

First Impressions

First Lutheran Church

February 2023

Rev. Sean Esterline
Pastor

Phone 812-431-1923 or 517-543-4360 ext. 222
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Mark Gawura

Specific Ministries Pastor for Care Ministry
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Specific Ministry Pastor for
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First Lutheran Church

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Phone 517-543-4360
Email: flcchurchoffice@gmail.com
web: firstlutherancharlotte.org

Amy Garnsay, Office Manager
517-543-4360 ext. 221
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Worship Times

Sundays 8:30 & 11:15 a.m.

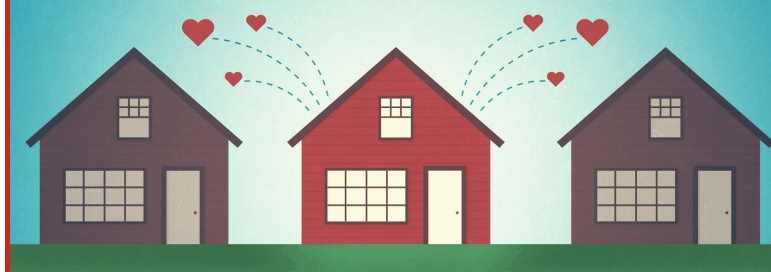
Contemporary Worship 2nd & 4th Sundays @
11:15 a.m. with live worship team
Communion Every Sunday

Mid-week Worship

Wednesdays 7:00 p.m. during Advent & Lent

Love Your Neighbor

Matthew 22:37-39



Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your mind.' This is the first and
greatest commandment. And the second is
like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Matthew 22:37-39

"That which we have seen
of Life, we proclaim to you."



FLC Statistics for JANUARY 2022

Confirmed Membership.....	250
Baptized Membership.....	319
Child Baptisms	(3) Ryleigh Nicole Raymer, Rhys Eli Raymer, and Rozlyn Lucille Raymer
Adult Baptisms	(0)
Jr. Confirmands	(0)
New Confirmed Members	(0)
New Baptized Members	(0)
Transfers Out (Confirmed)	(1) Dennis Sergent
Transfers Out (Baptized).....	(0)
Releases (Confirmed)	(0)
Releases (Baptized).....	(0)
Deaths.....	(0)



No Anniversaries for February



Diane Johncock	Feb 6
James Danke	Feb 7
Jamin Wing	Feb 7
Wendy Jorgensen	Feb 8
Matthew Packowski	Feb 8
Louann Gawura	Feb 9
Mark Gawura	Feb 11
Lisa Hamilton	Feb 12
Alana Vedder-Lord	Feb 13
Rhys Raymer	Feb 15
John Murray	Feb 16
Kayla Knickerbocker	Feb 17
Sally Bower	Feb 19
Christopher Mitchell	Feb 19
Sherry Allen	Feb 22
James Beal	Feb 27
(Joey Youngs	Feb 29)

If you have a birthday or anniversary this month and you do not see your name listed here, please let the church office know so we can update our records.

Thank you.

Church office: 517-543-4360 ext. 221

EMERGENCIES!

If you have a pastoral emergency such as a hospitalization, death in the family, or are in need of urgent Christian counsel, please call Pastor Sean Esterline (812) 431-1923 OR Specific Ministry Pastor for Youth and Family Ministry, Daniel Longden at (248) 802-2392.

First Lutheran Phone Number is 517-543-4360:

Church Office (Amy) - extension 221

Pastor Esterline - extension 222

Pastor Daniel Longden - extension 229

Kitchen - extension 224

**If you call the church and do not get an answer, please leave a message.*

*Please do not leave **emergency** messages on these extensions
as we may not access them in a timely manner.*

BIBLE STUDIES AT FIRST LUTHERAN

Please join us for Bible Study . . .

