

1870-2022

# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CELEBRATING 150+ YEARS OF MINISTRY

THE PASTORS, VICARS AND SONS & DAUGHTERS



First Lutheran has been blessed with amazing staff through the years. This booklet contains biographies and pictures we gathered from many of those people when we were planning to celebrate our 150th anniversary in April of 2020. Since we were unable to celebrate it at that time, due to the pandemic, we asked everyone included in this booklet to update their bio based on new life events that may have occurred in the past two years. Some bios are updated and others are not, but all of their fond memories and sentiments about First Lutheran remain the same.

Pastor Englund was the Lead Pastor when the church moved from 17th & A to our present location. Below is a letter we received from him.

150th Anniversary Committee  
First Lutheran Church  
1551 South 70th St.  
Lincoln, NE 68506

Dear friends,

I would be delighted to be with you as you celebrate the 150th anniversary of First Lutheran Church. However, since discretion is the better part of valor, I am going to have to refuse your kind invitation. While my health is still very good I find that the infirmities of the aged are ganging up on me as I get closer to my 90th birthday next June. This is making travel for both Greta and myself much more difficult.

We both have wonderful memories of being in Lincoln while I was serving as your pastor. They were exciting times, especially as we made the move to build a new house of worship. As I think back to that time there were many things to remember, but two in particular come to mind - the laying of the cornerstone and the dedication.


The laying of the cornerstone was probably the fastest one ever done as a very large thunderstorm was developing to the south. But we got it done and then left as fast as we could as the heavens opened and the downpour began.

Regarding the dedication we discovered a minor problem in that the base of the flower stands were slightly larger than the holes in the floor. Fortunately the building committee chairman lived close to the church and had a portable grinder. We were still grinding the bottom of the stands as people were arriving for the dedication....but we got it done in time!!!

I still remember the sermon that was preached that cold, windy, snowy day in January when Pastor Sabin Swenson challenged us with the question: How Wide are your Doors? Are they wide enough to welcome all people to come in - regardless of race, creed, color, sexual orientation, etc.? Are the doors also wide enough for all of you to go out and minister to all people and their needs, reaching out to them in love as God loved us?

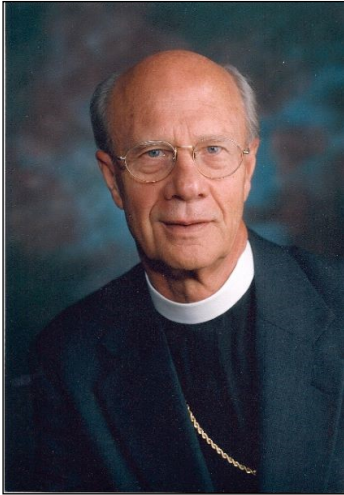
As I look at what you have done down through these years I would say that you have answered those questions in the affirmative, but you also still need to keep asking those questions again and again!

May God's peace be with you as you celebrate your 150th.



Richard H. Englund

# PASTORS



## **Rev. Dr. Dennis Anderson**

### **Interim Pastor 2013-2014**

Barbara and I remember with abundant fondness our time at First Lutheran. First is a congregation rich in lay leadership and strong in commitment to God's mission in the community and world! You are a beacon of Christian hope for so many. Your hearts and doors are wide and open.

We continue to relish in our retirement. Barbara is active in church music at St. Michael and the food pantry at Kountze Memorial. She continues in her art work and is now into the 58th year of making our Christmas cards. I teach at St. Michael's Adult Forum from time to time, serve on the Seafarer's International House Board in NYC and just completed 8 years on the Immanuel Communities Board. I continue with my new painting hobby, giving paintings to several church ministries for auction in fundraisers. We continue to travel several times a year, especially to visit with our children in Oregon and the Seattle area. We are active in refugee ministry with a very fine Syrian family of four children. Refugee ministry is a journey of humility and joy! (DECEASED SEPTEMBER 23, 2021)



## **Rev. Roger Bruns**

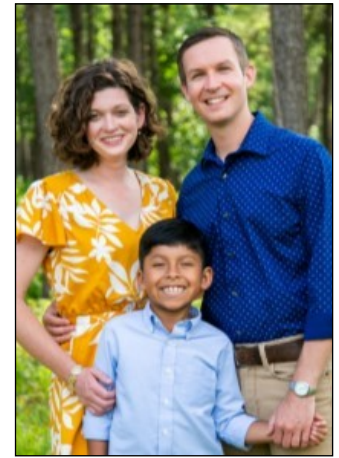
### **Assistant Pastor 1981-1982**

I served First Lutheran from 1981-1982 as Assistant Pastor under Pastor Harold Hamilton. After this, I did graduate study at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. Subsequently, I served churches in Walton, NE, Fayetteville, AR, and Richmond, VA. I served as a combat Army chaplain in the First Persian Gulf War in 1991. I also served two churches in Oklahoma since 2003 and am currently at Trinity Lutheran Church where I have been the pastor for 12 years.

## **Pastor Justin Eller**

### **Associate Pastor 2016-2020**

I am originally from North Carolina where I met my wife, Kari (Fisher), and together, we attended North Carolina State University. I majored in biochemistry with minors in genetics and Spanish. After working for several years in cancer research at Duke University Medical Center and LabCorp in the Maternal-Infant unit, I felt called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In 2005, Kari and I moved to Chicago where I attended the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. While in Chicago, Kari taught Spanish for Chicago Public Schools.



I was ordained in 2009 at the North Carolina Synod Assembly and my first call was as an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) missionary. From 2009-2013, I served with Kari as Pastoral Team Educators, based in La Paz, Bolivia, with the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana (IELB). In this role, I facilitated workshops on liturgy, contextual Lutheran identity and lay leadership development; taught courses in Spanish on Church History, Worship & Liturgy, New Testament and Greek at the ecumenical seminary, Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teología (ISEAT); was an itinerant preacher/presider throughout the Bolivian countryside; and was an honorary member of the Ecumenical Network of Women Theologians in La Paz. During this time, Kari began service by leading workshops on women's empowerment and Christian education. As her work and the need for further support in Christian education grew, she co-developed and directed the ELCA's Christian education program, Capacitando al Pueblo de Dios, while teaching English at ISEAT.

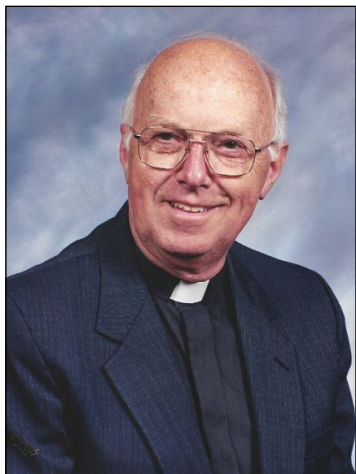
In 2012, our family grew with the arrival of our son, Everette.

In 2013, I was called to serve as the ELCA Global Mission Regional Representative in Southern South America, serving as liaison between the ELCA and companion Lutheran churches in Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Peru. In this role I accompanied the planning, monitoring and evaluating processes of ELCA-supported projects throughout the region, accompanied the companion churches with thematic workshops and was a resource person for other ELCA missionaries in the region. During our residency in Argentina, Kari continued her work of collaborating with Lutheran Christian educators throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

I was called to serve First Lutheran Church in Lincoln as Associate Pastor in 2016. At First Lutheran, I led the learning vision and creation of the *Framework for Transformational Learning: A Lifelong Learning Plan*, trained youth on the ELCA Accompaniment Model of Service in the World, partnered in preaching and leading worship and had a lot of fun. In 2019, Kari graduated from UNL with her master's degree in Child, Youth, and Family Studies and then worked as a Program Coordinator for the William H. Thompson Scholars Learning Community at UNL. Everette attended Morley Elementary School while we lived in Lincoln. Together, we were a puppy-raising family for service dogs in training through Domesti-Pups where we met our dog Ford.

