

January Worship Assistants
 Calling Chair, Donna Slais



**First Lutheran Church Council
 Highlights of December meeting**

Members Present: Ari Johnson, Mark Sparby, Gretchen Stenehjelm, Stefanie Russell, Glen Beard, Angie Moe, Craig Paulson

Members Absent: Erica Johnsrud, Steve Holen, Mikka Haugeberg, Megan Wirtz

Staff & Guests: Pastor Rob Favorite, Pastor Mark Honstein, Pastor Alyssa Quade, Anne Beard, Kay O'Connor, Janet Johnston.

President Ari called the meeting to order. Pastor Rob gave devotions. Minutes from the last council meeting were approved.

WELCA: Ann Beard gave a report from the WELCA. WELCA will pay for one of the egress windows in the parsonage. Carpet in the basement was discussed. They will meet with the Property Committee to coordinate this project

Finance: finance report approved after discussion on the net loss each month.

Property: Mondak Heating will look at the one furnace that is not working in the sanctuary. Still need to plan a work day

Stewardship/Evangelism: No meeting. 53 God's Child boxes were delivered.

Worship: the church is decorated with the help of Pastor Rob, Angie Moe, Brad & Kris Bird

Youth & Education: Sunday School Christmas Program on the 17th. Many LYO events are planned for the upcoming 2018. Sunshine Kids will start again in January.

Staff: Keene Parish has approved of the Pastoral contract for 2018. Annual meeting will be January 28th following the 11:00 AM worship (also potluck) Both Pastor Rob and Pastor Mark will be going with the Macedonia Group to AZ mid-January.

The Cantata was well attended. Pastor Alyssa will be gone Dec. 24-29.

Other Business: Staff Christmas gifts will be discussed via email.

Next meeting Jan. 10 @ 6:00 PM



SPONSORS

Thank you to the following for sponsoring the Sunday morning broadcast of FLC worship for the month of December: Gen Hutmacher in memory of her mother, Wanda; Caroline Schwartz in honor of the FLC Choir and Service Music; Owen & Laurie Hamre; Ed & Charlotte Schilke sending greetings from sunny AZ.

We need radio sponsors for 2018! Please check your special dates and call the office (444-3244) to sponsor a Sunday in this new year.

The cost is \$110.00 per broadcast.



LYO Events for January

Sunday, January 14th
 12:30 PM – 7:00 PM
 \$10.00 per youth

Meet at FLC to car-pool to Grassy Butte for sledding, competitions, team-building activities, lunch and dinner

Saturday, January 20th
 6th- 8th Grade ONLY

Friday -Saturday LOCK IN

Meet at the Rough Rider Center for a fun-filled night! Laser Tag, Swimming, Skating, Basketball, Bouncy House.... many more activities! Time to be Announced.

Jan 7th 9:00 AM
 Reader: Don Stenberg
 Greeters: Robin & Stacey Arndt
 Ushers: Donna Slais, Jeremiah Beard
 Comm: David & Celeste Berg
 Coffee Hr: JoAnn Faulkner

11:00 AM
 Comm: Confirmation Students

Jan 14th 9:00 AM
 Reader: Ari Johnson
 Greeters: Ross & Tricia Sundeen
 Ushers: Jayson & Amy Lund
 Coffee Hr: Carol Kummer

Jan 21st 9:00 AM
 Reader: Owen Hamre
 Greeters: Donna Slais
 Ushers: Duane Wold / Brian Anderson
 Comm: Donna Slais/Owen & Laurie Hamre
 Coffee Hr: Karn Pederson

11:00 AM
 Comm: Confirmation Students

Jan 28th 9:00 AM
 Reader: Sue Jorgenson
 Greeters: Nick & Amy Polvika
 Ushers: David & Celeste Berg
 Coffee Hour: LYO



Women of the ELCA Circles

Wednesday, January 3rd

10:00 AM FLC WELCA General mt. @ church

Monday, January 8th

5:00 PM Hope @ the Horizon

Tuesday, January 9th

2:00 PM Garden @ the Horzion

Wednesday, January 10th

1:30 PM Peace @ the church
 TBA Banks WELCA





Grace, peace and greetings to all of you!