- † Sunday Morning Bible Studies for Adults and Teens - 10:00 a.m.
- † Men's Monday Morning Bible Study - 7:00 a.m., Eaton Place Restaurant, Charlotte
- † Ladies Thursday Morning Bible Study - 9:30 a.m., FLC Library
- † JR Confirmation Classes - 7:00 p.m. Wednesdays

GROUNDHOG DAY!

Groundhog day is one of those made up holidays. (I think people made it up because they wanted something to celebrate in the middle of winter.) If the groundhog sees his shadow, coming out of his den, we will have six more weeks of winter. Growing up in Fort Wayne, I could never figure out what the excitement was. Of course, on February 2 you could be certain that there was at least six more weeks of winter ahead - at least in Fort Wayne! In Punxsutawney there may have been some question. In Fort Wayne, there was none. The day did inspire a very interesting movie, however. The Groundhog Day movie set forth the question of what a man would do if he had the same day, in this case Groundhog Day, to live over and over and over again. In the movie, the main character starts out confused, then takes advantage of the repeating day to serve his appetites, then he despairs and tries to end it all - but the day won't let him out. Finally, he uses the repeating day to learn about others and find out how to help them, and to improve himself. The repeating day ends when he has figured out how to focus on others and not on himself. While it is overly optimistic about human nature, it is an interesting idea, and the movie examines it with a certain amount of humor. Now, what does Groundhog Day have to do with a pastor's newsletter article?

Well, first, it is a holiday celebrated in February. Secondly it puts me in mind of several things dealing with the Gospel. For example, Groundhog Day is a reminder that even though winter is upon us, it is coming to an end. The groundhog sees his shadow and returns to his den, but the message is that there is a short period to come, and then the difficulties of winter will be over. The Gospel is the same sort of message for us. There is no mythical beast emerging from its winter hiding, but the Gospel tells us quite clearly that the winter of this world of sin has a definite time-table and that it is coming to an end. We have some more of it to endure, but it is about to end and the spring of the resurrection of all flesh and the summer of eternal life is soon upon us. We can't peg the date, but that springtime is coming, and it is closer than we might imagine.

The world has been going on for thousands of years since the announcement that we are in the last days was first made. Many have given up the expectation of the soon-to-come end of the world, and have gotten busy living in this world according to the ways of this world as though the end were not really coming. For thousands of years, the end has come for one generation after another. It did not come with Jesus in the sky and everyone rising from their graves - not yet! But it has come! And that day of resurrection is coming too. We are closer than ever before. The world around us will use the seeming delay to suggest that the final day is just a fiction, and try to seduce us into forgetting about it altogether, but the Gospel continues to be preached as our weekly Groundhog Day to remind us that the delay isn't what it seems.

The Apostle Peter even tells us that God is not slow, as some count slowness, but is patient with us, unwilling that anyone should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That ultimately won't happen. Some people simply refuse to be helped. Others want to have it their own way and receive only what they have deserved. They don't understand what it is that they have deserved, and they refuse to believe that God is going to do things His way and not theirs. But God's desire is that everyone have time to hear, and time to consider the evidence of the Word of the reality about them, and repent and be saved. Nevertheless, the time will come when God chooses to end the waiting, and the resurrection will be upon us like spring, and life will rise out of death - and, sadly, many of those who also rise will rise only to further, deeper, and greater death. But the Gospel stands as the reminder that the end of winter is coming.

Groundhog Day, the movie, depicts a man with what seems to be an almost infinite number of do-overs. He does what he desires, and the next morning, he starts all over again. He can go to jail, commit crimes, eat outrageously unhealthy, and even die over and over again, and at the same time each morning, he awakens untouched, back at the beginning of Groundhog day, only with the memories and the experience behind him to learn from. The Gospel is something like that, too.

