

First Lutheran Church Congregational Council

Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, January 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting in Upper Room or by Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84168009362?pwd=ZUpEQWFwaXF2bmZlVFlvVnl3Nko0dz09>

- A. Opening devotions and prayer
- B. Approve Consent Agenda
 - 1. Meeting Agenda
 - 2. Congregational Council Minutes – December 12, 2023
 - 3. Parochial report
 - 4. Staff reports
 - 5. Committee reports
- C. Action Agenda
 - 1. 2023 Final Fiscal Report
 - 2. 2024 Recommended Budget
 - 3. Lead Pastor 2024 Salary
 - 4. Staff and Family Health Insurance Coverage
 - 5. Justice in Action
 - 6. 2023 Advent and 2024 Lenten Meal Offerings
 - 7. 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda
- D. Discussion Agenda
 - 1. Staff sabbaticals
 - 2. Safety plan
 - 3. Council stewardship calls
 - 4. Nominating Committee recommendations
 - 5. Vitality Initiative Update
- E. Open Comments
- F. Closing Prayer

Executive Committee Meeting
First Lutheran Church
January 2, 2024

Present: Judy, Pastor Erin, Amy H., Scott, Lee, Pastor Andrew

Opening Prayer: Amy

Topics for discussion:

1. 2024 Budget
Budget Committee meets Monday night and Scott will bring a motion to the meeting on Tuesday night for Council approval.
2. Annual Meeting Agenda
Approved the agenda for the January 28 Annual Meeting.
3. Advent and Lenten Meal Offerings Designation
Lee will check with the social ministry group for recommendations
4. Staff Sabbatical policy
We continue to work on a policy going forward.
5. Lead Pastor Salary Resolution
It is required by our by-laws that Council approve the lead pastor's salary. Lee will submit motion.
6. Justice in Action Working Group
Discussed establishment of a working group to proceed and keep the congregation informed. We continue to discuss funding and a resolution will be presented at a later date.
7. Officers for 2024
New Council members along with remaining Council members will meet following the Annual Meeting to elect officers for 2024.

Submitted by Judy Batterman, Council Secretary

Parochial Report

	Baptized	Confirmed
1. MEMBERSHIP as of December 1, 2023	1096	913

Members received:

- A. by baptism (15 years and under)
- B. by baptism (adult)
- C. transfer from ELCA congregation
- D. other Lutheran
- E. affirmation of faith (Correction from 10/2023) - 8
- F. transfer from non-Lutheran congregation
- G. other and statistical adjustment

2 2

Members removed:

- A. death
- B. transfer to ELCA congregation
- C. transfer to other Lutheran congregation
- D. transfer to non-Lutheran congregation
- E. other and statistical adjustment

	_____	_____	
MEMBERSHIP as of December 1, 2023	1090	915	

Average Attendance

December	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
	609	720	720	564	537	565	518	online	201	234	240

Excluded Christmas Eve & Christmas Service for 2021 to present

Added:

- Baptism:
- Affirmation:
- Transfer:
- Other: Ken & Diane Stofferahn returned to active status

Removed:

- Death:
- Transfer:
- Dropped Due to Inactivity:
- Other:

Notes: [Live Stream](#) average for December 2023 is: 55

Congregational Council Meeting

First Lutheran Church

December 12, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pastor Erin Heidelberger, Lee Rockwell, Scott Williamson, Rod Johnson, Rebecca Pfabe, Zach Schafer, Lyle Petersen, Bruce Hull, Amy Harrison, Dave Pfister, Fred Ohles, Jenna Troutman, Judy Batterman, Emily Sears, Pastor Andrew Kitzing

MEMBERS ABSENT: Amy Tipton, Jennifer Wemhoff

OTHERS PRESENT: Wyatt Swanson

MEETING RECORDER: Ann Carlson

A. OPENING PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY:

The meeting was called to order by Council President Lee Rockwell at 7:01. Zach led the opening prayer and Bible Study. Lee welcomed Pastor Andrew to the meeting.

B. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Meeting agenda
2. Congregational Council Minutes – November 14 ,2023
3. Parochial report
4. Staff reports
5. Committee reports

Rebecca asked about the number of youth participating in the various activities mentioned in Sharon's report. She will follow up with Sharon directly.

It was moved by Fred and seconded by Dave to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried.

C. FISCAL REPORT:

1. 2023 Status report

The YTD receipts through November 30 were \$12,470 over budget; the YTD expenses through November 30 were \$21,204 under budget; the YTD budget surplus was \$33,674.

The surplus at the end of the year is projected to be \$25,200.

2. 2024 Budget planning

When comparing the programming that we would like to do with the projected receipts, we are still working with a large deficit.

Thus far, there have been 197 pledges, which is an increase from last year. The amount pledged is down from last year.