Do you believe in miracles? That is a phrase that I am sure that we have heard from time to time. But I wonder what it means for us, especially as we have read the Gospels and have learned about the healing ministries of Jesus. And what does it mean for us, today, in real life? I recall the 1980 Winter Olympics when, perhaps, the greatest upset in sports history occurred. The United States had defeated the Soviet Union in ice hockey, a feat that no one had ever expected to happen. I remember the announcer on TV, who was Al Michaels, crying out in the last seconds of the game, "Do you believe in miracles? Yes!" A miracle had, indeed, happened, but it was the hard work that led to that great moment that created the miracle. A group of college students had come together only months before to create a team for the ages. The team was led by their coach, Herb Brooks, who was not even the first choice to lead the team. But in their journey to the Olympics, this group of students became a healthy and high-performing team. After the Olympics were completed, Coach Herb Brooks shared some of his reflections on what happened in that journey, in that "miracle" that occurred. He said, "They were really mentally tough and goal-oriented. They came from all different walks of life, many having competed against one another, but they came together and grew to be a real close team. I pushed this team really hard, I mean I really pushed them. But they had the ability to answer the bell. Our style of play was probably different than anything in North America. We adopted more of a hybrid style of play – a bit of the Canadian school and a little bit of the European school. The players took to it like ducks to water, and they really had a lot of fun playing it. We

were a fast, creative team that played extremely disciplined without the puck. Throughout the Olympics, they had a great resiliency about them. I mean they came from behind six or seven times to win. They just kept moving and working and digging." It was apparent that the team acquired two necessary qualities for success: mental toughness and being goal-oriented. Being mentally tough requires a mindset to deliver your best each and every day. It is about not taking the easy way, but taking the best way, and to take responsibility. I think that the team had the attitude of "getting" to play rather than "having" to play. The coach had taught them that, in order to excel, they had to earn it by playing and winning against impossible odds. Whining or complaining about what was not possible, was not going to do it, but to solve the problem of beating the best team in the world. Winning the gold medal was the tangible sign of what the U.S. Hockey team had achieved. They had accomplished a miracle. For all of us, as people of God, the miracle is that we have been created by a God, who loves us beyond all comprehension, who continues to bless us and forgive us in spite of our failings, and who calls upon us to rejoice in him and to respond to the needs of others around us no matter how gifted we are. As a church body, we are, indeed, a team working on a mission to share our faith through our words and example. Yes, we sometimes fall short of the glory of God. But I am thinking that, in order to "feed the five thousand," we need to work together, listen to each, and allow the Holy Spirit to inspire us to create miracles in other people's lives. Let's do it!

Yours in Christ, Pastor Rob



Annual Meetings in January are **Garden on the 21st and First on the 28th** if you haven't email/or dropped off your year reports they are due in the office **January 12th**. If you have turned them into the office- I thank you so very much!

Reports include Garden and First Lutheran: WELCA secretary reports; minutes from the last church's annual meeting; Council President; FLC Building Committee.

All Treasurer's reports including the Churchs; WELCA; FLC Trust need to be in by **January 17th**

Banks Lutheran will have their annual meeting on February 4th - please drop/eamil those reports to the office by **January 27th**.



First Lutheran Building Fund

Angelina Marachek	\$ 20.00
Cleone Turnquist	\$ 500.00
Dale Jorgenson	\$ 660.00
Loren Berwald	\$1,290.00
Holly Washburn	\$1,600.00

First Lutheran Choir Fund

Holly Washburn	\$ 500.00
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Growing, Together, in Christ.

