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UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

To see our church calendar with full details and descriptions of all church events, please visit our website: www.firstlutheranalexandria/events.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

- 11/1: WELCA Dessert & Coffee
- 11/3: Living Nativity Sign Up Begins
- 11/4: Daylight Savings Ends
- 11/6: Baptism Class
- 11/8: Men’s Breakfast
- 11/13: Faith & Life Forum
- 11/19: Bookseekers
- 11/21: No Wednesday Programming, Worship, or Meal
- 11/21: Community Worship at St. Mary’s
- 11/7-28: Thanks for Giving
- 11/10-14: Commitment Week
- 11/24: Poinsettia Sign Up Begins
- 11/28-12/24: Advent of Gratitude

DECEMBER EVENTS

- 12/1: Living Nativity
- 12/6: New Member Social
- 12/6: WELCA Christmas Luncheon
- 12/7: Christmas Family Music Classes Begin
- 12/9: Christmas Store
- 12/9: Children’s Christmas Program
- 12/13: Men’s Breakfast
- 12/15: Carols and Candles
- 12/17: Bookseekers
- 12/24: Christmas Eve Worship
- 12/26: No Wednesday Programming or Worship

JANUARY EVENTS

- 1/8: Baptism Class
- 1/10: Men’s Breakfast
- 1/21: Bookseekers
- 1/28: Adult Ed - the Gospel of Matthew

FOCUS



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH | NOVEMBER 2018-JANUARY 2019

2019 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

WE ARE THE CHURCH
YESTERDAY - TODAY - TOMORROW

COMMITMENT WEEK IS NOVEMBER 10-14

It is both an exciting and challenging time to be the church. People are stretched and pulled in many directions by our fast paced and consumeristic culture. Many churches are struggling as they try to find their way through these challenges. In light of that, First Lutheran is excited and grateful to be a church that is able to draw on its rich history, provide ministries that are relevant for today and look forward to a future that is full of possibility.

As we prepare for 2019, we

choose to see the challenges ahead of us as opportunities. God continues to do amazing things in and through this church. As our ministries grow, and we move into our new church home, the cost of doing ministry will grow as well. Thank you for the important part you are playing in moving our mission forward.

When you receive your 2019 Stewardship packet in the mail, please take the time to prayerfully consider your plan as to how you will help serve and support our mission. This year

there are four ways to turn in your stewardship response:

- 1) Bring it with you to worship during Commitment Week, November 10-14
- 2) Drop it in the mail
- 3) Bring it to the church office
- 4) Complete the online forms at www.firstlutheranalexandria.com (Click on the 2019 Stewardship Campaign at the bottom of the homepage.)

Thank you for your support and for your willingness to be the church together!

CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMMING GROWTH

The pews are full! The hallways are full! The energy is exploding! This is the feel at First Lutheran Church on Wednesday nights. We have responded to a great desire from families to offer a mid-week, one stop opportunity for the WHOLE family! We offer KICK for our 2nd-5th grade students, Kingdom Kids-Wednesday for our 3 year olds-1st grade, Lil’ Kingdom Kids for our youngest kids, FLY/Confirmation for 6th-9th graders and



Candle time for 10th-12th grade students. All of this along with a good home-cooked meal, family game zone and worship round out for a great night for families. This is by far the favored choice of many of our families. We continue to offer options to our traditional Sunday families who bring their little ones to Kingdom Kids-Sunday at 8:30am. Our numbers have again increased; the kids and youth are coming!

THANKSGIVING EVE WORSHIP

Wed, Nov 21 | 6:30-7:30pm | St. Mary’s Church

This year, members of First, Bethesda, Shalom Calvary and St. Mary’s will come together for our annual Thanksgiving Eve Worship. We come together to set aside this time to celebrate what we have in common, to sing praise, and to give thanks to God.

LIVING NATIVITY

Sat, Dec 1 | 4:30-7:30pm | FLC

Walk-through from 4:30-5:15pm and drive-through starting at 5:15pm. Sign-up sheets for actors/actresses/helpers will be in the East Entry by the stairs. Roles are available for all ages—for individuals or families—and we can’t do it without you. Contact Roger Thalman at 320.491.2027 with any questions. Monetary donations are also needed to make this ministry possible.