In reality, you do not get to die over and over again, and if you commit a crime and go to jail, you will wake up there the next morning. The Gospel is not contrary to reality in that fashion. It does, however, provide us with a significant number of "do-overs". We call that provision of the Gospel, "forgiveness". In the forgiveness of sins, we have God standing us up, so to speak, brushing us off, and telling us to try again, only this time without the sin. Just as in the movie, we also start over with the memories intact, and, hopefully, something learned from the experience.

If you lie, cheat, and steal, you can be forgiven. Jesus died to purchase that forgiveness with the coin of His blood and death instead of your own. You need to repent, of course. Bill Murray did not need to be sorry for his behavior in the movie - but then the movie was a work of fiction, intended to amuse and entertain. The Gospel is not fiction, nor is it intended for entertainment. It is intended for salvation. It is meant to rescue you from your own sins and their just consequences under the justice of God. Each day, you earn something you don't want to receive in payment - for the wages of sin is death [eternal death, not just the body-in-the-box kind of thing]. The death of the body is fearsome enough, and
(Continued on next page . . .)

GROUNDHOG DAY *continued* . . .

has kept man running scared for a long time, but eternal death and misery is even more troubling to contemplate. Contemplating it and trying not to contemplate it has fueled millennia of terror, and hatred of God, and violence aimed at silencing the voice of the truth. Modern man may deny the creation with evolution, hoping to deny the coming judgment and what it means for those that do not believe, but nothing has silenced it yet. Jesus warned us that it would be this way, John 15:18-21, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me."

The Gospel of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ offers the sinner the do-over. It does not make that person outwardly better, nor does it insulate any Christian from the ability to do something unwise and sinful at a later date. It comes wrapped in a message that tells us that we cannot actually avoid doing sin because our nature is sinful - infected with sin. The problem is, in spite of our best efforts at personal decency and putting away sin, some of us fail in the attempt in public and dramatic ways. They bring shame on the Christian faith in the eyes of a world eager to find a flaw to rally their distaste for our religion around, but they are merely large and public examples of the truth that we all sin. For the Christian, however, the truth of this tendency to sin is simply a reminder of our on-going and profound need for the Savior.

I think the world hates that truth, too. They hate it because they don't want our Savior, and they have nothing of the sort for themselves, and, cry out as they might, they cannot drown out the echo of the knowledge within themselves that they are sinners (in the religious sense), and that there will come, for them too, a day of reckoning. All those funeral parlors and cemeteries stand in mute witness to those truths. Every preaching of Christ carries with it both the Law and the Gospel, and the reminder of the true God whose presence caused Adam and Eve to hide in fear and shame so long ago. If Christ doesn't just go away, they cannot silence the voice of the knowledge of sin and death and hell. Without God, life becomes meaningless rutting around in the filth with no point or purpose, ultimately a race to the grave, and haunted by that singular reality, and the sense that there must be something more beyond - and a simultaneous fear of what that might mean. So life becomes dismal and grey, or a wild chase filled with the frantic attempt to make it make sense without meaning. It becomes, as Shakespeare described, ". . . a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

But we have the Gospel do-over. We have the comfort of forgiveness, and a promise of new life, eternal life. We have the purpose for our lives which God has assigned to them. We don't always know what it is, but we know by faith that He has a purpose for us, and that our lives, though short and difficult at times, have meaning and value. The value of our lives is reflected in the cross of Jesus Christ. God valued us that much. He counted us worthy of redeeming at that cost, and then calling us by name in Baptism, and claiming us as His own, even adopting us into His family. He feeds us with His heavenly meal in the Sacrament of the Altar, and sends us out, cleansed and refreshed and renewed to do the things He has set before us to do to His glory and the welfare of our neighbors. We have a hope, other than simply growing old and ceasing to exist one day, as the world expects. We have a purpose: sharing the good news of forgiveness and life purchased and won for us with Christ's holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. We have a community to support us and for us to encourage and participate in. We have a victory that we don't have to win because it is won for us already, and proclaimed in the resurrection of Jesus from His tomb on Easter. We are winners entering the field, and have nothing to lose by sharing that victory with others. And, just like the movie, Groundhog Day, we have the privilege of learning from our mistakes and sins, and having another go at life with the aim of doing it better, not repeating the same mistakes, and not being finally held accountable for our weakness and cupidity. We are forgiven, set free into the world again, and our only instruction is, as it was for the woman caught in adultery so long ago, "Go, and sin no more."

