

2016 Annual Report

Abbreviated Mission Statement

The People of First Lutheran Church will . . .

- Love one another as Christ has loved us
- Grow in Faith
- Share the Gospel
- Spread the Gospel

Pastors

Senior Pastor Pr. Dianne Loufman
Interim Associate Pastor Pr. Gregory Garmer

Program and Support Staff

Ministerial Associate Ann Beck
Dir. of Youth & Family Ministry Deb Westerberg
Director of Music Ministry Dr. Jason Branham
Assistant Dir. of Music Ministry Karen Sande
Office Specialist Nancy Hamre
Finance Specialist Janet Freund
Custodial Team Duane Sieger
Karl Guldner

2016 Vision Council

Senior Pastor Pastor Dianne Loufman
President Candy Madich
Past President Suzanne Rauvola
Vice President Teresa Zupancich
Secretary Tammy Fanning
Treasurer Ron Carlson
Councilor at-Large Sarah Climis
Councilor at-Large Vince Magnuson
Councilor at-Large Aaron Wedge
Ministry Board Chair Diana Ream

Ministry Board

Pastor Dianne Loufman
Pastor Greg Garmer
Ann Beck
Dr. Jason Branham
Deb Westerberg
Dawn Boman
Diana Ream (Chair)
Steve Samuelson
Mary Schmitz
Sharon Turnboom
Margaret Broderius, Carol Prohaska (FLCW)

Ministry Team Chairs

Margy Bell Evangelism
George Rennan Lifelong Learning
Paul Anderson and Local & Global
Brenda Schrader-Johnson
Carlene Sippola Stewardship
Kirsten Bich Worship & Music

First Lutheran Church

Annual Meeting Agenda

February 12, 2017

12:15 pm

Call to Order	Candy Madich, President
Opening Prayer	Inside cover of the report
Devotion	Pastor Dianne Loufman
Approval of Agenda	Candy Madich, President
Reception of June 5, 2016 Minutes	
Reception of Reports	
Adoption of Mission Support Plan	Ron Carlson, Treasurer
Election of NE MN Synod Assembly Delegates	Dianna Ream
Mission Planning	Vision Council
New Business	Candy Madich, President
Closing Prayer	Pastor Dianne Loufman

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Pr. Dianne Loufman Senior Pastor

FLC — PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



As I think of this past year, one image seems to come to mind: MOVING! I made three trips between Philly and Duluth – the car so packed JuJu had to ride in front – the beginning, I fear, of her deciding she had graduated to human status. My husband made three trips with a truck and flew back to make a fourth trip with a car. I moved into an apartment and then into a house (thanks to all who helped make that happen). I continue to move things from the garage into the house and just in December we were able to move one of our cars into the garage.

This incessant moving made me think about the stories of God's people in Scripture. They, too, are constantly moving. Think of Abraham and Sarah called to be immigrants in a new land. Think of Jacob always on the move for fear of returning home to the consequences of cheating his brother, Esau. Think of Moses, Miriam, Aaron and the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for forty years, sojourning from one place and identity to a new place and identity. Think of the exiles forced to move to Babylon and then invited under a different empire to return. Think of the book of Ruth where Naomi moves to Moab with her husband and then returns home to Judah with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, emigrating with her. And then there is the name for the first followers of Christ – People of the Way. They were following the Christ who was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They were people on a journey risking and trusting this new found way.

This is why in many Lutheran congregations the worship leaders enter following a cross. It sends the message – we are People of the Way; we are people on a journey; we are people on the move; we are people who follow, not a pastor, but Jesus Christ. (Maybe once we get enough communion servers and assisting ministers and readers, we can have some crucifers).

As I reflect on this past year, I realize the metaphor of moving is an apt description of the beginning of our ministry together. We have been moving into the as-of-yet uncharted future.

Pr. Dianne Loufman

Senior Pastor

WORSHIP

The biggest movement I'd like to see here, in case you have missed it, is that we move into participatory worship. Worship is meant to be the expression of the people gathered, not the expression of the pastor and the musician alone. We have begun to move in this direction. We have some assisting ministers who are helping to lead. We have some people who are willing to help shape and build the repertoire at the second service; we need more. I hope we can move into adding more art and drama and dance. We moved and renamed the Art Team, Liturgical Arts and moved it under the Worship Ministry Team.

I'm thankful to all who add extra dimensions to worship. Each addition adds depth – like a fabric woven with warp and weft. We moved the traditional psalm tones out of the second service to use music more in line with the feel of that service. We moved out-of-doors and around the block with our Palm Sunday procession. We moved into marking the Triduum – the Three Days by adding an Easter Vigil. That service alone models what it means to be People of the Way as we move from the beginning fires of creation out-of-doors, to the gathering area to hear the movement of God amongst and through God's people, through the Red Sea (thanks to Angel and Andrew Saur's creation) to the font moving away from Satan and into the promises of God, and then around the sanctuary to enter into the light of the resurrection and to the altar to receive the very gift of Christ.

We started blessing our lives in new ways – our pets, our bikes, our skis, the trails we traverse, hunting, and our homes. Blessing reminds us that all time belongs to God; that as we leave this place of worship, our work as church has just begun. We are sent forth into the world as God's people – blessed to be a blessing and once in a while to dare to speak about faith or Christ's love or risk inviting someone to worship. The trail blessing was the most moving to me as Jonathan Rova wrote it and put cedar boughs in the font and the red candles representing the spiritual gifts of God floated lit over the waters and so many people came forth and Julia Sampson had the perfect idea of using film canisters for those who didn't have water bottles and people were still filling up their containers as I returned to the altar and people went into the highways and byways of the woods and blessed the trails and the people who would move over them. Wow! I would call that the movement of the Holy Spirit!

We (well, the custodians and a few others) literally moved the sanctuary furnishings (responses to this found under Worship Ministry Team). We have been moved to tears and laughter and occasionally to clap; my preference would be a rousing "Amen," but I recognize that might be moving too far, but shh!, I have seen a few people moving their bodies to music now and again.

EVANGELISM

We added to our moving outside of the building with summer worship to moving out of the building for a celebration of St. Francis Day with a blessing of the animals in the park; we moved out of the building for National Night Out with a wonderful turnout from the neighborhood and the church community where we listened to music, thanks to Dave Walter's contacts; we ate ice cream; played four square and learned from Mark Boyce the process of basket weaving. We moved outside on Thanksgiving Day to welcome runners into our space; I was invited to do the meditation for St. Luke's hospice remembrance service in November and Pastor Greg met those grieving the loss of children at the angel park in December. Staff has begun to meet at Sir Ben's to plan worship to be visible in the neighborhood and also to see who our neighbors are.

Pr. Dianne Loufman

Senior Pastor

At the National Night Out a woman shared that she thought our church was closed. At Sir Ben's the manager was invited to worship, but wasn't sure where First Lutheran was despite his child attending Promise Preschool. I know these sorts of comments offend people, but it is a sign to us that we aren't as visible as we think and that we don't share enough about ourselves and our faith community. I hope we move beyond that this year.

We sent postcards for Easter and Christmas out into the neighborhood. We know a few people responded to the invitation.

We moved our membership classes to Inquirers' sessions with a focus not on membership, but on discipleship; and as Dave Walter led them, the spirit of discipleship oozed out of him. Thanks be to God for his years of service.