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- Sunday, December 23
- 8:30 & 9:45 Worship (No 11:00am Worship)
- Christmas Eve: Monday, December 24:
- 10:30am - Children’s Worship
 - 2:00pm - Worship with Communion
 - 4:00pm - Worship with Communion
 - 6:00pm - Candlelight Worship with Communion
 - 9:00pm - Candlelight Worship with Communion
- Sunday, December 30
- 8:30 & 9:45 Worship (No 11:00am Worship)

GIFTS & MEMORIALS

Memorial gifts are a meaningful way to convey sympathy to the bereaved and acknowledge the loss of a loved one. They are another way that we give thanks to God for the ways we have been blessed. Gifts may be designated to a particular fund or left undesignated, which allows them to be used for special projects and areas of greatest need.

BUILDING FUND

In memory of Harlan Johnson, given by DiAnn Ness, Ruth Irgens
In memory of Stan Norlien, given by David & Cheryl Larson
In memory of Donna Lunemann, given by Alan & Kathy Patton
In memory of Helen Jacobson, given by Greg Tvrdik, Jeff Carlson, Junnell Widmark
In memory of Leonard Anderson, given by Ralph Hornberger, Ivan & Lois Wambheim
In memory of Harold Ranum, given by Nelli Meyer, Donna Todd, Kris Todd, the family of Mike & Gina Heiter, Gail & Nancy Todd, Alex Tax & Business Services, Dan & Gretchen Poffenberger, Jane Lange, Ken & Cindy Losch, Julia Mason, Dennis & Beverly Meyer, James & Barbara Syverud, Brian & Bonnie Ohm, Frank & Lou Starke, Caryl Nelson, Carol Feldmann, Sonia Bale, Steve & Noreen Thompson, Tom & Linda Akenson, Terry & Vera Overbeck, Ruth Nelson, James & Marilyn Carlson, Paul & Christine Cherwien, Yvonne Shimota, George & LaVerne Dyrstad, Colleen Gandrud, Gail Johnson, Joseph & Susan Johnson, Sue Dinauer, Willi Salvi, Kirby & Laura Todd, Paul & Mary Anderson, Karen Runge, Phil & Pat Haabala, Steve & Jana Maack, Jackie Ranum & Family, Arnie & Betty Gunness, Ruth & Russ Osterberg, Rod & Judy Skrandstad, Joel & Karyl Hoeper, Kiley & Mary Kay Todd, Jan & Mary Winge, Jim Johnson, Sharon Pope, Irene Seppanen, Curt, Gene, Dave & Ron Bardal, Leighton & Elaine Brown, Ann & Ron Branch, Norm Opeim, Vern & Judy Anderson, Ken & Sylvia Kellerman, Natalie Johnson, Ivan & Lois Wambheim, Maria Vasquez, Dan & Linda Zismer, Louise Wood, Janet Knoll, Sue Whitt, Darrell & Lynette TeSelle, Becky & Steve Wenz, The Angrist Family
In memory of Margaret Kallstrom, given by Robert & Joanne Kensinger, Junnell Widmark, Rose Marie Stoeck, Jenny Trumm

In memory of friend, Denny, given by Rod & Liz Engfer
In memory of Avis Haug, given by Ralph Hornberger, Glenda Seela, Gracie Lewis, Joan Suckow
In memory of Ruth Martinson, given by Robert & Beverly Dokken, LaVina Larson, Junnell Widmark, Rose Marie Stoeck, Jenny Trumm, Ruth Amundson, Gracie Lewis, Dennis & Bonnie Miller, Joan Suckow
In memory of Joan H. Thompson, given by Robert & Beverly Dokken, Joan Suckow, Greg & Val Trumm, Jean Erickson, Norman & Audriene Kvitek, Ruth Amundson, Paul & Linda Engebretson, Mary Norlien, Natalie Johnson, Arlou Schwendemann, Ruth Nelson, Joyce Thompson, Del & Kathy Kirkeby, Pauleen Garmon

In memory of Eleanor Hildreth, given by Jenny Trumm
In memory of Louise Tostenrud, given by Dennis & Bonnie Miller
In memory of Beth Pearson, given by Dennis & Bonnie Miller
In memory of Barbara Wilson, given by Rita Ellenberger
CAMPERSHIPS
In memory of Harlan Johnson, given by Carol Menzel, Janet Johnson
CHILDREN’S MINISTRY
In memory of Louise Tostenrud, given by Terry & Connie Brueske
DISCOVERY MIDDLE SCHOOL FOOD SHELF
In honor of Mike & Julie Shaughnessy’s 50th Wedding Anniversary, given by Mike & Julie, Ray & Cheri Norsted, and Friends
MISSION QUILTERS
In memory of Ruth Martinson, given by Marvel Olson

