Connection, we are seeking clients with mild to moderate dementia to attend a day full of stimulating activities such as trivia, music, exercise along with a healthy lunch each 1st & 3rd Mondays of the month here at FLC. Contact Jane Bugbee for more info, 651-210-2977.

## SINGLES 55+

Singles, age 55+ gather to eat and socialize on Fridays at 12:30 PM. Emails are sent to invite interested Singles and advise you of meeting opportunities. Contact Faith with questions or to be included in the group's email. 612-799-4245, [whitefa@comcast.net](mailto:whitefa@comcast.net)



*Young at Heart Group packing medical supplies for Global Health which will be shipped to hospitals in need around the world!*

## CHURCH OFFICE COUNTERS

Do you have an extra hour or two every couple of weeks to count the offerings/donations at FLCCH? No special skills required, and you will work and train with a lead counter who will show you the ropes. The counters usually come in between 9 and 11 AM on Tuesday mornings but times can be very flexible. You get to interact with the amazing First Lutheran staff and get treats on birthday weeks as a special perk. If interested, please contact Jana or Joyce in the office.



*Church Office Counters, Bobbie & Marilyn are busy at work! Thank you!*

## EASTER GARDEN—

*in honor of a loved one.* You are invited to contribute to the celebratory flower display on Easter Sunday. Cost is \$12 per flower arrangement. A sign up list is at the desk in the Commons. Deadline to order is Sunday, Mar. 24. Flowers can be taken home after the 10 AM Easter service.



*Some of our office volunteers gathered for a celebratory lunch. We appreciate the wonderful work you do!!*

# CHILDREN YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY NEWS

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

We will be focusing on the stories of Jesus' ministry from the Gospel of Mark in January, February, and March.

**FAMILY CHOIR** is an opportunity for children and parents to sing together! We will be singing in the Palm Sunday Worship Service on March 24. Rehearsals will be Sundays after church on March 3, 10, 17.

## YOUTH GATHERING!

We are taking a team of 14 high school students and adults to New Orleans for the ELCA Youth Gathering this July. The Gathering is a place to broaden our understanding of God's love; to pay attention to, advocate for, and care for our neighbors; and to know that as both saint and sinner, we are loved. To get to New Orleans, our team will have to raise \$7,500.



## MARDI GRAS LUNCH FUNDRAISER

Sunday, Feb. 11  
11 AM - 12:30 PM

Join us for a New Orleans, LA themed lunch served by our Youth Gathering team to support our trip!



**TEAM MEETINGS: Sundays at 12 PM**  
Jan. 14, Mar. 3, Apr. 21 (others scheduled as needed).

**COMMISSIONING IN WORSHIP & FINAL MEETING:** Sunday, July 14

## CONFIRMATION

### LENTEN CONFIRMATION ONE-ON-ONE MENTORS

This upcoming Lenten season, we are planning to connect our middle school confirmation students with adult mentors to pray with them one on one, talk together and learn from each other. Meet 4-6 times throughout Lent on Sundays, 11 AM - 12 PM or on Wednesdays during Lenten soup supper, 6 - 7 PM. The conversation will be as short or as long as the mentor pair desires. Contact Rachel, [rachel@flcch.org](mailto:rachel@flcch.org) for more details and help in coordinating meetings based on your schedule.

## CONFIRMATION RETREAT

Spring Confirmation & HS Retreat is Friday-Saturday, March 15 & 16. We will be attending the "Recharge" event at Luther Park Bible Camp. Luther Park is an ELCA Camp affiliated with Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Chetek, WI. The camp will provide lodging, meals, recreation, and worship times, as well as camp staff. We will have some learning times with just our church too. There will be large group activities as well as times for just 6-8th graders and 9-12th graders. Please contact Rachel for more information and to register.



Youth Ministries Brunch

## PALM SUNDAY BRUNCH

We are hosting a Palm Sunday Brunch Fundraiser for youth ministries at First Lutheran. The event takes place on Sunday, March 24. We need your help! Sign up with Rachel.  
Shifts: 9 AM - 11 AM (Set up and serve)  
11 AM - 1 PM (Serve and clean up)

## MARCH 24 EGG HUNT IN THE COURTYARD

11:30 AM - Sunday  
School children are invited to an egg-hunt with candy and fun in the church courtyard.



## PLANNING FOR SUMMER 2024

### Save the Date: VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL JUNE 24-28

We will be doing a morning VBS at church, with early drop off and optional afternoon childcare available. Youth Leadership Training Event - June 19-21; Join us for leadership training, Bible study, and planning for VBS! Open to all 6th-12th grade youth who would like to be leaders at VBS. On Friday afternoon, we will celebrate with a fun outing to a water park!



