Living Connected...
To God & Each Other

April - June 2024

Mission Jamaica 2024

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Sunday Worship:
8:45 & 10 AM
YouTube & Facebook Live
(All Age Worship)
May 12: Last 8:45 Worship until the fall

Pastoral Staff:
Bonnie Wilcox
Senior Pastor
(on medical leave)
Pastor Scott Jakel
Interim Senior Pastor
Jill Bergman
Associate Pastor

The Caller Newsletter is Published by First Lutheran Church.
Editor: Joyce Weaver,
joycew@flcch.org

Interim Pastor's Column

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is with deep gratitude that I write to you in this position as interim senior pastor of FLC. I had intended to turn things back over to Pastor Bonnie by now for this newsletter responsibility. However, as you've no doubt read, she is not following the schedule/timing following surgery that she thought she would be on.

That brings up the questions: Are we ever going to be on our preferred schedule? How does timing work for us as a child of God? What's the best attitude to have when change is afoot?

When Jesus was asked about timing matters - re: the specific schedule of God's work in God's world - he responded as recorded in Acts 1:7 "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." Message received!

In Luke 14 Jesus asks, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and count the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Or perhaps, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, everyone who sees begins to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and wasn't able to finish."

We've all been eager for Pastor Bonnie's return to the leadership of our congregation. However, we've been notified that that return is delayed. We've been told that between now and either June 1st or July 1st a reassessment

of her plan to return to work will be made. So…. that's what we'll wait for.

What we'll also wait for - or better said: take action in regard to is the work God has put into our hands. We'll build our own proverbial towers here at First Lutheran Church - Columbia Heights.

We are quite capable of continuing in the fashion that we see as our best course of transformational action for now. Christ is the sure foundation we are building on. Our ministry is not limited to any one leader being present in order for us to keep adding on to the ministry we've been attending to. We've got work to do - changing people's lives through the presence of God's Spirit among us.

As you know, in Pastor Bonnie's absence, I will continue to work with staff, council, and leadership - along with volunteers of our church - to reach people with God's love and God's help. We won't be mocked for stopping our work because we've actually counted the cost and we've got a clear calling to keep at it. The stakes are too high for us to pause now.

Pastor's column continues on pg. 2

Interim Pastor's column continued...

The reason I write from a place of gratitude is that I'm so thankful for the very capable people God has put in place here to serve alongside me at our church.

We're going to be fine. We'll pursue the scope of work that we've been asked to carry out. We'll even do some new ventures - if the Holy Spirit leads us in that direction. We'll be faithful. That's what we're called to do.

Thank you for all the prayers of support and the words of affirmation and encouragement that you've given to me in my work in this role as interim pastor.

I had not planned on being here this long. But I'm just like you - ready to zig and zag according to how life presents new schedules for us to follow. I'm just glad to spend more time in communication and partnership with you - including in writing this publication.

Peace be with you, my friends. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns as we move forward by faith. I'm excited to see how the new timing and schedule of things pan out. But I'll hold onto this new time-line expectation with a loose grip. I'll make room for adjustments - and God's grace!

Pastor Scott Jakel

Upcoming Worship at a Glance!

- **April 7: Last day of Wandering Heart Series**
- **May 12: Last 8:45 Chapel Worship until the fall**
- **May 19: Pentecost Sunday & Last Community Meal.** 10 AM Outdoor Service (weather permitting). Last day of Sunday School Party in the Courtyard, Picnic Lunch
- **May 26: Holy Trinity Sunday**
- **June 2: Summer Series Begins (1 John).** Recognition of our 2024 High School Seniors!
- **July 14: Second Summer Series begins on *Beatitudes*** 8-weeks following each of the beatitudes
- **Sunday Picnic Lunches and Family Fun Days.** Look for Family Fun Days and Picnic Lunches to be held once a month this summer!

Spring Sermon Series: *Resurrecting Faith, Hope & Love*

Beginning April 14, Pastors Jill and Scott along with Nathan will be preaching from the New Testament portions of scripture found in the Acts of the Apostles and Corinthians in the next couple of months.