*(continued)*

(cont) In 2020, I accepted a call to serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Latino Ministry Strategy in the Southeastern Synod and as Associate Pastor at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia. In this call, I accompany Spanish-speaking congregations in leadership development and spiritual growth, English-speaking congregations who are interested in participating in emerging ministries to, with, and among Latino people and communities in their context, and work to develop Synod-wide strategies for new Latino ministry initiatives and include more Latino representation at decision-making tables.



## **Pastor Richard Englund**

### **Lead Pastor 1963-1971**

After leaving First Lutheran, we moved to Fond du Lac, WI, where I served the Church of Our Saviour for five years. While I was there, I was able to establish a food bank based on what I learned about food banks when I was in Lincoln. This was for me a highlight of my ministry there as it is still a very viable program after almost 50 years. It now involves not only the churches, but schools, service clubs, businesses, as well as the city itself, and is now reaching the entire county serving people who are needing such help.

The next parish I served was Trinity Lutheran in Chambersburg, PA, a church which had to dismiss a pastor for mishandling church funds. Working to heal such a parish was a definite challenge which turned out to be successful, even to the point of doing much needed repairs to the church building. While I was there, I was asked by the Synod to be a member of a committee, along with members of the seven other synods in Pennsylvania, to form an advocacy program addressing the state legislature with the concerns of people who are often voiceless. The committee is named *LamPA* (Lutheran advocacy ministry in PA) which has become a respected voice of the eight ELCA synods. Another highlight for me was the invitation to open a session of the Congress with prayer. To stand where the President gives the State of the Union address was truly a very humbling experience.

After 17 years in Chambersburg, I partially retired, built a home at Lake Meade in East Berlin, PA, and then served as an interim pastor in three churches for over 6 years. Retirement gave me time for woodworking (cradle, tables, bookcases, grandfather clock, cedar chests, etc...and designing and building the kitchen for our home at Lake Meade). I also took a course in gardening and became a Penn State Master Gardener. After living at Lake Meade for over 24 years, owning a home became more of a burden than a pleasure so we moved to a cottage at SpiriTrust Lutheran in Gettysburg...much closer to church and other activities (1 mile versus 23 miles).

## **Pastor Aaron Erdley**

### **Associate Pastor 2007-2015**

It is hard to believe that it has been almost 7 years since we moved back to Pennsylvania from Lincoln. The blessings we received from our time with you are too numerous to count and we remember all of you in our prayers regularly.

Since July 2015, I've been serving as the Lead Pastor of Trindle Spring Lutheran Church in Mechanicsburg, PA. It has been a time of rejuvenation and growth for the congregation. In my time here, we've completed a visioning process that laid out 5-year goals for the congregation. Even though the congregation is over 250 years old, we have begun to find new ways to engage the community that we have been a part of for so long.

I've also enjoyed opportunities to minister to our greater community and the church at large. I've volunteered as a Chaplain for the local volunteer fire company, served a term on the Advisory Board for campus ministry at Penn State, and worked on the Synod Worship Committee and the Bishop's Mutual Ministry Committee. I've also continued mentoring Seminary students, both first year students in their introductory field education experience and one intern. Additionally, I serve as the internship cluster coordinator for Region 8. I'm certainly busy, but blessed by the ways I get to see the Holy Spirit at work in various ministries.

Of course, I can't give you an update without telling you about the rest of the family. Danielle is active in volunteering at the girls' schools and she has been serving as our part-time Music Director at Trindle Spring Lutheran for four years. She helps in planning worship services, picks hymns and directs all of the choirs and small musical groups of the church.

Elena turned 18 in January and is still dancing, singing and acting. She loves lighting up the stage in the high school productions and an occasional community theater production, too. Elena has enjoyed working for the last two years at a local Farmer's Market. She will graduate in June, and in the fall she is headed to Temple University in Philadelphia, where she will major in Public Relations with minors in Event Planning and Theater.

Kathryn turned 9 in December and she loves everything about third grade. She dances like her big sister and loves singing and crafting. This March she and Elena were blessed to be able to perform together in the high school's production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." It's safe to say the theater bug has bit her just like her older sister and we love seeing them perform together. She also recently started playing lacrosse.

It has been a real blessing to live closer to family. We see them often and it has made it easier for them to come and be with us for special occasions or events that the girls are participating in.

The whole Erdley family sends their congratulations to God's faithful people at First Lutheran Church. God has done wonderful work through you in the first 150 years and I'm certain that God has more in store for the next 150 years!





## **Bishop Brian Maas**

### **Lead Pastor 2006-2012**

We live in Omaha where I continue my second term as Bishop of the Nebraska Synod until the end of August, after which I will begin a new call as Vice President of Mission and Spiritual Life at Immanuel Communities. After many years in the public schools as a music educator and school counselor, Debbie is now a therapist in private practice in Omaha.

Nathan lives in Omaha and continues to work with high performance engines, both as a mechanic and a machinist. Becca married Nick Maguire

in October 2021, and they live in Manning, IA, where Becca is a school psychologist for Heartland Education Services.



## **Pastor Fred Nelson**

### **Lead Pastor 1993-2005**

Congratulations First Lutheran on your 150th Anniversary! I can remember the 125th!

I formally retired in November, 2009. I served a couple of interim ministries, one in Hot Springs Village and another in Norman, OK. I actually began a third interim in Bentonville, AR, when my wife, Barbara, became seriously ill with cancer. We thought when we had her right eye removed in Iowa

City we were free from worry. It came back with a vengeance. A trip to MD Anderson Houston and therapy treatments at an oncology center in Rogers, AR, couldn't deter the disease. Barb died under hospice care in December, 2013. We had been married 48 years. Needless to say, I was at an all-time low, but thankful my daughters and their families were close by and were pillars of strength.

I heard about a friend and former parishioner named Robin Appleton who had lost her husband in Ohio about the same time that Barbara died. We consoled each other. We walked and talked. We had many common interests and enjoyed each other's company. She had a daughter and son-in-law who lived in Bentonville. My girls and their families lived in Fayetteville about 35 miles away.

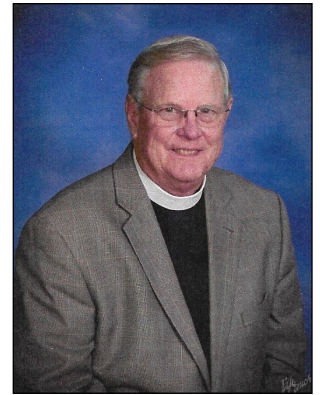
Robin and I were married at United Lutheran Church at a regular Sunday morning communion service on February 15, 2015. Bishop Mike Girlinghouse presided. Our daughters refer to our new situation as a "bonus family." We live in Bentonville, AR, and love it dearly.

Grandson #1-Jack is a U of A graduate and now lives in Atlanta working for Tyson Foods. Grandson #2-Bruce is a senior at the U of A. Both boys have state championship rings from their football days. Grandson #3-Henry is a student at U of A, sings in choirs and acts in plays. Grandson #4-Nelson is in high school and plays baseball.

