



Written by Pastor Susan Debner

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Sunday Worship:
8:30 & 10 AM

YouTube & Facebook Live
(All Age Worship)

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Joining God's Yes Year-round Generosity

On the first Sunday I ever dressed like a pastor (robe and all!) there was a big crisis in the community that had everyone's attention. I can't remember what it was, but I do remember the pastor's invitation to the congregation: "We will pray a *novena*," he said. The blank look on my face must have matched the rest of the congregation, so Pastor Henry Morris taught us all what that meant. I was a student-pastor with him at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Fairfield, CT.

A novena (from the Latin for "nine") is an ancient prayer practice of the church, possibly adopted from Roman religions in the early years of Christianity. For Christians, the nine days of prayer echo what the followers of Jesus did, after Jesus ascended (Acts 1:9) and before the Holy Spirit arrived on Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus told them to wait together for a promise from God. Jesus didn't give the most helpful or specific directions—but those early followers took his words to heart, spending the next nine days in Jerusalem, praying together.

On the tenth day, in a rush of wind and with tongues of fire, the Holy Spirit came to the people in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and the world has never been the same again! From this experience, the novena grew into the practice of praying to God for 9 days in times when we're not quite sure what will happen next, but collectively, we believe God is up to something. We pray to have our imaginations opened, and our hearts prepared for whatever God does next. In conversations with the Board for Spiritual

Growth (BSG), the staff, and others from the congregation and community, it is clear to me that God is doing wonderful and amazing things at First: The generous response to Metro Surge from this congregation is one example; the vibrant calendar of music and community events is another, and there are so many more! I've also been feeling a sense of something new trying to be born—but I am not yet sure what that will be? Have you ever felt this way? It is a strange, yet wonderful, liminal space.

At the BSG meeting last month, there was this beautiful conversation about prayer that grew into excitement for trying a novena together at FLC. The days between Ascension and Pentecost are **May 14-24** this year, and with the leadership of the BSG and staff, we'd like to invite you to **join us for nine days of prayer focused on our congregation, and what God is doing in our neighborhood that we might join.** There's no additional agenda to this prayer time beyond asking for our congregation to experience open hearts, piqued imaginations, and hope-filled faith that God listens.

Using email, social media, and the announcements made in worship, we will provide more details about this invitation and all the ways you might join it. In the meantime, I hope the fiery, windy Spirit starts tugging your heart with a desire to join us in this prayer adventure!

Joining you, joining God,
Pastor Susan



The letter from Pastor Susan invites us to a novena—nine days of praying for our congregation and how God is inviting us ever deeper into relationships with each other, and our neighbors. Together, we ask for God’s direction for our congregation, and for our openness in following it. Details will soon follow about options for online group prayer time, individual journal prompts, and prayer walks through the community.

Across the summer months, we are all encouraged to be attentive—watching for how God is already present in our neighbors and our neighborhood. What is God already up to all around us? This is distinctly different from our habit of watching for what *God isn’t getting done*, and summer will give us both experiences and reflections about how flipping the script changes our approach to mission and ministry.

Relationships are the currency of faith, which is how “Growing Connected” became our generosity theme for this year. Starting this month, we will have opportunities to grow in our connections with God and each other as we pray, reflect, observe, and dream together this year.

Sunday, May 24, is Pentecost—a day for wearing red and expecting the Holy Spirit to surprise and challenge us anew as we worship. We will have a brief time of reflection in worship about the novena prayer—inviting people to offer notes or join conversations about their experiences.

When the program year ramps up next fall, our connections to God and each other will be woven into program and budget plans for the coming year. Pledge cards will be collected at a special worship led by the Drama Ministry in November.

Spring (May-June): *Growing Prayers*
Summer (July-Aug.): *Growing Attention*
Fall (Sept.-Nov.): *Growing Generosity*

Financial Update: Thank you!
Please? Thank you!