Groundhog Day is a made-up, somewhat silly holiday for February. Still, when we look at everything through our faith, even a silly day like that can put us in mind of the Gospel. The end of winter is coming - and not just the winter of 2022-2023! Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

In Him,

- Pastor Sean



PLEASE JOIN US . . .

WEEKLY SUNDAY WORSHIP

at 8:30 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

Traditional worship at 8:30 a.m. every Sunday.

Traditional worship on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays at 11:15 a.m.

Contemporary Worship with Live Band

at 11:15 a.m. on 2nd and 4th Sundays.

All Sunday services now include communion.

STREAMING AND ONLINE WORSHIP

If you are immune compromised and cannot attend in-person worship,
or if you are unable to attend for another reason, please join us for worship online by going to

<https://www.facebook.com/flcharlotte/live>

All worship services will be livestreamed.

The worship services will be available for viewing after the livestream has ended.



THE SEASON OF LENT

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, February 22, 7:00 p.m.

MIDWEEK LENTEN WORSHIP

Wednesday, March 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29, 7:00 p.m.

Midweek Lenten Dinner served on these days at 6:00 p.m.

PALM SUNDAY

Sunday, April 2, 10:00 a.m.

One service on this day

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday, April 6, 7:00 p.m.

GOOD FRIDAY

Thursday, April 7, 7:00 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, April 9, 10:00 a.m.

One service on this day



FIFTY-TWO WEEK BIBLE READING PROGRAM

It's never too late to join in the 52 Week Bible Reading Program!

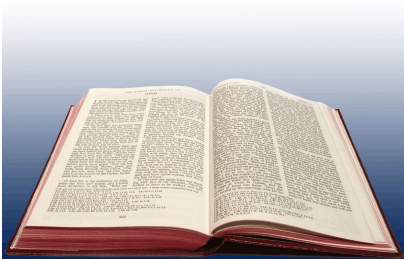
Bible readings for February:

Week 5

January 29 Exodus 31-32
January 30 Exodus 33-35
January 31 Exodus 36-38
February 1 Exodus 39-40
February 2 Leviticus 1-4
February 3 Leviticus 5-6
February 4 Leviticus 7-9

Week 6

February 5 Leviticus 10-12
February 6 Leviticus 13
February 7 Leviticus 14-15
February 8 Leviticus 16-18
February 9 Leviticus 19-20
February 10 Leviticus 21-23
February 11 Leviticus 24-25



Week 7

February 12 Leviticus 26-27
February 13 Numbers 1-2
February 14 Numbers 3-4
February 15 Numbers 5-6
February 16 Numbers 7
February 17 Numbers 8-10
February 18 Numbers 11-13

Week 8

February 19 Numbers 14-15
February 20 Numbers 16-18
February 21 Numbers 19-20
February 22 Numbers 21-22
February 23 Numbers 23-25
February 24 Numbers 26-28
February 25 Numbers 29-31

Week 9

February 26 Numbers 32-33
February 27 Numbers 34-36
February 28 Deuteronomy 1-2
March 1 Deuteronomy 3-4
March 2 Deuteronomy 5-6
March 3 Deuteronomy 7-9
March 4 Deuteronomy 10-12

FLC COUNCIL MEETING

The next Council Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 9, 7:00 p.m.

FLC ELDERS MEETING

The next Board of Elders' Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 21, 6:30 p.m.



FLC ELISABETH GUILD

The Elisabeth Guild will be *tentatively* meeting (pending weather)

Thursday, February 2, 1:30 p.m.

For more information please call Marj 517-543-1615.