## **Pastor William Shaner**

### **Interim Pastor 2005-2006**

On December 31, 2004, I officially retired! Several days later I received a call from the Bishop asking if I would consider being the Interim Pastor at First Lutheran Church, Lincoln. I began serving at First Lutheran on January 15, 2005. I served until Pastor Brian Maas accepted a call to be their lead Pastor. I enjoyed my time at First even though there were some challenges during the interim time.



I am presently serving my sixth interim. Someone asked me, "what part of retirement don't you understand?" I have enjoyed serving the church for almost 55 years of ordination. I have served parishes in Boston, MA, Potter and Gurley, NE, Alliance, NE and served for over 14 years as a development director for Martin Luther Homes and Mosaic. I also enjoy playing a little golf when time allows. Other joys include watching my son and daughter and grandchildren grow and enjoy what they are doing. I also need to thank my partner in ministry for over 55 years, Jane. She has, in many ways, raised our children with me not being around. I am still a member of First and serve as the chair of the Columbarium Committee. I enjoyed my time as your interim at First Lutheran. May God continue to bless your ministry.

## **Gordon E. Simmons**

### **Associate Pastor 1973-1977**

Sandie and I left First Lutheran in 1977 after I served there for 4 1/2 years as assistant pastor. Those were wonderful years for us and we have thankfully been able to keep in contact with some of you over the years. I went to Philadelphia where I served for a total of almost 30 years in two different calls. These were difficult situations, where sometimes it seemed like almost nothing worked; I was so thankful that I had had the opportunity to "try out" my skills at First Lutheran,



where it seemed like "everything worked." Those were good years. Pastor Harold Hamilton was a wonderful mentor. I retired in 2015 and we moved to Dover, Delaware, where our youngest daughter lives with her husband and their two children who are still in school. Their oldest daughter lives in Virginia. Our other daughter, Kristin, lives in Phoenixville, PA. Her daughter is working, living at home, and her son is studying for an advanced degree in physics at a University in Poland.

I'm keeping pretty active in my retirement. 1) I spend 5 hours a week keeping a 4-mile stretch of highway behind our house free of trash; 2) I bicycle 100 miles every week; 3) I swim a mile or so every week; and 4) I am the volunteer staff person for the ""Delaware Lutheran Office for Public Policy" and spend time in the nearby State Legislature. (When I was at First Lutheran I helped to found the "Nebraska Lutheran Legislative Caucus.") Sandie and I have enjoyed 55 years of marriage. We remain active in a congregation here in Dover and Sandie is still singing in the church choir!





## **Rev. Walter F. Taylor, Jr.**

### **Associate Pastor 1978-1981**

Dyann and I were privileged to serve at First Lutheran from 1978 to 1981, during the time that Harold Hamilton was the senior pastor and Elva Mares, as the Parish Secretary, was the one who really ran things! In May of 1981 I received my Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University and was called to teach New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, where I served until I retired at the end of 2016. Experiences at First Lutheran were often

shared in my teaching - and always good experiences! In 1988-1989 our family lived in Germany while I was a Fulbright Professor at the University of Heidelberg. During the spring semester of 2009 I was a short-term missionary for the ELCA and taught at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt. I am currently the Ernest W. and Edith S. Ogram Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University.

I have published 150 books, articles, chapters, reviews and audio-visual materials, including Paul, Apostle to the Nations: An Introduction (2012), and I continue to speak in congregations, at Synod assemblies, and at continuing education events.

While we lived in Lincoln, Dyann did income tax work in Wahoo with her father, which she continued after we moved to Ohio. She earned her Master's Degree from Kent State University in Library Science and retired five years ago from her work as a Library Media Specialist with the Columbus Public Schools. Our son Rick (Frederick) was born while we lived in Lincoln; he is a urologist, and his wife, Camille, is an obstetrician/gynecologist. They live in New Albany, Ohio, with their daughters Amelie (twelve) and Lindy (eight). Our daughter Jennifer, son-in-law James, their son Wilder (seven), and their daughter Fiona (two) live in Los Angeles. Jennifer teaches kindergarten in Hollywood, and James is an independent film-maker who has also worked on "Dancing with the Stars."

Dyann and I root for the Nebraska Cornhuskers, the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Columbus Blue Jackets, and, yes, for the Ohio State Buckeyes when they are not playing Nebraska!

We hope to be leaving for Israel and the West Bank at the time of the anniversary celebration and so will be unable to come. We give thanks for our years at First Lutheran and send prayers that God will richly bless your weekend.

## **Pastor Dan Warnes**

### **Lead Pastor 2013-2020**

I still remember the weekend Marianne and I came to Lincoln, NE, to interview with the Council and congregation. It was June of 2013! I was astonished to receive the call.

Since then we have come to consider Lincoln and First Lutheran Church our home. We've both been blessed to serve God here. Marianne was a nurse midwife for many

years in North Carolina. Upon our arrival in Nebraska she became a hospice nurse. In her words, *"She now midwives people into Heaven."*

Serving First Lutheran Church was quite an honor for me. First has a legacy of being served by great pastors and great staffs. It has a legacy of strong lay leadership. It is one of the flagship congregations of the Nebraska Synod. It was a privilege to serve such a dynamic congregation.

Marianne and I have three grown daughters, three sons-in-law and 7 grandchildren. Anna and Nate and their three children - Gus, Knut, and Eva - live in Crete. Kaaren and Greg and their daughters, Freya and Britta, live near Hudson, Wisconsin. Jennifer and Chris and their sons, James and Robert, live in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Our lab pointer, Lucy, rules our home.

I've served congregations in North Dakota, Minnesota, North Carolina and Nebraska. You might say that God saved the best for last!

I'm currently serving as a hospice chaplain at Tabitha Healthcare and as a part-time chaplain at Bryan Hospital.

Please continue the faithful work of the gospel! Continue the mission of Jesus Christ. Continue to love God and welcome the neighbor!



## **Pastor Erin Heidelberger**

### **Lead Pastor 2021-Present**

I began serving with the people of First Lutheran in August 2021. I previously served as co-pastor and then lead pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Aberdeen, South Dakota. A native of Nebraska (Grand Island), I grew up in Brookings, SD. I graduated from South Dakota State University in 1996 with a B.A. in Spanish and Political Science. I received a Graduate Diploma of Christian Studies in 2004 from Regent College, Vancouver, BC, and her M.Div. from Luther Seminary in 2015. I and my husband of 20 years, Cory, have a 16-year-old daughter, Katarzyna.



# VICARS AND INTERNS



## **Pastor Kelsey Fitting-Snyder**

**2015-2016**

As I sat down to write these remarks the word that kept coming to mind was gratitude. It was an honor and a privilege to serve as vicar in 2015/2016 with Pr. Dan Warnes. I could not have asked for a better internship supervisor or congregation. I am truly grateful for all of the learning and growth that took place during that time, but I am even more grateful to be part of the First Lutheran family. First Lutheran is a special place because of the incredible people and I am thankful to have been part of your lives, even if just for a short time.

After graduating from Gettysburg Seminary in 2017, I headed back to the mid-west for my first call in the pastoral residency program at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Davenport, IA. This program takes two first call pastors for two years and serves as an intentional time of learning and growth, while serving in a role similar to that of an associate pastor at a large established congregation. My husband, Jon, and I loved our two years in Davenport, but it is because of First Lutheran that we had looked forward to going back to the Midwest.

