



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.

Testimonies

I don't know about you, but whenever I am looking to try out a new restaurant, or if there is a movie that interests me, I love to go online and check out reviews beforehand. Although I enjoy hearing what professional reviewers have to say, I have actually found that I prefer to read comments that are written by everyday people. The reason for doing this is that I have found that if a majority of people rave about a certain eating establishment or a film in their testimonials, then more than likely I will enjoy it too. Perhaps this is why websites like Yelp, Meta Critic, and Rotten Tomatoes, have become so popular? Testimonials seem to matter to a lot of people.

I am fairly certain that Clif Christopher, the author of *"Not your Parent's Offering Plate,"* would probably agree with me. In his book he talks about the rise of non-profits and the fact that churches are now having to compete for people's generosity, because there are so many choices they can make when it comes to their financial donations. He suggests several different strategies for congregations to use in order to encourage their members and friends in their giving and one in particular really stood out for me.

Clif writes, "People want to be a part of something that changes lives. When a church consistently shows its constituency how lives are being improved through its ministry, then the church gets supported!" In order to do this it helps when members are willing to share how they have experienced this happening in their congregation through written or spoken testimonies.

It is my hope that people from our church would be willing to share their stories with me about the ways their lives have been changed by the people, the friends they have made here, by the staff, the worship, or perhaps even by a sermon they heard or a Bible study they attended. I would love to compile these testimonies to print in our newsletter and perhaps even put them on our website.

It is hard to express in words the difference that First Lutheran has made in my own life! Even though I didn't get much of an opportunity to meet the members and friends of our congregation before Covid hit, I truly feel that people here have understood that I have been learning as I go to help bring worship to people safely and to try and keep us all connected. Everyone has been so welcoming and supportive of my ministry here and I appreciate the opportunities you have given me to use the gifts that God has given me to serve you all in love. I also truly appreciate the care and understanding you have shown me as I continue to heal from my marriage ending. FELC is filled with the love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness of God!

Now that you have heard my testimony, please consider sharing your own with us!

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



Lenten Midweek Services

"Created for Community"

**Wednesday Holden Evening
Prayer Services**

March 30 & April 6, 7:00 PM



Hymn Sing

April 3 @ 9:45 am

Come and sing your favorite hymns before worship! Look up your favorite hymns and be ready to sing.

**Join in Community this Holy Week and Easter
to celebrate the Risen Christ.**



Holy Week

Palm/Passion Sunday

April 10, 10:00 & 11:30 AM

Maundy Thursday

April 14, 7:00 PM

Good Friday

April 15, 7:00 PM

Easter Sunday

April 17, 10:00 am

We are nurtured, prepared...



We are opening up after the Covid-19 restrictions that made it impossible to worship in the sanctuary. Presently, we have about 55 to 60 fully vaccinated worshipping in our sanctuary. Praise the Lord that we are finally able to worship and fellowship together. Now, even those who are not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated can attend worship services but must wear a mask. Those who are vaccinated a mask is now optional, except for singing.

With our increasing attendance with more to come, we need more readers of the lessons, people to do the "prayers of the church", people for the "singing of the psalms", and those who do the ushering. A special thanks must be given to those who have already done these tasks. During our present worship, the Altar Guild have done a great job of providing a meaningful worship experience. However, it would be great if others can volunteer to be stewards of our worship experience; it would be a blessing to them.

We have now restarted our coffee hour, thus, to continue we need volunteers to make coffee before worship and afterwards to do the cleanup.

Speak to any council member, committee member, or Pastor if you are called to any of the tasks that are needed within our congregation. As it says in Acts, Chapter Two, Verse 42. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

See you in Church.

Donn Hollenbeck, Council President



Music! Music! Music!

Sadly, we have no current choir director. But we sure miss that extra richness a choir anthem adds to our services. So, here's our plan. We're hoping to generate enthusiasm for a volunteer "pick-up" choir. We did this years ago during the summer hiatus of our regular choir. Simply put, any and all interested singers will meet with me (Pete) before church to practice an easy/favorite/familiar hymn from one of the hymnals, do a brief practice and sing for the congregation during the service. Easy, simple, no particular skill needed except a desire to enrich our regular Sunday services.

Please contact Pete with your interest!



Book Discussion Group

Our next book discussion book is *The Nightingale: A Novel* by Kristin Hannah. Join us for discussion at the church on May 5th at noon.



In October we learned Bill had a large tumor on his liver which was inoperable. Bill struggled and remained positive but he could fight it no longer and we lost him.

I thank all of you for your loving cards, prayers, and visits over the past few months. Hospice was wonderful as all of you our dear friends at First Lutheran Church.

Thank you for being there for me and family.

Lillian Ritchie-Killeen



Thank you so very much for you faithful giving to New Earth Recovery. Your support helps us to continue to carry on our mission! You are truly appreciated. Thank you and God bless you!

Sincerely,
Colleen Fisher, NER Board Member

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

It's time to rejuvenate, revitalize, and perhaps reinvent our monthly Bible Study. Our next meeting is Thursday, April 21st. at 1:30pm in the Chapel or Fellowship Hall. We will be concluding the winter Bible Study from the Gather Magazine, March-April Issue, session 4.

