



# 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.

## *Unwrapping Jesus*

Even now I can still recall a children's sermon that I preached years ago on Christmas Eve. As the kids came forward to the altar area, with joy and wonderment reflecting on their expectant faces, I invited them to sit down with me around a Christmas tree decorated with chrismons (ornaments that feature symbols and names representing Christ). And after initially greeting the children and asking them the reason for their illation that evening, I began to talk about the importance of names in the Bible and how often times certain individuals in scripture were given meaningful names that reflected a person's situation, or it revealed a particular character trait about them.

When growing up in Sunday school I remember learning that Issac's name meant "laughter" because his mother Sarah had laughed when she learned that she was going to have a child. I also can recall being taught that when Moses was a baby he was rescued by Pharoah's daughter from the Nile River and the meaning of his name, "to draw out of the water," reflected that event. And of course, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ and hear the familiar story of how his conception would come about, we are reminded that Mary was told by her angelic visitor to name her baby Jesus, which in Hebrew means "God saves!"

My little Christmas homily that night continued with me showing the children some of the ornaments on the tree and explaining the different names and symbols embroidered on them that represented Christ. And after reminding the kids that Jesus is Immanuel (God with Us), and after clarifying the meaning behind symbols like the Alpha and Omega (God is the first and the last), I asked them what names they had for our Lord. Which is actually a question I invite the members and friends of First Lutheran to consider this year as we enter into the Season of Advent.

So, let me ask you, what names do you have for Jesus and how do those names impact the relationship you have with God and with the people in this world created in His image? Perhaps you view Christ as your good shepherd leading you through life? Maybe you see Jesus as the lamb whose blood has set us free from our sins? Or perhaps you understand the Lord to be a good friend who has always been there for you in the good times and bad. And yet, no matter how we might perceive Jesus to be working in our lives, I would imagine that the more we get to know the Lord the more our understanding of God expands and grows.

With that being said, I am hoping that as we prepare for Christmas and everything that comes with it, that we will also take some time to unwrap who Jesus is to us and how that impacts the ways in which we live out our faith. And to help us do this, I will be offering several different meaningful opportunities to help us in this endeavor. For example: A special advent devotional called, "Unwrapping the Names of Jesus," will be available for purchase for \$10 (*the church will have some copies on hand, or you can find it on Amazon*). Also, each week during worship a special printed ornament, that coincides with each candle on the advent wreath, will be handed out to people of all ages. And I am hoping to offer a special advent craft and Christmas movie night on December 14<sup>th</sup> with popcorn and other holiday treats.

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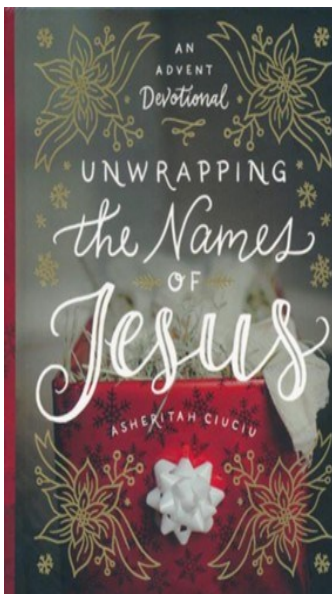
Of course, there will be other opportunities for you to unwrap Jesus as we learn more about him in our Sunday morning worship, during our Bible studies (Wednesday at 9am or Sunday after worship), and through the different ministries that take place within and outside our church building. Please continue to explore this special advent newsletter if you would like to learn more details about all the different things that will be happening here at FELC. And I hope and pray that the light of Christ's love and the gift of his spiritual presence in your life will help you find all kinds of ways to celebrate the precious gift of our savior.

Advent Blessings,  
Pastor Ryan

## A Blue Christmas Holden Evening Prayer Service Monday, Dec 9th, 7 PM

For many people the Holidays can be a time of sadness and hurt, especially for those who have lost loved ones this past year and are facing the reality of celebrating Christmas without them. Perhaps you, or a family member or friend, are dealing with an illness or other tragic circumstance that might be keeping you from finding joy or delight during the season of Advent. Whatever you may be feeling, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, you are encouraged to join us for Holden Evening Prayer on Monday December 9th at 7pm. We will be singing a well-known liturgy, there will be a special time of prayer with a lighting of candles, and there will be an opportunity for us to take some time to reflect on the reality that it is ok to let go of people's expectations of how we should feel and act during the Holidays and give our burdens and hardships over to God.

