



# THE VOICE

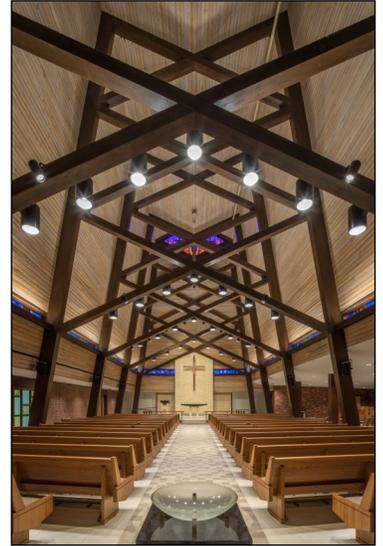
Making disciples of Jesus Christ  
for the transformation of the world.



## TAKING OUR FOOT OFF THE GAS PEDAL

About a month ago, the Church Council discussed and voted to adopt a proposed phased reopening of our church facilities. We have been functioning in Phase 1 “Business Hours” since mid-June and we are grateful to those who have visited us and followed the risk reduction measures put in place: masks, hand sanitizer, 6-foot physical distancing, health inventory and visitor log.

At the July Council meeting, after Lincoln leaders indicated we have returned to a high risk of COVID-19 spread in the Lincoln-Lancaster community, it was decided we must take our foot off the gas pedal of reopening our church facilities. The decision was made to stay in Phase 1 and not move into Phase 2 (small group in-person ministries) as planned.



Two new directions came up during the Council meeting:

1. We will connect our First Lutheran Church phased reopening plans to the different levels of risk on the Lincoln COVID-19 Spread Risk Dial (<https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/covid19>). What this will look like for First Lutheran is:
  - Severe Spread Risk (red): Church facilities are closed.
  - High Spread Risk (orange): Phase 1- Facilities open for business purposes; Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 am-4:00 pm.
  - Moderate Spread Risk (yellow): Phase 2 - Small group ministries may gather in the facilities.
  - Low Spread Risk (green): Phase 3 - Modified in-person worship and learning opportunities.
2. When the risk dial moves into a lower risk area, we will wait one week before fully moving into that more open phase. When the risk dial moves into a higher risk area, we will immediately begin functioning under our risk reduction measures associated with that phase. There will, however, be occasions when we will need to be flexible with this plan when it comes to certain events, but they will be carried out with the utmost caution and care.

Since the pandemic hit in March we have seen the love and deep care you have for the wellbeing of others - wearing your face masks, checking in on fellow members and making donations of food and resources. We are astounded by how you live out your discipleship in ways that give glory to God and how your communal adaptability helps us be nimble as we face new challenges. Thank you.

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
[www.flclincoln.org](http://www.flclincoln.org)

AUGUST 2020

## ADULT ONLINE LEARNING

### Adult Forum

Info: [connie.kisling@gmail.com](mailto:connie.kisling@gmail.com)

Re-Plays: [www.flclincoln.org/learn](http://www.flclincoln.org/learn)

August 2 – Dimensions (Part 2 of 2) – *A Day in the Life of an Infant, Toddler and Preschooler* – Michelle Zimmer, Education Programs Director. Discover how hands-on experiences based on the interests of the children allow them to learn in ways that meets their individual needs.

August 9 – *Meet Our New Transitional Minister*. Get to know Pastor Steve and learn about his ministry experiences and what he looks forward to in his transitional ministry role.

August 16 – *Coronavirus Update* – Bob Rauner, First Lutheran member. Get a current update on the coronavirus activity in Lincoln.

August 23 – *The Meaning of Disease* – Patrick Hayden-Roy, First Lutheran member. Explore Bible passages and how they speak to us today as we confront the power of disease.

August 30 – *Argentina Trip* – Pastor Justin Eller, First Lutheran Pastor. Hear about his travels to Argentina and Uruguay last fall and to Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, the companion church of the Nebraska Synod.

### Bible Studies

Tuesdays 5:45 pm and Wednesdays 10:45 am

Info: [pastorjustin@flclincoln.org](mailto:pastorjustin@flclincoln.org)

Tuesday's group is studying Genesis and Wednesday's group is journeying through Matthew.