We'll emphasize heralding the message of Jesus in our witnessing, the healing that comes in Christ's name, and both handling resistance to our work through perseverance and handling rejection through cooperation in Christ.

Then we'll focus on faith, hope, and love and finish with an emphasis on the power of new life and the Holy Spirit as we come to the month of May.

We look forward to sharing God's Word in powerful, life-changing ways each week on Sunday mornings. Don't miss it! God's Word is like a seed that needs to be planted in our hearts - especially as we move into the planting season of Spring! To God be the glory.

Summer Sermon Series, 1 John: *Belonging Through Believing and Being God's Love in Community*

We'll celebrate and concentrate on faith active in love in the family of God and in God's World in need and learn how to care for those in Christ's Community in our deeds as well as our words.

Come, and experience the Holy Spirit's power to strengthen and guide us in our daily lives as God's children. Thanks be to God for our siblings in Christ who inspire us to service and joy.

- **June 2: 1 John 1:1—2:2**
  The Joy of Fellowship and Forgiveness
- **June 9: 1 John 3:1—7**
  Righteousness Revealed in Love
- **June 16: 1 John 3:16—24**
  Sacrificial Living and Loving
- **June 23: 1 John 4:7—21**
  Imperfect People, Perfect Love
- **June 30: 1 John 5:1—6**
  The Spirit Active in Love
- **July 7: 1 John 5:9—13**
  Experiencing Life Eternal Even Now

If you are looking for a tangible way to do something to show your support for Pastor Bonnie and to honor her ministry while she's on medical leave, here's some suggestions.

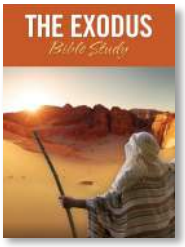
Rather than buying flowers. why not access the ELCA Good Gifts gift list and give something in honor and appreciation for Pastor Bonnie.

You can spend $10 for some baby chicks who will grow up to be chickens and be part of an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals for a family in need.

For the same price you can purchase a fruit-tree seedling which will be an investment in a community in some place in need that can have an impact for generations to come. Same price: a blanket to be given to a survivor in the aftermath of a disaster or emergency. Honeybees cost $20 and provide honey to eat and beeswax plus the bees help pollinate plants.

The website is goodgifts.elca.org.
If you need to work through the church on this, contact our office and we can help you make your gesture to show your appreciate and support for Pastor Bonnie.

Sunday Bible Study



Bible study is offered at 8:30 & 11:15 AM (same study at different times) in Katie Luther Room. Participants should feel free to bring in a morning coffee or snack. If attending the later study, grab a community lunch to bring in, or enjoy lunch at 12:15 PM. *(Resumes April 7-May 5).* **Summer Bible Study will run June through August at 11:15 AM only.**

All are welcome to join any Sunday! Questions to Michelle Edwards, shell-lyn@hotmail.com, 763-300-8419

Financial Peace University Returns!

Is money a constant source of stress in your life? Do you feel like you can never get ahead?
I would like to share with you the financial program that changed my personal financial journey and empowered me to achieve my financial goals and dreams.

Financial Peace University is appropriate for you at any age, relationship status, or financial level. Following Biblical principles in the management of our money leads to financial peace.

Join my virtual Financial Peace University class starting at 6:15 PM on Thursday, April 11 and learn how you can pay off debt, save more money, and build wealth.

Visit: https://www.fpu.com/0FB311 to sign up! We will meet over Zoom one hour per week. You will watch the videos on your own and we will meet to discuss and work together. Contact Pastor Jill with questions. I can't wait to get started!

A Pilgrimage to Greece in Pictures and Stories, May 12

Pastor Jill will be sharing the amazing experiences she had on her trip to Greece. She will have pictures and stories and an opportunity for you to go with her next year. Come to the May 12 adult forum, 11:15 AM!

