



First Lutheran Church

.....
Called to proclaim and celebrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
we are nurtured, prepared, and sent to be the light of Christ in our world.

"Be prepared." Jesus said it, Paul emphasized it, and eventually even the Boy Scouts picked it up as their own mantra. The season of Advent begins in just a few weeks with its own admonition for Christians to "be prepared." But what are we actually called to be prepared for? Are we preparing our hearts and spirits to receive the coming of the Christ child into the world - or are we preparing for a final month of frenzied shopping, holiday headaches and heartburn, economic homicide (that is, willfully sacrificing our bank accounts), a 15-pound weight gain, endless renditions of the same one dozen Christmas songs, insane shopping mall traffic, and the general atmosphere of surliness, desperation, depression, anxiety and rage that accompanies all of these?

Caught up in a consumer Christmas, we can easily find that instead of preparing to sing "O Holy Night," we find ourselves living out one "holy nightmare." One of the most obvious signs of the nightmarish quality the secular season has taken on is its interminable length. More often than not, countless people these days start preparing for Christmas the day after Halloween - for like all nightmares, "consumer Christmas" seemingly goes on forever without getting anywhere. The message is the same for months - buy, Buy, BUY!

As Christians we generally understand that the joy of Christ's impending entry into our world should remain tempered with the recognition of our own sins and shortcomings. Yet somehow we have managed to move from this tempered vision of joy to a full-out celebration of the human ability to completely maul and misconstrue God's intended purpose of the incarnation (Christ taking on human form). Advent has been transformed from a season of preparing for Christ's birth into a condensed exercise of self-conscious absorption with things and money, grabbing, and getting. One might argue that it is up to the church to save Advent from being labeled as nothing more than the "last (number) shopping days left before Christmas."

Among the first transformations that need to occur is replacing the commercialized concept of a "holiday" with the sacred observation of a "holy day." Preparing for a **holiday** - that is, a day off or a week-long vacation from work - does involve a frenzied, kind of slap-happy series of errands and chores so that when the time comes you can leave. A **holiday** is typically viewed as a break from our ordinary routines and a time to spoil ourselves by focusing on our favorite activities - golfing, swimming, gaming, reading, lounging, or traveling.

Holy days, on the other hand, should have exactly the opposite effect. Sacred seasons are holy because they nurture us into being whole, complete, healthy persons. Time spent preparing for **holy days**, like Advent, should be seen as a time to slow down, to meditate, to reflect, and to recenter ourselves as we seek to reorganize the priorities and concerns that dictate our existence. After all, preparing for the holy day of Christ's birth, and for the 2nd Advent of his return, should be a priority for all individuals who identify as followers of Jesus. As St. Matthew declares, "You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Mt. 24:44)."

Advent Blessings,
Pastor Ryan

P.S. As you read the newsletter, I encourage you to consider the different advent activities and opportunities that will be offered at First Lutheran to help you prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Perhaps you might highlight the things that interest you and maybe you will even find something you will want to write on your Advent calendar.

Called to proclaim and celebrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ...



Thanksgiving Evening Service

Wednesday, November 24th @ 7pm

Join us for Thanksgiving Eve Worship on November 24th. Please join us for this meaningful time of worship as our country pauses to give thanks.

Our Thanksgiving Outreach Offerings of food will be given to the helping hands foodbank in Clearlake. Our monetary offerings will be donated to the Neighbors In Need Food Bank. Thank you for your generosity.

Sunday Worship Times

Indoor Worship in Sanctuary

(for those who have their COVID Vaccine)

Overflow Family Area

(Vaccinations not required) in Fellowship Hall
Sunday Morning at 10am

Drive-up worship

(An outdoor service—open to all)
Sunday Morning at 11:30 am



Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Friday, December 24th

3pm & 7pm

Indoor worship in the Sanctuary (vaccination required) with a Family Friendly overflow in the Fellowship Hall (vaccination not required.)

5pm

Drive-up Service
(electric candles will be used)



Our Christmas Eve outreach offering will be given to flood relief efforts in Skagit County.