We created a new team called Intentional Nurturers and hope to move all people into this sensibility of coming to know someone new and nurturing them along in community and making sure they are connected and cared for and missed when they aren't here.

We were moved to create a Simple Meals team that is still getting off the ground. What is the one thing that is always included in hospitality? Food! When people stop by our homes, we offer them something to drink and eat. I know you know this for all the people who invited me over and fed me! The same is true when we invite people into our faith home – we want to be able to offer hospitality. FLC has depended upon Char Juntunen and Beatrice Ojakangas with many helpers to take care of food hospitality. We are so grateful for them. Going forward in our busy world, how can we continue to offer simple, but grace-filled hospitality to those who gather in our faith home?

We were moved to create FLC buttons to wear in order to share who we are at events such as the Rhubarb Festival. Have you seen them? We need to remember to wear them!

STEWARDSHIP

We moved stewardship away from being synonymous with financial giving to its true meaning – stewardship is everything we do after saying, "I believe." As our stewardship theme put it: It All Belongs to God. Stewardship is our care of all that God has entrusted to us and so we are called to care for ourselves – our bodies, minds, emotional and spiritual welfare; we are called to care for creation; we are called to care for relationships; we are called to discern and care for our talents and our finances. Each of these relationships is a sign of the strength of our relationship with God. Do we trust and rely on God as the foundation of our lives, or is God the extra cherry on top? There is new energy and there are new people on this team as we realize how fun stewardship is when understood rightly.

As Pastor Garmer has moved on, we are seeking to strengthen our caring ministries team so that we are visiting those who are sick or homebound, suffering loss, or celebrating new life. Perhaps you would be moved to take communion or the gift of prayer to someone?

Some of us are moving our bodies in new ways with YogaDevotion on Monday evenings.

Pr. Dianne Loufman

Senior Pastor

We moved out of the building and into the neighborhood to care for creation with a clean-up of the neighborhood as a restart up of our creation care team.

Pledging did not noticeably increase from last year, but our unpledged giving allowed us to end the year without having to use all the lutfisk monies and anything else we could find to close the gap. I hope that is another sign that we are being moved by the Spirit and moved into the future.

PROPERTY/SPACE

Property is its own committee in FLC's structure, but care of property is a stewardship issue, too.

We opened our doors to the CHUM assembly and to a prayer vigil in remembrance of those who were massacred in Newtown four years ago. Choice Unlimited is teaching cooking classes in the kitchen and an HIV support group has asked to meet in our building. AA groups meet in our building twice a week. Sunday afternoons twice a month people gather to learn the ukulele. These are both community outreach efforts and good stewardship of our space. We have a large beautiful building with lots of space; how can the building be offered as a blessing to the community? How can it be filled with life on a daily basis? You would be surprised how people would be moved by curiosity to see who we were by watching people go in and out of our building all day.

Thanks to a financial gift from a congregational member matched by the Foundation, we have moved out of existence the corner buildings. We even have some funds left over as a beginning step towards a digital sign. When the weather breaks in the spring and the ground is soft enough, I'm going to suggest we buy or someone builds a sign such as found at the beginning of trails where our neighbors can write their suggestions of what they'd like to see happen with that space. We might be surprised how and what people are moved to share.

ADMINISTRATION

We moved some action teams from one ministry team to another and some we re-moved altogether as they were no longer functioning. New people moved into new positions and others were given the freedom to realize they could move on. We'd like to create a climate where saying "Yes" to a ministry doesn't mean one has signed one's life away.

We moved as a council to hire a communications person (job description in the works). We have a rich ministry and rich possibilities, but we have to be able to communicate what we are doing more effectively and to a wider community.

The vision council is moving beyond the nuts and bolts of ministry to fulfill its visioning component. The ministry board has wrestled with a lot of the nuts and bolts and the ministry teams are leading with new people in new directions. I am thankful for those who have accepted these leadership roles in moving FLC into the 21st century.

LSS' Center for Changing Lives is moving in a few blocks from our building. What are the opportunities for us to serve and partner?

Pr. Dianne Loufman Senior Pastor

COMMUNITY

LSS' Center for Changing Lives is moving in a few blocks from our building. What are the opportunities for us to serve and partner?

The Montessori school Many Waters' junior high moved next door. Are there opportunities to partner with them?

Who else is in the neighborhood? Who is missing from our congregation? What does it mean that the Spirit leads so many health care professionals to worship here? How do we serve this community of healers?

COMMUNICATION

Communion, communication, community all have the same root. Holy Communion is God's communication to us of God's presence in bread and wine given for all for the forgiveness of sin. Holy Communion makes us into the community of Christ, but we need healthy communication to live that out. Without healthy communication, communities fall apart. We know this happens in our families, so how much more so is the possibility in a community of disparate people. Knowing this, we have started what will be an ongoing happening of crucial conversations. There is nothing we should not be able to talk about with one another — respectfully, honestly, and lovingly. My prayer is that we are continually moved towards an openness that allows us to hear and understand one another and the perceived other and be moved to love, to forgive when necessary, and sometimes to be moved to change.

We have moved Bible study into Sunday morning in hopes that those who responded to the Interserve Survey, wanting to grow in their faith, might be moved to attend to strengthen the foundation of their faith and their ability to bring a Christian perspective to our and their own crucial conversations.

One of the most important things we communicate is who we are in Christ and who as a congregation we are called to be. With that in mind, we have been working on our mission statement, our logo, and new images to convey how God is inviting us to move into the future. Thanks to Anya Powell who helped design our new ministry team fliers and who, along with Angel and Andrew Saur, have been working on designs for our logo and banners.

FLC
First Lutheran Church
faith**love**community

Growing in Faith
Spreading God's Love
Gathering in Community

I am grateful to all of you for the Spirit's movement in our lives that brought us together and now to this place of moving into the future created by God. With Christ as our Way, Truth, and Life we will be able to move into the future as the People of the Way we are invited to be.

Pr. Dianne Loufman

Senior Pastor

My gratitude to Becky Kilgore for temporarily entering the chaos of stories coming at her from many directions to put together this report. Thanks to Nancy, Janet, Jason, Carl, Duane, Deb, Karen, Ann, and Pastor Greg for their shared partnership in leading all of you along the Way. And first and last of all, thanks be to God, who leads us in Christ on the journey.

— Pastor Dianne



Membership Statistics

Baptisms

1/3/2016 Charlotte Anais Osthus
 1/3/2016 Ella Arlette Kurtz
 4/3/2016 Koczur, Jacob Aldon
 4/3/2016 Koczur, Molly Anne
 5/16/2016 Midboe, Aubrey Lynn
 6/12/2016 Ekker, Lars Erik
 8/9/2016 Letendre, Ella Claire
 8/9/2016 Socha, Joel Michael
 8/9/2016 Socha, Liza Jean
 9/25/2016 Karlgaard, Calvin Glen
 10/17/2016 Marynik Lila Helen

Funerals

1/7/2016 Galeski, Vivian
 2/1/2016 Langguth, Charlotte Ann
 2/13/2016 Van Deelen, Benjamin Richard
 3/9/2016 Alsop, Robert Alvin
 5/14/2016 Johnson, Theodore Leonard
 7/11/2016 Wiklund, Virginia
 8/20/2016 Verchotta, Phyllis
 8/22/2016 Link, Joseph Robin "Rob"
 9/28/2016 Nelson, Betty Jean
 10/5/2016 Perkins, Ruth
 10/8/2016 Magomolla, Zakayo Thaddayo
 10/10/2016 Knutsen, Heidi Lee
 10/19/2016 Keller, William Charles
 11/12/2016 Leland, Raymond William
 11/30/2016 Anderson, Linda Lou