Decisions will need to be made on the following:

- Salary increases for Pastor Erin and staff
 - *Council discussed this topic while Pastor Erin and Pastor Andrew were out of the meeting room.*
- Health insurance for dependents
 - *We currently pay 60% of the premiums for dependents; the recommended increase for 2024 is to pay 70% of the premiums for dependents.*
- Funding the position of director of discipleship
 - *It is likely that this position cannot be filled in 2024. We need to come up with an approach to get this position in the 2025 budget.*
- Funding the maintenance reserve fund
 - *Council members think that funding the maintenance reserve fund at \$500/month is a high priority. The maintenance reserve fund will have \$38,800 at the end of the year. There is a line item in the budget for normal repairs/maintenance.*
- 2023 projected surplus
 - *Council members think that the projected surplus should be used as income for 2024.*
- Sources of funds to assist in balancing the budget:
 - *PPP Funds*
 - *Carol Reed Fund*
 - *Kathy Bruggeman Fund*
- In 2025, our mortgage payments will be paid from the budget.

We need to get the pledge numbers high enough to support the programs we would like to do, such as adding a Director of Discipleship. We can start by introducing this at the Annual Meeting as well as at the 5th Sunday Town Hall.

Wyatt will send out various budget scenarios to Council members such that final decisions can be made at the January meeting.

D. ACTION AGENDA:

1. Pastors' housing allowance

It was moved by Rebecca and seconded by Emily that the designated housing allowance for Pastor Erin Heidelberger will be set for the 2024 calendar year at \$27,000 and for Pastor Andrew Kitzing for the 2024 calendar year at \$26,500. These amounts are to remain in place until or unless there is Council action to change them.

The motion carried.

E. DISCUSSION AGENDA:

1. Staff sabbaticals

Now that Pastor Andrew is on board, sabbatical requests can be considered.

Pastor Erin will provide a written resolution for the January meeting as Sharon Hardel has requested a sabbatical.

The current sabbatical policy should be reviewed and updated.

2. Staff health insurance

The goal is to move the coverage from 60% of the premiums in 2023 to 70% of the premiums in 2024, along with incrementally increasing the coverage to 100%. The Synod recommendation is that the church provide 100% for both Pastor and family coverage.

3. Immanuel Foundation grant request

We did not receive the grant we applied for as the guidelines do not allow for scholarships.

4. Safety plan (including firearms)

Scott ordered “no firearms” signs to be posted at the doors to the building.

Al Williams will participate in developing the Safety plan.

5. Council stewardship calls

Council members were asked to call members who made pledges to thank them for their pledge. The calls should be made by January 1.

6. Las Abejitas – follow up to family adoption and firework sales issues.

There is nothing further about family adoption. The firework sales issue was decided at the last meeting.

7. Nominating committee status report – Emily Sears

Every category has a full slate except for the Council. There are nine nominees out of a full slate of twelve potential nominees.

All nominees were asked to submit a photo and Bio by noon on December 15.

Nominees were encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting as well as the two Adult Forums that precede the meeting.

F. CLOSING PRAYER: Zach led the closing prayer.

G. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 8:50.

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Surplus

PROPOSED ACTION: Transfer surplus funds to the 2024 budget \$41,083

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: Receipts in 2023 totaled \$923,432 an increase of \$37,789 (+4.3%) from 2022

Expenses in 2023 totaled \$882,349 a decrease of \$14,244 (-1.6%) from 2022

Resulting in a \$41,083 operating surplus for 2023

Motion to transfer these surplus funds to be used in the 2024 budget

SPONSORS: Scott Williamson, Treasurer on recommendation of the Finance Committee

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

PROPOSED ACTION: Approve a budget of \$981,083 for Fiscal Year 2024

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: The 2024 budget recommended by the Finance Committee is based on total receipts and expenditures of \$981,083.

Projected offering receipts of \$906,500 represents an increase of 0.4% over 2023 offering receipts of \$902,575.

Additional receipts include \$74,583, of which \$41,083 is surplus funds from 2023 and \$30,000 rental income from the Las Abjeitas daycare center.

Total Benevolence/Serving giving of \$90,650 represents 10% of projected offering receipts; with 7% to the ELCA & Nebraska Synod (\$63,455) and 3% to local benevolences (\$27,195).

Program expenses (Worship, Learning, and Hospitality/Care) total \$35,220; an increase of 10.7% over 2023 program expenses of \$31,817.

Support expenses total \$856,923; an increase of 12.7% over 2023 support expenses of \$760,275. The majority of the budgeted increase is for compensation & benefits for full staffing that is now on board. In addition, our strategy of transferring funds to the Mortgage Transition Fund will continue for the sixth and final year.

SPONSORS: Finance Committee

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2024

PROPOSED ACTION: Increase Pastor Erin's 2024 salary by 6%, (3.5% of which is a cost of living increase and 2.5% is a one-time salary adjustment in recognition of her Lead Pastor designation).