A Christmas Comfort and Consolation Worship Service December 19

Let's face it, during this time of year we all have lots to do in order to be prepared for all that the Christmas seasons brings! And I think it goes without saying that we all have been experiencing lots of different emotions lately: from pain to heartache, from happiness to sadness, from hopelessness to uncertainty. In fact, we can all probably use an outlet to help us let go of our grief and sorrow, or to assist us in finding ways to allow ourselves permission to be sad or even upset during a Holiday where people tend to expect us to be happy and joyous all the time!

Rather than adding to your list of things to do, I thought it might be nice to offer a special worship service on the **4th Sunday of Advent** (during our normal worship times) that will give us an opportunity to express our sorrow and grief over the many different kinds of losses (death, shattered relationships, unemployment, certain freedoms and liberties) we have experienced this past year because of the pandemic and other unnamed reasons. Comfort and Consolation can be found when we embrace the opportunity to share our worries and troubles with others and as we celebrate the awesome gift of Immanuel (God with us) that we lift up during the Christmas season.



Operation Christmas Lights

As Christians we typically associate light with Jesus who said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12).” We are also aware that during this time of year Holiday decorations feature lights that not only help bring illumination to our long and dark nights, but they can also bring joy and happiness to those who gaze upon them. And so that being said, after talking with our Parish activities committee, we have decided to have a Christmas light decorating event at our church after the drive-up worship service on Sunday **December 12th at 12:30pm.**

We are hoping people will donate Christmas lights, or appropriate lighted decorations (we probably want to avoid secular images of things like Rudolph or Santa, but objects like candy canes or holly are acceptable) and our hope is to keep them for future use. Please note that all donations should be placed in the church nursery (currently not being used), and you are **not required** to donate lights if you would like to help us decorate.

This is a great opportunity for people of all generations to **safely gather** together and **reconnect** with one another as we work to bring beauty and joy to our dark little corner of Mount Vernon. Please note that hot chocolate and other treats will be provided to help warm you up. Also, if you don’t have the energy or the physical ability to help with the decorating, perhaps you might be willing to donate some Christmas lights or maybe you can just come and offer some ideas, suggestions, and fellowship.



Fireside Christmas Caroling

In December we are hoping to have an opportunity to **safely gather** together and sing some of our favorite Christmas carols. The worship and music team has suggested that, in place of Holden Evening Prayer on **December 13th at 7pm**, we gather around a small firepit under the covered walkway at church and honor the birth of our savior by making a joyful noise to the Lord!

End of Year Giving

I’m sure that you are receiving lots of mail from a variety of charities asking for “end of year” gifts. If that is a ritual in your household, we invite you to consider First Lutheran Church and many of its designated funds as a possible recipient of that generosity.

Some suggestions include:

- First Lutheran General Fund
- Capital Improvement Fund
- Scholarships for Lutherwood

Your gifts to one of these funds, or any other designation are appreciated.

We are nurtured, prepared...

Sunday School



Join us for Sunday School on
December 12th at 11 am
in the fellowship Hall.



Our current book discussion
book is...

“1984”

by George Orwell

Join Pastor Ryan for a book discussion
on December 2nd at noon in the
Fellowship Hall.



A Personal Devotion and Bible Study Idea

Beginning on the first Sunday of Advent,
try committing yourself to reading one
chapter of Luke’s Gospel each and every
day. Since there are 24 chapters for you
to explore you will have read the entire
story of Jesus’ earthly life before
celebrating his birth on Christmas eve.

Church Council Meeting Dec 16th @ 6pm

Our last Council Meeting of 2021 will be
Dec 16th at 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall.
We ask that council members from 2021
and the newly elected 2022 Council
Members attend. Retiring Council
Members, please remember to bring your
Council notebook to pass along to the
board member who will proceed you.



It is time for committees and boards to prepare to write their annual report. The Annual Report will be presented by the council to the congregation at our February Semi-Annual Meeting. This is a great opportunity to share, not only the happenings of 2021 but also your group's hopes and visions for 2022.