Confirmation - Sunday, October 30, 2016

Kianna Donnellan
 Eva Huber
 Sara Revoir
 Addeline Sampson
 Mikaela Smith
 Katelyn Weaver
 Greta Worley

New Members

5/15/2016
 Aubrey Lynn Midboe
 Glen Backman
 Donna Bergstrom & Ari Fischer
 Tyler Curnow
 Janet & Carl Freund
 Katrina Erickson
 Lois Knutson
 Brian Peterson

 10/30/2016
 Cheril Chesser
 Lorie & David Haglin
 Nick & Tammy Licari, Issac, Ellie & Henry
 Stephanie Lundblad
 Joyce Mattson
 Jeremy Roseth
 Sam Weston

 12/11/2016
 Beth & Brian Aebly & Ella

Marriages

1/16/2016 Alex & Vanessa Kronzer
 4/16/2016 Michael & Kierstin Swenson
 6/18/2016 Roger Larson & Jessica Johnson Larson
 9/10/2016 Tyler & Stacie Curnow
 10/1/2016 Justin & Monita Niemann
 10/2/2016 Jason & Christina Branham

Welcome to the Lord's Table - 4/24/2016

Eve Dorman Jacob Downs
 Joseph Gustafson Ella Linval
 Bennett Linval Brynn McCourtney
 Norman Nelson Sam Shilman
 Jake Valentine

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Total Baptized Members	1,886	1,885	1866
Total Confirmed Members	1,353	1,354	1326
Number of Households	670	750	657
Number of Giving Households	346	351	345
Average Weekly Attendance	344	375	386

Some member clean up has taken place in 2016.

FLC ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

February 14, 2016

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL MEETING February 14, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

President Suzanne called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m. and determined a quorum was present.

PASTORS PRESENT

Senior Pastor Dianne Loufman, Interim Associate Pastor Gregory Garmer

OFFICERS PRESENT

Suzanne Rauvola, President; Tim Holst, Past President; Candy Madich, Vice President; Ron Carlson, Treasurer; Brian Bich, Councilor at-Large; Tom Whittaker, Councilor at-Large; Diana Ream, Ministry Board Chair

OFFICER ABSENT

Greta Johnson, Councilor at-Large

OPENING PRAYER

President Suzanne Rauvola led the assembly in the opening prayer.

DEVOTIONS

Pastor Dianne Loufman led the assembly in the Litany printed on the inside of the front cover of the Annual Report. She also shared an ELCA video on inviting people to church.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Tom Boman moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ronald Ream seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

RECEPTION OF MINUTES

Vince Magnuson moved to accept the minutes from the June 7, 2015, congregational meeting. Jonathan Rova seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

Dave Walter moved to accept the minutes from the November 11, 2015, congregational meeting. Wahli Vanstrom seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

RATIFICATION OF MINISTRY BOARD APPOINTMENT

Char Juntunen moved to accept the appointment of Sharon Turnboom to the Ministry Board as presented by the Vision Council. Terri Krause seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

RECEPTION OF REPORT

Mary Schmitz moved to accept the Annual Report as presented. Jane Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

FLC ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

February 14, 2016

ADOPTION OF 2016 MISSION PLAN – Ron Carlson, Treasurer

TFR Interest

Interest will come due in 2016 for the TFR loan that was generously made by the FLC Foundation to reduce the TFR mortgage. The interest may be waived by the Foundation if a request is made. Mark Knutson, Chair of the FLC Foundation, indicated that any request would be looked upon favorably.

TFR Balance

Bank Mortgage	\$522,726
FLC Foundation Loan	<u>250,000</u>
Total Due	\$772,726

Treasurer Ron Carlson presented the 2016 Mission Plan as approved by the Finance Committee and the Vision Council. There was no discussion or questions.

Jim Zastrow moved to accept the 2016 Mission Plan as presented. Jon Sande seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

VISIONING CONVERSATION – IMAGINE!

Pastor Dianne led a conversation on “Image if we kept the Annex Building/Transitional house property and demolished the buildings. We could. . .” and “Imagine if we sold the Annex Building/Transitional House property. We could . . .” “Imagine!” cards were handed out for members to answer both questions. This will help with determining how best to move forward with the property.

ELECTION OF NE MN SYNOD ASSEMBLY DELEGATES

Three names were brought forward to approval. The Vision Council will appoint a fourth delegate. Members that the Vision Council has approved to be delegates are: Candy Madich, Vice President; Diane Ream, Ministry Board Chair; and Joycelyn Ream, member.

Jane Olson moved to accept the delegates for the NE MN Synod Assembly as presented. Ronald Ream seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Rev. Marshall Moen proposed a group of single members meet once a month for a potluck dinner for Fellowship. An interest meeting will be held on Sunday, February 21 to plan.

CLOSING HYMN AND PRAYER

Pastor Greg Garmer led the assembly singing the first verse of the hymn *What a Fellowship, What a Joy Devine* followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Kilgore
Vision Council Secretary

FLC CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

June 5, 2016

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL MEETING JUNE 5, 2016

Call to Order

President Suzanne called the meeting to order at 11:15 and a quorum was present.

Pastors Present

Senior Pastor Dianne Loufman, Interim Associate Pastor Gregory Garmer

Officers present

Suzanne Rauvola, Tim Holst, Candy Madich, Ron Carlson, Greta Johnson, Tom Whittaker, Diana Ream

Officers Absent

Brian Bich, Councilor at-Large; Becky Kilgore, Secretary

Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer by Pastor Greg Garmer

Approval of Agenda

Tom Whittaker moved to approve agenda as presented. Dan Badger seconded the motion. Motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

Reception of Minutes

Mark Gunderson moved to accept the minutes from the February 14, 2016 congregational meeting. Dick Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed with a unanimous oral vote.

Senior Pastor Report

Slideshow PowerPoint presentation by Pastor Dianne Loufman on the power of recognizable logos and the myriad of symbols and colors FLC has. What is our recognizable logo?

Financial Report—Ron Carlson, Treasurer

April 2016 Income and Expense Report

Total Income April 2016	Mission Plan: \$ 62,006	Actual: \$ 56,092
Total Income Year to Date	Mission Plan: \$273,225	Actual: \$268,882
Total Expense April 2016	Mission Plan: \$68,382	Actual: \$ 62,525
Total Expense Year to Date	Mission Plan: \$274,546	Actual: \$263,239

April 2016 Time for Renewal

Total Income	\$3,823
Total Expense	\$3,064
Bank Loan Balance	\$501,782
Foundation Loan Balance	\$250,000

FLC CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

June 5, 2016

Annex Property Update

Motion from Vision Council to demolish the buildings on FLC property (12th and Superior Street) - Tim Holst mentioned the fact that this decision does not close any of the options for the property. The motion passed unanimously.

Recognition of retiring Vision Council members

Suzanne Rauvola said kind words about the Vision Council members completing their terms. Members were given a Thyme plant for giving of their time. The Vision Council members recognized were: Tim Holst, Tom Whittaker, and Greta Johnson. Two recognized retiring members were not present: Brian Bich and Becky Kilgore.