BACKGROUND: Although a 3.5% cost of living increase for all called and employed staff members for 2024 will be submitted for ratification at the 2024 congregational annual meeting, the FLC constitution requires the Congregational Council to set the annual salary of the Lead Pastor. The 2.5% one-time salary adjustment recognizes her lead pastor status now that Pastor Andrew is on staff.

SPONSOR: Executive Committee

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2024

PROPOSED ACTION: Adjust the family health insurance support to 70% coverage for 2024.

BACKGROUND: The ELCA health insurance recommendations are full coverage (100%) of costs for called and full-time staff. Due to budget issues the past few years, FLC has continued the 100% coverage for full-time pastoral staff, but has reduced coverage for family members to 60%. The Council goal is to yearly increase the family members coverage by 10% to reach the recommended goal of 100%.

SPONSOR: Executive Committee

MEETING DATE

January 9, 2024

PROPOSED ACTION:

Approve FLC participation in the Lincoln/Lancaster County Justice in Action coalition; approve 2024 membership fee of \$2,000 to be funded from the Fund II account dedicated to social issues, and identify Kari Hoeft, Barb Johnson-Frank, and Pastor Andrew as an initial steering committee to secure additional FLC member participation and represent FLC to the Justice in Action coalition..

BACKGROUND:

Justice in Action is an interfaith, grassroots coalition of faith communities in Lancaster County, Nebraska. Its purpose is to harness the power of organized people to address big community problems.

Every year, each faith community hosts a series of Listening Sessions. Themes emerge from the stories shared and members gather to democratically select priorities for the coming year. Research committees interview subject experts and comb through relevant reports. Solutions emerge by looking at the best practices in other cities, new proposals from experts, and common sense. Findings are approved by a local board.

Based on the example found in Nehemiah 5, the annual Nehemiah Action Assembly demonstrates broad public support for proven solutions. From this platform, the organization seeks and obtains commitments and support from local officials. As needed, the organization monitors progress on the issue to ensure desired impact. System-wide changes often require a series of cycles before the organization can responsibly shift its focus to new priorities.

SPONSOR:

Executive Committee

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2024

PROPOSED ACTION: Designate the Morley and Pyrtle elementary schools backpack programs as the recipient entities for the Fall, 2023 Advent and Spring, 2024 Lenten mid-week congregational meal donations.

BACKGROUND: First Lutheran has been an active supporter of the Morley and Pyrtle backpack programs for several years. Early financial support was provided by a generous one-time donation from a FLC member. This financial grant has ended and various fund raising activities have been initiated to allow support to continue. The cost to FLC is approximately \$6,000 per year.

SPONSOR: Social Ministry Committee/Executive Committee

AGENDA
ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING
FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 28, 2024

12:30 p.m.

- A. Call to Order and Establishment of a quorum (Lee Rockwell, President)
- B. Opening Devotions (Lead Pastor Erin Heidelberger)
- C. Approve Agenda (Lee Rockwell)
- D. Approve Minutes of 153rd Annual Meeting January 29, 2023 (Lee Rockwell)
- E. Nominations and Elections (Sandy Latshaw)
 - 1. Congregational Council
 - 2. Nominating Committee
 - 3. Synod Assembly
 - 4. Endowment Fund Board
- F. 2023 membership Report (Pastor Erin Heidelberger)
- G. Staff and Leadership Recognition (Lee Rockwell)
- H. New Business
 - 1. Approve Budget for 2024 (Scott Williamson, Treasurer)
- I. Questions and Answers relating to Reports (All)
- J. Open Comments Period (Lee Rockwell)
- K. Closing Prayer (Pastor Andrew Kitzing)
- L. Adjournment (Lee Rockwell)

Ministry Items of Note/Celebrating:

- The **Vitality Initiative team** continues its work on Phase 1, which will wrap up this month, of the Vitality Initiative process: Discovering who we are. In December, the team started conducting short interviews with about 40 church members (will finish in January) as the team continues to explore how God has uniquely called First Lutheran into ministry.
- **Advent and Christmas:** We saw attendance at midweek Advent services that was consistent with last year (we have around 100 at both services each Wed). Our Longest Night service on the last Wednesday of Advent was cancelled due to weather last year, and we had about 50 people attend this year. I'm celebrating the turn-out for the new 1:30 family/child-oriented Christmas Eve service—over 100 people attended! While there were a few First Lutheran members, most of the faces were new. A big part of that is due to publicizing the service in our neighborhood and throughout the Lincoln community—big thanks to Kathleen for her work on that. We also saw steady increase in attendance at the other three services (3:30, 5:30, 7:30). Comparing those three services to last year, we saw a 10% increase in attendance. Comparing 2023 (including the 1:30 service) to 2022, we saw a 29% total increase in Christmas Eve attendance.