Please e-mail reports to Holly no later than Sunday, January 16, so that there is plenty of time to compile, edit, and print the report for the congregation. Thank you.

Appreciation...



Dear FELC Members,

Bunches of thanks for all the kind words, cards, and support during the last month after my mum Valmai du Toit, passed away on September 8. She was a core foundation to my life, having fostered me at 6 weeks old and then adopted me, along with 18 other foster children. I am grateful for the kind community at FELC including the lovely blue prayer shawl that Jana Svendsen dropped off at my house— thank you so much! I was able to travel back to South Africa for Mum's memorial service, held on my birthday (Sept 23) which provided an important sense of closure. Her service was at St. Luke's Anglican Church in Howick, where Mum sang in the choir until she went into assisted living in 2019. I am grateful for the example Mum set of her life of service.

With appreciation,

Lindsey du Toit



We so appreciate the coats, jackets, fleece, hats, loves, socks and pair of boots.

When our students are getting their needs met they can do their best learning.

Thank you!

Heidi Hixon, Jefferson Counselor

A Note from Preschool...

The Board of First Lutheran Preschool has made a difficult but necessary decision about the future of First Lutheran Preschool.

First Lutheran Preschool will be closed indefinitely.

We have pondered the goal of our preschool and what it can honestly offer our community, congregation and mission of sharing the Love of God at this time. It has become evident that with COVID, staffing, facility and quality of experience in mind, we cannot continue.

This decision was difficult to make. Each member of the Board felt this closure the most respectful way to honor the founders and vision of First Lutheran Preschool.

We thank First Lutheran Church and its members for all the support we have received throughout the years. Your generosity has given us encouragement, hope and the ability to move forward.

Most sincerely,
First Lutheran Preschool Board

Social Ministry Thanks You

In October, First Lutheran's Social Ministry reached out to the congregation asking for new coats, hats, mittens, and socks to keep our community warm. And, wow, were we ever overwhelmed by your generosity! We received 40 coats, 40 pairs of mittens, 40 hats, and 120 pairs of socks.

The kids-sized items were divided and sent to Jefferson Elementary and Little Mountain Elementary. All adult-sized items were donated to Community Action.

Thank you, First Lutheran congregation, for your generosity and for helping warm our neighbors during the cold months.

God Bless,

Social Ministry



Dear Congregation,

The Giving Tree is traditionally a tree decorated with ornamental stars that have wishes from some of the organizations that First Lutheran partners with. You may take a star (or two or three!) from the tree and purchase the wish list item, then return it to First Lutheran (with the star attached) by the Epiphany (January 6th, 2022). The only exception are the stars for Josephine Caring Community, in which items are due back to the church by Friday, December 17th.

As with everything else in the world, the Giving Tree will be a little different this year. We will have an actual tree in the Narthex with stars attached. Plus, starting on the first Sunday of Advent (November 28th), each week we will highlight a different organization: what it does for the community and how you can help. That information will be shared in the weekly e-newsletter, in the Sunday bulletin, and in person by Social Ministry at the end of each Sunday service.

This Christmas season we are assisting:

Josephine Caring Community provides rehabilitation, assisted living, long-term care, childcare, early childhood education, and spiritual guidance all under the motto of “one heart, many hands.”

YMCA Oasis Teen Shelter provides youth with a safe place to spend the night every day of the year plus access to a case manager to help teens locate safe, stable, and permanent housing.

New Earth Recovery is a Christian-based organization that loves, strengthens, and accompanies people in recovery from substance addiction.

Community Action fosters and advocates for self-sufficiency among low-income people in Skagit county. The organization’s Hurdle Busters program helps people overcome a hurdle that is keeping them from meeting their goals.

Jefferson and Little Mountain Elementaries are our neighboring schools. Both have many families who need assistance with groceries, purchasing warm clothes and footwear for their children, or paying for utilities.