Election of Leadership Slate – Diana Ream (Ministry Board Chair)

New to Vision Council:

Teresa Zupancich, Vice President

Tammy Fanning, Secretary

Vince Magnuson, Aaron Wedge, Sarah Climis — Councilors at Large

Vision Council-Continuing

Candy Madich, President

Suzanne Rauvola, Past President

Ron Carlson, Treasurer

Diana Ream, Ministry Board Chair

New to Ministry Board

Mary Schmitz, Councilor at Large

Ministry Board-Continuing

Diana Ream, Chair

Steve Samuelson, Dawn Boman, Sharon Turnboom; Councilors at-Large

New to Nominating Committee

Tim Schandel

Nominating Committee-Continuing

Diana Ream, Chair; Cecile Swenson, Jeremy Downs, Jackie Johnson, Nancy Rova

Endorsement of FLC Foundation Board Members

Mavis Whiteman, Jim Zastrow

Motion to accept Leadership Slate by Ron McKinnon and second by Mark Boyce. Motion passed unanimously.

Message from President Suzanne Rauvola – Suzanne thanked the congregation for allowing her to serve the FLC community as their President. The Congregation applauded her service.

FLC CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

June 5, 2016

Catherine Anderson presentation “Wondering about Faith Formation” Using the image of a bird trying to make a nest and failing because it kept doing the same thing instead of adapting to its new environment, Catherine asked if nostalgia was killing the church. The golden circle, starting with why, then moving to what and how, illustrates the question — “Why do we do what we do?” Catherine challenged us to start every meeting at FLC with 10 minutes of wondering, promising that we would see changes within the year. Small group discussion followed with table talk and group summaries.

No New business

Closing Prayer by Senior Pastor Dianne Loufman at 12:40 pm.

Meeting minutes submitted by Greta Johnson and Candy Madich

Candy Madich President

On January 11, 2016, Pastor Dianne Loufman joined the body of Christ that is First Lutheran, ushering in a new perspective, fresh ideas, and excitement for all that lies ahead. Pastor Dianne began leading Sunday worship on January 17 and was installed at First Lutheran Church by Bishop Thomas Aitken on January 24.

Shortly into the new year, an FLC family offered money to demolish the FLC-owned buildings at Superior Street and 12th Avenue East, if FLC Foundation would provide a dollar-for-dollar match. A \$30,000 match was provided by the Foundation, and soon bids were secured for demolition of the building as well as remediation of asbestos on the property. Before demolition, the entire 3-lot property was appraised, with funding again provided by the Foundation.

Soon this building constructed in the 1800's was demolished and the lot leveled, ready for the next step. Meanwhile, at the February 2016 congregational meeting, members participated in Visioning conversations: "Imagine — What if we keep the property? What if we sell?" This conversation will continue.

Vision Council has embarked on a Visioning journey, guided by the ELCA document "The Mission We Share," requiring a Mission Plan from every congregation in the NEMN Synod. Led by Pastor Dianne, Council is looking both within and beyond our church walls answering **WHY** we exist as a congregation, leading to a vision of **WHAT** and **HOW** we will carry out God's mission.

Hospitality and welcoming came into focus as Vision Council, Ministry Board, Ministry Teams, and Action Teams wondered and planned how FLC would reach out and welcome the stranger. Intentional Nurturers are now part of our efforts to build connections with people coming into our community of faith, so they will feel cared about and valued. The Evangelism/Welcome Ministry Team surveyed our church building and collected pictures of "wear and tear" areas needing some TLC. The PowerPoint "Visitors' View" creates awareness of what a guest sees as they enter our church. One of the areas needing repair has been addressed: front steps at the Superior Street entrance were repaired, railings were painted and bricks were refurbished at the Superior Street and London Road canopy entrances.

Work is proceeding on a new logo for First Lutheran, a logo that we can all relate to, remember, and share with others. Discussion is ongoing, imagining and planning new electronic outdoor signage that will communicate upcoming events and invite guests to join us.

At year's end, Pastor Greg Garmer retired after three years of ministry at First Lutheran. Thank you, Pastor Greg, for supporting and guiding us when we needed it the most!

The past year has brought renewal, positive energy, and hope. We can all do our part to continue the momentum: When a request goes out for help, or a sign-up sheet appears, say "**Yes!**" Whenever possible, **attend worship** and FLC events regularly (and invite a guest), consider all points of view and **be open** to new ideas, look for unfamiliar faces at worship, **introduce** yourself, listen to their story and **invite** them to further events. And if it turns out that they have been a member for 20 years, just take Naomi's advice and say, "Well then, it's time we met!"

Thanks be to God!

Pr. Gregory Garmer

Interim Associate Pastor

*“Jesus answered them, “Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.”
Matthew 21:22*

Answered prayer is always a blessing.

When I first learned that Pastors April and Judd were leaving at the end of 2013, I honestly thought to myself in prayer: *Gracious Lord, be with all the people of First Lutheran Church in this time of loss and stress, that none of their good service, faith, and mission be broken or lost from your sustaining grace; and grant me, if I can do anything towards that end, to have at least a small measure of wisdom and strength to offer it.*

Well, it was hardly a week later that Bishop Tom Aitken called and with the Vision Council, asked me to “help out” through the interim time.

It was indeed daunting to lead worship those first Sundays of January in 2014, but once again, I had the temerity to pray: *Lord, please may I not be asked to offer anything in this pastoral responsibility that I cannot do gladly, for your sake and in your name.*

Now I can sincerely say that both those prayers have been graciously answered, not just for me, but for the whole congregation, as it has pulled together, repenting where appropriate, renewing its vision and now uniting in strong and purposeful ministry with Pastor Dianne’s shepherding.

Surely, all of this is Christ’s doing and blessing through his Holy Spirit’s work in Pastors Mark Holman and Becky Wagner, the Vision Council, Ministry Board, Ministry Teams, Call Committee, the dedicated staff of Jason Branham, Karen Sande, Ann Beck, Deb Westerberg, Janet Freund, Nancy Hamre, Duane Sieger, Carl Guldner, the many faithful volunteers, and the united effort of the whole congregation.

Truly it has been good to be a part of that whole coordinated response and I feel abundantly blessed by this “Senior extension” of my 44 years in public ministry for the Lord and this good church we call the ELCA.

In faith and friendship,

Gregory Garmer



Ann Beck Ministerial Associate

The year 2016 is an amazing one on which to reflect. After a lengthy and often dark time of conflict, doubting, transitioning, searching, confessing, and healing, we were blessed to welcome Pastor Dianne to help FLC move into the future. What I have experienced and witnessed this year is the power and energy that comes from a renewed spirit of hope. And what I most appreciate about Pastor Dianne is her constant challenge and reminder that our hope is not in us, but in the immense love and grace of a God who ultimately holds us all.

Like the new green of seedlings emerging even as winter lingers, hope rises in the growing edge of discovery, as we — as a congregation and as individuals continue to explore what it means to live as people of faith.

Professional development and personal growth were entwined this year, and I was fortunate to participate in several tremendous educational opportunities. Last fall I completed the Sacred Art of Living and Dying series, a 4-unit program over 18 months, focused on understanding and transforming spiritual pain. I also participated in excellent events related to church visioning and ministry in new ways: “Engaging Adults” by Vibrant Faith, and Luther Seminary’s conference on “Rethinking Sunday Morning: Better Questions, Bolder Experiments.” These multi-day seminars provided a wealth of insightful information, new research, broad perspectives, and detailed examples, all with the goal to help churches navigate mission and ministry in a world very different from recent generations.