Thank you for your faithful support of FLC! Your generosity flooded our neighborhood with kindness during Metro Surge, and thanks to you, all of our families were able to stay in their homes and have their basic needs covered in those difficult months. We were also able to keep up with the ongoing needs of our ministry and building. Thank you! Worship, weekly meals, funerals, after school programs, and community meetings all continued on schedule. Lutefisk was baked and shared! Countless fabulous concerts were hosted! Bultum’s community continues to thrive in our building! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

A few unexpected expenses are currently stretching the budget: the elevator has needed several costly repairs, and we have begun planning for a major elevator project in 2027-28. Several doors around the building have also been updated or will be soon, to increase security and safety. Many kids are considering a week of camp, VBS, or other summer programs. This has put a \$30,000 strain on the budget for April. As you are able, your support for these extra projects is appreciated! Please? Again, thank you!



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** through 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 55421, and choose to make a regular weekly or monthly offering.
- 4) **Stock Transfers to the Church**.
- 5) For more information, contact the church business office, 763.788.9653, Admin1@flcch.org

SUMMER WORSHIP & MINISTRY NEWS



Worship Series continues through May 24

Travel through the earliest gatherings of the Christian church with us as we experience God's disruptive gospel in their lives, and in ours. The Book of Acts prompts us to ask deeper questions about what is real, and about what God might make possible in our lives and our neighbors' lives.

PENTECOST SUNDAY, MAY 24
(10 AM Service Only) Wear Red!
Outdoor Worship (weather permitting)



Let's Talk About Evil
This Summer! (May 31—July 5)

We experience the devastating power of evil in so many ways, yet the more evil there is in the world around us, the harder it gets to agree on it, let alone do anything about it. By exploring villains in the Bible this summer, we can create a pattern recognition for discerning evil in the world. We can then reflect on how God and God's people respond to abuses of power with transformative love and liberation.

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

8:30 AM Chapel Worship
(8:30 is not offered on May 24, July 5, Sept. 6)
10 AM Sanctuary Worship

SUMMER BUILDING HOURS:

Monday-Thursday:
9 AM to 2 PM
Sundays: 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM
Memorial Day to Labor Day

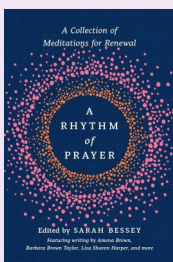
We are here for you all summer long, but if you need access to the building or staff, please use texts, calls, or emails to connect before dropping into the office.

Summer office hours are shortened due to the complexity of summer staff schedules. All staff work the same amount of hours, but camps, outdoor programs, and vacations complicate our ability to have a predictable presence in the building.

A Rhythm of Prayer

A Rhythm of Prayer will be a six week summer series helping us experience prayer in a new way. Each person prays differently and we all can grow in our knowledge of prayer, meditation, spiritual practices, and liturgical prayers. We hope you are able to open up your faith and spiritual

life to new possibilities of being grounded and filled with the Spirit. We are going to dig deeply into why we pray, when we pray, and how we pray.



We will use Sarah Bessey's Devotional Collection "A Rhythm of Prayer" as a guide and we invite you to purchase the book and follow along.

Sunday Bible Discussion Group on the Beatitudes

This summer's discussion on the Beatitudes will focus on topics from the book "Set Apart" by Jennifer Kennedy Dean. June 14—Aug. 16

Facilitated by Madonna Wagner, please join us from 11:15 AM—Noon for some amazing discussions and socializing. The book can be purchased on Amazon <https://a.co/d/o8JpHort> (not necessary for discussion)



Want to be baptized? *You betcha!*

In worship last month, after hearing about baptisms in Rachel's sermon on the book of Acts, we made an open invitation for anyone wanting to talk about a baptism to reach out to Pastor Susan, or any member of the staff. This invitation never expires!

We are always excited to hear from anyone who would like to know more about getting baptized! Please feel free to email, call or text: (612) 239-8968



Do you want to join First Lutheran?

We would love to welcome you into membership with us! Please let the office or any staff member know if you'd like to be part of a new member group.

A time of gathering and welcome is being organized next month for everyone who is interested.