Upcoming Items of Note/Working On:

- **Realm Church Management:** FLC staff will be oriented to Realm this week, and we will begin to congregational roll-out at the end of January with launch activities continuing through Lent. This will include having FLC members submit photos or have them taken at the church for an online church directory through the Realm Connect app (we will also make a few printed directories available for those who are not online).
- **Communion Faith Milestone** – I will lead Communion Faith Milestone classes over three Sunday mornings during the learning hour (this is a change from last month's report): February 25, March 3, and March 10 with First Communion on Sunday, March 17.
- **First Lutheran 101** – I will lead classes for newcomers/new members on Sundays during the learning hour on Feb. 11 and 18 with New Member Welcome on Sunday, March 3.
- **Pre-marriage sessions:** I continue meeting with one couple who will be married at First Lutheran in June 2024.

Calendar:

- **Continuing education:** I'll attend the Crossings Community preaching conference outside of St. Louis, MO, January 28-30 (leaving after the annual meeting).

Dec. 18 – Moving Day!
20 – Longest Night Service
24 – Xmas Eve
25 – Xmas Day
Jan. 2-3 – Mini-VBS
4 – Pizza Night
9 – Bible Study
14 – Baptisms – Lam Duer family
Feb. 7 – Mohrenweiser Lecture (online)
14 – Ash Wednesday/Lent

As you can see, Lent is nearly here. Which means all the hopes of quiet after Christmas are certainly dashed. The past month had plenty of excitement. We moved from Omaha to Lincoln. Christmas worship services happened. The mini-VBS week was a success.

I thought the Christmas worship services were wonderful. They were worshipful, they had wide congregational involvement, they were Christmas. It's no secret that I hate Christmas, but if I have to experience it every year, the worship services of this year were pretty darn good.

We followed the wisemen to begin the new year. The mini-VBS week was a great opportunity for our members to get out into the community and make a difference. I had the chance to volunteer at the Center for People packing produce and restocking the pantry. The next day I went with a small group to the Lutheran Food Pantry at St. Andrew's to pack boxes for people at the City Mission. It was good, and it was good to see younger members of our congregation get involved with giving and mission work.

There will be four baptisms on January 14th. They are all siblings and attend the Nuer service. We are excited to be able to share in the sacrament of baptism with their family that day.

I'll be attending the Mohrenweiser Lecture online in February hosted by California Lutheran University. The title is Health Crisis and Life's Ending: A Conversation. One of the presenters is my pastoral care professor from seminary, Herbert Anderson.

Thank you, again, for all the kind words and generous hospitality you've shown Lori and myself this past month. We really can't say thank you enough.

Blessings,

Pr. Andrew

Director of Worship and Music

December 2023

Sunday Morning Musicians

December 3	both	Spirit Ringers
	8:15	Scott Vicroy
	10:45	Dawn & Kaitlyn Brock, Kari & Cora Hoeft
December 10	8:15	Carol Reckmeyer, Matt Reckmeyer, Brian Niebuhr, Erin Niebuhr,
	10:45	Adult Choir, Beth Strasheim
December 17	8:15	Sherri Cotter, String Ensemble (Kaitlyn Brock, Lucas Culbertson, Konnor Garrett, Mai Jacobo, Aden Niebuhr, Brian Niebuhr, Will Niebuhr, Xander Niebuhr, Kayla Peters, Jenna Troutman, Bennett Bacon)
	10:45	Faith Trek Children (Orff and Song), Adult Choir, Erin Pfister, Bonita Thomsen
	8:15	Erin Pfister, Adult Choir, RingersJazz Team (Matt Reckmeyer, Bob Schoettger, Jay Sears, Martha Tanner, Bennett Bacon)
	10:45	Jazz Team (Caitlin Buckwalter, Alex Hinton, Sophia Johnson, Christian Paulsen, Matt Reckmeyer, Bob Schoettger, Martha Tanner, Anna Wemhoff)
December 31	10:45 only	Julia Williams, Navy Mathes

Saturday Musicians

December 2, 16, 30 – Christine Carman	December 9 - Kristina Hanson
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Mid-Week Service Cantors

Holden Evening Prayer	December 6	Gordon Youngquist (Noon), Pr. Bill Peterson (6:30pm)
Holden Evening Prayer	December 13	Shanon Hardel (Noon), Dawn Brock (6:30pm)
Longest Night	December 20	Kari Hoeft (6:30pm)

Christmas Eve Worship Services

1:30pm	Lucas Culbertson, Sharon Hardel
3:30pm	String Ensemble (Kara Baxter, Sebastian Baxter, Aden Niebuhr, Brian Niebuhr, Erin Niebuhr, Will Niebuhr, Xander Niebuhr, Youth Orff Ensemble, Faith Trek Choir, Youth Choir, Jenna Troutman)
5:30pm	Brass (Trevor Culbertson, Alex Hinton, Steve Janssen, RJ Metteer, Matt Reckmeyer, Jay Sears, Bennett Bacon), Christine Carman, Spirit Ringers, Claire Ehlers, Daniel Bushard, Nicholas Bushard, Tony Bushard, Zachary Bushard
7:30pm	Anna Kruse, Liana Sandin, Brass (Steve Janssen, RJ Metteer, Matt Reckmeyer, Jay Sears, Jenna Troutman, Bennett Bacon), Adult Choir

Christmas Day

10:00am	Erica Johnson-Buss, Erin Pfister, Bonita Thomsen, Bennett Bacon
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Overview

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy is a special way to celebrate the coming of Christ as a church. Having a family light the candles give us a chance to recognize family and pray for them, also for the families to remember the special occasion to lead this liturgy as a family.