Its fine to jump right in even if you have not read the previous sessions. There will be a limited number of copies of the study available thru the Church, if you have not ordered your own subscription. We will continue using the Gather Magazine Bible study, at least for May. If there is interest, we will have access to the summer studies for free- no magazine subscription needed.

Over the next several months we would like your input and inspiration as we plan for the next year, for opportunities of fellowship and friendship, support, and encouragement as we gather for study and prayer.

Any questions? Contact Connie Wells

Neil passed away Jan. New Year's Day. I am thankful for the First Lutheran friends attending Our memorial service for him.

You are a Blessing.

Darlene Hamburg



Wishing much love to you all—Your gifts truly sustain the work of Oasis programs!

With gratitude,

Kat Lohman, Director of Advancement
The Skagit Valley Family YMCA

First Lutheran Scholarship

First Lutheran Church offers a \$500 one-time scholarship to young adult church members (under 22) who have left high school and wish to pursue a post-secondary education or vocational training. Interested candidates may inquire at the church office for an application.

Several years ago the First Evangelical Lutheran Church (FELC) established a scholarship for our church young adults. This one-time scholarship of \$500 has blessed us with the opportunity to help the young adults in our congregation who are leaving or who may have left high school to reach their educational goals.

Contributions to this fund are always appreciated as this will be a continued gift provided each year. Another way to donate to our FELC High School Senior Scholarship is through the Memorial Committee by designating a percentage or all contributions received for this fund in memory of your loved one.

Sincerely,

Debbie Lisser, Patty Norris, and Barb Lowery

Sent to be the light of Christ in our world.



Spring Sunday School Dates: April 10th & May 15th

David & Kristina are looking forward to meeting with the Sunday school students in our classroom at 11:00 am on April 10th & May 15th.

Please watch for a text reminder. If you are not receiving Sunday school reminders, please email the church office at office@firstlutheranmv.org and we will add you to the contact list.



Social Ministry Recent Sock Drive The generosity of our congregation was again evident in the recent sock drive.

You donated:

172 pairs for men, 133 pairs for women
105 pairs for children, And 6-8 pairs for babies

The men's and women's socks were delivered to Friendship House and will be shared with First Steps in Burlington. The children's socks were delivered to Jefferson Elementary and Little Mountain Elementary schools. (We will hold on to the baby socks until the baby item drive later this spring.)

Although the Social Ministry Committee does not currently have a designated toiletry drive some toiletries and cosmetics were left at the church and they were delivered to Friendship House/First Steps, New Earth Recovery, and Oasis Teen Center. Anyone wishing to donate toiletry items can check the websites for the organizations and find out exactly what is requested and needed and deliver them personally. The committee may consider having a toiletry drive in the future.

Thank you again for the generous support of the sock drive and remember the ongoing collection of canned soup!

Social Ministry Committee



Spring Diaper & Baby Item Drive

The Social Ministry Giving Focus from April 24th to May 31st will be BABIES!

We will be collecting diapers of all sizes (newborn to toddler), baby wipes, onesies and baby food in jars or pouches. **Please note that this year we will not be asking for formula due to safety recalls.** All of your donations can be placed in the crib you will find in the narthex and will be distributed to WIC and Neighbors in Need. Please help us keep the littlest among us fed and dry.

We would like to thank you again for your bountiful donations in previous months to our Sock and Soup Drives. We are truly blessed to belong to such a generous family of God.



Friendship House Continues to Serve Many Needs

"The mission of Friendship House is to reflect the heart of God by feeding, sheltering, clothing and healing...to empower those in need."

***Friendship House Cafe:** As the **only no-cost daily meal service in Skagit County**, Friendship House provides a critical service to our community. We are committed to serving at least one meal per day, 365 days per year to anyone who is hungry. We serve an average of 5,500+ meals per month (66,000+ meals per year)! * taken from the Friendship House Newsletter

First Lutheran is a consistent part of serving our homeless neighbors. Once per month, we gather supplies for a dinner to be served at both the *Friendship House Cafe* and now at *Skagit First Step* in Burlington. We usually feed 35-40 men, women and children at the Cafe and 45 people living at First Step for a total of **90+ meals**, all thanks to your generosity!

How? Members of our congregation bring food to the church kitchen on the last Tuesday of each month (April 26 and May 31 this spring!) You may access what we need from the sign up sheet [linked here](#). The sign up is also included in church E-news, or you can simply sign up on the list on the kitchen refrigerator.

Our menu is a simple meal of **Sloppy Joes on buns, fresh salads with dressings, green beans and homemade brownies**. The Sloppy Joe mixture may be made ahead of time and simply frozen in gallon zip-lock bags and placed in the church freezer. We gather all the menu items on the day of serving and take to the Friendship House Cafe to prepare the meal in their wonderful kitchen. It's a simple process but **it takes all of us to feed close to 90+ people per month**.