We currently live in Waco, TX, with our cats, Jarvis and Felicity. While living in Iowa, Jon finished a Masters of Choral Conducting from Western Illinois University and began applying to PhD programs. We moved to Waco in the fall of 2019 after my residency concluded so Jon could begin his PhD studies in Church Music at Baylor University. He is currently in his final year and working on his dissertation. Around the same time we moved, I accepted the call to serve as pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Waco. But as you know, shortly after that, the world changed. I learned so much from pastoring through a pandemic and it is a blessing to serve the people of St. Matthew.

I knew before I graduated from college that I was called to pastoral ministry, but I never would have guessed that this journey would lead me to Nebraska, Iowa and now Texas. Each of these experiences have shaped a part of me and my ministry and I am so glad that First Lutheran is part of my story (I still talk and think about you all often). The Holy Spirit is indeed at work. I give thanks that the Spirit brought us together at the right time and I look forward to seeing where the Spirit leads First Lutheran in the years to come.

Happy 150th (+2) First Lutheran Church!

## Pastor Joshua Gyson

**2014-2015**

I thank you for your continued support and prayers and please know that First Lutheran remains in mine. While I will not be able to attend the anniversary event, I am still happy to share with you where your guidance and love has helped to lead me and my family in ministry.



I was first connected with First Lutheran through stories from a long time member, a seminarian student with me at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, who used to share such wonderful stories from her home congregation of First Lutheran. It was a delightful surprise that I actually found myself at one time a member of First Lutheran through the Internship Program at LTSG. Rev. Aaron Erdley was my supervisor and I appreciated learning congregational ministry from all of the staff at First Lutheran. It has been almost 5 years that I have been away from First Lutheran, but I am happy to share that I am now a pastor at All Saints Lutheran Church in Lutz, FL, (north Tampa area). My time as a Vicar (intern) at First was very formative. As a relatively new pastor now, I still find myself asking how would Pastor Aaron handle this situation and how would Pastor Dan plan for what's coming up? I treasure the memories that I have of First Lutheran, but also recognize that First is still a big part of my life and ministry. It has always been supportive communities, like First Lutheran, that allowed me to discern a calling to seminary. Places where I was allowed to be who I really was deep down however and wherever the Spirit may lead.

As a pastor now, I have had the great pleasure of talking with multiple youth about going to seminary and how the church takes delight in watching God lead the next generation, like God has always led the church. Since becoming a pastor I have laid hands on one member of my congregation at his ordination. This week, I am writing a letter of recommendation for another woman and I have one or two teenagers who have spoken with me about possibly attending seminary one day.

I believe the leadership in the church has a bright future because I see it firsthand in my life on a regular basis. I thank God for places like First Lutheran who are willing to continue to nurture church leadership, as is the tradition of First! I thank you all for supporting those who are discerning their calls to ministry and for always seeing things in others that they just can't see in themselves yet.



## **Pastor Juliet (Rasi) Focken**

**2006-2007**

After seminary, I was able to move to Genoa NE, and work with the wonderful people at Augustana Lutheran. During that time, I was awe inspired by the people and their ministry in the community. There was a richness in living in a small community and I still have fond thoughts of my ministry time there. I deeply miss the rural way of life. While I was there, Pastor Brian was elected to be Bishop and asked me to join his staff. I've been part of his staff since 2012, working primarily with congregations in transition and First Call pastors. Being in a different congregation each week has taught me the pride we carry so deeply for

our Lutheran traditions and the joy that comes when congregations are actively doing ministry in the community. It is a blessing to be able to see how the church's ministry impacts lives all across the state.

In 2019 I remarried and my son, Colton, went from being an only child, to the youngest of six children. It's a happy and busy time as we all figure out our own place. My husband, Fred, and I live with the youngest two children in Elkhorn and he works in Omaha.

I'm thankful for First and the ministry you do. You were willing to take a chance on all your interns. At times, we all were messy or overwhelmed. You gave us the space to grow and to start to develop into the ministers that the church needed us to be. Thank you for giving us all that space and for laughing, crying and celebrating with us along the way. You offered us so many opportunities for growth and put so many wonderful mentors in our path. I never thought that I would come back to Nebraska, but that's the real gift of the Holy Spirit and the ministry you do. You taught us to wonder where God was active, you trusted that God would push us out into ministry and we all have grown because of your ministry. Thank you.

## **Pastor Jean McCartney**

**2016-2017**

After internship at First Lutheran, I was picked up by the Western Iowa Synod. I accepted a call to Saint Paul Evangelical Lutheran in Missouri Valley, Iowa. I am honored to have served almost two years as the pastor at Saint Paul.

Saint Paul is a community-minded congregation. Among many ways of reaching out, Saint Paul serves a free community meal every month and sponsors a large garden available to all.

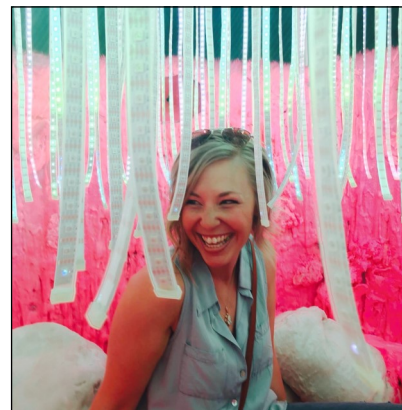
The experiences and relationships from First prepared me well. I am grateful for those.



## **Pastor Lauren Muratore**

### **2012-2013**

Hey there! I'm Pastor Lauren Muratore. I served my internship at First (The Best Internship Site in the Country) during the 2012-2013 academic year. I received my Masters of Divinity from Gettysburg Seminary (now United Lutheran Seminary) in 2014. After graduating from seminary, I received my first call to Gettysburg Seminary, serving as the Director of Admissions, Assistant Dean of the Chapel and Coordinator of Spiritual Formation from June 2014 to June 2017.



In 2017 I followed a call to Baltimore, Maryland, to pastor the redevelopment of Salem Lutheran Church. "Redevelopment" means Salem was, at one point, considering closure or merger with another congregation, but caught a vision for resurrection and ran after it with everything they had. That, of course, required letting some things die: Salem let go of "how we've always done church," being open to - I kid you not - every new idea. It was beautiful to witness. During my three years with Salem, they grew in numbers and in ministry, and deepened their already strong identity as a "neighborhood church," renovating the lower level of the building to create an inclusive, wellness-focused community center called Riverside Third Space, which launched in October of 2019. My call to Salem also involved partnerships with other local congregations; I served as Visitation Pastor for Christ Lutheran in the Inner Harbor area from 2017-2018, and as Priest in Charge at The Episcopal Church of the Redemption from 2019-2020.

In late 2020 - right in the middle of the pandemic - the Spirit and people of Augustana Lutheran Church y La Comunidad de Santa Maria called me to be pastor. It has been a joy to spend the last 17 months getting to know the congregation, as well as a new city, Washington, DC, which is quite a place to call home! Embodying a ministry of radical, gracious welcome, Augustana is a diverse, intercultural congregation that welcomes people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, educational backgrounds, and economic conditions. They are rooted firmly in their Lutheran heritage and expression, yet joyfully ecumenical in composition, with people coming to worship from a wide variety of religious backgrounds. Augustana y Santa Maria celebrates Holy Communion in English in the morning and Spanish in the afternoon. Together, we are striving to learn and grow in the Spirit, celebrating the gifts of God that empower us to engage in the struggles of life, to care for each other, and to serve Christ where we work and live. At the center of the congregation is the love and grace of God in Jesus, expressed through traditional-yet-always-new liturgy and music.