FLC COMMUNITY DINNER

Our next Community Dinner will be held on

Monday, February 20, 6:00 p.m.

This dinner is free to all in our community or congregation regardless of need.

Helpers are needed please. Questions?

Please contact George Hatter at 517-213-1939.



ELECTRONIC GIVING AVAILABLE

First Lutheran has an electronic giving option called Kindrid.

To utilize this option simply go to our website at www.firstlutherancharlotte.org look for the kindrid smart giving logo and click on it or go to the drop down menu on our website (three lines together at the top) and then click on “give.”

Thank you for your continued support to First Lutheran and your church family.



PLEASE HELP OUR LOCAL FOOD PANTRY

Please consider donating to Helping Hands Food Bank to help struggling families. You may drop donations directly to the food bank at 621 Jefferson St., Charlotte. or you may leave donations in the collection box located in the FLC narthex. Donations need to be in-date and unopened. Donations of non-perishable food items and personal care items such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers, and cleaning supplies, are needed.

You may also send a monetary donation to:

Helping Hands Food Pantry - 621 Jefferson St., Charlotte, MI 48813.

For questions please call the food bank at 517-543-8737. Thank you.



ALTAR FLOWERS

Please consider signing up to provide flowers to beautify our Sunday altar. Cost is currently \$20 per bouquet.. Please make checks payable to FLC Elisabeth Guild and place in Shirley Lea's mailbox. You may take your flowers home with you following the 2nd worship service.

A sign-up sheet is located in the office hallway. When you sign up you may state a reason for your flowers (this will appear in the Sunday announcements) such as celebrating a birthday or anniversary, in loving memory of someone, in thanksgiving for blessings, etc. Thank you for helping make our altar beautiful.



USE OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH BUILDING

The First Lutheran Church fellowship hall, kitchen, and Pastor Olson Memorial Room, are available for use by members and outside groups for their private events, meetings, etc. To make a reservation please contact the church office 517-543-4360 ext. 221. Please do not make plans to use the facilities without making a reservation through the church office as someone may already have the space reserved.

A member of FLC must be present for the duration of any event/meeting held at First by an outside group. FLC is not available for for-profit events (Tupperware, Candlelight, craft sale, etc.). A deposit of \$150 is required for any use of the FLC facilities other than for non-profit or church events. A list of facility use rules and a cleaning check list can be obtained through the church office. Be sure to clean and secure the building after your event. Thank you.

LCMS Stewardship News for January

Don't Replace "And" with "Or"

We've all heard that stewardship means giving to the church of our time, talents and treasure. This alliterative trinity helps us see that giving is not just about money, but about our whole lives. As we confess in the Small Catechism's explanation of the First Article of the Apostle's Creed, God gives us everything we have and enjoy. First we confess that God gives us "our body and soul, our eyes, ears, and all our members, our reason and all our senses" (SC II). Then we confess that He gives us material things. The time, talents, and treasure trinity places before our eyes the fact that we are to give something of all three of these things toward the mission of the church in thanksgiving for what God has provided. For everything we have, and indeed, everything we are, comes from God's fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.

The problem with this alliterative trinity comes when we replace one little word with another little word — when we replace the word and with the word or. It is always written with the and, but when we read it, we read it with the or. Thus this quite helpful trinity, which extolls that everything that we have and are is a gift from God, to be given back in service of His church, turns into a trinity that we can pick and choose from when we serve God. The giving of our time, talents and treasure turns into the giving of our time, talents or treasure.

Then the question arises: Can we give of our time and talents instead of our treasure? Or perhaps it is the other way round: Can we give of our treasure and not of our time and talents? But these are the wrong questions. The right question is, can we give of our time and talents in addition to our treasure? Yes, indeed, we are called to give of all three. The things that God gives us are not to be pitted against one another. Rather, they are given to us, and we are to press them all into God's service for benefit of His church and our neighbors in need.