Musical Offering: The season of Advent and Christmas is filled with worship opportunities. Vast resources of music tells the Gospel of Christ's coming and his birth. First Lutheran Church is so blessed to have people with musical gifts and deep love of God who share their gifts generously. For sharing a few minutes long music, it takes hours of practices. We are so grateful for the people's efforts and time. A wonderful thing happening during a group rehearsal is their mutual relationship growth; experienced people help beginners and the beginners will give affirmation to those who guide them.

One of the special joys for this season is to welcome people home who are usually away for college or work.

Preparation of the Lord's Table: The dedicated people who prepare Communion for all worship services are not seen, but they are the solid rock to our worship services. Jan Wigodsky and Bonita Thomsen have been calling people to serve this ministry and it has been adding more people. We welcome more people to join in this ministry, especially to set up communion ahead of time. This can be done as a family.

Worship Assistants: Liturgy is made of work of people. Each worship service requires services from Worship Assistants. We are grateful for the people who served in each role. Especially on Christmas Eve, many roles involved out-of ordinary instructions. We will schedule a rehearsal for Christmas Eve Worship Assistants next year to clarify each role. The 3:30pm communion procedure change was made in the last minute for this year. There were a few things to be implemented for the next Christmas Eve worship service from this year's experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Soli Deo Gloria

Masako Bacon

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT /DECEMBER 2023

Outreach

*Compared to previous month report

FACEBOOK REACH

Page Followers	950 (+4*)
Page Likes	769 (+3*)
Page Visits	1,390 (+216*)
Total Posts	57 (+9*)
Total Reach	5,903 (+2,120*)
Total Paid Ad Reach	3,211
(Christmas Eve for Kids & Families Worship Post reached 2,011 and the Event reached 1,079)	
Post With Highest Reach	589 people
Post on December 24, 2023 - "The waiting is over!" Christmas Eve post	

INSTAGRAM REACH

Followers	211 (+2)
Total Profile Visits	14 (+4*)
Total Posts	28 (-1*)
Total Reach	244 (+138*)

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

Total Emails Sent	14
(FaithTrek Blast News, First Look, First Things First, Funeral Notice)	
Average Open Rate of All Emails	65% (-4%*)
First Things First Email	68% (-2%*)
Average Open Rate	5% (-11%*)
Average Click Rate	
Advent/Christmas Devotions Open Rate	62%
Active Subscribers	540 (-6*)
(1 new subscriber and 7 bounced emails removed)	

WEBSITE

Total Web Page Views	3,294 (+102*)
Top 3 Page Views	
• Home Page	1,206
• Calendar	392
• Livestream	209

LIVESTREAM WORSHIP

Facebook Viewing

Average # Weekly Live Viewers	14 (+1*)
Average Minutes LiveWatch Time	00:07:12
Average # Weekly Published Viewers	24 (-8*)
Average Minutes Published Watch Time	00:03:11

Web Page Viewing

Total Page Views	209 (+49*)
Total People Engaged with Page	79 (+29*)

Vimeo Recorded Advent Reflections (Dec 6 & 13)

Total Viewers	5
Ave % of Recording Watched	17%

Vimeo Recorded Sermons

Total Viewers	6 (-13*)
Total Viewers Who Watched	
100% of Recording	4 (-1*)
Number of Downloads	0
Ave. % of Recording Watched	49% (+12%*)

Vimeo Full Recorded Worship Service

Total Viewers	8 (-3*)
Total Viewers Who Watched	
100% of Recording	1 (+1*)
Number of Downloads	2 (+2*)
Ave. % of Recording Watched	75% (+26%)

OTHER

News Posts (Website)

Total Posts	23
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First Glance

Total Published	4
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Vimeo Published Videos

Total Published	17
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COMMUNICATIONS REPORT / DECEMBER 2023

by Kathleen Simley, Communications Director

COLLABORATION PROJECTS

Worship & Music Set up the [online signup schedule](#) for worship assistants for January, February and March 2024 and recruited readers for Sunday worship services for all three months.

Ensured the livestream worship service was set up each week by either Jim Overcash, Brian Niebuhr or myself.