In addition to my congregational call, I regularly preach at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women, serve as VP of the board of directors for Reconciling Works, and lead study tours to South Africa. I enjoy reading, painting, wandering the city streets with my partner, Jack, and snuggling with Elliott, my 16 year-old orange tabby cat. You all should know that internship at First Lutheran was the clear catalyst for many of my deepest ministry passions; you called me "Vicar", but quite literally, made me a pastor. Thank you, Church. You are beloved.

## **Pastor Jody Rice**

### **2007-2008**

I was ordained in June of 2009 and served my first church in Cole Camp, MO. My second call, where I am currently serving as Senior Pastor, is at Grace Lutheran Church in Fremont, Ohio.

Jeff, my husband, is still hiking the Appalachian Trail. We have been married for over 47 years. My mother, Lorraine Crawford, lives with us full-time now. She is 99 years old.



My degree was from Jacksonville University in Marketing and Economics. My Master of Divinity degree was from Gettysburg Seminary-which is now called United Lutheran Seminary.

One of the greatest gifts of ministry in my current call has been a partnership with LIFT (Living in Faith Together), a parish model of being church together! Our Vision of LIFT is “Faithful to God’s call as one Body in Christ, we work together as fellow Christians to renew mission and ministry in the greater Fremont area.” We have joint worship services during the year and called a “LIFT” pastor. We work together for all youth functions like Vacation Bible School, Confirmation, Youth Gathering and more. We have joint choir festivals. We go out as the hands and feet of Christ and “Love our Neighbor.” We have truly become the Body of Christ.

We have eight churches that work together for the Kingdom of God! It not only includes the Lutherans in Fremont, but also the Methodists and soon perhaps the Episcopalians. We have also started a new church for the Latino/Hispanic community - Camino de Vida.

The second aspect of my life in 2019 was my diagnosis of breast cancer. I was first diagnosed in February with Stage One invasive ductal carcinoma. I underwent surgery and radiation treatments. Life began to return to normal until I followed up with a lung scan in May. They found breast cancer on my right side which had metastasized to one lymph node. Another surgery, chemotherapy and more radiation. The cancer with the appointments, surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and the side-effects can control our thoughts, disrupting us from living the abundant life Christ came to give us. Cancer does not bring good thoughts. If allowed, it can consume our minds...bringing harmful, intimidating thoughts whose purpose is to steal and destroy. What is anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer to do? My life has changed forever. Cancer changes your life. Nothing is ever the same again. I will never be “cured”, but I am forever blessed. If you or a loved one is facing cancer, know that God hasn't forgotten you.

And always remember the Good News. No one with cancer walks alone. I have been loved by friends and family alike and am blessed by so many people. Let us always remember that the Holy Spirit cradles us in our walk reminding us that we are triumphant in Christ! So, when we are tempted to be overcome with worry because of cancer or any disease and its dreadful thoughts, we need to be reminded that we are children of God (*continued*)

(cont) with wonderful promises. We all share in God's peace, mercy and grace. I will be forever grateful for a God who loves me and family and friends who continue to support me. I thank everyone at First Lutheran Church for helping to shape my ministry. You are "blessed to be a blessing" to many!

## **Pastor Chris Suehr**

### **2011-2012**

I was a Vicar from the former Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Angela and I started off our marriage with a year-long honeymoon in Lincoln during the 2011-2012 intern season. Shortly after leaving, I published the Haiku Bible, based on the Bible in 90 Days study that First Lutheran had recently completed. I tried to keep in touch with emails and phone calls, but have not had the opportunity to return to Nebraska since then. I do, however, regularly use my "Growing in Faith through the Lens of Science" mug. It has held up nicely!



The years travelled fast. Since those halcyon days of internship, I completed my Master of Divinity degree and was called to serve as a pastor on a church staff north of Pittsburgh. During that time, our family of two became a family of four following the birth of Ramona (2014) and Maya (2015).

The peculiar blend of God's calling and gluttony for academic punishment makes so many pastors not sated. After many months of prayer and reflection, our family sold their house, quit their jobs, and moved into Angela's parents' attic, as we both went back to school: Angela for a teaching certificate in special education and Chris for his PhD in religion and culture.

We have both since completed our programs. Angela is a special educator and I recently completed a stint as a teaching fellow at Catholic University. I am discerning my next steps while working as an interim pastor. Ramona is in second grade, loves singing and Legos, and does soccer and Taekwondo. Maya is in kindergarten, loves singing and games of any kind, and also does soccer and Taekwondo. The Suehr family is back in a place of their own. The most recent addition to the family is Janet, a mini lop bunny, who according to the girls, is "the cutest in the world."



## **Pastor Sarah Timian**

### **2010-2011**

Originally from North Dakota, I attended Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, before going to the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg (now part of United Lutheran Seminary). I served as Vicar at First Lutheran Church during the 2010-2011 academic year. Over ten years later, I still find myself remembering conversations, examples, and lessons from my time at First Lutheran when faced with a new ministry task or issue. I am truly grateful for my experience there and I wish everyone the best on this 150 year milestone. May God bless you as you have been and continue to be a blessing.



As I write this, I am just starting the second year of my call at the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer in Foxborough, Massachusetts. It has been an adventure to move to a completely new region and I look forward to exploring more of New England as I continue to settle in here. Prior to my call to Massachusetts, I had served as an Associate Pastor in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In the 1950's and 1960's, Augustana Seminary appointed interns to congregations. We didn't hear from everyone, but this is information we had on file of previous interns.

(Rev.) Delbert Anderson served in 1956-57. He was ordained in 1958 and served in Hong Kong. He is retired and lives in Illinois.

(Rev.) Norman Erickson served in 1953-54. Following his ordination in 1955, he was called to Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, IA. He later became Chaplain and Counselor at Luther College.

Pre-Intern (Rev.) John Kisling served in 1964-65.

(Rev.) Kenton Larsson served in 1955-56. He was ordained in 1958 and served a church in Taylor Falls, Michigan.

(Rev.) John Liljenstroepe served in 1969-70. He was ordained in 1980, in Seattle, WA. His first call was as Protestant Chaplain at Providence Hospital in Anchorage, AK. He is retired and currently living in Washington State.

(Rev.) Donald Nelson served as Pastor's Assistant in 1952. He is retired and currently lives in South Carolina.

*(continued)*

(Rev.) Elmer Sterner served in 1954-55 and was ordained in 1955. On August 5, 1955, he married Martha Sorenson at Grace Lutheran Church in Lincoln.



Norma Malfatti served as a Vicar in 2009-2010. She attended Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and was ordained in September, 2011, at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Vestal, New York, where she served her first call. She currently serves as Director for Evangelical Mission for the Upstate New York Synod.



Katrina Vigen served as Vicar at First Lutheran from 2013-2014. She was ordained in 2015 in Raleigh, NC. She and her husband, Ryan, and their son, Emil, moved to Nelson, British Columbia, Canada for her first call at Ascension Lutheran Church, associated with the ELCA Synod of Canada. She is currently serving at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

## SONS & DAUGHTERS



### **Pastor Heather Grell**

After graduating from Luther College with a BA in Religious Studies in 1999, I (daughter of First Lutheran members, Harold and Gay Sutter) married fellow First Lutheran Church member, Brett Grell, (son of former First Lutheran members, Diane Grell-Kamler and Brian Kamler) on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June that same year. We began married life in Galesburg, IL, where Brett completed his undergraduate studies and I worked as a secretary for the Dean of

Learning Resources at Carl Sandburg College.