Let's Go to Greece & Walk in the Footsteps of Paul May 2025

Would you like to deepen your understanding of the Bible and learn about the spread of the Gospel in its earliest days? Pastor Jill has an amazing opportunity for you! I will be leading a trip to Greece in May 2025 and I want YOU to come along. Come to the adult forum at 11:15 AM on May 12 to hear about my most recent journey to Greece and to get information for the upcoming pilgrimage.

I'll be hosting an informational Zoom meeting on **Monday, June 3 at 7 PM**. Contact Pastor Jill for the Zoom link or with any questions.

New Member Orientation

Sunday, April 28

Are you ready to take the plunge? If you would like to become an official member of our congregation, we want to welcome you in worship! Our next opportunity to welcome new members is Sunday, April 28, 10 AM worship service. Immediately following the service, we'll meet for an orientation and a shared meal. Contact Pastor Jill or the church office for more details.

Fix-it Clinic at First!

May 4, 10 AM – 1 PM

Have broken stuff lying around? Don't trash it - fix it! Come to Anoka County's Fix-it clinic at First Lutheran to meet with an expert fixer to help repair your favorite lamps, coffee makers, clothing, vacuums, etc. Please bring any replacement parts.

Young at Heart bus trip to Branson Sept. 16-21, 2024

COST: $798 deposit $75 due May 10, balance due July 10. Trip insurance is separate and is $72. Sign up at church or call Karen Palm, 612-616-3879.

First Lutheran Book Club

The Book Club meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday at 1 PM. Join them for a book discussion, fellowship & refreshments. For more information, contact: Char, charzarich@gmail.com

Meals on Wheels & More

is looking for volunteer drivers to deliver meals Monday thru Friday in Southern Anoka County. Most can be delivered within an hour. Meals & route directions are picked up at Allina Hospital-Unity Campus, Fridley at 11 AM. Contact Anita Dillenburg, 763-755-7839 for details.

Singles 55+ gather to eat and socialize on Fridays at 12:30 PM. Emails are sent to notify interested Singles of meeting opportunities. Contact: Faith 612-799-4245, whitefa@comcast.net

Facility Rental

Looking for a beautiful place to host your family celebrations, reunions or a summer gathering? Consider renting at First Lutheran. Contact: Joyce, joyce@flcch.org, 763-788-9653.

On Feb. 21, 2024 we were privileged to be called upon to host a Memorial Luncheon for Scott Linder, retired Lieutenant with the Columbia Heights Fire Department & colleague of Dave Meyer (pictured) & Bruce Shelito. Scott's wife was transported by a uniformed officer in this fire truck. Several hundred service & community guests attended his service, and nearly twice the number of expected, his luncheon.

Family Choir this Spring.

Sunday School children and their families are invited to take part in our Family Choir. We sing together following the 10 AM service for a brief rehearsal before Sunday School. Celebrate the tradition of song, worship, and joy with your children! **Rehearsal: April 21, 28 & May 5. Sing in worship on May 12**

Earth Day Service Projects

Central Avenue Clean-up
April 20, 9 AM - 11 AM

Youth and adults are invited to meet at the Columbia Heights Library to help pick up trash on the sidewalks of Central Avenue.

Adopt a Park Clean-up

Sunday, April 21 (during Sunday School)

Kids, youth and families are invited to join us to clean-up our parks for Earth Day! First Lutheran has adopted Ostrander Park, across the street from church. We'll have a special treat of cupcakes to celebrate.

Last Day Party!

Sunday, May 19
11 AM – 12 PM (Courtyard)

Join us to celebrate a wonderful year of Sunday School, Confirmation and Community Meals. We'll have a grill-out, treats and a Bouncy House.

Last Day Bonfire FLY Youth Group **Wednesday, June 5 (Courtyard)**

Thank you for a wonderful year of youth group, averaging 25-30 teens each week joining together for food, fellowship, faith-filled bible study and fun. For our celebration, we will have a bonfire with s'mores, games and prayer.

Congratulations to our 2024 High School Graduates!

Blessing during 10 AM worship service on June 2, including a gift from our congregation.

