



# THE FIRST PERSPECTIVE

November 2023  
First Lutheran Church, Stephen, MN

***Dear First Lutheran faith family,***

December blessings to you and yours! This is such a wonderful time of the year; some even say the “most wonderful” time of the year. For us Lutheran Christians, this is the season of Advent, a time of preparation for Christ’s coming as we remember Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem so long ago. God comes to us as a little one, with all vulnerability, to show us the tender love God has for each and every one of us and how God wants us to have that tender love in each of our lives. So, this season not something we just remember, but also participate in – a reminder we are called to always make room for God in the manger of our lives. How are you making room for Jesus in the manger of your soul?

Here are the worship services and themes for December:

**December 3rd** at 9 am: “Keep Awake”

First Sunday of Advent / Holy Communion

**December 10th** at 9 am: “Prepare the Way”

Second Sunday of Advent

Later that day at 5 pm: **Wednesday School Christmas program**

**December 17th** at 9 am: “Testify to the Light”

Third Sunday of Advent / Holy Communion

**December 24th** at 9 am: “The Lord is With You”

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**December 24th** at 4 pm: “Good News of Great Joy”

Christmas Eve / Holy Communion

**December 31st** at 9 am: “Seeing God’s Salvation”

First Sunday of Christmas



***I will be taking some time off at the end of the month, December 25 – January 2. I look forward to seeing pictures of your Christmas celebrations!***

God’s blessings to you during this most wonderful time! Have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Peace and everything good to you and yours!

Your pastor,

Brother Jeff

# WEDNESDAY SCHOOL NEWS

## **CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**

The Wednesday School Children's Christmas Program will be held on Sunday, December 10 at 5 pm at the Church. All are welcome to come and enjoy the program.

## **WEDNESDAY SCHOOL RESUMES IN JANUARY**

There will not be Wednesday School on December 13, 20 and 27 and January 3rd. Wednesday School will resume on January 10th. Have a Blessed Christmas season!

## **WEDNESDAY SCHOOL AND CONFIRMATION: FAITH, FOOD AND FUN!**

Wednesday School and Confirmation are off to a great start for the 2023 school year!





# CHURCH NEWS

**THE MARTHA/RUTH CIRCLE** will meet Monday, December 11, at the church fellowship hall. We will meet at 6:00 pm for a appetizer potluck and our Bible study will be the devotional in The November/December Gather magazine.

**LOOSE CHANGE:** Loose Change Sunday is the 3rd Sunday of each month. November Loose Change: **Summer Bible Camp Program**

**BULLETIN SPONSORS:** If you would like to honor or remember a family member, you can sponsor a bulletin. Sponsorships are \$20. Please contact the office with your request.

**ALTAR COMMITTEE:** Reminder to change the paraments and fill the candles. Communion is served the 1st & 3rd Sundays. Committee members prepare the altar.

**LAY READERS:** Please consider signing up to read during services. If you haven't been a lay reader before, contact the church office to find out more.

**THRIVENT MEMBERS,** are you throwing away \$500 a year? You have the opportunity to use this money to help causes of your choice. Contact Sharon Kotts for assistance.

## Do You Have News To Share?

Send announcements and events you would like to share in the newsletter to [firstl@wikel.com](mailto:firstl@wikel.com) by the 20th of each month.

# DECEMBER FOOD SHELF NEWS

The Food Shelf "Bring-one-item" Appeal for Sunday November 19 brought in 35.33 pounds of food. Also donated was kitchen and personal care items. Thank you!



Due to the early delivery deadline, no food shelf donations will be delivered after December 11. Holiday theme food items, such as hot cocoa and other spicy drink mixes, canned cranberries, green bean casserole fixings, etc., may be donated until December 10th. As always, household and personal care items are also appreciated. Food Shelf deliveries for 2024 will resume in mid-January.

A complete accounting of 2023 donations will be in a report for the FLC's Annual Meeting.

Collection baskets are by the back door and in the fellowship hall at First Lutheran. Looking ahead to the new year, the January/February theme is "Have a Heart." Thanks for helping care for our neighbors! Any questions, call Jane (218) 478-2456.

# A CALL TO CHURCH STEWARDSHIP

Every month the church council receives a report of the monetary donations to First Lutheran Church. We don't discuss or calculate the non monetary donations to First Lutheran, and those volunteer hours add up quickly.