Scheduled and ensured 5 Sunday worship services were streamed by Jim Overcash, Brian Niebuhr or myself.

Uploaded the sermons from the weekly livestream worship services (except for Christmas Eve worship) to [Vimeo](#) for viewing and shared as Tuesday [Facebook](#) posts with the help of member, Barb Johnson-Frank.

Uploaded the full worship livestream services (except for Christmas Eve worship) to [Vimeo](#) and shared in the *First Things First* e-newsletter each week.

Ensured the Advent mid-week worship service was recorded on December 6 and 13.

Uploaded the full Advent mid-week worship recording from December 6 and 13 to [Vimeo](#) and shared in the weekly Advent devotional emails.

Uploaded the Advent mid-week worship message recording from December 6 and 13 to [Vimeo](#) and shared on [Facebook](#).

Promoted the Christmas Eve and Day worship services, with a special emphasis on the 1:30 PM service for Kids & Families, in the following ways:

- Designed a [door hanger](#) that was hung in area neighborhoods by First Lutheran walkers.
- Designed a [postcard](#) that was shared with the congregation and three daycares/preschools (including Las Abejitas).
- Created a paid Facebook post that reached almost 2,011 people and a paid Facebook event ad that reached 1,079 people.
- Listed the 1:30 PM worship service on the [Macaroni Kid](#) online calendar and had a paid Facebook post on their page.
- Listed all Christmas Eve worship service times (and the *Longest Night of the Year* worship) in the Neighborhood Extra religion notes on Saturday, December 16 and 23.
- Designed a [postcard](#) with all worship times and mailed to all members.

Designed a special [worship bulletin](#) and "[First Glance](#)" insert for the 1:30 PM Kids & Families worship service.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT / DECEMBER 2023

by Kathleen Simley, Communications Director

COLLABORATION PROJECTS (cont.)

FaithTrek	<p>Published and sent 3 <i>Weekly Blast</i> emails to 56 parents of kids, ages 3-5th grade, in collaboration with FaithTrek Coordinator, Laura Gaulty.</p> <p>Produced the movie, <u><i>Out of Time: Christmas Pagaent</i></u>, which premiered at the congregational Christmas Pagaent on Sunday, December 17.</p>
Hospitality & Care	<p>Recruited greeters for Sunday worship services, including Christmas Eve worship, sent the Greeter Guide to members who were new to greeting beforehand and sent them a “thank you” message after. I also worked with Faye Doolittle on recruiting Stephen Ministers as greeters for the <i>Longest Night of the Year</i> worship service.</p>
Adult Forum	<p>Downloaded the recording of the Adult Forum session on December 10 and uploaded it to Vimeo for viewing; links to each recording are posted on our website under Adult Forum ministry (https://flclincoln.org/learn).</p>
Fellowship Committee	<p>Created an online sign up for the Christmas Day Dinner.</p>
Advent	<p>Designed and sent five Advent and Christmas weekly devotionals.</p>
Gifts of Hope Alternative Giving Market	<p>Set up the <u>Gifts of Hope online store</u> to ensure it was ready to open for sales December 2 and 3. Attended the Gifts of Hope Market on December 3 and created a <u>video</u> that featured photos and video clips that were captured at the market. It was shared on Facebook, in the <i>First Things First</i> e-newsletter and as a <u>News</u> post on our website on December 6.</p>
First Friday Jazz	<p>Promoted the January 5 concert on the <u>First Friday Jazz Facebook page</u> with posts and a paid ad. I also promoted it on the First Lutheran Facebook page.</p> <p>Attended the December 1 concert and captured video and photos. I compiled and edited the video and posted a finished video on the First Friday Jazz Facebook page.</p>
Christmas Photo Booth	<p>Set up and managed a photo booth for all the Christmas Eve worship services that was a huge hit with families and friends!</p>
Pew Card	<p>Designed a <u>laminated pew card</u> listing all the ways someone can connect with First Lutheran that made its premiere in the Sanctuary pews on Christmas Eve.</p>

Sharon Hardel's Report to Council December 13, 2023 – January 9, 2024

Highlights of the month:

December 14 the Youth Workers of Lincoln area got together for lunch at Lazlos. We enjoyed a meal together and some good conversation about possible events in 2024. Our first activity is planned for January 5, an 8th – 12th grade lock-in at Sheridan Lutheran. As of 1/4, we have one youth participating.

The Youth Group Christmas Party Pot Luck was held on December 17. We had 7 of our youth in the Christmas pageant earlier that morning and 6 youth and 4 parents / adults at the Christmas Pot Luck.

Laura Gaulty, Linda Bogenreif, and I made up craft bags for the 1:30 Christmas Eve service. We made 25 bags, 1 / family and all were given out at the worship service.

I attended a rehearsal with Masako and Lucas Culbertson on Saturday December 23 to go over the 1:30 Christmas Eve Worship songs since Masako asked me to be the song leader. I attended the 1:30 and 3:30 Christmas Eve Service before heading out to PA to be with family for the week of Christmas.