The following year, we moved to Philadelphia, PA, where I attended seminary. During seminary, I worked at University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation in downtown Philadelphia – one of the early RIC congregations - and then completed my internship year at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ardmore, PA. I graduated with a Master in Divinity degree in 2004 from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

I was ordained at First Lutheran Church in Lincoln on September 22, 2004, and began my career in ministry as the Associate Pastor at First Lutheran Church in Blair, NE. During my three years in Blair, I taught confirmation and headed the visitation and senior ministry, as well as sharing general pastoral responsibilities.

Our first child, Ryan Sutter Grell, was born in 2006 during my first call. The next year, I went on family leave. During my leave from call, I accepted an interim pastoral position at Rejoice! Lutheran Church in Omaha, NE, where I ended up serving for eight years. During my time at Rejoice!, I primarily focused on preaching, worship leadership and adult education. It was during my time at Rejoice! that our second child, Anna Lynn Grell, was born in 2011.

I am currently an Associate Pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Omaha, NE, where I began serving part-time in 2017. Holy Cross has recently become an RIC congregation and I am thrilled to be a part of their welcoming and affirming ministry.

## **Bonita Johnsen**

I was on the church staff of First Lutheran Church as choir director, organist and Director of Music Ministry from August 1984 to July 2017. At the invitation of the pastors and current music ministry staff, we remained members of the congregation after retiring and love being in the volunteer role.

My husband is Ron Thomsen. We have two daughters and their husbands, two sons and their wives and seven grandchildren. We enjoy spending time with them.



I received a Bachelor of Music Education from UNL as an organ major. I returned to UNL for a Master of Music with emphasis in sacred music in 1984. Much of that course work applied to certification in the LCA as a Lay Ministry Associate. There was additional independent theological study with Dr. Carl Hansen and others. I was certified in November of 1987. Since that time, I completed several classes at Trinity Seminary and independent study with Dr. Paul Westermeyer at Luther Seminary. The lay minister title changed with the formation of the ELCA to Associate in Ministry and now Deacon.

My mother told me I knew about a call to church music when I was a small child hovering around the organ in our home church informing the organist I would play it some day. I started playing for some worship services when I was 13 and directing the adult choir when I was a senior in high school. I played almost every Sunday from undergrad days until retirement. In addition to playing the organ, there was great fulfillment in working with the choirs, bells, soloists, etc. and always emphasizing that the glory belonged to God.



## **Pastor Megan B. Morrow**

**Daughter of Andrew & Margaret Morrow (both deceased)**

Baptized into Christ at Grace Lutheran and confirmed at First Lutheran Church, both in Lincoln, I grew up with many wonderful teachers, pastors and role models in the Body of Christ that embodied God's grace for all, and instilled Paul's vision that all are gifted for building up the Body and serving God's world as members of Christ's Body active in love.

After graduating from Lincoln East High School, I attended the University of Kansas, was active in Lutheran Campus Ministry exploring faith and call, and graduated with a degree in Music Education and Music Therapy. I was a Registered Music Therapist in the Chaska, MN, schools from 1986-1988.

The Spirit inspired further discernment through my involvement in a local congregation in Minneapolis, MN, which led to entering Luther Seminary in St. Paul, in 1988. I served as a Pastoral Intern at Reformation Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, PA, from 1990-1991 with Rev. Gordon Simmons as my Supervising Pastor (who happened to be one of our pastors at First during my confirmation years!). In 1992, I graduated from Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, with a Master of Divinity degree. I was ordained into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament on July 10, 1993, at First Lutheran Church in Lincoln.

## Pastor Barbara Morgan Oshlo

My husband, Bob, and I and our two sons, Ryan and Christopher, joined First Lutheran in or around 1991. Our sons went to Lincoln East and they wanted to go to church nearer to their school and with friends. I became involved in Lydia Circle, taught high school and middle school Sunday School class, Confirmation Mentor, helped start the Stephen Ministry program and served a couple of terms as a Council member. During my tenure on Council, Pastor Fred Nelson received another call and we welcomed Pastor Brian Maas.



Vicar Juliet (now Pastor Juliet) felt I might have a call to Seminary! As a Postal Worker, I was sure she was joking, but it became clear that she was serious and Pastor Brian concurred! I prayed and spoke with both of them, but couldn't hear or distinguish a call from God myself. The suggestion, however, never left me and I eventually visited the seminary and set the candidacy wheels in motion.

We arrived at Seminary definitely in a strange, but exciting environment. After one day of summer Greek I came home and told Bob, "Don't unpack, I won't be able to do this, I fear I will fail." As it turned out, I was able to do it - with God's help, and definitely with Bob's help. His support and encouragement was the thing that finally helped me to decide to go to Seminary and see why God might want me to learn to become a pastor. We loved our years at Seminary. They were challenging, but were also deeply rich years. Bob loved working at Seminary on the Grounds Crew and he was much appreciated by them!

My ordination was held at First Lutheran with the involvement of so many friends. I was ordained by the pastor who noticed something in me and encouraged me. There were tears when now Bishop Brian Maas asked me to bless the congregation in my first official act as an ordained pastor. How could I bless a congregation who had done *nothing* but bless me, given me so many opportunities to serve and to learn about myself, had taught and put up with me and given me *so much*?

Though I am now a Pastor at St. Mark's in Valley, Nebraska, and love my call there - there is a sense in which I will always be a member at First Lutheran. It is and has been my spiritual home for over 20 very critical years and the place where I was mid-wived into ministry. I love this church and it's forward-looking, kind people - who are curious and love to learn and serve! I will always miss being here. I will *always* miss the people and the wonderful music and I will always be so very grateful to God for leading our family to First back in the 90's and all the surprises, friends and adventures that were in store for us here.

May God bless you for birthing so many calls to ministry.

Thank you so much. May the Lord continue to be with you.



## **Dara Kautz**

I am the daughter of Lyle and Connie Petersen and First Lutheran Church was where, aside from home and school, I grew up. I was baptized here. I was confirmed here. I attended and taught Sunday School here. I lived for Advent workshop and loved Celebration Singers and the fellowship that happened during rehearsal and at the Amigos lunch just prior. I have fond memories of *Silent Night* sung by candlelight at the Christmas Eve service and of the masterful storytelling of Pastor Fred Nelson's sermons. First Lutheran was the place that welcomed me into the body of Christ and into that great mission we share: to serve and bear witness to God's creative and redeeming Word to all the world.

I have been away from First Lutheran (and Lincoln) for over 15 years. During that time, I graduated from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln with a B.A. in Psychology and minor in Art; married Jordan Kautz; moved to North Carolina and earned a Master of Divinity from Duke University; moved to Minnesota for my husband's medical residency; and had two kids, a son, Asher (9), and a daughter, Avery (5).

Ten years ago I stepped away from my professional roles in order to stay home with our kids and sought out opportunities to "serve and bear witness" outside of a Sanctuary or pulpit. The challenge to find ministerial opportunities in the unconventional with a reflection on my past—my own experiences in art, my family tree of pastors who were also carpenters, my seminary texts, namely Bonhoeffer's, *Life Together*, and the last stanza of that baptismal welcome: "God's *creative* and redeeming Word" (italics mine) - has led me to an unexpected future. I am starting a small business in design and figuring out what a creative ministry it can be.