There are so many ways to volunteer at First Lutheran. This is not a complete list, but something to get you thinking about how to best serve your church family.

- Lawn Mowing
- Snow Shoveling
- Lay Reader
- Stream on Facebook
- Ushering 2 to 3 times a year
- Serving coffee twice a year
- Deep cleaning once a year
- Special music
- Altar committee
- Quilting
- Substitute teacher for Wednesday school
- Decorate (and undecorate) for Christmas
- Summer flowers
- Clavinova- just pushing buttons, not actually playing so yes you can do it!
- Head Usher(s) - we would love to have a few people serve as head ushers for special events

There are jobs for families, retirees, college students, elementary students, everyone who is a member of our First Lutheran family. If you have a project you would like to add to our list, please talk to Betsy or Whitney.

We hope you remember First Lutheran with your monetary donations but we also need all hands on deck for the little jobs that make our church family run smoothly. If you have questions about volunteering, your Stewardship Committee, Betsy and Whitney can point you in the right direction.



Dear Friends,  
 On behalf of everyone at Northlands Rescue Mission, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your recent generous donation of \$71.21. Your contribution has made a significant impact on the lives of the homeless individuals we serve, and we are thankful for your partnership, compassion, and support.

The impact of your donation will be felt long after today, as it empowers us to continue offering support, care, and hope to those facing homelessness. Together, we can create a community that values every individual, regardless of their circumstances, and build toward a future where the homeless are truly empowered to live their best lives possible. The poet Charles Bukowski once said, "You begin saving the world by saving one person at a time."

We would be honored if you could visit our homeless shelter and see these efforts and observe the direct impact of your donation firsthand.

Once again, thank you for your kindness. We are incredibly grateful for your belief in our work and your dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of others.

*A written note on the letter:* "Thank you for partnering with us to create positive change for the individuals and families we serve."

God Bless,  
 Sue Shirek, Executive Director  
 Northlands Rescue Mission



## FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH FUND OPTIONS

The church council has decided to create a new fund, The **Schendel Family Fund** in honor and memory of Pastor Mike and Karen Schendel, who gave so much to our congregation and community. The goal is to create an endowment fund, where the interest can be spent on church and community projects. We have been fundraising for the outdoor sign fund in honor of Pastor Mike, and this would be a continuation of those efforts.

Our **Education Fund** is also open and receiving funds. If you stop by the church on a Wednesday night and see the rooms filled with K-9 students, you can appreciate how much time, love and materials go into our program.

The **Altar Fund** is also open for donations. The Altar is such a warm, welcoming sight for in person and online worshippers.

Thank you for remembering First Lutheran as you consider your monetary donations. We want to make investments in our youth, congregation, buildings and community.



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 12/02..... Rachel Weberg
- 12/02..... Garrit Winge
- 12/03..... Aase Hamness
- 12/03..... Renee Jensen
- 12/04..... Greta Weberg
- 12/05..... Whitney Weisenberger
- 12/06..... Nancy Gajeski
- 12/09..... Aiden Sundby
- 12/10..... Michael Douglas
- 12/10..... Sutton Torgerson
- 12/13..... Sharon Kotts
- 12/15..... Ingrid Bazey
- 12/16..... Brayden Benson
- 12/16..... Holly Jensen
- 12/16..... Jody Paulson
- 12/16..... Grant Woinarowicz
- 12/19..... John Peterson
- 12/20..... Eileen Opp
- 12/21..... Bowen Anderson
- 12/21..... Chris Mills
- 12/23..... Carl Troska
- 12/28..... Oakley Rost
- 12/30..... Todd Nelson



## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 12/27 ..... Brian & Betsy Jensen
- 12/27 ..... Carly & Isaac Black
- 12/28 ..... Shawna & John Peterson

## MEMORIALS

**In Memory: James Brinkman**

Kris Ann & Myron Pietruszewski -  
 Schendel Family Fund

**In Memory: Jacqueline LaBlanc Stakes**

Kris Ann & Myron Pietruszewski -  
 Outdoor Sign

**In Memory: Andrew LeBlanc**

Kris Ann & Myron Pietruszewski -  
 Outdoor Sign

**In Memory: Darlene Wesolowski**

Tim & Darlene Bates - Outdoor Sign  
 Gale Frei & Fanny Schaefer -  
 Undesignated

# THIS YEAR'S STEWARDSHIP PROJECT BENEFITS ANIMALS

We are doing a little different of a project this time around. We have a lot of animal lovers in our congregation and are giving a donation opportunity that will benefit three animal rescues. This aligns with Brother Jeff's pet blessing and all the love our congregation has for animals.