¹⁸Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. ¹⁹I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise. (Isaiah 43:18-21)

Happy New Year! As I look back over 2017, especially where my head was at the start of the year, I am in a much better place this year than last. Last year I was tired and ready to quit, this year I am rejuvenated, inspired, and ready to try new things. A lot of that is due to a new pastor and a couple new council members that are trying new things. They have challenged me to look at things differently, get out of my comfort zone and step up my ministry. So, there's gonna be some changes round here; primarily with me, and possibly you too.

In Isaiah 43, God told the Israelites to forget about former things because He was doing something new! God is always doing and creating something new; but I forget that when I am stressed about the busy pace of life with kids, depressed about the clutter in my office and home, anxious about medical problems with me and others, or discouraged about the financial struggles in the churches. I get overwhelmed, and want to retreat into my cluttered office and hide. But when I give in to that temptation, I miss new things God continues to do. Thankfully, there are more times I see God at work

For instance, this morning before I got to the office to write this article, I was driving home from the paper route and met

member of our parish heading out of Watford to do a task he wasn't looking forward to doing. What are the odds that we happened to meet at the exact time he needed prayer? It was definitely a God thing, so I prayed with him and wished him safe travels. It wasn't a planned meeting, in fact I was hoping to meet up with someone else, but God put us together at that time, in that place, for a purpose.

Yes, God works in amazing ways, but I have found the less time I spend with God in worship, in prayer or reading my Bible—due to my busy schedule or being anxious, depressed or overwhelmed—the easier it is to miss what God is doing and become more anxious, depressed and overwhelmed. The less time I spend with God, the less I desire to spend time with God. Have you ever experienced this? Our spiritual appetite seems to run opposite the way our physical appetite runs? The longer we go without eating, the hungrier we get. But the longer we go without prayer, worship or Bible reading, the less we feel like doing those things.

In the Air Force, I was moved around a lot in the first 3 years, so I did not connect with a church. While stationed in England for 18 months, I didn't go to church except on Christmas and Easter. Even then the experience was uncomfortable because I was unfamiliar with the service and the design of the church left me feeling distant and disconnected from God. I was content partying with my friends and sleeping in on Sunday even though I was raised going to church every Sunday for the first 20 years of my life. I was away from God and had lost my appetite for the "living water."

I certainly don't want to lose my appetite for God and miss out on all the good he has for me in this life, let alone the next. And I'm sure you don't either. So how can we reinvigorate our spiritual appetites? How can we increase our desire for the things of God? Well, King David was called "a man after God's own heart" in 1 Samuel 13:14 and, by examining David's psalms, pastor and Hebrew scholar Dr. Paul Manuel has come up with some hints for cultivating our spiritual hunger. He says, "To foster

your spiritual hunger, you have to feed your spiritual hunger" and even though David occasionally slipped up, he had a well-developed spiritual hunger. You can tell that by the psalms he wrote.

¹O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." (Ps 63:1) First, David hungered for the person of God. God is a relational being, he wants to be in relationship with us and would like us to want to be in a relationship with Him.

"One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." (Ps 27:4) Second, David hungered for the presence of God, and found it in the Temple. God is everywhere but is most present in church, during worship.

⁵I remember the days of old, I think about all your deeds, I meditate on the works of your hands. ⁶I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. (Ps 143:5) Third, David hungered for God's plan and purpose rather than his own. He knows from Israel's history that God's plan was always better than the people's plan and the same is true for us.

¹I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ²Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever." (Ps 145:1-2) Lastly, David hungered to praise God. Manuel wrote, "When one has come to the point of knowing the Lord in a personal way, the desire to sing His praise and sing it often becomes very strong." This has been my experience as well.

As we welcome Emmanuel, "God with us", let's work on our desire to be with God. In the next 4 weeks, read each of the above psalms in their entirety, and talk to God about where you are at and want to be compared to each psalm.

Together in Christ,
Pastor Mark