## Sheri Roberts

I am connected to First Lutheran because I grew up there and then I was blessed to serve there. When I was in elementary school, we visited with our then next-door neighbors, Dale and Ellen Niebuhr. My parents, Judy and Randy Bailey, liked it, so we stayed. I was active in the life of the church throughout school, and when I was in high school a



Youth Director (Yvonne Steindal) was hired. I served as a summer intern with Yvonne while I was in college. I began my tenure at First Lutheran in 1996 as the Interim Youth Ministry Director. My position evolved with staffing changes, and when I left in December 2007 I was the Director of Youth, Family, and Education Ministries.

Before joining the staff at First, I received my Bachelor's in Elementary Education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I became an Associate in Ministry in the ELCA in 2002. Since going back to teaching, I have earned a Master's Degree from Doane University in Curriculum and Instruction, and a Math Endorsement from UNL.

Jeff and I have lived in Gretna since 2000, although we're temporarily living at my mom's lake house in South Bend while we build a new home in Gretna. Jeff is in IT at Union Pacific in Omaha and I teach 3rd grade at Whitetail Creek Elementary in Gretna. In March, our son Dylan, who is 23, moved to Fort Myers, Florida, for a new position with United Rentals. Our daughter Bailey is 20 and she is finishing her sophomore year at UNL studying Elementary Education. They both make us so proud!

First Lutheran holds a very special place in my heart. It is where I was confirmed and married. Both of our children were baptized there. My father is inurned in the Columbarium at First. My mom, Judy Bailey, is still an active member of First Lutheran. Whenever I visit, it feels like home. Congratulations on 150 + 2 years of service and ministry!



## **Dr. Katherine A. Shaner**

In classrooms, in faith communities, in the public square, I challenge faith leaders to listen for the voices of people who are usually left out of the stories in our biblical texts and in our histories of justice. As Associate Professor of New Testament at Wake Forest University School of Divinity and a pastor in the ELCA, my call to this work is evident in everything I do. Throughout my teaching and scholarship I examine the intersections of race, class and gender, as well as the ethics of contemporary biblical interpretation.

I teach all things New Testament to Master of Divinity students who are preparing for ministry work across multiple denominations and settings. I teach classes that explore the theological, social and political implications of biblical interpretation for contemporary communities. My course offerings include Women and Slaves in Early Christianity, Multicultural Biblical Interpretation, The Material World of the New Testament, Revelation and introductory courses.

I also teach and preach in congregations and with church groups big and small all around the country. In October 2019, I gave the annual Habener Lecture at the Lutheran Center of North Texas in Dallas - the first woman to deliver this lecture to a joint ELCA and Missouri Synod constituency. In June 2020 I was a keynote speaker for the Luce Hartford Conference in Christian-Muslim relations. In October 2020 I was a keynote speaker for the Nebraska Synod's Re-Formation Event.

As a scholar (i.e. nerdy nerd), I write about the earliest Christian. I work with archaeological materials from modern-day Turkey, Greece and Israel to help better understand the full context of the earliest Christian communities. My book, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (Oxford University Press 2018), challenges readers to re-think common perceptions about how enslaved persons participated in early Christian communities.

I am the daughter of Pastor Bill and Jane Shaner. I came to First Lutheran in 1990 as a teenager and spent my formative high school and college years (until 1998) as an active member and a participant in the youth ministries. Currently, I live in Winston-Salem, NC, and am a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in High Point, NC. When I have a free moment, I try to get out on the hiking trails in the mountains nearby. I still run regularly, but my organ-playing skills are quite clunky these days. I enjoy cooking meals for friends and arguing theology with my dog, Karl Bark





## **Pastor Beth Ann L. Stone**

*Ordained on July 14, 2001, at First Lutheran Church and daughter of First Lutheran members, Judy and Bob Batterman.*

I was about five years old when my family moved to Lincoln and joined First Lutheran where Pastor Gordon Simmons (parents' friend from college) was serving as a pastor. I grew up as a "church rat", active in youth ministry, choirs and serving as an assisting minister and member of the Congregational Council. After graduating from St. Olaf College in 1992, First Lutheran became my "home congregation" as I went on to work and serve the church in various capacities in other parts of the country. I worked with youth ministry that summer at First Lutheran before moving to Salisbury, North Carolina, for two years as a Youth Ministry Intern (ELCA program) in the North Carolina Synod office. I then moved to the D.C. Metro area to serve as a Lay Associate on the staff of Christ Lutheran Church for three years in Bethesda, Maryland.

In 1997, I began my seminary studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, where Dr. Wally Taylor (another one of my childhood pastors at First Lutheran) was my New Testament professor (and one of the few Cornhusker fans in a sea of OSU grads). Seminary President, Denny Anderson, also welcomed me to campus and reminded me that he could see me moving toward ministry since I was a teenager. I soon met Karl-John Stone, fellow seminarian, and we married just before our senior year began. I served my internship year at Bethany Lutheran Church on the south side of Chicago, and after graduation, Karl-John and I moved to central Pennsylvania for our first calls. I was pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in McClure, PA, for seven years, and it was there that our two boys, Henry and Liam, were born and welcomed into the family of God.

Karl-John and I were called as Assistants to our Synod Bishop in the Upper Susquehanna Synod (2007-2014) and returned to Nebraska at the end of that time to serve on staff at Southwood Lutheran Church in Lincoln. In September 2018, I was called as Senior Pastor of Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church in Racine, WI, (also known as the "spaceship church" for its unique round shape) and our family moved to Packers territory. This active congregation is comparable to First Lutheran in many ways and I'm pleased to work here with my colleague, Pastor Krista Zimmerman, and a number of lay staff.



## Pastor Heidi Youngquist

I was baptized at First Lutheran in the early 70's and attended First Lutheran for most of my elementary school years. Not only was Pastor Hamilton my pastor, but he also lived in my neighborhood! I walked past his house every day on my way to and from school which served as a meaningful reminder of the church's presence in my life beyond just worship on Sunday. Although a majority of my formational years were spent in the United Methodist church (prior to Confirmation through Graduation), I found my way back to my Lutheran roots as a student at Saint Olaf College, a college of the ELCA. Having been away from the Lutheran church for many years, there was something so very comfortable and familiar about the Lutheran traditions of worship and liturgy. From the very first hymn during opening worship my freshman year, I knew that I had returned home.

During my summers in college I worked at Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, MN, serving two summers as a counselor and two summers as the Assistant Program Director and Waterfront Director. Those summers were key to my faith formation and my call to ministry. In addition to those four summers, I worked for a year as a retreat host and two and a half years as Program Director. I also served as youth director for congregations in MN and TX before taking a break to earn a Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. Although I was eager to pursue a career in counseling, something kept nagging at me and I found myself longing to return to youth ministry. As a serendipitous gift from the Holy Spirit, I discovered First Lutheran was looking for a Director of Children's Ministry/Christian Education. Without hesitation, I gave up all the hours that I had accumulated toward licensure and made the ultimate return home! It was a joy to serve on staff at First Lutheran for a little over eight years—working with Sunday school, serving a short stint as the Preschool Director, teaching confirmation, leading the Milestones Ministry and coordinating both middle school and senior high youth ministries.

About six years in, the spirit made a move that I was not expecting! Having been invited to preach for a noon Lenten service, people began to ask, "When are you going to go to seminary?" From that moment on, my call to ordained ministry began to take shape. In July of 2017, I began my studies at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA. During my time at Wartburg, I earned a concentration in Mission Development/Redevelopment, served as an intern at Grace Lutheran Church in Dodgeville, WI, and earned the highest of honors for my senior thesis entitled: *Living Word, Living Water, Living Witnesses: An Evangelical and Missional Catechumenate to Equip Newcomers for a Life of Faith*. I graduated from Wartburg in May of 2021 and was blessed beyond blessed to land in the South Dakota Synod and receive my first call to Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Aberdeen, SD. Bethlehem's mission is to be "a family of God journeying together in faith, touching lives by welcoming, (continued)

*(continued)* worshipping, teaching, and serving.” As a staff pastor, my primary areas include welcoming, worshipping, and teaching.

