

Message from our Bishop...

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Have you ever seen a new tree planted that has two supports added? I'm thinking of a young tree that stands between two poles to which are attached a tether, each pulling the tree in the opposite direction. Not only do these supports help guard against windstorms, but they ensure that the young tree grows up straight and true between the opposing tensions of being pulled in opposite directions.

So too, I imagine, do the opposing pulls of the Democrat and Republican parties do the same for our country. Blue and red need each other; right and left, conservative and liberal. We need the dichotomy, the tension of opposing forces, the disagreement, so that we can grow, straight and true somewhere in the middle. I can only imagine what the tree feels as it is being pulled in two opposite directions, but I would guess it is something like what our country is feeling now. When considering the election results, some feel relief and even elation, others feel disappointment and even anger. Never before have so many voted. Never before has the country offered such clear and disturbing statistics for how many are pulling in opposing directions. We are polarized, standing in support on opposite sides of the tree, pulling with all we've got, and yet, if one side has too much influence, the tree will bend. There is value in having each side pull, so that our country can grow straight and true somewhere in the middle.

What then does this mean for ministry?

It is curious to me how 100% of our congregation members can agree that Jesus Christ is Lord, but we do not agree on what that means, how that impacts our vote, and how we embody that conviction in our ministry efforts. But then again, the church is not known for its level of agreement except for the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord.

When political convictions run deep, when we feel the tension of being pulled in opposing directions, when we are grieved by the lack of agreement and the swirl of emotions and the resentment towards those who are pulling the opposing tether, I urge you to extend some grace.

Forgive others for not voting as you did. Forgive others for not championing the same convictions that you hold dear. And turn your efforts, your attention, your energy to push and pull the growth toward and into the work of Christ.

We are not going to agree as a country, and not even as congregation, but we can agree that we are invited to participate in the breaking in of the kingdom of God. We are called to bear the light of Christ. And our efforts in ministry are strengthened when we work together towards some goal, some embodiment of the presence of Christ in the world. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Comfort the afflicted. There is blessing and life-giving growth as we concentrate on the nuts and bolts of our faith.

Yes, there is still the pandemic which is no small challenge. But consider that it is an additional tether, another added tension. Don't let that get in the way of you and your congregation growing straight and true and keeping the thing, the thing. Jesus Christ is Lord. And more than that, Jesus Christ is your Lord, your Lord and Savior. The rest is just...tension, albeit challenging, grieving, thick, and concerning tension, but through which we grow straight and true.

In the midst of this tension, God is at work. As we consider our own convictions with humility, and the convictions of our friends and neighbors with grace and forgiveness, we will find our way forward, as a country and as congregations called to serve the work of Christ. And whether or not you believe the world is going to pieces, I am glad to remind you that the Northern Great Lakes Synod has indeed already planted an apple

tree. In November of 2018, I was invited to participate in the retreat for newly elected leaders sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation. In observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I planted an apple tree on behalf of our synod in Wittenberg, Germany. We are Tree #468, and if you are ever in Wittenberg, please feel free to find our tree and take a picture.

Because even if the world goes to pieces, Jesus Christ is Lord and you and I are invited, encouraged, indeed, we are called and equipped to be his presence in the world. And that, my dear friends, colleagues, and congregational members, is no small thing.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Katherine Finegan



Tuesday, November 10th the church council met for its regular monthly meeting.

The council discussed the closing of the local cemeteries for the winter season and therefore graveside services will not be an option till spring. The council directed Pastor Rasner to perform in church funerals, if requested. The services will be allowed for immediate family only.

Pastor Rasner provided to the Property committee a verbal quote for the roof replacement. The committee is also forwarding a sample of the present roofing to be checked for asbestos. Snow removal was discussed and it was agreed to contract with Tony Serbinski, as he has done the snow removal the past several years. The Technology committee requested that approval be made to purchase a new computer and video camera to enhance the Sunday morning service experience via Facebook and WIKB. The council approved the purchase. Estimated cost of the equipment is \$1,150.00. We have received a \$500.00 grant from the Synod to be used for Outreach to the community and that grant will be used to help with the cost. A Thrivent Action Team card valued at \$250.00 and provided by Sheila Holm was used to purchase the camera, therefore the capital outlay for the church is \$400.00.