Summer 2024 Children, Youth and Family Ministries

Camp Firelight Vacation Bible School June 24-28, 2024, at First Lutheran Church

VBS from 9 AM - 12 PM
Cost: $25, scholarships available
For kids ages 3 to grade 5
Youth in grades 6-12 are invited to register as counselors and team leaders. Parents and other adult volunteers needed to help lead the kitchen and stations.
New this year: Expanded care options!

- Early Drop off available beginning at 8 AM (must pre-register)
- Lunch served at church
- Afternoon childcare until 5:30 PM (must pre-register)

Camp WAPO

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! Camper Blessing will take place on July 28 in worship. Please pray for our Family Campers, Seeds campers (in 1st-3rd grade), WAPO Youth (4th-9th grade) and our WAPO High School campers.

There may still be room for you! Register at this link: http://lwlbci.com/first-ch

2024 ELCA Youth Gathering

CREATED TO BE the tAble
MYLE Young Adult Gathering
JULY 16TH–20TH 2024
NEW ORLEANS

First Lutheran is sending a team of 14 Youth & Adults to the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans

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.
To support our trip, we will have a stock sale in May.

April 21-May 14
Stock Sale

Buy a share for $25 and invest in our youth going to the Youth Gathering.

We will have a shareholder's dinner in August to report on the return on your investment!

Team Meetings:
Sunday, April 21 at 12 PM
Sunday, May 19 at 12 PM
Sunday, July 14 - Commissioning in Worship & Final Meeting

Leaders in Training (L.I.T.)

Youth in grades 6-12 are eligible for our Leaders In Training program this summer, which will help prepare them for being a counselor at VBS and a leader in all areas of their lives.

We will meet June 19-20, 10 AM - 4 PM at First Lutheran. On Friday, June 21, L.I.T. students will have the opportunity to go to Valleyfair.
Cost: $40 (scholarships available).

Come hear stories and stretches from Yoga Practitioners! April 17, 6:30 PM
So many people have experienced healing and peace through the stretches and intentional mindfulness of yoga. We will hear from several yoga practitioners about how yoga has helped their lives. And we will be invited to learn a few simple breathing and stretching exercises. The Youth Group will attend. All ages and abilities are invited to join.

After School continues to be a vibrant ministry on Tuesday and Thursdays 4:30 - 6 PM! We have a large group of 30 middle school students who love to play soccer and volleyball in the gym! We also have a great group of elementary students who enjoy crafts and games. Thank you to Jane, Larry, Karen, Linda, Ben, Molly, Paul, Rachel, and Nathan for ongoing mentorship. And thank you to everyone who supports this ministry with gifts to provide mentoring and a warm meal. We will continue After School until Memorial Day weekend.

Community Lunch continues until Sunday, May 19!
We are so grateful to be able to offer a community meal each Sunday. With rising food prices and many new families coming into our community, we continue to see growth and appreciation for this amazing ministry.
Thank you to Rock Kari, Brian, Roy, Wendy, Judie, Dianne, Dave, Pam, Jenn, Jane, Betty, and all the volunteers who help make this meal possible.

Mission Jamaica 2025 ***(Vacation with a Purpose).*** Trip dates for Mission Jamaica 2025 are **Trip D:** Jan. 26—Feb. 1, 2025 (in Kingston). **Trip E:** Feb. 1—8, 2025 (in Montego Bay). More details to follow. Contact Larry or Jane Bugbee for information, 612-812-1633.

Earth Day Columbia Heights Clean up
Saturday, April 20 from 9- 11 AM
Join our neighbors and HeightsNEXT group for the Annual Earth Day Clean-Up event! We'll kick off the event by handing out safety vests and garbage bags at the Columbia Heights Public Library and assign volunteer clean-up areas. Families with young children will have park areas designated for them. Each group will pick up trash from sidewalks, bushes and grass along the sidewalks and within the park.

Story Telling Night: "Stories from our Palestinian Neighbors"
We had a powerful night during "Stories from our Palestinian Neighbors" in March. We heard stories from our Palestinian neighbors who have immigrated to the Twin Cities and Columbia Heights. Each of the Palestinian storytellers had lost many family members during the war in Gaza.