My daughter, Violet, has been an incredible partner in this adventure! She is currently a sophomore in high school. As a high schooler, the changes and transitions have not been easy, but she continues to be supportive and encouraging of God’s call and looks for ways to celebrate how God is at work through it all.

I am so grateful for the ways First Lutheran has shaped my understanding of ministry and know that my experiences at First will continue to serve as a model and inspiration for me as I lean in to my first call and beyond!

### **Pastor Philip N. Youngquist Jr.**

My parents and I moved to Lincoln in June, 1941, and joined First Lutheran Church at that time. I was confirmed in the class of 1946, by Pastor Clarence Hall, who encouraged me to go into the ministry. I entered Luther Academy in Wahoo, NE, in the fall of 1946, and graduated in 1948. I continued at Luther Junior College, graduating in 1950. Then, I attended Bethany College, in Lindsborg, KS, graduating in 1952. I enrolled at Augustana Seminary in Rock Island, IL, that fall, graduating in 1956. Our seminary class was ordained at Moorhead, MN, on June 17, 1956. On June 24, I preached at First Lutheran. My first call was to Bethel Lutheran Church, Herndon, KS, starting July 1. Subsequent calls were to Fridhem Lutheran Church, Funk, NE (1959-1966), Good Shepard, Washington, KS (1966-1972), Hebron, Burdick, KS (1972-1985) (also Marion Hill, White City (1974-1985), St. Mark, Great Bend, KS (1985-1989) and Zion, Clyde, St Paul, Linn and First Clay Center, KS (1989-1993). I have been retired since November, 1993. I married Marilyn Farb in Rockford, IL, September 25, 1956. We have lived in Lindsborg, KS, since 1997. We have 4 children, 11 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren. I am now 88 years old. I praise God for His guidance and blessing throughout my life. To Him be the glory.



In the 1950's and 1960's, Augustana Seminary appointed interns to congregations. In the late 40's and early 50's, while Pastors Hall and Swenson served as both our pastors and as president of the Nebraska Conference of the Augustana Synod, we were provided with pastoral support by the Synod. We didn't hear from everyone, but this is information we had on file of previous interns.

(Rev.) Delbert Anderson served in 1956-57. He was ordained in 1958 and served in Hong Kong. He is retired and lives in Illinois.

(Rev.) Norman Erickson served in 1953-54. Following his ordination in 1955, he was called to Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, IA. He later became Chaplain and Counselor at Luther College.

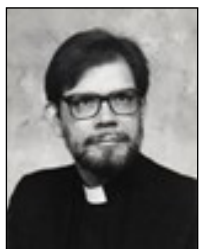
(Rev.) Kenton Larsson served in 1955-56. He was ordained in 1958 and served a church in Taylor Falls, Michigan.

(Rev.) John Liljenstolpe served in 1969-70. He was ordained in 1980, in Seattle, WA. His first call was as Protestant Chaplain at Providence Hospital in Anchorage, AK. He is retired and currently living in Washington State.

(Rev.) Donald Nelson served as Pastor's Assistant in 1952. He is retired and currently lives in South Carolina.

(Rev.) Elmer Sterner served in 1954-55 and was ordained in 1955. On August 5, 1955, he married Martha Sorenson at Grace Lutheran Church in Lincoln.

This is information we had on Sons and Daughters who did not send us updated information.



(Rev.) Bruce Berggren (Joan) was baptized and confirmed at First Lutheran. He was very active as a youth. He entered Augustana Seminary in 1958 and was ordained in June, 1962, in Detroit, MI. His first call was to Immanuel-Adullam in Bertrand, Nebraska. He also served at St. Thomas Lutheran in Omaha and as Campus Pastor at the Lutheran Center at UNL. Bruce died in December, 2018.

(Rev.) Clifford Berggren was baptized at First Lutheran. He attended Augustana Seminary and was ordained in June, 1955, in Moorhead, Minnesota. His first call was to St. Paul Lutheran in Hanley, British Columbia. Cliff is now deceased.



(Deacon) James Bowman (wife, Vivian, and daughters, Persephone and Kjersten) joined First Lutheran in 1982. He is a graduate of UNL and North Park Theological Seminary. He and Vivian spent three years in the Peace Corps in Liberia. He was commissioned as an Associate in Ministry in 1987. They were members of First Lutheran until 1999 when they moved to Washington, D.C. where Jim took a position with Lutheran World Relief. They currently reside in New Mexico.



(Rev.) Susan Granata was baptized and confirmed at First Lutheran. Following her marriage, she moved away from Lincoln. She entered Pacific Lutheran Seminary in Berkeley, CA, in 1978 and was ordained at Christ Lutheran in San Lorenzo, California, in June, 1982. Her first call was to St. Mark Lutheran in Salem, Oregon. She is currently retired and resides in Oregon. Along with an invitation to her ordination in 1981, Susan sent the following note:

*“Dear Friends at First Lutheran,*

*Although it has been many years since I have been a part of First Lutheran, I remain a daughter of this congregation having been nurtured through my growing up years in this family of faith. In a very real way, therefore, my ordination is a celebration of your ministry to me and to the whole Church. I thank God for that ministry and ask that you keep me in your prayers as I prepare for ordination and my installation as Associate Pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Salem, Oregon. Peace to you all.”*



(Rev.) Maryanne Cox and children, Curt and Crystal, joined First Lutheran in 1986. While here, she married Rev. Mark Morgenstern who was also a member of First Lutheran and on staff at Carol Joy Holling. She entered Wartburg Seminary in 1990 and was ordained in 1995 in Iowa. She currently lives in Shepherd, Montana.



(Rev.) Gretchen Naugle and husband, Ron, became members of First Lutheran in 1983. She attended Gettysburg Seminary and was ordained in 1994. She served churches in Nebraska before becoming an Interim Rector for the Episcopal Church Diocese of Nebraska. Gretchen and Ron both died in 2021.

(Rev.) Al Sieck and Sandy joined First Lutheran in 1974 and were married soon after joining. They served as leaders of a youth folk choir, *The Gospel Spirits*. Al entered Lutheran Theological Seminary in Chicago in 1978 and was ordained in 1982 at First Lutheran. His first call was to Our Savior’s Lutheran in Spencer, NE, and Trinity Lutheran in Bristol, NE. He, Sandy and one of their four children were killed in an auto accident in 1993.

(Rev.) Timothy Wattman was a short-term member of First Lutheran. In 1976, as a seminary student at Lutheran Northwestern in Minnesota, he enrolled in the Chaplaincy Program at Bryan Hospital and joined our church. He remained a member of First Lutheran until his ordination in December of 1978 at Salem Lutheran Church, in Stromsburg, NE. His first call was to Trinity Lutheran in Polk, NE, and Zion Lutheran in Benedict, NE. While he was here, he assisted with our summer worship & learn program. Pastor Wattman died in 2013.



Glathen Rathjen (David) served as the Director of Christian Education in 1993 when she resigned to attend Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, OH. She was ordained in 1996. She is now retired having served at Faith and Christ Lutheran in Talmage, NE. She currently lives in Lincoln with her husband, David.