RADIO SPONSORSHIP

In memory of Stan Norlien, given by Lois Lubeck
In memory of Harlan Johnson, given by Lillian Schuneman
In memory of Harold Ranum, given by LaVina Larson, Greg & Val Trumm, Cortlan & Joanne Krogstad, Jan Kalina
In memory of Helen Jacobson, given by Greg & Val Trumm
In memory of their parents, Pauline & Herman Schultz, given by Pauline & Warren Olson, Judy & Clark Hoffman, Roger & Ruthie Schultz, Marie Daugherty, George & Linda Schultz
In memory of Harlan Schuneman, given by Lillian Schuneman
In memory of Ian Lo, given by Lillian Schuneman
In memory of Marv Trana’s mother, Eleanor Hildreth, given by Marv Trana and family, Pat Johnson, Sue Johnson
In memory of Joan Bjerknes and remembering their 53rd Wedding Anniversary, given by Jim Bjerknes
In memory of Margaret Kallstrom, given by Family & Friends
In memory of Arnice Carlson, given by Jeff Carlson
In memory of Leonard Anderson, given by Dave & Lola Anderson
In memory of Chuck Erickson, given by Jean Erickson & family
In memory of Jack Trumm, given by Jenny Trumm & Family
In memory of Olive Leland, given by Don Leland
In memory of Joan H. Thompson, given by Audrey Gustafson, Minton & Diane Larson, Glee Domschot
In memory of Ruth Martinson, given by Carol Feldman, Pat Johnson, Sue Johnson, Audrey Gustafson
In memory of Brad Lantz, given by Dolly Lantz and Family
In memory of their parents Bill & Lorraine Zismer and Edna & Ervin Muth and Aunt Darleen Anderson, given by Dan & Linda Zismer

In honor of their children, given by Scott & Julie McDonald
In honor of their 65th Wedding Anniversary, given by Orin & Lois Lundberg
In honor of Darrell & Margaret Kalina’s 40th Wedding Anniversary, given by Shirley Dickman
In honor of their 45th Wedding Anniversary, given by Dan & Deb Loken
In honor of their daughter’s 26th Wedding Anniversary, given by Roger & Sheryl Bakewell
With gratitude, given by Orlyn & Janyce Struck
With gratitude, given by the Thursday morning Women’s Bible Study group
UNDESIGNATED FUND
In memory of Keith Roman, given by Chad & Michelle Rhen
In memory of Avis Haug, given by Alan Iverson
WORLD HUNGER
In memory of Albert Peraino, given by Rita Ellenberger
WORSHIP & MUSIC
In memory of Marion Bauer, given by her family
In honor of Glenn & Dorothy VanAmber’s 50th Wedding Anniversary, given by Yvonne Shimota

A DREAM BECOMES A REALITY

By Alice Anderson

25 years ago, my husband, Dave, and I had a life-changing experience. We went to Nicaragua and lived with a family. I can truly say that I have NEVER encountered such warm hospitality as I did on that trip. I can still recall the sound of our hostess scrubbing our clothes on a washboard early in the morning as I lay in bed. Besides building relationships with our brothers and sisters in Central America, we learned about social, political and economic realities of our neighbors to the south. Although the world would consider our new friends and hosts poor, we learned how very rich they are in expressing Christ-like love to strangers.

Since the time of our visit, I have longed to once again reach across boundaries and extend and receive that same love and cultural enrichment. After attending a presentation about a US/Mexico boundary delegation, I knew that I must pursue it. I invited two friends from First Lutheran to accompany me. Without hesitation, they said, “Yes!”, which allowed this dream to now become a reality!



Janna Lindoo, Bonnie Miller and myself will be part of a group going to learn, grow, and experience life on the southern border. With the help of Vicki Schmidt (who was one of our Lenten adult forum leaders last March) we will fly in late October to El Paso, Texas and learn from both our neighbors in the southern US and our neighbors in Mexico.

SERVANT SPOTLIGHT



Name: Jodi Belseth

How long have you attended/been a member of FLC? 2 1/2 years

Tell us about yourself: My husband, Bruce, and I retired to Alexandria in January 2016. Bruce was an elementary school teacher and I was a physical therapy assistant. We enjoy camping, gardening, canning and boating.