Buy Nothing Spring Event
We again partnered with Columbia Heights "Buy Nothing" group for a free swap in March. Around 150 people came to shop and share. Our entire Commons and link were filled with people's things to be re-homed. We are looking at hosting another event in the fall. Thank you to Jennifer, Patty, Bob, Kathy, Karen, Linda, Nathan, and Rachel for helping host this great group!

Lutefisk …. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
Thanks to all who helped prepare and serve the lutefisk dinner this year. We served 934 meals and raised over $13,000 for our church benevolences, for camp credits and for the church budget.

By far the compliment heard most often (besides how full they are) is how welcome and how well cared for our guests feel when they come to our dinner. And that happens because of all of you, your smiling faces and helpful hands. This event has always felt more like a congregational event, rather than a fund raiser or just a big dinner. It is a treat to work with young and not so young volunteers and get to know each other better. On top of that, we get to have some fun doing something that many of us don't do very often. Thank you for another very successful dinner.

Caritas Vocal Ensemble
Saturday, April 13, 2 PM

Please join the Caritas Vocal Ensemble in a Spring concert entitled ***To Touch, to Kiss, to Die: Love in the Earth and Body*** in our lovely sanctuary. This ensemble is dedicated to sharing meaningful music performances to benefit the community. This concert will explore earthly love: the kind that raises heart rates, dilates pupils, and catches our breath. Experiences ranging from heartbreak, to love at first sight to the thrill of being in love are all captured here, with music by Debussy, the Wailin' Jennys, Stevie Wonder, Dowland, and more. This concert is free and donations will be collected towards our own Community Lunch Program. Please come and support our Community Lunch. More information can be found at www.caritasvocalensemble.org

Copper Street Brass
Friday, April 19, 7 PM

The Copper Street Brass represents the Evolution of the Brass Quintet. Through inventive concerts, engaging educational programs, and original musical arrangements, they bring a fresh perspective to instrumental music. To express their artistic voice, they use a dazzling fusion of brass, keyboard, guitar, percussion, and electronic instruments to appeal to a universal audience and go beyond ordinary. Please join them in a concert entitled ***That 70's Show.*** Tickets are $30 for adults, $10 for college students, free for ages 17 and under. More information can be found at www.copperstreetbrass.org.

Chorus Polaris
Sunday, May 19, 3 PM

We again welcome our own in-house Chorus Polaris in a concert entitled ***The Broadway Show.*** Chorus Polaris is a premiere community choral ensemble comprised of professional, semi-professional, and talented amateur singers. Directed by William Mathis, the 50-voice choir presents music spanning nearly a thousand years – from the Renaissance to jazz, to classic and modern choral masterworks complete with orchestra. This concert will be sure to get your toes tapping with familiar tunes from Broadway. You might even want to sing along! Ticket information can be found at www.choruspolaris.org.

Minnesänger
Sunday, April 14, 4 PM

Join Minnesota's own German Language Chorus (Minnesänger) in a concert of Johannes Brahms. The music of Brahms has it all – love, lust, longing, joy and adventure. Directed by John Hoffacker, this chorus sings mostly in German, and this will be an afternoon of stunningly beautiful music. This concert is free, but donations are accepted at the door. More information can be found at www.germanchoir.org.

Singers in Accord
Saturday, May 4, 4 PM
Sunday, May 5, 4 PM

We welcome back Singers in Accord in their concert entitled ***From Darkness to Light: Navigating the Storm of Life.*** Join Singers in Accord and esteemed guest conductor Philip Brown for an afternoon of soul-stirring music. The choir will weave together a captivating tapestry of melodies that reflect the human experience and the beauty of unity, through sharing our vulnerabilities. Singers in Accord will be joined by two exceptional high school choirs from Totino Grace and Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs, making this a truly unforgettable experience. Ticket information can be found at www.singersinaccord.org.