Our congregation as a whole is also growing in faith-forming ways. With financial support from the First Lutheran Foundation, leadership from the Discovery Team task force, and professional guidance of InterServe Ministries, the Lifelong Learning Ministry Team embarked on a “discovery” journey. This initiative was committed to learning about and leaning into the needs, hopes, challenges and current realities of our congregation, especially for our youth and families. Thank you to the hundreds who participated in this process. Our final Discovery Team meeting was just completed in January and a brief summary update was included in the February 2017 issue of The Builder. Look for InterServe’s final report soon.

The information gathered is rich with hope and opportunities and will be valuable for many aspects of our church’s ministry in the months to come. However, new ideas are already being implemented as we “experiment boldly” to build on the hopes and address the challenges of growing and living as disciples, and realign our ministry to be faith forming partners for all ages. The Sunday School program was adjusted to include a monthly intergenerational learning time — GIFT. (Growing in Faith Together) with a year-long focus on the Fruits of the Spirit. GIFT Sundays have been well attended and received as an informal, fun, and meaningful time of learning as families, and across generations. Adult forums continue to be rich learning times and have added an intentional emphasis on “crucial conversations” as we learn to talk deeply as a community, respect and understanding over tense division. A regular Sunday morning Bible study has also been added; an informal weekly gathering designed to explore Bible stories and how they translate to and transform our life today.



Ann Beck

Ministerial Associate

We are also growing as people caring for one another. As we say goodbye to Pastor Garmer and his presence in times of grief and loss, we are being called to embrace our mutual responsibility to share in joys and sorrows. Many are actively engaged in direct pastoral care, such as hospital or homebound communion visits, and in an informal network of caring phone calls, prayer shawls, cards, meals, and messages. A new Caring Ministers group has begun meeting, looking forward to build a broad-based and integrated outreach, as we all learn to be more intentional and skilled in caring for each other. It is the prayer and intention that in the coming year we will grow in compassionate connections amongst the people of FLC, using the wide variety of gifts we have been given to care for one another.

It has been a blessing to work with my colleagues and with fellow members in this body of Christ. I look forward in anticipation as we continue to work together with inspired vision, building a community emboldened by the Holy Spirit to learn, worship, care, and serve together to support God's mission in the world. God's blessing on each of you as we go out faithfully living and sharing the Good News!



Deb Westerberg

Director of Youth and Family Ministry



As I reflect back on stories from this past year where I have been aware of God's Spirit moving, those moments have often been in simple ways, but that have left an impression on my heart about what God is up to in our faith community as we live and wrestle with what it means to be Christ followers. One strength I see at FLC is desire to bring people of all ages together to live, learn, and grow with each other. Church is one of the few places in society where all generations gather together on a weekly basis – what a gift we can celebrate! There's such a richness in being able to share God's story and our story with one another.

Here are some stories from this past year that have left an imprint on my heart in being a part of this congregation:

Senior/Senior Sunday

This past Spring as we were planning to honor FLC's senior members we were also planning to honor FLC's high school graduates. During staff meeting we decided that maybe those two events could be celebrated together and how might that look? We asked senior members to write letters to our high school students. They shared their life experiences with these students who were at a major life milestone. On that Sunday we had our high school graduates bless the person who had wrote them a letter, to thank them for their witness. After the worship service, I heard that one of the elder/student pairings had been extra special. About 17-18 years prior, a family with young children (the youngest being carried in an infant car seat) were joining the church and they were matched with another couple who were their sponsors. Here they all were once again, standing in front of the church, supporting one another a different point in life's journey.



Ukulele

This past year, a ukulele group began under the direction of Angel Saur. This has been a highlight in my month as a group of seemingly random people gather together to learn how to play the ukulele! There are young kids, there are retirees. There are people from FLC, there are people from the community (in fact at our last gathering there were about 20 people there, half of them from the community!). We laugh, we play, we sing. And there's nothing like hearing a couple of 3rd graders request *Leaving on a Jet Plane* and then belting it out! During the summer, we met outside in the Peace Garden to play. On one particular Sunday afternoon, a couple who had parked in the London Road lot in order to go for a walk on the Lakewalk heard us playing as their returned to their car. They came over, sat down, and listened for a bit. We had a chance to briefly chat with them before they moved on. What an opportunity to be church (in a maybe quirky way!) outside the walls of the church building!



Deb Westerberg

Director of Youth & Family Ministry

Journey

One of the blessings of Journey (our Confirmation ministry) is that parents and students in younger grades join together to participate each week. At the beginning of class, I ask the parents and their child to take some time to check in with one another, to share a high and low from the day. There is something special to see parents hold their child's face in their hands as they make a connection with one another.

“My Usher Friend”

As I was sitting in the sanctuary one Sunday morning, waiting for worship to begin, I happened to catch a brief interaction between one of our students and an usher. As she went into the sanctuary with her parents, she stopped, turned around, and went back to one of the ushers to give him a hug before turning around and skipping to catch up with her family. This same student, at a Journey class about Worship, mentioned that she is friends with one of the ushers. I'm not sure how this friendship started, but seeing these two look out for one another on a Sunday morning is pretty special.

Middle School Gathering

This year at Middle School Gathering we once again had an awesome group of students attend the one night event. On Saturday evening during hotel life the kids can pick from a bunch of different activities such as swimming, crafts, games, etc.) Our hotel rooms were at pool side and I happened to be sitting with the other FLC adult leaders to check in with them as the evening started to wind down. The group of kids had all ended up in one of the hotel rooms. Through the open door we could see them laughing, playing cards, and having fun as a group. This meant a lot to me because this particular group of 11 kids comes from 5 different schools in our community. Seeing that they chose on their own to gather as one group to have fun, meant they were building community, something that's hard to do an hour or two each week at church. They spent intentional time together to laugh, play, worship, and learn about how they each belong and matter to Christ.

Elementary Rejuve

Each winter I have the opportunity to bring a group of elementary kids to Camp for the Elementary Rejuve. It's a one night retreat with camp staff. I was able to ask one of our college students to come with to help lead small groups. It was after this weekend that cemented the fact that she felt God calling her to work at camp for the summer. (And I'm happy to say she did and has applied to work another summer at camp!) During the time there, we did Bible studies, played games, and did some singing. On the car ride home, I had three students with me. They sang camp songs the whole way home, close to an hour and half ride! As they got back to church, they decided the next day that they wanted to teach a couple of the songs to the rest of the Sunday School kids, which they did! Another opportunity to build community and then bring that back to their fellow students with the purpose of sharing their experience!

There are just the start of the stories that make up some of my 2016. As I type, more and more come to mind. The common theme that I saw throughout the year, is that being a part of community, of belonging, is important. It takes effort to show up – sometimes it is easy, sometimes it can be hard. But by being present in community we are all richer as we experience God's presence together. We can be church to one another and we can be church in our world. It is a privilege to be on this journey of faith with this community and I'm excited to see where God will lead us in 2017!

Dr. Jason Branham Director of Music Ministry



The year 2016 proved to be an exciting year on many fronts!

I must begin by thanking everyone for their encouragement and support of my and Christina's wedding in October this year. Each day, we're more and more thankful for each other and you – our faith community.