MUSIC & COMMUNITY



Exultate Chamber Choir & Orchestra

Join the 30th season celebration in a concert of the *Exultate Chamber Choir and Orchestra* on **Saturday, May 16, 7 PM**. This performance will feature the pinnacle of choral music, the *Mass in B Minor* by Johann Sebastian Bach. Conducted by Thomas Rossin, Exultate goes beyond the notes on the page to bring you, the listener, the personal response that makes sound into rich, meaningful music – the language of emotion. Join us for this evening of tremendous music. Ticket information can be found at www.exultate.org.

Summer Soloists

Throughout the summer, we will be having instrumental soloists that will be playing at the 10 AM service. Jeffrey will invite some of his friends to enhance our services with their music. Stay tuned!

Music Appreciation Sunday, May 17

Join us for 10 AM Worship!

This service will feature our music groups including the *Sanctuary Choir, Campanile Handbell Ensemble and Family Choir*. We will also feature small groups as well as instrumentalists. Join us for a festive service filled with music!

Thank you!

As we head into the summer months, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many musicians that have added beauty our services with tremendous music this year. Thank you to the Sanctuary Choir, Campanile Handbell Ensemble and Family Choir. Thank you also to instrumentalists: Judy Eddy, Chris Larson, Emily Olson De Alvarez, Drew Stolba and Jerry Erickson. Thanks also to small group members: Chris Dansby, Chris Larson, Meagan Ferrise, Kristin Young, Missy Habeck, Amy Deutschman, Pam Hartel, Ruth Dodson, Jerry Erickson, Paul Christensen and Jon Lueth. I appreciate all of your hard work this year! Thank you!





Family Choir

All ages are invited to join us for the Family Choir! Sing to the Lord with us. We rehearse on Sundays, 11 - 11:15 AM. Rehearsals: May 3 & May 10. Sing in Worship on May 17.

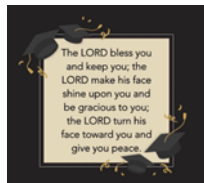
Last Day Party Sunday, May 17

11 AM - 12 PM in the Courtyard. Join us to celebrate a wonderful year of Sunday School, Confirmation and Community Meals. We'll have a grill-out, treats, face painting and a Bouncy House.



Congratulations to our 2026 High School Graduates!

Graduate Blessing during worship service on June 7, including a gift from our congregation.



Fundraiser Lunch Jamaican Meal

Sunday, May 3
You are invited to join us for a fundraiser for our Youth Trip to Mission Jamaica this July. Chef Kevin will be making us a delicious Jamaican feast, served by our team members. \$5/person



Last Day Bonfire FLY Youth Group - June 3 in the Courtyard

Thank you for a wonderful year of youth group! Our teens joined together for food, fellowship, faith-filled Bible study & fun. For our celebration, we'll have a bonfire with s'mores, games and prayer.

Camp Wapo 2026

Theme: *Wonder*, based on Matthew 19:26 — "With God all things are possible." This summer, we'll explore both meanings of the word wonder: questioning and awe. It will be a week of curiosity, questions, and the wide-open mystery of God's love. Campers will journey from curiosity to calling — from "What if?" to "Here I am!" — discovering that every question is a doorway to deeper trust, transformation, and relationship with God.



Our children and youth will be attending Bible camp in August. **There is still room to register if you are interested!**

We ask the congregation for prayers for our kids at camp this summer. **Campers' Blessing in Worship on Sunday, Aug. 2**



Food Truck Party Vacation Bible School June 22-26, 2026

We are on a Roll with God! Our kids will learn to serve with purpose and rely on God each day for our daily bread. We will be doing a morning VBS at church, with early drop off and lunch provided.

Youth and Adult leaders needed.

Kids and volunteers can register at <https://flcch.org/grow-in-faith/children-youth/vacation-bible-school/>

On Sunday, June 28 We'll Sing a VBS Song in Worship!

VBS Decorate and Set-up Days - June 18 & 19, 10 AM - 4 PM each day

Youth & Adults - you are invited to join us as we decorate for VBS, paint windows and have fun together. We'll celebrate with a lunch out on Friday.