Would you like to help? We have a dedicated group of people who help each month but **we could use more volunteers**. Could you remember our meal needs when you grocery shop? Or maybe help by making some Sloppy Joe mixture and freezing it for later use? You may use your favorite Sloppy Joe recipe or follow this one- it's an easy recipe:

Friendship House Sloppy Joe Recipe

Serves 24

Hamburger - 4 pounds
Onion - 2 cups chopped
Tomato sauce - 3 - 15 ounce cans or 2- 29 ounce cans
(add 1-15 ounce can of stewed tomatoes along with 2 cans tomato sauce if preferred)
Garlic salt - 1 Tablespoon
Chili powder - 1 Tablespoon

Brown hamburger with the onion. Drain off excess fat. Season hamburger with garlic salt and chili powder. Add tomato sauce/stewed tomatoes. Cook over low heat and simmer 30-45 minutes. Chill and freeze in gallon sized zip lock bags. Deliver to church.
Each recipe should fill 2 bags. (Recipe may be halved if it is more convenient.)

Almost every month we hear **"Sloppy Joes? It's our favorite! And the brownies, of course!"**

Thank you for considering helping with this monthly FELC mission. Without you - it would not be possible to continue this wonderful Friendship House tradition at our church.

Questions? Contact Barb Sneva 360-421-3463 or Debbie Lisser 360-424-0408

With gratitude for your help,
Barb and Debbie

April 2022



From the Bishop:

One of the things I love about living in the Pacific Northwest is the abundance of life. In January, the grass is green. In February, plants are blooming. In March, little flowers are pushing through soil. In April, color bursts out everywhere. To me, these signs of life are miracles.

And don't we need some of these signs right now? I mean, there are so many places where it feels like ongoing winter - the discord and acrimony amongst families, churches, peoples, and nations. As I write this article Russia is invading Ukraine. Perhaps when you read this article, things will be different but at this moment there is bombing and shooting and fear and death. And entrenched crises continue: houselessness, racism, ableism, unjust governments, and so much more. Individually, many are experiencing physical and mental illness, fatigue, and exclusion. I remember a quote from C.S. Lewis' book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* where one of the characters says, "It is winter in Narnia, and has been for ever so long ... always winter, but never Christmas."

It has been a long winter ... perhaps even two years of winter. Pain and sorrow and death feel very close. There is grief, there is anger, there is exhaustion, and there is sadness.

And yet ... And yet ...

Gardens are full of seeds. Farmers are tilling the soil. Tulips are blooming. Rhododendrons are on their way. We see signs around us that winter is ending and the Bringer of Spring is coming.

As I travel through this synod, I see signs of new life and new hope. I see resolve and new partnerships. While there are challenges that we are all facing, while there is much work to do individually and together, I sense new possibilities.

When I meet with councils and other leaders in congregations, I am delighted that we are having good, strong, sometimes difficult conversations about things that matter. In our best moments, we are not as concerned about smaller difficulties but instead, as people of faith, we are leaning into what it means to love God and love neighbor in this time and in this place. I thank God for the opportunity for conversation, listening, and moving on the Breath of God's Spirit.

The truth is, alone - we cannot create life, alone - we cannot change systems, alone - we cannot move winter into spring. But *through Christ*, through the One who died for this world and who is raised into new life, we can.

And so, as it is written in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

We do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 16-18

We are promised that through this time, through world events, through whatever is next, Jesus is with us. And even more than that, we are promised that there is something amazing beyond all measure - more than we can know or even imagine. It is difficult to sometimes comprehend this promise - especially when we look at the destruction and pain and devastation in this world - and yet ... and yet ... we cling to the promise. As people of faith, we pray and whisper and shout it out - that through Christ's death and resurrection all things that create death will be gone. Period. Full. Stop.

And because of knowing and trusting this promise, we are then called, as beloved children of God, to see, appreciate, and tend to the small plants entrusted to us - knowing that we also are plants, also seeds, also soil, called to live into and share this new life with and for others.

May this Easter spring forth with new life for you. May you feel the hope given through Jesus. And may together we shout, "Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!"

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
bishop@lutheransnw.org

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Jesus Christ, we are nurtured, prepared,
and sent to be the light of Christ in our world.*



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.

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2015 E. Blackburn Rd.
Mount Vernon WA 98274
Mailing: PO Box 777
Mount Vernon WA 98273

Worship Services

Sunday Worship 10:00 am (Sanctuary) 10:30 am (drive-up)

Church Office—office@firstlutheranmv.org

Website w/calendar www.firstlutheranmv.org

Join us on [Facebook](#)

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

Holly Oliver,

Parish Administrator-office@firstlutheranmv.org

Pete Olson,

Worship Accompanist-peterdonne@yahoo.com

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.

Our Congregational Leaders

President— Donn Hollenbeck

Vice President— Bob Ramborger

Secretary— Yvonne Carter, Sandy Simon

Treasurer— Brad Pickett

Trustees

Jeff May, Lowell Larsen, Bud Fish

Deacons

Heather Romano, Bob Ramborger, Vacant Position

Parish Activities

Frances Wraspir, David Jones, Ann May