I'm continually grateful for the presence of our new pastor, the Rev. Dianne Loufman, and the renewal she has brought to our many ministries. Her knowledge and experience has been able to stimulate new ideas for our worship life – this is evident in the numerous stories that you can read in the *Worship and Music* portion of our report.

Karen Sande continues to be an incredible blessing to our community with her steadfast faithfulness to our children and youth! She has been able to create many exciting opportunities for our young musicians through the *Apostle Singers* and numerous instrumental ensembles. We had the privilege of hearing an intergenerational instrumental group on Palm Sunday, Reformation Sunday, and Christmas Eve.

First Lutheran continues to provide musical outreach opportunities. In the fall, Karen and I collaborated with several of our instrumentalists to present an *Organ Plus* concert. In November, the *Soli Deo Gloria* choir, along with other singers from the community and a professional orchestra performed the *Cantata No. 1, How Brightly Shines the Morning Star* for a full house! We are looking forward to hosting *The National Lutheran Choir* in March of 2017.

In anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, an action team, chaired by Suzanne Rauvola, organized a potluck and hymn-sing on Reformation Sunday. This was a delightful opportunity to learn new hymns, sing familiar favorites, and enjoy a time of fellowship. And yes, the food was phenomenal!

Ministry Board

Diana Ream, Chair

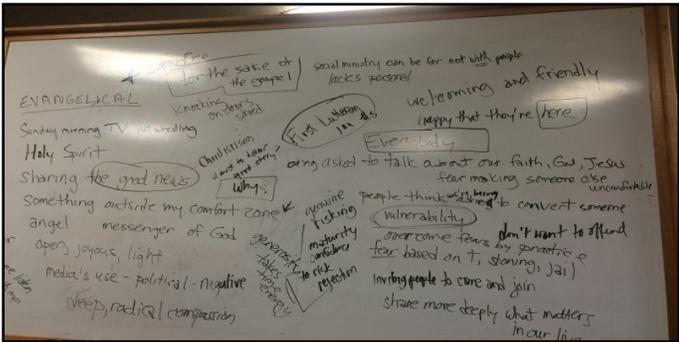
Diana Ream, Chair; Pr. Dianne Loufman; Pr. Greg Garmer; Ann Beck; Jason Branham; Deb Westerberg; Dawn Boman; Steve Samuelson; Mary Schmitz; Sharon Turnboom; FLCW

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.
Ephesians 4:11-12

The **Ministry Board** meets on the first Tuesday of the each month. In addition, each member serves one or more of the **Standing Ministry Teams** reported on later in this document. As a board, we approved mission support plans for all the ministries of First Lutheran, including all benevolence programs which totaled \$100,587 for 2016; we reviewed, approved, allocated, and tracked all Action Teams; advocated programs to address the needs and issues of the church; and addressed the staffing needs of the Ministry Teams.

Some specific actions taken by the Ministry Board include:

- Removed staff-led ministries from Action Teams
- Evaluated Action Teams and placed them under the correct Ministry Team (for example, Caring Ministry Action Team was moved from Evangelism to Stewardship – Care of Relationships) or removed them because they were no longer functioning
- Updated the special giving policy
- Established Standard Operating Procedures for the Ministry Teams (# of people on team, length of service, etc.)
- Providing feedback and guidance with the creation of a Logo/Banner
- Assisted each of the Ministry Teams in discerning the “WHY” when creating their promotional fliers
- Held Strategic Planning Meetings with each Ministry Team



- Practiced “clearing” names through the Ministry Board so that we are inviting new and different people
- Approved six new Action Teams
- Approved new Chairpersons for Stewardship and Worship Ministry Teams

FLC EVANGELISM TEAM

*But you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem.
Acts 1:8*

Our purpose is to encourage & teach
First Lutheran Church to be a
community of radical hospitality.

We fulfill this ministry by:

- sharing faith outside our walls
- inviting guests to journey with us
- providing meals and a welcoming space

Action Teams:

- inquirers
- intentional nurturers
- invite
- simple meals

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First Lutheran Church

Evangelism & Welcome Ministry Team

Margy Bell, Chair; Pastor Dianne Loufman; Pastor Greg Garmer; Tim Climas; Nicole Feralin Krause; Jeff Karlgaard; Gail Tate

HOSPITALITY

The Sunday before Thanksgiving Pastor Dianne announced there was a signup sheet for people who would like to welcome runners and spectators to come into church during the annual Gobble Gallop Run to warm up and use the restrooms. There were six people who signed up (Pastor Dianne, Tom & Mary Boman, Dick & Yvonne Anderson, and me). I had no idea what an impact opening the church doors for a few hours that morning would have.

At first it was slow going. People didn't know the church was open, so we made a rudimentary sign posted on a folding chair on the sidewalk and began to personally invite people to come in and warm up or use an indoor restroom. I think it was the offer of the restroom that was the biggest draw card at first, but the warm and dry spot quickly became our calling card. We heard heartfelt cries of "Awesome!", "Thank you!", "This is amazing!", and on and on. People ran into others they knew and we were surrounded by hugs, hellos, and reunions. It was a massive party. A good number of members were there to run or cheer on family members and said they were delighted and happy the church was open for the community.

There are a few different races during the Gobble Gallop event, but the main attraction is the 5K. By the time the 5K began, it was getting rainy and cold. After the runners had gone by, we invited any and all spectators to wait for their return in the warm and dry lower commons. Many families took us up on the offer. I was talking to a couple and asked who they were there to cheer for. They shared that this was their son-in-law's first road race after his brain tumor surgery. He has a goal board and was looking forward to crossing this milestone off his list. They were excited, but nervous, and were visibly relieved when they received a text from their daughter that they were on their way back from the halfway point of the race. What a joy to share that time with them and to be able to hear their story. A story of fear at diagnosis and joy at each completed milestone.

We left the church that morning thankful for this time spent in community with our community. But the fun wasn't over yet. The next day I was at Kohl's waiting in the Black Friday checkout line when a woman approached me. She asked if I had been at First Lutheran the day before. She proceeded to tell me how thankful she was that the church was opening and welcoming to the Gobble Gallop runners and their families. The opportunity to have a place that was warm and dry was such a gift and she hopes we will be there next year. She gave me a hug and said she was glad they had not removed the security tag from her garment so she could run into me and thank me personally.

Those few hours that Thursday morning have remained with me for weeks. Meeting people from all over, welcoming them into a warm, inviting place, hearing their stories, sharing their joy . . . this is a Thanksgiving morning I will remember.

— Suzanne Rauvola

EVANGELISM AND WELCOME MINISTRY ACTION TEAMS

- First Fruits
- Food Hospitality
- New People
- Special Events
- Sunday Morning Hospitality



Evangelism & Welcome Ministry Team

FOOD HOSPITALITY

Who did you meet at the Lutefisk Dinner?

I met so many people and I didn't have my phone to write down their names and remember them.

But I did meet a man from Toivolo, MN and he told me it was Finnish for hope. I said I wish I had known that for the previous Sunday's sermon on hope.

I met Tammy Licari's parents -- the Sullwolds. Tammy and her husband, Nick just joined FLC and they returned to Duluth from having lived in Denver for the last 10 years. They are happy to be back near family. They attended here long ago and now attend Gloria Dei.

I met a couple who met in a bar in NYC; she originally from Parkchester in the Bronx which is near where I lived and where I would catch the train into Manhattan. He lived in an apartment on Central Park West -- if you know the area -- la-di-dah!