Music Sunday
Sunday, May 12, 10 AM

On this Sunday, we will celebrate the many musicians of FLC! This will be a music-filled service with the Family Choir, Sanctuary Choir, Contemporary Ensemble, Campanile Handbell Ensemble and instrumentalists! Come and honor our own FLC musicians in a service of praise and celebration!

MINISTRY NEWS

Hello from the desk of the Finance & Operations Manager.

One wintery Friday in February I stayed late at work and decided spontaneously to attend the evening's Northwest College Concert performed at FLCCH. The College Choir sang a choral piece by Josef Anton Bruckner and was accompanied on the organ by our very own Jeffrey Patry. Still mourning the loss of my mom I was struck by the beauty of the Sanctuary and the wonderful sounds of the organ as well as the talent of the Choir. It made me feel at peace and appreciative of the experience I was given as part of my work environment.

This collaboration with another nonprofit organization is only one example of the many activities happening at FLCCH to engage in outreach, carry out the church's mission and to welcome the cooperation with other nonprofit partners. But inviting other communities to our campus also means the need for scheduling and maintaining it. Joyce continues to oversee our facility usage, invoicing, safety precautions and maintain various building calendars.

During this quarter alone, Jody and his team repaired bathroom sinks, rearranged the Commons Area, painted walls, made sidewalks safer by spreading woodchips and completed replacing of lights and repairing the window in the Sanctuary. The maintenance team has also worked hard to create a list of long term project goals in order to be a responsible landlord to our tenants.

Nathan has started to form a task force joined by congregation members and staff to help and complete new lease negotiations with our current schools. As Bultum Academy and Meadowlark are growing we need to address early on their room needs and our own building limitations. More to come in the next Caller.

Financial Snapshot!

Period ending February 29, 2024		
General Checking	$	96,062
Mortgage & Maintenance	$	70,976
Perpetual Reserve Balance	$	107,657
Special Projects Balance	$	460,666
Memorial Fund Balance	$	57,276
Endowment Savings Balance	$	78,643
Endowment Investments	$	1,227,408
Total Current Assets	$	2,098,688
Total Fixed Assets	$	2,710,149
Total Liabilities (incl mortgage)	$	1,235,651
Total Equity	$	3,568,052
Net Revenue as of 02/29/2024	$	5,134

In this issue I also want to address a couple of tax questions regarding the tax exempt status of DAF and IRA made charitable donations which have come up recently.

If a donor contributes to FLCCH through a donor-advised fund (DAF) or through an IRA fund those donations are considered tax deductible. Donors who contribute to the DAF or an IRA receive an immediate tax deduction When the donor recommends these grants to go to the church, FLCCH receives these funds and they will be recorded in our donation software as charitable donations. However, on the tax giving statement those donations will not be marked as tax exempt as they have already received a tax deduction. Instead, each donor receives an individual donation receipt letter at the end of the tax year as their tax receipt clearly stating that these donations have been distributed by a DAF or an IRA account. These letters can be forwarded to the donor's tax accountants or kept as individual records as official tax receipt documentation.

If you have any financial questions/concerns, please don't hesitate to stop by my office or contact me by phone/email. jana@flcch.org, 763-788-9653 ext. 104

Blessings, Jana

First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights (FLCCH) is financed by the generous, direct monetary gifts of its members and friends.

There are several ways you can bless this mission of Jesus with your gifts:

1) Place your **Check or Cash** in the offering plate during the service. Please use an offering envelope so we can give you credit for your gift.
2) **Electronic Funds Transfer** from our website, flcch.org (upper right hand corner). You can set up a one-time or recurring donation.
3) **Bill Pay**. Follow the directions of your bank or credit union to create First Lutheran as a Payee at 1555 40th Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55412, and choose to make a regular weekly or monthly offering.
4) **Stock Transfer to the Church**.
5) For more information, contact Jana Dietering, Finance & Operations Manager, 763.788.9653, jana@flcch.org

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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

SUNDAY WORSHIP
8:45 AM CHAPEL
(May 12: Last 8:45 Worship until the fall)
10 AM

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

SUNDAY MEAL
11 AM - 12:30 PM
(May 19: Last Meal until the fall)

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