**Saturday with the Guys** - 2nd Saturday; 8:00 am  
(Reading *Simply Jesus* by N.T. Wright)

Info: [jim.kisling@gmail.com](mailto:jim.kisling@gmail.com)

**Harbor Coffee Talk** - Mondays; 1:30-2:30 pm

Info: [sharon@flclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@flclincoln.org)

**Faith to Go!** - 2nd & 4th Wednesdays; 6:30 am

Info: [tlbeermann@hotmail.com](mailto:tlbeermann@hotmail.com)

**A Few Good Men Bible Study** - Tuesdays; 7:00 am

Info: [lrockwell@windstream.net](mailto:lrockwell@windstream.net)

**Gather and Gab** - Thursdays; 8:00 pm

Info: [sharon@flclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@flclincoln.org)

## DISCIPLES LEARN...

## WELCOME DIMENSIONS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Info: [pastorjustin@flclincoln.org](mailto:pastorjustin@flclincoln.org)

With the classrooms set up and the Nature Explore Classroom beginning to take shape, we are excited to welcome Dimensions Early Childhood



**Dimensions™**  
Education Programs

Education Program to First Lutheran in August! It will be wonderful to have infants, toddlers and preschoolers learning in our church facilities again. Once we have a date for a celebratory kick-off event and ribbon cutting, we will invite the congregation to participate the beginning of our new partnership. To learn more about the Dimensions Foundation, visit <https://dimensionsfoundation.org>.

## SATURDAY WITH THE GUYS

2nd Saturday of the month; 8:00 am

Info: **Jim Kisling** at [jim.kisling@gmail.com](mailto:jim.kisling@gmail.com)



Grab a cup of coffee and join Saturday with the Guys online the second Saturday of the month at 8:00 am. The discussion is always centered on a book, article or video clip. The discussions are open and thought provoking and are open to men of all ages. You can jump in anytime it works with your schedule. The group is currently reading *Simply Jesus* by N.T. Wright. Contact Jim Kisling for information on how you can be a part of the discussion.



JOIN US FOR  
ONLINE  
BIBLE STUDY

Tuesday 5:45 pm or  
Wednesday 10:45 am

Contact  
[pastorjustin@flclincoln.org](mailto:pastorjustin@flclincoln.org)



## FAITHTREK

Sunday, September 13

Info: [lindsey@flclincoln.org](mailto:lindsey@flclincoln.org)

Announcement!

Plan to join us as we kick off a new year of FaithTrek! Whether or not we are able to meet in person we will begin our 2020-2021 year of learning on Sunday, September 13. We are excited to encourage families to connect and grow in faith together! Look for more information in the coming weeks, along with an exciting announcement! In the meantime, here are some articles for families as we deal with uncertainties regarding the pandemic:

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-you-and-your-kids-can-de-stress-during-coronavirus>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/parenting/coronavirus-kids-talk.html>

## WALKING WET

Info: [sharon@flclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@flclincoln.org)

For families with children age birth to 3, videos will soon be released showing ways everyday activities can be used to share faith activities with your little ones. The goal is to release a video each month and also have parents share what they are experiencing with each other as they share the faith practices.

## CONFIRMATION: DINNER+LEARNING

Wednesday, August 19; 6:30-7:30 pm

Info: [pastorjustin@flclincoln.org](mailto:pastorjustin@flclincoln.org)

Dinner+Learning Confirmation is evolving to respond to the realities of the pandemic. This year we will learn together online as middle schoolers and at home as families of faith. When it is safe, we may gather periodically for in-person community building. Our new year will begin August 19, from 6:30-7:30 pm, with an orientation to the year, goals, expectations and games.

## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL LEARNING

Info: [sharon@flclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@flclincoln.org)

Parents and students are currently being surveyed about what topics and resources they would like to receive during our new year of learning. We don't know when we will hold classes again in person, but we will try to have weekly materials available for use to continue faith conversations at home.

## BACKYARD SUMMER SAFARI

Info: [sharon@flclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@flclincoln.org)

Thank you to the thirteen families that participated in the Backyard Summer Safari program! We enjoyed seeing photos of the kids (and parents and grandparents) with big smiles on their faces! Despite all the challenges due to the pandemic, it was fun to take time and explore and appreciate God's creation.