After four years and after marrying, they moved to Iowa and then Denver and then back to Poplar where the man is originally from. Now they live in Lake Nebagamon not far from where Erik and I have property.

He grew up eating Lutefisk and it brings back so many memories.

See what wonderful connections we make when we ask people to tell us their stories?

— Pastor Dianne



FOOD HOSPITALITY

I look at my spiritual journey as being an ecumenical one. Grew up in the United Methodist Church and originally came to Duluth about 20 years ago to be a part of the Loaves and Fishes Catholic Worker Community. It was in my post Catholic Worker life while living on Jefferson Street that I learned about First Lutheran's Lenten services. I will admit that it was the above average, not your ordinary Wednesday night church supper, that initially appealed to me as a vegan. But the mid-week break for singing, quiet, prayer, and stillness is what keeps me and my partner Jen Stenersen coming back. Even though we are now members at Peace UCC, we continue to feel welcome as "Lutherans for Lent." Thanks for feeding our spirits with the Holden Evening Prayer service and our bodies with the amazingly yummy food.

— Melissa Boyle

Evangelism & Welcome Ministry Team

NEW PEOPLE

Brian, new member: Pastor Garmer introduced me to a member, Paul, who was to be my “Intentional Nurturer” to help introduce me to the church. After meeting a couple of times to get to know each other, Paul invited me to the Friday morning men’s Bible study group, which I now really look forward to each week. This connection has helped me to get involved in the church and has been really good to help me grow in my faith. This has all been a wonderful new experience of church for me and gives new meaning to my faith.

Paul, member: When asked to be an “Intentional Nurturer” my reaction was, well, OK, but it was kind of out of duty. Was I wrong! Meeting Brian, learning of and sharing his story and challenges, has been a neat experience and blessing — he has nurtured my faith. His insights expressed in our men’s group discussions about what being a follower of Jesus is all about, and how serious popular Christian music can reach out to hurting people, have been mentoring to me.

— Paul Anderson

SPECIAL EVENTS

FLC’s Invite Action Team with support from the Vision Council and Evangelism & Welcome ministry team reached out to the Hillside Neighborhood on August 2 by hosting an ice cream social as part of the community’s National Night Out. FLC members and neighbors attending enjoyed a great time getting acquainted... sharing stories... playing games and enjoying ice cream and toppings on a very warm August evening.



I wish I could remember those who came. I do remember Rondee...a (African American) boy who had walked several blocks with his family to enjoy the ice cream...participate in the games and face painting. I remember a couple of young men who were construction workers who came by after work. They made sure we didn’t have any ice cream left over.

I hope this is an event that will become a tradition for First Lutheran Church. It’s a great opportunity to extend a welcome and get to know neighborhood residents.

I believe the participation in the event proved that **“if you invite them, they will come.”**

— Dave Walter

Evangelism & Welcome Ministry Team

On Sunday, December 4, 2016 I noticed a small notice in the “Coming Events” listing of the Duluth News Tribune announcing: *“The Angel Vigil will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 6 in Leif Erikson Park.”*

Since it was constructed, I have noticed this beautiful memorial while running the Lake Walk through Leif Erikson. Since being at FLC, this memorial has meant even more to me because of all the families at First who have suffered the loss of a child. Situated just across from the bench that Paul and Carol Anderson dedicated to the memory of their son Scott, and directly across London Road from the doors of the church, I have thought that this is a site worthy of congregational awareness.

As the weather on December 6 deteriorated to strong 25 mph wind and biting 20 degree cold, I searched the News Tribune again on December 6 to see if this event was still going to be held, but found no additional notice.

At Ministry Board that evening, I mentioned to Pastor Dianne that I wanted to excuse myself shortly before 7:00 pm to see if the Vigil was still going to happen. When I looked across the street people were getting out of cars to walk into the park. So, I went over and joined them. In the howling wind, at least 45 people had gathered together, along with a camera from KBJR.

In the relative darkness I couldn't recognize anyone I knew, so I just stood quietly on the side while one of the organizers gave an oral history of the Angel Memorial and its origins. What I learned is that on every December 6 at exactly 7:00 pm a vigil is held at all the Angel Memorials in all the cities of the United States, Canada, and around the world.

It was too windy to light candles, but a beautiful bouquet of a dozen white roses was lovingly laid at the base of the angel statue. Then, all present were invited to take turns stating the name or names of the children they were there to honor and remember.

After everyone had spoken, the man holding the microphone turned to me and asked if I had someone to remember. I told him that I wasn't sure if it was appropriate for me to speak as I had no one personally to remember. “But,” I continued, “I'm the Associate Pastor across the street at First Lutheran Church and this memorial site is important to our congregation because of the number of families in our midst who have lost children over the years. Also, in the past year our community has lost three children who were loved by our community, two of the memorial services were held at First Lutheran, and if it would be all right, I would like to give their names.” Immediately, he welcomed me to do so. So I shared the names of Ben VanDeelen, Isaac Gardner, and Zakayo Magomolla.

As I had self-identified as a pastor, he then asked if I would be willing to offer a prayer. So I prayed for all those who were gathered and the children they still loved and remembered, asking that God would continue to help them always to cherish the precious ones they were honoring, and that God's comfort might sustain them in their loss.

With that the Vigil essentially concluded. But immediately, Dan, the man holding the microphone, asked if I or someone else from First Lutheran could be available next year on December 6 to offer a prayer. And I assured him that could be so. He took my contact information and I returned to the Ministry Board meeting where I shared his request.

Continued on Page 29

Evangelism & Welcome Ministry Team

In visiting with Julie Eckman and others since the Vigil, it was suggested that this could be a meaningful annual outreach. Surely FLC could offer our building as a place for attendees to gather beforehand or to warm up afterwards in inclement weather. We could even offer coffee and a sanctuary for prayer if wanted.

— Pastor Gregory Garmer

RADIO MINISTRY

What does our FLC radio broadcast mean to me? There have been times over the past years when I have been ill and not able to attend church service in person. What a comfort it has been for me to know that I can still listen and worship in my own way at home. I often think of those who are confined to home for a long period of time, and how important it is for them to be able to listen to our service – to still feel connected to FLC and comforted by our meaningful sermons, scripture readings, beautiful music, etc.

I feel our radio broadcasts are such an important outreach tool, hoping some folks who listen will decide to visit FLC in person when they are able.

Thank you to all those who donate to this ministry.

— Nancy Magnuson

SEMINARY BENEVOLENCE

This year I've had the chance to co-lead a group at my seminary called "Women in Ministry." As we describe it, our goal is to support women in our community in the areas of "spirituality, self-care, and sisterhood," and one way we did that this year was through an event called "Prayer Mosaic." This event brought women together for a morning of interactive prayer followed by a meal. We invited people to host different prayer stations that creatively incorporated different forms of prayer — everything from song to art to poetry to silence — and we also did a "prayer walk" together around our campus. This experience was powerful for me because it brought together the diverse gifts and interests within our community, renewed my prayer life, and strengthened relationships amongst us, and I hope to try to do something like this again in a church setting.

— Gina Sterk

NEW PEOPLE

The biker bursts out each morning
and pedals along the lake,
praising God for the peaceful scene,
aging dogs awaken to a new day of
nourishment and loving care...

I am astounded by the variety of
paths taken by new members
I have met. The expression of love
is endless.