Thus, we give all three. We give our treasure in the form of a generous, first-fruits proportion of our income. We give of our time in generosity for the benefit of Christ's holy church. We give of our talents in the same manner. Since God gave us all these things, we are called to give generously of all these things in faith toward Him and in fervent love to our neighbors.

For God has provided all these things for us. Out of His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, He gives us each time, talents AND treasure as a means to bless those around us. We serve our neighbors with these things, blessing them with the blessings with which God has blessed us. We give of our time, talents and treasure to our families, our society, our church and our local congregations. And we do this because we know that we are not our own. Rather, we belong to God. We have been bought with a price: the holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave everything — His time, His talents and His treasure — to have us as His own and to live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting

righteousness, innocence and blessedness. We have these things as gifts and blessings from God. Let us then press them all into service for the sake of His love — time, talents and treasure together.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry



DONATIONS FOR FIRST LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL/DAYCARE

We are collecting paper products and cleaning supplies for FLPD on an ongoing basis. A collection basket is located in the FLC narthex.

Thank you for your donations.



DONATIONS FOR EATON COUNTY PREGNANCY CENTER

The pregnancy center helps women in need and encourages them to choose life.

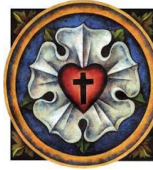
Donations of diapers (size newborn-4), wipes, sleepers (newborn - 1 year), receiving blankets, and maternity clothes (all sizes) are needed - a box is in the FLC coat room.



HOW YOU CAN HELP THOSE IN NEED

Here is a list of ways you can help those in need in our community and congregation:

- ☞ **FLC Esther Fund.** This fund helps provide emergency housing to the homeless in our community. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please write “Esther Fund” and the amount you wish to contribute on your offering envelope.
- ☞ **FLC Good Samaritan Fund.** This fund helps members of First Lutheran who have a financial need. If you are a member struggling with a financial need, please contact the church office to apply for help. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please write “Good Samaritan Fund” and the amount you wish to contribute on your offering envelope.
- ☞ **Helping Hands Food Bank.** You may make donations at FLC or directly to the food bank: 621 Jefferson St., Charlotte. For questions please call the food bank at 517-543-8737.
- ☞ **Pregnancy Center for Eaton County.** The pregnancy center helps women in need and encourages those considering abortion to choose life instead. We are collecting donations of diapers (size newborn thru size four), wipes, sleepers (size newborn thru one year), receiving blankets, and maternity clothes (of all sizes). The center is also in need of monetary donations. Please send monetary donations directly to Pregnancy Center of Eaton County, PO Box 480, Charlotte, MI 48813. Volunteers are needed to help clean and organize at the pregnancy center (337 State St., Charlotte), and help greet clients, Thursdays from Noon - 3pm. Questions? Please contact Gina at 517-543-7077.
- ☞ **SIREN Eaton Shelter.**
Please make donations directly to the shelter:
520 Robinson St., Charlotte, MI. For questions please call the shelter at 517-543-0748.



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Scripture Alone

We believe that the Holy Scriptures in their entirety are the inspired and infallible Word of God and that they alone are the only source and norm of faith and life for the Christian. We believe that the Bible is complete and requires no additions from any other source and that it clearly reveals God's plan of salvation for mankind.

Faith Alone

We believe that man was originally created holy by God but later rebelled against God and is now, by his nature, spiritually dead and blind. Only when man is brought to faith by the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God is it possible for man to be saved. Faith is God's work - not man's work - and comes only by hearing the Word of God. Man is justified before God by faith alone and not by good deeds.

Grace Alone

We believe that we are saved by grace alone and that man cannot earn his way into God's favor. Grace is the undeserved love of God who sent His Son Jesus into the world to take our place under God's law and to suffer and die to pay the penalty for our sins. Whoever trusts in that redemptive act of Jesus Christ will not perish but have everlasting life.