## CAMP WAPO

We invite you to join in the excitement at Camp Wapo — *A Place of Grace.*

A place where faith and fun collide. A place for YOU! This summer's theme is: ALWAYS: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* ~ Hebrews 13:8.

Camp is a life-changing experience, and we want to get every kid in our community to Bible camp!



## SEEDS CAMP

Ages: Completed grades 1-3  
Cost: \$260 (All campers eligible for \$50 church gift; scholarships up to full amount available)  
Dates: Aug. 2-4

## YOUTH CAMP

Ages: Completed grades 4-9  
Cost: \$650 (All campers eligible for \$100 church gift; scholarships up to full amount available)  
Dates: Aug. 4-9

## ROOTS SENIOR HIGH CAMP @ WAPO

Ages: Completed grades 10-12  
Cost: \$650 (All campers eligible for \$100 church gift; scholarships up to full amount available)  
Dates: Aug. 4-9

Registration for all camps opens Jan. 15, 2024, and reserved spaces close Feb. 15, 2024. Register at this link: <http://lwlbcj.com/first-ch>





## Panel Discussion on the Importance of Youth Activities

**Wednesday, Jan. 17, 6:30 - 7:30 PM**

One lesson we learned from the Pandemic is how important it is for youth to participate in church activities, sports, music, and clubs! We will hear from First Lutheran youth about how staying active and connected helps their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health.



## Stories from our Palestinian Neighbors

**Wednesday, Feb. 7, 6:30-7:30 PM**

We will hear stories from Palestinian people in our community about the culture, history, and the current challenges our Palestinian neighbors are experiencing.

## Buy Nothing Event

**Saturday, Feb. 17, 9:30 - 11:30 AM**

Please join us for our next FREE Buy Nothing Project giveaway event (like a FREE flea market, garage sale, swap meet). If you have items you want to give away for free, please bring them during set up, 9 - 9:30 AM and place them at your table (tables provided and assigned as people arrive). You can browse and look for items at other tables during the event, starting at 9:30 AM. All items are for PERSONAL USE and are NOT for sale or resale. At the end of the event at 11:30 AM, you must take any of your remaining items and bring them home or donate them. Contact Nathan, [nathanr@flcch.org](mailto:nathanr@flcch.org) to reserve a table.



## Last Supper Drama—2024

Thursday, Mar. 28 & Friday, Mar. 29 at 7 PM.

This year's Last Supper Drama will center on the life of the disciple Peter. A fisherman who loves his family and fishing and hates paying too much in taxes. Peter does his best to follow Jesus...but makes a lot of mistakes along the way. This dramatic re-telling brings the old story to life in a new...and very relatable way!



## After School Continues Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:30 - 6 PM (following the Columbia Heights School calendar)

We have a great group of students, mentors, and we continue to serve delicious and nutritious foods for dinner. Our group has 20 middle schoolers and 15 elementary students who attend over the course of a month. We were blessed to have a great group of regular volunteers, and 2 amazing Northwestern University Education Students as Interns. The gym has been full of soccer games and Katie Luther Room has been an amazing place for crafts!

*Special thanks to Jane and Larry Bugbee, Rachel James, Angela Gallo, Karen Mattison, Ben and Molly, Jessica, Stacy, Linda, and Joe Stinson for their support of this ministry.*



## Parents Groups continue in 2024!

We have a delightful group of parents who meet to help support each other, laugh, and get real about the joys and challenges of raising kids (...on not enough sleep!). Both parent groups meet bimonthly on Sundays at 11:15 AM.

\* **Moms meet 1st & 3rd Sundays**

\* **Dads meet 2nd & 4th Sundays**



## December SACA Christmas Toy Drive

In December First Lutheran partnered with Toys for Tots and SACA Food Shelf to provide gifts for over 500 kids in the community! Thank you to everyone who donated gift cards, all the volunteers, our youth group, and the amazing folks at First Lutheran!

Together we made this year a merrier Christmas for so many families. We also had a wonderful After School Christmas Party with delicious food from Jane, and a visit from Santa Kevin!







First Lutheran Church  
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**SUNDAY WORSHIP**  
**8:45 & 10 AM**

**10 AM WORSHIP**  
ALSO AVAILABLE  
**ONLINE- LIVE**  
**STREAMED VIA**  
**YOUTUBE &**  
**FACEBOOK LIVE**

**SUNDAY MEAL**  
**11 AM - 12:30 PM**

**DAYLIGHT SAVING**  
**TIME 2024!**

**Sunday, March 10**  
Set your clocks for it to  
begin at 2 AM.

**RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED**

***Don't miss Family Worship, Creative Arts, Music & Fun at First!***