Play & Pray Dates— 11 AM Sundays (May 31-Aug. 23, no event on 7/5).

Kids and Parents: Join us after worship in the Courtyard for a moment of prayer, singing & learning together. Stay for a playdate on the playground! You are welcome to bring a picnic lunch. In case of rain, playdates will move to the gym.

Mission Jamaica July 7-14, 2026



We are excited to bring a team of 14 youth and adults to Mission Jamaica this summer. We will be serving at Westhaven Orphanage, helping with recovery from the hurricane and serving the children and adults with disabilities who live there. Our group will stay at the Youth With A Mission base in Montego Bay. Thank you for your prayers.

Please help us reach our fundraising goal through purchasing stock in our youth by participating in our envelope fundraiser. Thank you for your support.

Katie Luther Circle, Moms Group.

This group is part of WELCA (Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). Join them at 11:15 AM on the 1st Sunday of the month for fellowship and advocacy at church or plan to gather for a prescheduled outing. Contact: Rachel, rachel@flcch.org

Columbia Heights Peace Breakfast, Tuesday,

June 9, 8-9:30 AM



The Columbia Heights Peace Breakfast celebrates leaders in nonprofits, faith communities, and elected officials committed to peace, cooperation, understanding, and working together for our community. This year, people who stepped up during Metro Surge are to be appreciated.

A light breakfast will be catered by Railwerks Brewing Depot in Columbia Heights. FLC would like to have eight people. Tickets are \$25. <https://heightsnext.org/events/columbia-heights-peace-breakfast/>



Our beautiful new church 14 passenger Ford Bus has arrived!

Our last bus was purchased 20 years ago and we have faithfully used it many times per week to drive people to and from church, Youth Group, After School, deliver food to neighbors in needs, take kids to Camp Wapo, and Missions Trips. Our older bus continues to drive and will be used, but it now has no heating or AC. We are working to rehome the very old 1996 bus to a local ministry in need. We are grateful to Rock Hauser for coordinating this purchase. We are also grateful for a large dedicated anonymous gift that allowed us to purchase this new bus. Funds were also made available by Memorial and Endowment. Thank you to our drivers, our volunteers, and ministry staff who will bless our community with this new bus (aka mini-van).



Thank you for a great year of Community Lunch!

We are so grateful for a wonderful year of Sunday Community Lunch. We have served over 100 meals on Sundays throughout the year! We were so blessed to have around 20 regular visitors from the community come to join and eat with us. We are finishing our meals on May 17 and restart again on Sept. 14, 2026. Thank you to all the people who ate with us, servers, dishwashers, and especially our amazing cooks Rock and Kari Hauser and Kevin and Jill Kaliher.



Buy Nothing Event. We are so grateful for the generosity of our church towards our neighbors in need. In these challenging economic times, so many people are struggling to pay for necessities. 50 church members and over 500 neighbors came to church for a Buy Nothing Giveaway event on April 20! We brought clothes and household items to give away to kids and neighbors in need. We are blessed by the partnership with community leaders, the Buy Nothing Project Columbia Heights leaders, and our church members who make this ministry partnership possible.



Our After School Program is growing!

In April, our After School Program started to see a big increase in students. So many of our immigrant students were staying home this winter due to the increased immigration enforcement surge. But since the ICE surge ended, we have seen a lot of new students and families. We now have around 35-45 students and adults on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This has been a big increase since this winter. Thank you to everyone who supports this ministry and allows us to provide a safe place for our neighborhood kids to play, learn, grow, and eat a delicious home-cooked meal!



Easter Drama Ministry

We were so blessed by our amazing drama *The Last Words of Jesus*. It was a powerful Passion Play put on by a First Lutheran cast and crew during Holy Week. This was very different from the previous Last Supper Dramas which focused much more on the life of Jesus and Maundy Thursday. *The Last Words of Jesus* was a series of one act scenes based around the Last Seven Words of Jesus which comprise a traditional Good Friday Tenebrae service. You can watch the recording on First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights YouTube page www.youtube.com/@flcch. Thank you to Larry Bugbee for this amazing photo!