1. **Perry's Paws out of Kennedy, MN.** Their mission goal is "to reduce the number of homeless, unwanted, and abandoned cats and kittens in Kittson County and the surrounding areas . . . [and] to rescue and rehabilitate as many cats as possible." Perry's Paws may also begin a "trap, neuter, release program" to slow a possible cat overpopulation.
2. **Turtle Mountain Animal Rescue out of Rolla, ND.** Their mission is to rescue stray animals and re-home ones in need while putting into place the necessary services to decrease animal overpopulation. It is their mission to work with the communities they serve so that together they can come up with long term permanent solutions that improve the quality of lives for humans and animals.
3. **Journey Home Animal Rescue of Grand Forks, ND.** Journey Home Animal Rescue, based in Grand Forks, was founded in 2018. A group of dedicated animal advocates recognized the need for a foster based rescue in the area. They accept strays and owner-surrenders from ND, MN, SD, and occasionally outside areas. They place all their animals in foster homes while they are receiving medical care and learning to be a beloved family member until they are ready to start their new journey in their forever home.

Please feel free to donate whatever you feel you can or want. The donations made to the church for this project will get dispersed evenly to each place. Feel free to reach out to Whitney with any questions on this project.

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## First Lutheran Church Council Minutes November 1, 2023

Members Present: Connie Troska, Kris Ann Pietruszewski, Melanie McGlynn, Jess Rogus, Sharon Kotts, Krissy McMahon, Betsy Jensen, and Pat Heggen.

Also in attendance: Keith Szczepanski, Darlene Bates and Pastor Jeff.

President Connie called the meeting to order.

Melanie gave devotions.

Secretary's report: A change was made to October's Treasurer's Report as it was states minutes instead of report for the approval. A motion was made by Kris Ann to accept the October minutes with that correction, seconded by Jess. All in favor, motion carried.

Treasurer's report: Darlene presented October's offerings. A discussion was had on where to use the undesignated memorial funds to pay the additional parsonage costs. Betsy made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. Melanie seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

### Offerings for October

October 1st.....	\$2,022.00
October 10th.....	\$2,257.00
October 17th.....	\$1,685.00
October 24th.....	\$1,690.00
October 29th.....	\$1,790.00

October Loose Change: \$231.00  
to People's Church in Bemidji

**Membership changes:** None

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### *Deacons:*

- Tim will be here November 19th.
- Brother Jeff will be gone on December 31st.

### *Trustees:*

- The gutter people should be here either the end of this week or beginning of next week. After gutter installation, the heat tape people will come.
- The fire escape painting will wait until spring.
- Some people have trouble getting up the stairs when going up to the lectern. The trustees are looking into some sort of railing for people to use.

### *Parish Education:*

- The Christmas program is on December 10th.
- Kids are singing in church on November 19th.

### *Stewardship:*

- Give to the Max Day is November 16th. We have 2 choices of where we can designate our money towards.
- There will be a December donation project like last year. More details to come.
- An update on our sign project. We are running into problems getting a sign to insert into our current brick sign. It is cheaper to get an entirely new sign rather than an insert.

### *Pastor's Report:*

- Brother Jeff appreciated our clergy appreciation gift.
- Brother Jeff wants to paint 1 accent wall in his office. All were in favor.

**OLD BUSINESS:** No Old Business

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Keith Szczepanski was here to present his family's idea as a memorial to Stacy. They are donating money to places around the different area where Stacy worked and lived.
- A Canva subscription was purchased by the church to facilitate the newsletter, online service PowerPoint, and other flyers.
- The kitchen door key pad works sporadically. We need a new lock. Melanie made a motion to purchase a new lock for the kitchen door. Krissy seconded it. All in favor, motion carried.
- We need to renew our covenant with Peoples Church in Bemidji. Brother Jeff handed out their renewed covenant. It has been tabled until we can go over it with the entire congregation at the annual meeting.
- Brother Jeff would like to create a kid friendly space for parents and kids to go during the service if needed. Using a corner of the Fireside Room seems to be our best option.