Karrie Lickliter and I went shopping for supplies for the Mini VBS "Travel with the Wisemen" event on December 31. Our mini VBS took place January 2 – 20 participants, and January 3 – 13 participants. We packed 90 winter kits (a hat, gloves, lip balm, hand warmers, and tissues) for Matt Talbot, made about 200 cookies for participants and Matt Talbot, served at Center for People (gave out food for about 340 people, The Lincoln Lutheran Food Pantry, and Matt Talbot (served up 140 baked potatoes for dinner). Then on January 4 we held a Pizza and Movie Night. Laura Gaulty helped to lead this event and we had 28 participants. A special thanks to Liz Streur and Carol Olson and her mother for making over 35 hats for our winter kits and to Gay Sutter, Faye Doolittle, and Our Saviour's Lutheran member for applying for Thrivent Action Team projects to help us pay for all the supplies we used over the week.

Friday January 5 our youth will serve a baked potato bar for the First Friday Jazz. This is our first fundraiser in 2024 for our summer trips. We have 7 youth helping to serve and 2 families that couldn't attend are providing a dessert. Then we have our lock-in as mentioned above.

The Learning hour resumes again on January 7 and we will pick up with our getting ready lessons for the Youth Gathering (which is appropriate for youth who aren't going to the Gathering as well).

Coffee Talk will meet on Mondays as usual however the Gather and Gab is taking a break until the end of January.

Projects Working On:

1. Winter schedule for youth events and learning
2. Summer Youth Accompaniments Trips and fundraisers
3. January Prayer / Meditation opportunity to go with Synod theme Go and....Rest

Laura Gaulty and I will be going to New Orleans January 16 – 21 for the ELCA Youth Network Extravaganza where I hope to find our hotel and make some tour arrangements for the summer Gathering.

Happy New Year,

Sharon Hardel

FaithTrek December 2023 Council Report

Whew- at the end of 2023, we have added a new class, and our numbers are up for the year!

This month was focused mainly on the all generational Christmas Pageant, "Out Of Time", with the filming of seven scenes, and the last scene was done live in the activity center. I was chuffed to see it was standing room only, and I do believe it was a hit. I'm extremely grateful to Judy Bailey for her enormous help and expertise, as well as Mark Mesarch. Also, Kathleen Simley seamlessly put together my hodgepodge of filming into a wonderful "movie". We had participants from ages 2 to 72 in the pageant, but I am thankful that it's over! :)

The cherubs have been practicing for musical performances, and I have to admit, their song at the 3:30 Christmas Eve service brought a tear to my eyes. I'm so very proud of them! Respectfully submitted,

Laura Gaulty



Sabbatical Proposal

Dates suggested: July 28 – September 15 (approximately 7 weeks)

Why I am requesting a sabbatical? Covid was a very trying time and as you know we have not had a full staff since before Covid so now that Pastor Andrew is here and we are basically back to full staff, I would like to take a sabbatical for rest and renewal. I feel like I have been running on fumes for the last year or so and would like to find my creative spark and joy for ministry again. I connect most with God in nature so much of what I would like to do on Sabbatical is to have time to rest, do some self-examination, and spend time with friends and family in camp settings and in National Parks.

Activities I would like to explore during Sabbatical:

1. Spend the week of July 28 – August 2 at home with Kent to rest and relax after the summer youth trips and VBS. No cost for this time. There is a possibility of Kent's parents coming to Nebraska to stay with him while I'm at the Youth Gathering, so we may take some time driving them back to MT and exploring the National Parks on the way. This would give me a chance to have family time and connect with God through Nature (I would pay for this travel on my own).
2. August 4 – August 11 – Attend Family Camp at Camp Nawakwa in Arendtsville PA. Cost \$500. At Family Camp, I will participate in morning Bible study with other adult campers and worship every evening with all the campers (youth and adults). In the afternoons, I will be able to participate in a variety of activities with other campers such as hiking, making crafts, reading, relaxing, and field trips in the local area. Camp is a beautiful place to connect with nature, God, and each other. Kent and I used to attend this camp with friends and family from PA, so I would also use this week to visit and reconnect with many we have not seen since Covid. (I attended this family Camp for over 20 years each summer and built some good friendships with other families). I would also spend some time in PA visiting Family before returning to NE.
3. The remaining weeks in August I would like to travel with Kent around Nebraska at my own cost and Kent's friend is celebrating his birthday Aug. 24 at a Cardinals and Twins baseball game. We will join him in MN for the weekend (Aug. 23 – 25). No cost (I would pay for this on my own). Again, this will give me time to spend with Kent and some of his friends that we don't see very often. I want to try to travel with Kent now while he is still mobile enough to do so.
4. September 7 – 8 – Attend "Cultivating Compassion in our Daily Lives" retreat at the Benedictine Center in Schuyler NE. Cost: \$163.43 Here is a description from their website describing the retreat and what I would hope to receive from attending: *Do you ever wish the world would stop long enough for you to catch your breath? Hit the Pause Button and gift yourself with time and space to nourish and refresh your Spirit in a kind and supported environment surrounded by the beauty of nature. We will explore compassion as a necessary part of nurturing emotional resilience to meet the challenges of our daily lives. Come away and ground yourself with experiential compassion practices, personal reflection, and small group dialogue in sacred community with the Holy One.*
5. September 9 – 15 – For my final week of Sabbatical, I would like to finish as I started, taking time to harvest my garden and spend time with Kent exploring anything else we want to see in Nebraska and surrounding areas.