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# DISCIPLES SERVE...

## FOOD NEEDS AT LUTHERAN FOOD PANTRY CONTINUE

**Info: Judy Batterman at [judybatterman@gmail.com](mailto:judybatterman@gmail.com)**



Our Saturday drop off of food items for the Lutheran Food Pantry will no longer continue. However, food items can be dropped off during the

week – Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 am-4:00 pm – just inside the front entrance. If you are unable to take your items to church during the open hours, contact Steve Lenzen or Judy Batterman to make other arrangements. If you are unable to shop, you can send your monetary donation to the church. It will be recorded on your giving statement and someone will be happy to shop for you. The need for food continues and First Lutheran, through the Lutheran Food Pantry, has done a tremendous job getting food to those in need. Thank you to all who contributed food, money and time.

## FAIR TRADE CHOCOLATE

**Info: Faye Doolittle at [fdoolittle@windstream.net](mailto:fdoolittle@windstream.net)**

Have you been missing your favorite Divine Chocolate? You are in luck! Call the church office to make arrangements to pick up your favorite flavor, such as Cranberry Hazelnut, Toffee or Mint. Each Divine bar is \$3.50.



## YOUTH GROUPS TO RESUME

**Info: [sharon@flclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@flclincoln.org)**

We will be planning outdoor activities in the foreseeable future, as weather permits, for the preschool and elementary, middle school and high school youth groups. Look for more information to come!

## MUSIC MINISTRY NEWS

**Info: [music@flclincoln.org](mailto:music@flclincoln.org)**

Singing and wind instrument ensembles have strict limitations due to potential air-borne contamination of coronavirus. Until further research on the aerosol spray issues, these groups will need to seek their ministries in different, but safe, ways.

### FALL KICK OFF

Adult Choir will begin meeting Wednesdays at 7:10 pm via Zoom on August 26 with a devotion and short rehearsal.

The following groups will meet in-person IF church moves to Phase 2. Each group will follow COVID-19 protocol (details will be sent later.)

Chorister Choir will begin meeting every Wednesday, starting August 26 at 5:00 pm, as an Orff Ensemble.

Spirit Ringers will meet every Thursday at 6:30 pm starting August 27.

### SHORT TERM IN-PERSON ENSEMBLES

Strings - Will meet as a small ensemble

Brass - Will rehearse outside

Jazz Team - Bass and Drum Combo

Band - Regular combination placed in safe distances

# DISCIPLES WORSHIP AND PRAY...

## THE WELCOMING PRAYER

**Info: Denise Mainquist at [deemain12564@yahoo.com](mailto:deemain12564@yahoo.com)**

Sometimes we struggle to accept the “bad” things in our lives. We want to rail at God and we wonder why God has placed such a burden on us. The Welcoming Prayer can help us draw closer to God and recognize that God is in all things and is always teaching us how to draw closer. Sit quietly, calm your mind and pray the Welcoming Prayer to find peace with all that is. How does it feel to give up the desire to control and overcome what is happening today? And if you still want to rail at God, God can take it.

Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I welcome everything that comes to me today because I know it's for my healing.

I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons situations and conditions.

I let go of my desire for power and control.

I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval and pleasure.

I let go of my desire for survival and security.

I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.

I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within. Amen



## PLAN FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP

While we continue to monitor the risks of COVID-19 community spread in Lincoln, we also continue moving forward with our preparation and plans for resuming in-person worship when it is safe. In July, our Church Council approved plans to move forward with live streaming worship. We are in the process of purchasing the equipment needed to make this a reality! Stay tuned for more information as we get closer to launching worship live online.

### A Blessing for the Start of the New School Year

*Those who are students this year gather together, and all family and friends of the students gather around them.*

Family and friends together pray:  
As it says in Psalm 25, "Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me."

Dear Lord, we ask for your presence as we gather around these students to ask your blessing on the occasion of the first day of school. Grant these students your peace to conquer fears, your wisdom for their learning, and your love to share with all they meet.

A blessing for students (parents/caregivers place your hand on your students head or shoulder and pray):  
God of all knowledge and wisdom, (name student(s)) and these school supplies remind us that a new school year is soon to begin. We pray your blessing on them and upon all students, young and old, as they begin

a new year. Help them discover and develop the gifts you have given them. And as they grow in knowledge, help them also grow in kindness and compassion.