Krissy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Pat. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

The next meeting will be December 6th at 7:45 PM.

Melanie McGlynn  
Church Council Secretary



# THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ADVENT CANDLE COLORS

Following is excerpts from an article written by Joel Ryan, and posted at [www.christianity.com](http://www.christianity.com). For the complete article visit their website and search for: "The Meaning and Symbolism of Advent Wreath and Candles".



In almost all Advent traditions, lighting candles is a prominent feature of each week's commemorative celebration. Candles and the light they produce reflect the light that came into the world with the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Some traditions light a single candle on each of the 24 days leading up to Christmas. Other traditions place one large candle in the center of the Advent wreath and light it every day of December until Christmas. The most common tradition, however, typically uses four candles. Each advent candle is lit on one of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

In most traditions, the lighting of the candles is meant to be done as a family and will often be used to reflect on the hope, faith, joy, peace, light, and purity that came into the world with the gift of the Messiah. Families will typically light the candle together, often encouraging children to participate in the celebration. Many modern churches light an Advent candle during Sunday services to prepare for Christmas as a church family.

## Advent Candle Colors

The color of these candles can vary, but it is common for the first, second, and fourth candles to be purple, while the third is rose-colored, red, or a pinkish hue. Often, a fifth white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Day itself.

**First Advent Candle:** The first purple candle symbolizes HOPE. Also known as the "Prophecy Candle" in memory of the prophets, particularly Isaiah, who prophesied the birth of Christ. It symbolizes the anticipation felt in awaiting the coming Messiah.

**Second Advent Candle:** The second purple candle symbolizes FAITH. Also known as the "Bethlehem Candle," signifies Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

**Third Advent Candle:** The third candle is ordinarily pink and represents JOY. This candle is pink because the rose color represents joy, also known as the "Shepherd's Candle." The third Sunday of Advent is meant to remind us of the world's joy at the birth of Jesus and that the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent.

**Fourth Advent Candle:** The final purple candle marks the last week of Advent as we anticipate the birth of our Savior. This final candle, also known as the "Angel's Candle," signifies PEACE. It reminds us of the angels' message: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men" (Luke 2:14).

Regardless of specific Advent traditions and differences in how it is celebrated across cultures and countries, Advent is a time for all believers and families to commemorate the arrival of the Messiah, prepare for his second coming, and celebrate the joy of Christmas together.

May you be blessed this holiday season as you prepare your heart for Christmas!

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## BROTHER JEFF'S CONTACT INFORMATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Brother Jeff Brown | Email: [flcpastor@wiktel.com](mailto:flcpastor@wiktel.com) | Phone 218-230-6583 | Office Hours: Sunday -Thursday (Friday off)

## CHURCH OFFICE INFORMATION:

Secretary: Darlene Bates | Email: [firstl@wiktel.com](mailto:firstl@wiktel.com) | Phone 218-478-3895 | Office Hours: Tues-Wed-Thurs 9am - 12 pm

THE FIRST PERSPECTIVE  
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 US POSTAGE PAID  
 STEPHEN, MN 56757  
 PERMIT NO. 1

# DECEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
All Sunday Services are celebrated in-person or on Facebook Live					<b>1</b> Pastor's Day Off	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b> 9 am Worship with Communion 10 am - Fellowship	<b>4</b> 6 pm Martha Ruth Circle	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 6 pm - Wed. School 6:30 - Confirmation 7:45 - Council	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Pastor's Day Off	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> 9 am - Worship 10 am - Fellowship 5 pm - Christmas Program	<b>11</b> 9:30 am Quilting	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> No Wednesday School	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Pastor's Day Off Weiland/Ellefson wedding rehearsal	<b>16</b> Weiland/Ellefson wedding
<b>17</b> 9 am Worship with Communion 10 am - Fellowship	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> No Wednesday School	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Pastor's Day Off	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 9 am - Worship 10 am - Fellowship 4 pm - Christmas Eve Services	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> No Wednesday School	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> 9 am - Worship; 10 am - Fellowship	Published monthly by the Congregation of First Lutheran Church, Stephen, MN Copyright: First Lutheran Church, Stephen, MN 56757					