### **Advent Devotional: *Unwrapping the Names of Jesus***



During Advent, I encourage you to join me as we unwrap the names of Jesus and explore what our faith in Christ truly means for our lives. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, and all that comes with it, I believe it is important for us to take some time to also prepare our hearts for what the season may bring. And as you study this devotional daily, either on your own or with your family, you can also join me each week for coffee at Haggen on Friday mornings at 11am to discuss how your Advent journey is going. Please note that I am also willing to meet on Wednesday evenings at 6pm if you work during the day, or if mornings don't work for you.

If you would like more information about this devotional, please see the following excerpt from Christianbooks.com: "Treat your family to the ultimate gift this Christmas as you "unwrap" the meaning-filled name of Jesus, week by week! Asheritah Ciuciu leads parents and children through the four weeks of Advent with weekly interactive devotional activities, each followed by five readings celebrating the Savior at the heart of our hope, preparation, joy, and love." And although the description mentions families, it is a devotion for anyone and everyone.

### Semi-Annual Meeting- Nov. 24

Join us after the service on Nov. 24th to discuss and vote on the 2025 Budget and to elect our 2025 officers. Many hours of dedicated work have gone into the proposed 2025 budget, which is posted on the bulletin board just outside of the Fellowship Hall.

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 2024 but also your hopes and dreams for 2025. Please e-mail reports to the church office no later than Sunday, January 12, so that there is plenty of time to compile, edit, and print the report for the congregation. Thank you.

### Nominating Committee News

We still have vacancies on the slate for the 2025 church council. We still have room for one Deacon and one person on the Board of Parish Activities. Please contact Frances Wraspir, Connie Wells, or Margie Holdt to learn more.

### Church Council Meeting Dec 19th @ 6pm

Our last Council Meeting of 2024 will be Dec 19th at 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall. We ask that council members from 2024 and the newly elected 2025 Council Members attend. Retiring Council Members, please remember to bring your Council notebook to pass along to the board member who will proceed you.



**Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service  
Tuesday, December 24th  
at 5pm**



*This year's Christmas outreach offering will be given to Lutheran Disaster Response. Please indicate "outreach offering" on your check.*



Were you aware that the words to **Joy To The World** were inspired by Psalm 98 in the KJV?

*"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, rejoice, and sing praise. Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together before the Lord for he cometh to judge the earth, with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."*

Issac Watts put the lyrics to Handel's music from The Messiah in 1741, though the final tune we know today was by Lowell Mason in 1836.



**Join us after worship on December 8** as Pete Olson plays the tunes and David Johnson leads us in singing Christmas Carols, from *Rudolph* to *Joy to the World* in the Fellowship Hall and learn more about the history of some of our beloved holiday songs. We hope to see you there!

*We are nurtured, prepared...*

## Sunday School Christmas Lesson

**During Advent we will be having a special Christmas lesson for the Sunday School kids on December 8<sup>th</sup> at 9am.** We will have some Holiday treats, maybe sing a Christmas carol or two, and the children will learn about the birth of Jesus and what it all means. Also, when you are marking your calendars for this event **I would encourage you to take note of our next class which will be held on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025.**

## Advent Craft & Christmas Movie

I know that this time of year is often busy for people, as we buy and wrap presents, decorate our houses, and prepare ourselves to spend time with friends and family. And yet, perhaps you would like to take a little break and have some fun with your brothers and sisters in Christ. If that is the case, consider joining us on **December 14<sup>th</sup> from 1pm to 4pm** for a special craft and a Christmas movie. Food, snacks, and beverages will be provided.



Our Men's group will meet on December 15th, and January 19th at 3pm at Temperate Habits in Mount Vernon. You are invited and you are always welcome to bring a friend.



## Advent Ornaments

Each week during worship (beginning on Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>) we will be lighting a candle on the Advent wreath, and we will hear some special words about the meaning behind each of the four candles on the wreath. To coincide with this meaningful tradition there will be printed ornaments near the bulletin board that people of all ages are welcome to take home, color, decorate, and hang on their Christmas tree. Each of the ornaments will represent a specific candle such as: hope, joy, love, peace.



## Appreciation...

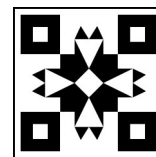
I so appreciate the honor of serving my First Lutheran family! Sending my humble thanks for all the kind comments and the gift cards presented to me last Sunday. I was obviously too stunned to offer my thanks at the time; seldom do you find me speechless, but this caught me unaware and a bit choked up. Thank you all...

Pete

## Church Calendar

Remember that we have a calendar attached to our website [www.firstlutheranmv.org](http://www.firstlutheranmv.org)

We do our best to keep it updated with all the church happenings & community building use. If you would like to add a meeting or event to the calendar, please email the church office at [Office@firstlutheranmv.org](mailto:Office@firstlutheranmv.org) Thank you for helping us keep the calendar up to date!