Tell us about your family: We have two children, Bryce and Trista, and a son-in-law, Ryan. We enjoy spending time with our grandchildren, Emery (3 1/2 yrs) and Madden (1 1/2 yrs).

What is your favorite Bible verse? John 3:16

In what ways do you volunteer at FLC? Usher, serve communion, bake communion bread, VBS volunteer, provide baked goods, fold bulletins, serve at funerals

Why is it important for you to volunteer at church?

My husband and I were both raised in families who were dedicated to helping and supporting the church. We feel it is a way for us to give back for all of the blessings we have received.

Tell us about a time that was especially meaningful to you as a volunteer at FLC.

A recent and fun activity was cohosting our neighborhood gathering at our home. We enjoyed visiting with friends and meeting new people.

If you could encourage someone else to serve at FLC, what would you say? We all have gifts to offer and can bless others but using those gifts.

UNWRAPPING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Over the last couple of months, we as a congregation have been learning about our spiritual gifts. In the book of 1st Corinthians, Paul writes that God has given each of us gifts, for the common good. In other words, we are to use our gifts to serve and encourage one another. If you have not already done so, and you would like to learn more about Spiritual Gifts, the first step is to complete the Spiritual Gifts Inventory. An inventory can be located at First Lutheran’s website: www.firstlutheranalexandria.com. Click on the Spiritual Gifts box or you can pick up a hard copy at the Welcome Center.

Once you have identified your top gifts, the next step is to explore what these gifts mean for you and how you can use them. It is important to find someone with whom to discuss your results. We have a Spiritual Gifts Team made up of members who would be happy to meet with you. To make an appointment, call the church office. We will also continue to offer question and answer sessions occasionally to discuss in a group setting. You will have the opportunity to share your top two gifts when you complete and turn in your Time and Abilities form from your Stewardship Packet that will be arriving soon.

This process of discerning our Spiritual Gifts together is new for each one of us. Already, we have been surprised by God’s leading as we take time to discover our gifts. There were many “aha” moments for our tenth graders who took the inventory and saw some of the unique ways God has gifted them. You could see joy in their eyes as their results came in and they began to realize this meant something for them. Others have been affirmed in knowing that they are already using their gifts at home or at work or in our community. We have older members who have come to realize that God may be calling them to use their gifts differently now that they are retired. We only get to have these moments of discernment and discovery when we stop to see that God has given us gifts. Not only has he given them to us, but asks us to use them.

Our hope is that this will be an opportunity for you as a gifted Child of God and as a member of Christ’s body. Our prayer is that it will be a chance to see and know that God has created you with purpose. Let’s discover our gifts together use them for God’s Kingdom.

PASTORS’ PEN

Soon after Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter addressed a crowd, telling the story of Jesus, the Messiah, whose mercy and forgiveness bring life and wholeness into the world. Moved but unsure, those who heard Peter speak looked at him and asked, “What should we do?” In many ways we at First Lutheran are part of that same crowd. We have heard the story of Jesus, of his love and forgiveness, and we ask, “Now what should we do?” We wonder how to be the church that God is calling us to be. We have been shaped by churches, places that have a special place in deep in our hearts. We look back and hold those memories dear, but we are also called to look forward and ask with faith, “Now what?”

In a time when faith seems to be losing its place in our culture, First Lutheran has experienced significant growth. Though the core of who we are has not changed since our beginning, the ways that we practice faith and the manner in which we carry out ministry has changed significantly over the years. With average worship attendance above 750, we are no longer the small church that we once were. We are a large church. In fact, our average attendance puts us in the top 1% of churches in the ELCA. These patterns of growth necessitate that we continue to discern what it means to be a large church, while always remembering who we are and who God has called us to be.

For the people of First Lutheran, this means that we must begin to look together at how we vision for the future, how our leadership is structured, and how we carry out our mission and ministry. Among many things, this means that our staff must take steps to further empower our congregation to own, shape, and carry out ministry. It also has led us to elect members-at-large to our Vision Team to free both the Vision Team and the boards to focus more purposefully on their work.

In the coming weeks, months, and years, this question will continue to shape us. This year we remember that we are the church. Because the “we” is growing, First Lutheran is asking significant questions and making important transitions. Because God is at our center and in our midst, we are being made new.