Advent and specifically Christmas eve services were discussed and several options may be available, a final decision will be made at the regular December meeting as more information will be available at that time.

"Be strong, be brave, be fearless, you are never alone" Joshua 1:9,

Gale J Holm
Council President



Stewardship

October begins a season of reflection. The leaves falling from the trees, signals a change coming soon. We recently celebrated the lives of the saints who have gone before us on All Saints Sunday. We also begin to think about the end of the church year and the oncoming adventure of Christmas at the beginning of a new church year. In reflection, please consider how you may be able to catch up on your contributions to First Lutheran. Remember that stewardship is a simple reminder that all we have has been given to us by God. What we do with these gifts should be in honor of Him.

Again, FLC income exceeded expenses for the month. However, income was significantly behind prior year. If you recall, October of 2019 was a record income month due to our incredible pasty sales. We look forward to the time in the future when we can all come together in fellowship to make the best pasties in the UP.

Be careful, and enjoy the “ADVENT”ure of the season. Have a safe, healthy and very Merry Christmas!

Jill & Curt

	Income	Debits	Net
October	\$6,814.01	\$4,389.49	\$2,424.52

Technology

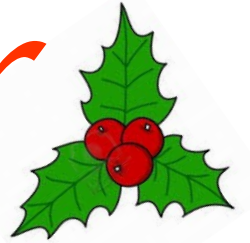
Time and time again, when we offer it up in prayer, the Lord will answer. Through you, our prayers for an upgraded broadcast system have been answered. THANK YOU. The new equipment has already been ordered. Once it is delivered, we'll begin the process of learning how to create and publish an enhanced worship service broadcast. We have been blessed for nearly 50 years of radio broadcasts on WIKB through the generosity of Thrivent, both on FM and through their radio broadcast streaming on the internet. Only a few months ago we began to video stream our Sunday services on FaceBook with a new presentation software. In the future, our new equipment will bring you into the sanctuary during the service and enable you to watch our service on a live video stream. Be patient, be thankful and be prepared to safely step back into your sanctuary, virtually. Let us know if you would like help getting set up with FaceBook to watch our video broadcasts of our worship services.

May God bless you as you have blessed us...





December



Happy Birthday

Lynn Karvala	1
Ethlyn Melchiori	2
William Starkey	5
Callista Bortolameolli	8
Katarina Hemeleski	8
Bertha Pangrazzi	14
Robert Quayle	14
Sheila Holm	15
Breanna Kemppainen	18
Thomas Karvala	20
Peter Nocerini	24
Ashlee Scalcucci	26
Blake Pietila	27
Karen Behling	28
Joan Basting	29
Madelynn Anderson	30

Happy Anniversary

Kurt and Brenda Markkola	2
Ed and Myrna Cook	12
Keith and Jana Aho	21
Cheney and Sandy Carlson	27

With Sympathy

The family of Alice Skrivani.

The family of Michelle Brendalen, Pastor Tom Wickstrom's daughter.

If we have missed your birthday, anniversary or a loved one has died, please notify the church by either leaving a message, email or text. Those numbers can be found on the front of this Newsletter. Thank you.



WELCA NEWS

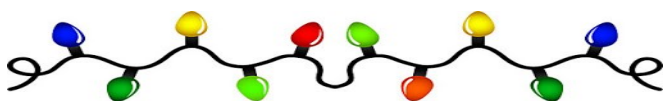
On 11/9 Women of the ELCA met in the Fellowship Hall.

A couple of ladies are working on Thrivent Action Team cards to obtain food to help out the Food Pantry at St. Vincent's.

We decided to send Christmas Cards to our homebound and care center members this year as we are unable to do the traditional cookie delivery and caroling. Plans are to get them ready at our next meeting on 12/14.

Also, on 12/14 we'll do a general cleanup and finish any decorating for Christmas Services as needed.

Happy Holidays to all! Please stay healthy.



Synod-Wide Christmas Eve Worship Broadcast

The Northern Great Lakes Synod is hosting a Christmas worship service that will be televised on WLUC and FOX-UP! The *tentative* days and times of the broadcast are listed below, but please be sure to check the Synod website, Facebook page and E-Notes for updates leading up to Christmas. Gather your household in the living room and enjoy this special event! All times are CST.