After School Summer Adventures

Everyone is invited! Contact Nathan to join these adventures. nathanr@flcch.org

YWCA Shoreview Water Park

Tuesday, June 16. Noon - 3 PM
Free! Lunch and Bus included.

Water Park Day

Tuesday, July 21. 1:30 - 4:30 PM
Jim Lupient Water Park. Free!
Lunch and Bus included.

Monarch Spanish and English Festival

Thursday, July 23. 4 - 7 PM
Kordiak Park, Columbia Heights. Free!
Meet at the Park. Kids come w/Families

Como Park Zoo

Tuesday, Aug. 11. Noon - 3 PM.
St. Paul. Free! Lunch and Bus included.

MINISTRY NEWS

Building Updates

First Lutheran has a long history of being a welcoming, beautiful, safe and accessible church. We undertook some important repairs to our church this winter to keep this welcoming ministry going!

After 20 years it was time to get a new 150 gallon water heater. It was quite a project getting this tank up and down three flights of stairs. There is a fun video of it being installed on our Facebook page!



We are also committed to making sure our building is accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

In March, our elevator stopped working for two weeks! It was evident to see how much we rely on our elevator. Our choirs have members in wheelchairs and walkers. These singers rely on our elevator to get to the choir room. School materials are brought up every day to our charter school and Sunday school rooms. We are certainly grateful to have the elevator back up and running!



Exterior doors #2 and #6 were replaced with new electronic access for better security!

Thank you!

We are grateful for all the legacy gifts, donations, volunteer hours, and staff work that made these repairs possible!

Summer Projects Continue!

A few projects on the calendar for this summer include repairing the Sanctuary doors, replacing the flooring in Katie Luther and the many routine repairs, painting and deep cleaning done throughout the building and grounds in preparation for the return of Bultum Academy's students and staff. (Check church bulletin for opportunities to help with projects or contact the church with your ideas!)



Children & Youth Earth Day Clean-up April 2026



Spring Recap:

Food and Rent Deliveries during Operation Metro Surge

“Thank you for the support of all of us who come from another land, but we are all children of God, and God bless you for your help.” - Message from an immigrant mother of two children in our After School program.

We are so grateful to the many people who showed up to help during the difficult last months. We had 20 volunteer safety patrollers for Bultum Academy!

We trained hundreds of Rapid Response Constitutional observers. First Lutheran members donated \$12,000 to help immigrant families. We received \$10,000 in Welcome Grants from Minneapolis ELCA to help cover rent for people out of work. We delivered over 300 bags of donated groceries on the church bus!

We also provided rent support for 15 families for February and March! We thank God that we can be a blessing to our neighborhood. Thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered, sorted food, patrolled, and translated!

A special thank you to our Spanish Speaking Children, Youth and Family Assistant Angela Montero Gallo who went above and beyond to translate and coordinate with our Latino Families!



First Lutheran Book Club

This social ministry, enjoyed by both casual and avid readers, is looking for a new facilitator. They typically meet in the afternoon, once a month for a book discussion, fellowship and refreshments. Please contact Joyce in the church office to find out more about connecting with this or other delightful volunteer groups at First Lutheran. joycew@flcch.org, 763-788-9653.



First Lutheran Church
1555 40th Avenue NE / Columbia Heights, MN 55421-3195
WEB: flcch.org / PH: 763-788-9653

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SUNDAY WORSHIP
8:30 & 10 AM
10 AM WORSHIP ALSO
AVAILABLE ONLINE-
LIVE STREAMED VIA
YOUTUBE &
FACEBOOK LIVE
SUNDAY MEALS
11 AM - 12:30 PM
Last meal before
summer break, May 17
Meals resume Sept. 14,
2026

RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

SUMMER
Hours
Monday-Thursday:
9 AM to 2 PM
Sundays:
7:30 AM to 12:30 PM
Memorial Day to
Labor Day

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