Blessings,
Pastors Greg, Kari and Ben

CAROLS & CANDLES WORSHIP

Saturday, December 15 | 5:00pm | Sanctuary

All are invited to celebrate the season of Christmas at this wonderful concert featuring the choirs of First Lutheran, the singing of favorite carols, meaningful readings, and beautiful candle lighting.

NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERINGS



One of the goals of this year’s theme, “We Are the Church,” is to strengthen our relationships with one another. This was lived out over the last couple of months as the 29 neighborhood groups that make up our congregation came together.

The agenda for these Neighborhood Gatherings was simple. We wanted to provide an opportunity for neighbors to gather, a chance for old friends to connect, and for new friends to meet and get to know one another better. The hosts provided hospitality and root beer floats, which were a big hit with all the participants.

Each gathering included lots of laughs and a chance to share stories and build relationships. Thanks to all of our hosts and to all who attended these events!

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL

One of the most exciting things about teaching preschool is that learning is happening at all times. No two days are alike and lesson plans change in an instant. The most meaningful lessons are brought forth by the children themselves. They are constantly showing the areas that they are developmentally interested in and ready for, sparking new ideas for games and learning centers each day.

Our little "communities" at Community Preschool are developing quickly. It is exciting to see how much the children grow socially each day. Socialization and communication skills are top on our list. Preschool is a safe place to experience being a leader and a follower as well as what to do when you don't get your way during play. Our goal is to work with the children to develop the needed skills to be part of a successful "community".

We hope that you can join us in the new church building the Fall of 2019 as we celebrate our 40th year of being part of First Lutheran church. Look for registration information coming in January 2019.

Sincerely,
Melisa, Kelli, Helen, & Angie



A NEW APPROACH TO OUR FUNERAL HOSPITALITY

“Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

Intentional caring and hospitality is one of First Lutheran’s core values. One of the ways we have been engaging this value has been to review how our Service Groups are functioning.

This past August a number of our Service Group chairs came together with some staff and decided that the first area that needed attention was how service groups are involved with serving funeral lunches and providing hospitality to members and families at the loss of a loved one. As a result, we have reorganized how this valuable ministry is carried out. We sent out invitations for members to sign up to serve and to bring baked goods. We have been overwhelmed by the positive response. We believe this new approach will be a much more effective way to offer this support. From this new group of 355 members, we will be forming four Funeral Hospitality Groups with four co-chairs per group. There are also two Funeral Hospitality leads, Jan Pray and Sandy Telander, who will coordinate and oversee this ministry. This new plan is set to begin in November 2018.

Thank you to all who have signed up for this valuable ministry. If you would still like to get involved you can do so by contacting the church office.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY IDEA FOR THE FOCUS?

We are looking for FOCUS story ideas from you! If you have a story to share of how God is at work through the ministries of FLC, please contact Sara Renney, Communications Coordinator, at communications@firstlutheranalexandria.com. Story idea submission deadline for the February-April FOCUS is Friday, December 7. Help us share all the ways that WE ARE THE CHURCH!

THANKS FOR GIVING

November 7-28 | East Entry Wall by Stairs

Help us raise funds to support our Children & Youth Ministry! These funds will help support summer trips and scholarships for the many young people who participate in our programming. Grab an envelope from the wall with the dollar amount of your choice. Take as many envelopes as you want! Pay for your envelope in the following ways:

- Fill your envelope with cash or check (made out to FLC with “Thanks for Giving” in the memo line) and return to the church office during business hours.
- Pay online at www.firstlutheranalexandria.com/your-gift. Click on the “My Offering” button and pay in the Thanks for Giving category.
- Payments can be turned in through the office or offering plate.

THANKS FOR GIVING to our children and youth!

ADVENT OF GRATITUDE

November 28-December 24 | West Entry

This year’s Advent of Gratitude project is focused on supporting the ministry of ELCA World Hunger through the ELCA Good Gifts program. The ELCA Good Gifts program supports the ministry of ELCA World Hunger by providing critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. Throughout the season of Advent, you are invited to take an ornament from the Good Gifts tree located in the West Entry, based on the amount you would like to give or the project you would like to support. There are ELCA World Hunger Advent calendars available for your use that can be picked up at the entrance to worship. Kids in Kingdom Kids and KICK will be collecting offerings in World Hunger barns. All donations will be collected the week before Christmas Eve.