Social Ministry is extremely grateful for all your help, past and present, helping improve the lives of our fellow Skagitonians. Thank you for helping First Lutheran spread the love of Christ with the community.

Heather Romano

On behalf of Social Ministry

Sent to be the light of Christ in our world.



Friendship House

Did you know First Lutheran Church has been providing a Sloppy Joe meal to Friendship House for over 30 years?!

Thank you for all of your donations helping us with a constant supply of nourishing meals each month!

This month we will be providing the meal on November 30. You can sign up to provide an item for the meal by clicking [here](#).

We Need You!

Indoor Worship

If you would like to sign up to serve in worship in the month of **December** click [here](#). You can check back anytime to see what spots have been filled and where help is needed.

Drive-up Worship

If you would like to sign up to serve in worship in the month of **December** click [here](#). You can check back anytime to see what spots have been filled and where help is needed.

Please call the church office if you would rather be assigned to serve. When you contact us, please let us know what service you attend & how you would like to help. We will plug you in to the schedule. If on the other hand you would rather pick and choose your dates, you may still do so using the link to sign up genius. It is pretty user friendly but feel free to contact the church office if you would like help navigating the system.



New Earth Recovery Benefit

Celebrate a medieval Christmas with the acclaimed NOËL Celtic and classical harp ensemble and benefit New Earth Recovery, a faith-based nonprofit operating recovery homes in Skagit County. Tuesday Dec 7 @ 7:00 pm, First Christian Reformed Church in Mount Vernon. Harps, flute, strings, poetry, and treats following. Free event with a freewill offering.



Church Quilters This has been a productive year for the church quilters despite the constrictions of the pandemic. We were not able to enter the church until spring but made up for a late start by meeting once a week rather than twice a month. We have completed and delivered 65 quilts to several agencies in Skagit Valley and also 15 baby quilts to WIC and Mary's Inn. We have resumed our twice a month meeting schedule and invite anyone interested in helping complete the quilts to please join us. We meet on the second and fourth Thursday mornings, beginning about 9:30am but the hours are flexible to meet individual needs. Sewing skills are not required, there are a variety of tasks to help with and some can be done from home, like washing and ironing sheets or fabrics, sorting fabric strips, and piecing quilts. If you would like to piece fabric into tops, we have pattern ideas and can share the guidelines we follow. Thanks to generous donations we have the resources to complete many more quilts and we have requests from area agencies for more quilts, we just lack enough time and volunteers. Anyone interested is invited to come to our next quilting day on **December 9**. (We do ask that you have been vaccinated and agree to wear a mask.) Contact Mary Anne Ramborger, Connie Wells, or Joanne McCormick, or come to our next meeting.

First Lutheran

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Join us for Sunday School on
December 12th at 11 am
in the fellowship Hall.



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

This is Christ's church.
There is a place for you here!

The ELCA is the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person—questions, complexities and all. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.



You are created uniquely by
God and you are welcome here.

Your Abilities· Age· Culture· Economic Status·
Gender Expression/identity· Life Circumstances·
Marital Status· Questions· Race· Sexual Orientation·
are welcome here.

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Church Office—office@firstlutheranmv.org

Website w/calendar www.firstlutheranmv.org

Join us on [Facebook](#)

Office is open Tues & Thurs 9:30-3:30

Phone: 360 424-6832 - Please leave a message

Pastoral Emergencies, please listen to voicemail message

To reach our Staff:

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Pastorryan@firstlutheranmv.org

Holly Oliver, Office Ph— 360 424-6832

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Pete Olson,

Worship Accompanist—peterdonne@yahoo.com

Our Congregational Leaders

President— Bob Ramborger

Vice President— Donn Hollenbeck

Secretary— Mary Anne Ramborger

Treasurer— Jeanette St. Germain

Trustees

Donn Hollenbeck, Jeff May, Vacant Position

Deacons

Doug Carter, Heather Romano, Vacant Position

Parish Activities

Frances Wraspir, David Jones, Vacant position