— Lois Reich



FLC LIFELONG LEARNING TEAM

*As you therefore have received
Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives
in him, rooted and built up in him and
established in the faith, just as you were taught,
abounding in thanksgiving.
Colossians 2:6-7*

Our purpose is to nurture people, of all ages,
to grow in faith as followers of Jesus Christ.

We fulfill this ministry by:

- teaching and studying God's Word
- deepening our relationships with God & others
- connecting our story to God's story
through study, fellowship, service & celebration

Action Teams include:

- Lenten book study
- family fellowship
- milestone ministries
- intergenerational Sunday School
- discipleship small groups
- adult forums

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First Lutheran Church

Lifelong Learning Ministry Team

George Rennan, Chair; Ann Beck; Deb Westerberg; Ben Blais; Mary Dontje; Steve Samuelson, Shar Valentine; Krista Warren

Lifelong Learning Action Teams

- Discipleship Groups
- ELCA College Matching Scholarship
- ELCA Youth Gathering
- Family Fellowship
- Intergenerational SS
- Lenten Book Study
- Library Committee
- Milestone Ministries
- SS Christmas Lunch
- SS Review & Planning
- Summer Youth & Family Ministry
- Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study/Forums
- VLM Programming

CHILDREN'S BIBLES

I can tell how the Bibles given to the kids have touched them. Since Zach was in the 2-3 year old room about 7 years ago, they started receiving Bibles. Zach and all the kids enjoy getting a new one every couple of years and it's fun to watch from the picture story Bible in 2-3 year olds, to the 4-5 year old Story Bible, and even as 3rd graders how they are still excited, and try to follow along in service when the readings/gospels are read in their Bibles. It is fun to see them use their own resources and it is in a format that is age appropriate. Elise especially is cute with her 2-3 year old Bible as it came with a DVD and she is always asking to listen to the stories in her Bible, and watching her interest in wanting to follow along with the messages as they were read in Sunday School. I know, overall, the gift of the Bibles means a lot to my kids in particular.



— Sarah Warner

BIBLE STUDY

I participated in the *Unnamed Women of the Bible* study over the summer. It was an impromptu and informal gathering of women who work during the day and are unable to attend the Friday Bible study. As we discussed the readings, we discussed issues in our own lives. One particular problem that was plaguing my family at that time was our miserable dinners. Every night the perfect storm of hungry, whiny children; hungry, rammy, why-isn't-dinner-ready-yet spouse; and hugely over-stimulated, crabby, stay-at-home-mom; brewed in our kitchen to provide a wide-open portal for darkness. I was on edge, ready and willing to bite anyone's head off and they all retaliated. We'd make it to the table mad at each other, nagging the kids through their meal, desperate to be done and put them to bed.

We had a nice little advice brainstorm and ended the meeting. Five days later I put together the best meal we've ever had. It was on-time, everyone like it, I had little candies on the table to entice the kids to tend to their meals with out nagging. It was so pleasant! Two days after that, our women's group met again. I mentioned "I don't know if you guys were praying for me or what, but I knocked it out of the park on Monday." It was silent for a moment and then one woman said "Ok, it was me. I'll own this one. I was so upset thinking of you guys fighting! I thought about it all weekend." I had never talked to this woman before our meetings, but recognized her. What a priceless treasure to know her love and compassion. I truly felt lifted by my church community - truly understood that I had received grace, undeserved grace.

The story continues to evolve. We have never gone back to that horrible, dark place at our evening meal. There is still tension, but no longer fighting. I shared with my husband that we were prayed for so we could enjoy, together, feeling the power of prayer and God working in our lives. Amazing!

Lifelong Learning Ministry Team

FAITH 5

I'm happy to be able share the story of how Faith5 has impacted our family's lives. I've been a member of the Lifelong Learning team for the past three years. A year and a half ago, Ann and Deb invited me to a weekend seminar given by Rich Melheim here in Duluth. It was based on his book, *Holding Your Family Together* . I was unable to attend, but our Lifelong Learning group committed to reading the book as a team. Our family has been incorporating the techniques learned in this book (I will refer to it at Faith5), for the last nine months. What that means is at 8 pm its Faith5 time in our household. Before you say, "WOW, what Commitment!", we manage to actually do it 3 times a week (the kids are with their father 3 nights a week and sometimes we miss a night). It has been a wonderful faith growing adventure.

Faith5 is setting aside time in your nighttime routine to discuss your highs of the day, your lows of the day, a Bible verse and how it relates to your day (where you saw God today) and sharing a blessing on each other. When the children's grandparents are in town, they would do it with us and we have invited Bob's older children to be a part of Faith5 too when they're visiting.

The best part: There Is Nothing Quite like Your Child Blessing You.

Second best part: When you're kids remember to do Faith 5 without reminding them and racing to get their Bible (and, of course, arguing about who gets to read first)

Third best part: Having your preteen daughter share that she is stressed about school and being able to pray with her about it.

Fourth best part: As parents, we get to share how we have helped others through our day (actions speak).

Fifth best part: You get the picture.

For me, I hope it has shown Bob, Jake, and Olivia that God is more important in our family than laundry, dishes, TV or even my phone. :-)

These are my **HOPES** for my family and my church family:

I hope this ritual will be the foundation of how we show thanks and gratitude to God and to each other and how we pray to God to assist in the challenges of our lives.

I hope it promotes a sense of love and well-being so the kids can go to sleep at night in that state of mind.

I hope to find other families who are willing to read Rich Melheim's book, *Holding Your Family Together* and gather to talk about it.

I hope families of all ages will start Faith5 in their homes. I can see the older members of our church talking about their highs and lows around the dinner table or at bedtime.

I hope our pastors will elevate the importance of Faith .

I hope Faith5 spreads like wildfire through our church and that it becomes one of the pillars of Christian education here at FLC.

I hope that you too will have your child bless you one day.

— In God's Love, Shar Valentine

Lifelong Learning Ministry Team

JOURNEY/CONFIRMATION

Tonight I was able to take part in the 3rd Grade Journey Confirmation Class with my son Andrew. This is certainly not our first time attending these classes, but I had to stop to thank Deb Westerberg whom taught the class this evening. I thanked her for teaching not only our children about the Liturgical Calendar, but also the parents. As I sat there in class and watched all who participated, I reflected on my personal experiences and do not recall it ever being interactive nor fun (just serious). I admired the parents whom attended after a long day of work and who participated along with their child/children. I loved that we all were there for one common reason: Building our personal faith together, all unified by our faith in God and Jesus Christ. Wow! We have lived here for approximately 2.5 years and my children have learned the most from FLC than any other church we've attended in our Military career of about 15.5 years. After tonight's class, while driving home, my 12 year old son Caleb explained the birth of Jesus Christ starting with the constellations. Wow! Gratitude to all who have taken part in the growth of our family's faith! We cannot thank the community of FLC enough for taking part in such an important part of our family's life! Faith is life's compass!

— Scott, Olivia, Samuel, Caleb & Andrew Lenz



PRE-K VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

It was with great joy that Marit pulled her FLC vacation Bible school ornament out of the box and placed it on the tree this Christmas. The hanging dried orange slice brought back memories of learning about the 9 Fruits of the Spirit this past summer. Marit remembered making play dough shapes of strawberries (love) and bananas (joy) and cherries (peace) and marching around the church with fruit-shaped shakers wearing her "Fruits of the Spirit" crown. "Can I do that again next year, mommy?" The answer was a resounding "yes!"

— Dana Varland