Christmas Eve

WLUC 3-4 pm

FOX-UP 6-7 pm

Christmas Day

WLUC 11-12 am

Fox-UP 8-9 am



Men's Group

Due to Hunting season and covid restrictions, the Men's Group was canceled this month. Stay safe and Merry Christmas to all.

Next meeting: December 17th



Christmas Poinsettias December 20th service

2020 has been a trying year for all of us. Since we do not know at this time if we are having a Candle light service, we are going to have our poinsettia garden on the **20th of December**. This year you can order your poinsettias directly at Silver Moon. If you call Martha, she will deliver for free the poinsettia you pick out. You will have to notify the church office of who you are honoring or in memory of. **I will need the names by December 14th**. You can drop the name in the offering plate, leave a message on the phone or send me a text.

6.5 inch \$15.00

8 inch \$32.00

10 inch \$45.00

Call Silver Moon @ 906-265-6666 to order your flower. Ask for Martha and have her deliver to First Lutheran (for free).

Notify church of names:

Phone: 906-265-9518, leave message

Text: 217-855-4956, your name and who in memory of

Or put names in offering plate

Order early, she has a limited number!

Sweet Redemption

I ran into my old boss today at the grocery store. Well, it's funny, you know, because I had a few weeks ago been cleaning up the house and found a photo of him working at his desk, and I wanted to send it to him. As I looked at it, I thought he really wasn't that bad of a guy to have as a boss, and I should tell him that. I remembered how, on his last day at the office, he had made a point of seeking me out and wanting to clear the air, so to speak, said something like, "I hope everything is good between us." And I know, whether or not it was good or whether I was holding back on him with an honest answer, I would have said, "Everything's just fine, Dave" even if I was still angry or holding on to something less than copacetic of the past.

It was a long time ago. I've been retired 4 years, but he probably almost 10. Anyway, you know how it goes. I thought about sending the photo to him but ended up throwing it in an envelope and returning it to a box in a dark closet, stashed away only as a good thought, and never actually doing anything about it.

So, I was a bit surprised to see him picking through the produce section but, after some perfunctory greetings, I told him about the photo and that he had been on my mind, and then I said what I really needed to say, which was something like, "Dave, you were a pretty good boss to me." He looked at me dubiously from behind his mask because, you know, it's Covid time and we were both faced up, and he says, "Oh C'mon. I thought you didn't like me," meaning as a boss for all those years.

And I found myself fessing up by the bins of loose onions and stacks of bagged potatoes, and admitting, "I didn't," but quickly adding, "But I've reconsidered my position."

My position? Who talks this way? But, honestly, during this season of Covid, I have reconsidered so many things that I thought were set in stone forever, but learned instead that they are not. Nothing is set in stone. And how do you explain in the produce section that you've moved from thinking with your head to thinking with your heart, and everything softens up when you do that, and you no longer hold on to the negativity that is attached to silly and stupid things, and those self-pronounced assessments that hardened into resentments seemed to lighten up and float away like a little kid's helium balloon that lets loose from a carefree little hand? You can't explain any of this easily, if at all. Why couldn't I see any of this before?

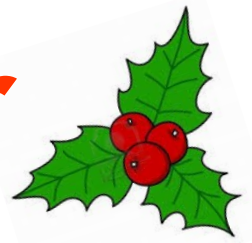
This is a story about healing a relationship. Healing, in Greek, means to be made whole. Jesus healed people as testified to in the gospels. There is always so much mystery in these encounters. Where do you see yourself in the sweet redemption story? Have you, like me, uttered an "everything's just fine," when truly you know there is work yet to be done? Have you, like me, had some good thoughts arise only to re-shelve them, unacted upon, in the back closet of your mind? Have you set your thoughts in stone, or are you willing to reconsider your position?

Donna Ahlberg





December



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
 10:00 Service Lance Crevier		9:00 Quilter's				
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
 10:00 Service Rev Doug Johnson		9:00 Quilter's 10:00 Finance 6:00 Council				
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
 10:00 Service Lori Ward	WELCA 11:00	9:00 Quilter's		8:30 Men's Group		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
 10:00 Service Noisy Offering Donna Ahlberg		No Quilter's		<i>Candlelight Service</i> <i>TBD</i>	Merry Christmas 	
27	28	29	30	31		
10:00 Service Andy Hill		No Quilter's				

Interim Pastor, DJ Rasner
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Broadcast WIKB 99.1 FM
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