A blessing for parents and caregivers (all):  
We ask your blessing on parents and all those who care for students. Strengthen us/them to surround our students with encouragement, support, and love.

A blessing for teachers (all):  
Dear God, thank you for all our dedicated teachers. For their inspiration in our lives. For their knowledge and skills. For their commitment to education. Please bless their work.

A student's prayer (students):  
Dear God, in Proverbs 23:12 you tell us, "Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge." Help us to open our hearts and minds this school year, to learn about your amazing creation, and to equip ourselves to be servants in this world.



Closing (Leader/all)  
"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."  
Jeremiah 29:11.

Students, enter this new school year knowing that you are enough. You are loved. And, you are never alone. May you feel God holding you close in times of uncertainty and celebrating with you in every success. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our savior and Lord. Amen

**A Morning Ritual:**  
Make the sign of the cross on the forehead of your child before he or she leaves for school, saying "(Child's name), Jesus goes with you wherever you go." Remind your child that you think about and pray for him or her during the day.

## DRIVE THROUGH BACKPACK BLESSING

**Sunday, August 9**

**Info: [sharon@fclincoln.org](mailto:sharon@fclincoln.org)**

Save the date for the Drive-Thru Backpack Blessing for all ages. More details will be coming!

**Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

## CHURCH COUNCIL CORNER

**Info: Bryan Hanson at [bryan@flclincoln.org](mailto:bryan@flclincoln.org) or Mike McDannel at [michael.mcdannel@icloud.com](mailto:michael.mcdannel@icloud.com)**



Stewardship has remained strong despite not being able to worship in person since mid-March. The staff has done an outstanding job keeping in contact with members and producing the pre-recorded worship services!

Operating budget update: Total receipts year-to-date are \$12,256 over budget while total expenses year-to-date are \$29,951 under budget, for a budget surplus of \$42,207 thru June. Program expenses (worship, learning, and hospitality) are \$6,523 under budget due to church activities being curtailed while staffing expenses are \$19,495 under budget due to Pastor Dan and Sunni's staff turnover.

In addition to the operating budget contributions our members have shown tremendous generosity to the Food Pantry (\$8,880 cash contributions, plus several tons of food donations!!) and \$9,188 to the Pastors discretionary fund.

Building Project financial update: The final draw on the construction loan was made in June. We ended up needing to borrow \$2,068,000; well below our initial projection of \$2,400,000. The main reason for this is due to the capital campaign pledge receipts being ahead of our initial cash flow projection at this point in time by \$250,000.

Up to this point we have been making interest only payments on the loan, however, beginning August 1 the full monthly principal & interest payment of \$11,726 will begin. As we progress into the follow-up three-year pledge drive in the spring 2021 those funds will be used to make the monthly payments thru 2024, with any excess funds applied as mortgage pre-payments to drive down the monthly mortgage payment to an amount that can be absorbed into the regular operating budget in 2025 ... with the assistance of the mortgage transition fund which we will continue to build up thru 2024.

Other: In April the Council approved an application for a \$48,000 Payroll Protection Program loan thru the Small Business Administration. The loan was granted and funds were received on May 1 to be used toward our compensation expense for May and June. We are awaiting our bank to provide us with the template forms to show proof that the funds were used for that purpose and to apply for loan forgiveness.

## MEMBER HAPPENINGS

Our sympathies to David Pitts in the passing of his mother and to Fabi Gondim in the death of her grandmother.

Welcome new members: Scott Williamson, Michalla Schartz and Leah Schartz.

Congratulations to Alexis Sandman, Grace Monson, Bailey Sandman, Anna Kruse, Mandy Snyder, Abby Watts, Fabianne M. Tavares Gondim, Dylan Roberts and Emma Krause who were awarded college scholarships from the First Lutheran Endowment Fund.



Download the *Give+* App to make your contributions to First Lutheran in a safe and secure way!