Your Social Ministry Committee has decided to do things a little differently this year. Instead of putting stars on the Giving Tree requesting specific things for different organizations we are asking for the following items:

1. Warm hats - all sizes
2. Gloves and mittens - all sizes
3. Warm socks - all sizes
4. Warm scarves - adult size only

We request that all of these items be in new condition; they will be donated to Jefferson school, and other local agencies.

Donations will be accepted Dec 1st through Epiphany. Please place your gifts under the tree or in the boxes and bins provided. As always, the committee thanks you for your donations as we help our less fortunate neighbors stay warm this winter.

### **Cleaning Your Linen Closet? Donations Requested**

The church quilters are in need of flat sheets to use for the backs of the quilts we make each month. Do you have gently worn, stain free flat sheets, twin size or larger, that you no longer use? Any color or print is acceptable! Not to be choosy, but fitted sheets, unless they are king size do not work for our use. Also, it is difficult to use the microfiber sheets, our preference is cotton or cotton/polyester blends. Donations will be gratefully accepted and they can be placed in the quilters storage room at the far end of Fellowship Hall. If you would like acknowledgement of the donation please attach a note.

### **Fall 2024 Quilt Distributions**

The church quilters completed 52 twin size quilts from late spring through October 2024. The quilts were blessed on October 27 and packed for delivery. The following agencies were given quilts:

- 8 to Family Promise
- 8 child and baby size to Family Promise
- 9 to Friendship House
- 10 to Lutheran World Relief
- 11 to Martha's Place
- 6 to New Earth Recovery (Men's House)
- 52 TOTAL**

Anyone is welcome to join us on the second and fourth Thursdays to help finish the quilts. We meet from 9:30 to early afternoon but each individual's time is always flexible. There is time for rest and fellowship at morning coffee! Those who desire bring lunch and continue working into the afternoon. We are called the church quilters but no complicated sewing is involved on Thursdays; if you can tie a simple knot you possess all the qualifications needed. ( If you really enjoy piecing quilt tops we have wonderful donated fabric to take, and at home create a 60"x80" quilt top for us.) Please consider helping in this worthwhile ministry of providing warm quilts for various agencies in our valley as well as contributing to Lutheran World Relief.

### **Friendship House Meal**

First Lutheran has consistent role in serving our neighbors who are experiencing food and home insecurity. Once per month, we provide the financial resources for a dinner to be served at the Friendship House Cafe and now at Skagit First Step in Burlington...

Thanks to your generosity!

Thank you for sharing donations for our Friendship House Meal Ministry.



## End of Year Giving

You may be 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 and the Friendship House Meal Fund. Your gifts are appreciated!



If using offering envelopes is important to your personal stewardship practice, the church will happily provide them for your use. We are not requesting worshippers to use envelopes, order them only if you find them helpful. Giving statements are provided, by emailing or calling the office and requesting them at the end of the calendar year. Offering envelopes will be available, by request, please email the church office [office@firstlutheranmv.org](mailto:office@firstlutheranmv.org) to make a request. If you place an order for offering envelopes, they will be available for pick up at the church in late Dec. or early Jan.

### FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

2015 E. Blackburn Rd.  
Mount Vernon WA 98274  
Mailing: PO Box 777

#### Worship Services

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

Church Office-[office@firstlutheranmv.org](mailto:office@firstlutheranmv.org)

Website w/calendar [www.firstlutheranmv.org](http://www.firstlutheranmv.org)

Church Phone: 360 424-6832

Direct number for Pastor Ryan Rouse- 360 603-6379

#### To reach our Staff:

**Pastor- Pastor Ryan Rouse**

[Pastorryan@firstlutheranmv.org](mailto:Pastorryan@firstlutheranmv.org)

**Holly Oliver,**

Parish Administrator-[office@firstlutheranmv.org](mailto:office@firstlutheranmv.org)

**Pete Olson,**

Worship Accompanist-[peterdonne@yahoo.com](mailto:peterdonne@yahoo.com)

## Mark your Calendar

With the luxury of a weekly e news to share information, we have been relying less on newsletters. We have adjusted to a more seasonal rhythm with our newsletter publications.

Our Next Newsletter will be our Lenten Newsletter.

If you have information that you would like included, please e mail it to the church office by Feb 23rd.



# First Lutheran

### Our Congregational Leaders

**President**– Donn Hollenbeck

**Vice President**– Bob Ramborger

**Secretary**– Sandy Simon, Vyonne Carter

**Treasurer**– Brad Pickett

**Trustees**- Bob Ramborger, Brad Clifton. Manny Gonzales

**Deacons**- Doug Carter, Frances Wraspir

**Parish Activities**- Ann May, Sue Holmes