During my sabbatical, I plan to visit and worship in other congregations and explore their youth ministry programs and offerings to get some new ideas and help spark my creativity. I also plan to volunteer at the Center for People and at FoodNet while here in Nebraska. I enjoy helping at both of these organizations and would like to spend more time learning about each organization and how we might involve our youth and families in serving here in Lincoln.

While I am on Sabbatical these would be what needs to be covered by other staff (or volunteer):

1. Coffee Talk group meeting Mondays at 1:30 pm
2. Gather and Gab Zoom meetings on Thursdays from 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm
3. Youth presentation of Summer Trip- put together powerpoint / video presentation and send the youth reminders to be at the presentation to share their experiences. Have fruit or something a bit more than donut holes to set this Sunday apart from typical Sundays. The date will be set with Adult Forum committee.
4. Work with Laura to get Backpack Blessing tags together and ready to hand out on Aug. 10 / 11 at worship services.
5. Work with Laura to plan any special first Sunday back to Learning activities, i.e. congregational breakfast or rally day type activities.
6. Someone to help with Confirmation nights – lead games, help with small groups
7. Lead any youth / family activities that are offered throughout the weeks I will be away and send texts / e-mails / newsletter to parents and youth reminding them about activities and events.
8. Coordinate signup with Kathleen for Congregational Retreat and give final count numbers to Camp end of August for our retreat on Sept. 21.
9. Print off Children's worship bulletins each week.

When I return from Sabbatical, I will share what I learned and did via a written report as well as offer to lead Bible Study or discussion groups about topics I learn like Compassion (Benedictine Retreat topic) and Created to Be (Family Camp Bible Study topic). I will also incorporate more local service into my ministries here at First based on what I learn from the organizations I volunteer at over the weeks of my Sabbatical.

Fellowship Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

Attending: Judy Bailey, Judy Batterman (chair), Linda Bogenreif, Carlene Falos, Karen Moser, Cindy Schuster, Carol Tesar, Gordon Wolfe, Verla Youngquist, Linda Carlson

Devotions: Given by Judy Bailey

January devotions: Karen Moser.

Review of Events:

1. **Gratitude Sunday** – We served beverages, adding hot chocolate in addition to coffee, tea, and juice.
2. **Thanksgiving Dinner** – Forty-one people attended, and great food was provided by our committee and those who joined the dinner.
3. **Advent Wednesdays' Lunches and Suppers** – We averaged about 25-30 for lunches and 40 for suppers. Many thanks to bakers Karen Clementson for cornbread and Steve Doolittle for Asiago bread at the suppers.

Upcoming Events:

1. Last **Advent lunch and supper** will be on December 13th. Many congregation members have signed up to bring soups for both meals.
2. **3rd Sunday coffee between Sunday services** – At 9:30 the Christmas pageant will be presented in the Activity Center, so more people will attend than the usual numbers for coffee and donut holes. We will add hot chocolate to the beverage options.
3. **Christmas Day Dinner** – 11:30 a.m. after worship. Carlene will prepare the turkey and ham, and mashed potatoes and gravy and stuffing will also be provided by the committee and the Lenzens. As of this date, eleven people have signed up for dinner, but more are expected. We will prepare for 35.
4. **Christmas Eve snacks for staff between services** – Judy will confer with Masako to determine if the staff would like some snacks and how many to prepare for. Our suggestions for food include gluten-free snacks, meat, cheese and crackers, a vegetable tray, and deviled eggs. We will finish deciding upon food after Judy Batterman contacts us. We thought that the food could be brought to the church before 3:00.

Additional Information:

1. Judy Batterman prepared and read to us the committee's annual report. Thank you, Judy! We applauded her wonderful leadership.
2. We agreed that we would invite Pastor Erin to our January meeting to let us know some of her plans for 2024 and how our committee can contribute and help.
3. Vicar Erick Hill has accepted a call to pastor at Messiah Lutheran in Ralston. His ordination will be on January 27 at 10:30 at Resurrection Lutheran in Gretna.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 9, at 5:30 p.m.

Devotions will be given by Karen Moser.

Submitted by Linda Carlson, Secretary