# DISCIPLES TELL THEIR STORIES...

## UNDERSTANDING GOD AT WORK IN OTHERS WHO BELIEVE DIFFERENTLY

*by Pastor Steve Griffith, First Lutheran Transitional Pastor*

Hello, First Lutheran friends. By the time you read this I will have been on the job for almost a month. I am enjoying working with Pastor Justin and the fine staff here and I have begun getting acquainted with some of you. It's only fair for you to know a bit of how I practice discipleship in everyday life.

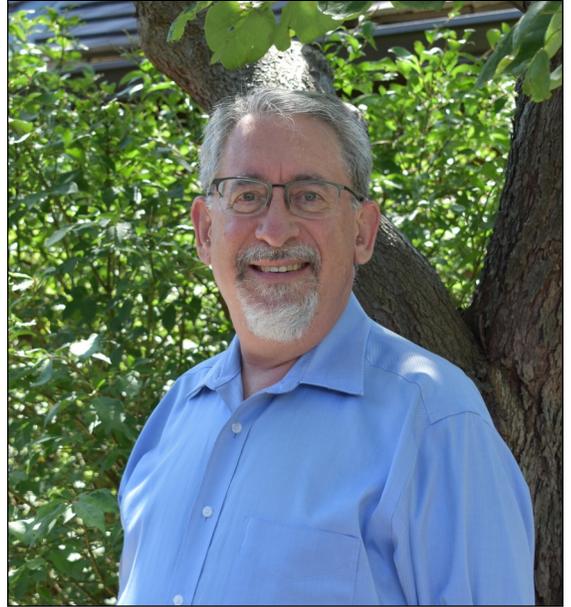
Dad was a minister in the Evangelical United Brethren Church and then the United Methodist Church. Mom had a degree in religious education. They both had grown up in devout church families. It was always clear in our household that religion was not confined to Sunday morning. Mom and Dad were always involved in practical expressions of being Christian: helping a troubled teen, advocating for services and education for Native Americans or speaking up about issues in the community. I think I caught from them both a readiness to help others in need and a sense of outrage at injustice.

I've had a deep interest in other religions for many years. I have just completed six years leading the Faith Coalition of Lancaster County and I'm committed to fostering greater understanding and appreciation for the different faiths of our neighbors. I believe I can be a better Christian when I understand more fully how God is at work in the lives of others who believe differently.

A core Christian teaching is that every person is created by God and so is a beloved child of God. So, after I retired from full-time ministry in 2015, I served 18 months as executive director of Nebraskans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and am presently on the national Board of Directors of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. For several years I was involved in PFLAG Lincoln, working to provide support, education and advocacy for LGBTQ persons and their families and friends. Increasingly urgent is the hard work of understanding and dismantling racism and white supremacy.

I see political advocacy as a moral calling. It's not something separate from Christian faith, but an indispensable and inevitable fruit of faith. The prophet tells us God intends us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

I could go on. I have focused here on my social justice advocacy side, but there are so many aspects of practicing discipleship. I'm always glad to visit with people who want to know more and discuss the whys and hows.



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## A THANK YOU FROM DEACON SUNNI

Once again I say, "Thank You!" to the people of First Lutheran for your partnership. It was fun to see so many drive by on June 28. I longed to say thank you in person and encourage you to continue your journey as disciples. Smiles, flowers, cards, laughter and blessings were shared. And, you shared gifts, too! I have gift cards to eat out, go shopping and enjoy my favorite drinks. I love the colors of the quilt which I admired at last year's Gifts of Hope. The white stole with its symbolism will be worn with honor. Other gifts are being used in my backyard hideaway project with plantings and fire pit. Thanks for your kindness and words of encouragement.



First Lutheran  
Church-Lincoln



@flclincoln

*Each person is a unique creation of God and, through grace, is a child of God. The people of First Lutheran Church welcome all because God welcomes all, without regard for race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status, physical or mental challenges, imprisonment, addictions, socio-economic circumstances, or anything else that too often divides us. First Lutheran Church is a spiritual community that celebrates the gifts of God that can empower us to engage in the struggles of life, to care for each other, and to serve Christ where we work and live. Our unity is in Christ.*

*The Voice* is a monthly publication of First Lutheran Church - 1551 S. 70th Street - Lincoln, NE 68506 - 402.488.0919 - [www.flclincoln.org](http://www.flclincoln.org)