

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL  
MEETING AGENDA  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2024  
Meeting in Upper Room

- A. Opening Devotion – Pastor Andrew
  
- B. Approve Consent Agenda
  - 1. Meeting Agenda
  - 2. Congregational Council Minutes September 10, 2024
  - 3. Parochial Report
  - 4. Staff Reports
  - 5. Committee Reports
  
- C. Action Agenda
  - 1. Approve plan for Pastor's Annual Evaluation
  
- D. Discussion Agenda
  - 1. Fall Festival Review
  - 2. October 27 Town Hall / Special Congregational Meeting
  - 3. *Growing Young* small group discussion
  
- E. Financial Report
  
- F. Open Comments
  
- G. Closing Prayer
  
- H. Adjournment

Executive Committee Meeting  
First Lutheran Church  
October 1, 2024

Present: Judy, Lee, Pastor Erin, Pastor Andrew, Emily

Opening Prayer: Judy

Topics for discussion:

1. October 27<sup>th</sup> Town Hall  
We discussed if we wanted to bring up any other topics than the ones we already had on the agenda.
2. Constitution Amendments
  - A. Council Size- Reduce from 15 to 12
  - B. Endowment Board- housekeeping details
  - C. Proposed slate vs. two candidates per position
  - D. Section C-10-03
    1. Sunday worship announcement October 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>
    2. Email to congregation by October 17<sup>th</sup>

We discussed all the above topics (related to #2). We referred to the Constitution and we can alert congregation of these things by electronic means (email). Lee will talk to Kathleen.

3. Nominating Committee Council Representative- Emily Sears  
Emily agreed to serve as the Council Representative on the Nominating Committee again.
4. Pastor's Evaluations
  - A. Southwest Iowa Model
  - B. Southwest Washington Model
  - C. Council Involvement

We discussed that these are good models but might be too much to take on right now to completely change. We will probably use the one we used in previous years. Council needs to take on a more active roll in implementing a new evaluation method. We will bring the evaluation method to Council next week to take home and fill out.

5. Pastor Erin's Sabbatical  
We discussed that Erin is eligible in 2026 for her sabbatical and she plans on taking it. She is going to apply for a Lilly Grant, and we will need a committee to help her fill out the application.
6. *Growing Young* Follow-up  
Discussed the importance of implementing this ASAP. Next week in Council we will break into small teams (3-5 people) to brainstorm ideas on how to get this information to the Congregation.

7. Other:

- A. We will meet with Wyatt in November to discuss budget etc.
- B. We need to designate one of the exec committee members as the main check signer for better continuity. Will be either Scott or Lee.
- C. Discussed who should sign the salary checks.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer at 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by Emily Sears, Council Secretary

## Parochial Report

	Baptized	Confirmed
1. MEMBERSHIP as of September 1, 2024	1094	906
Members received:		
A. by baptism (15 years and under)	1	
B. by baptism (adult)		
C. transfer from ELCA congregation		
D. other Lutheran		
E. affirmation of faith		
F. transfer from non-Lutheran congregation		
G. other and statistical adjustment		
Members removed:		
A. death	2	2
B. transfer to ELCA congregation	2	2
C. transfer to other Lutheran congregation		
D. transfer to non-Lutheran congregation		
E. other and statistical adjustment		
MEMBERSHIP as of September 30, 2024	1091	902

### Average Attendance for September

<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>	<u>2024</u>
426	372	436	382	345	281	online	314	242	286	223

### Added:

Baptism: Caden Kasperbauer

Affirmation:

Transfer:

Other:

### Removed:

Death: Dan Howard, James Howat

Transfer: Steve & Kathy Dickey to Sheridan Lutheran Church in Lincoln

Dropped Due to Inactivity:

Other:

Notes: [Live Stream average for September 2024 is: no data available](#)

Congregational Council Meeting

First Lutheran Church

September 10, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pastor Erin Heidelberger, Pastor Andrew Kitzing, Lee Rockwell, Patrick Hayden-Roy, Rod Johnson, Emily Sears, Karen Statham, Jenna Troutman, Jennifer Wemhoff, Bev White, Brandon Wiebelhaus, and Scott Williamson.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Judy Batterman, John Bonaiuto, Amy Harrison, Kari Hoeft, and Dave Pfister.

MEETING RECORDER: Emily Sears

A. OPENING DEVOTION AND PRAYER:

The meeting was called to order by Council President Lee Rockwell at 7:00. Pastor Erin led the opening devotion and prayer.

B. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Meeting agenda
2. Congregational Council Minutes – August 13, 2024
3. Parochial Report
4. Staff Reports
5. Committee Reports

It was moved by Jen and seconded by Bev to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed.

C. ACTION AGENDA

1. Approve use of Contingency Funds for Heating Repairs

Scott Moved and Patrick seconded the use of the contingency funds (PPP money) for the much-needed repairs.

Scott made an amendment to the motion to use some of the emergency maintenance funds first and then use the contingency funds. Scott moved his amendment and Patrick seconded the motion. The motion to amend the original motion was discussed and passed. The amended motion was then discussed and passed.

2. Approve submission of Endowment Fund Constitutional Amendments

Scott moved to accept it and Emily seconded it. We will combine the approval of the changes with the town hall and congregational vote on council size in October. The motion carried.

D. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION AGENDA:

1. Growing Young Follow-up Action

- We need to have a group to start implementing this eventually, to share what we've learned.
- Staff will take this information and start utilizing it.

- Thinking of showing the video in two sessions in Adult Education, either in November or December.
2. Council hosting Fall Festival games
    - We need 6 people to do 1 hour of volunteering for games.
    - A sign-up sheet was sent around the table and time slots were filled.
  3. First Things First and First Stories Newsletter
    - Very few Council members are opening and reading both emails.
    - Everyone on Council needs to be reading both emails.
    - Check your spam folders.

E. FINANCIAL REPORT:

YTD receipts through August 31, 2024, are \$3,310 over budget; YTD disbursements through August 31, 2024, are \$12,556 over budget; YTD deficit through August 31, 2024, is \$9,256.

A total of 33 members have fulfilled their 2024 pledge through August 2024. We have received about 72% of the pledge money through August. The non-pledge money is a little behind.

Expenses declined for the second consecutive month! We saw an additional \$3.7k in repairs and maintenance expenses. The bulk of this expense was related to the sanctuary A/C issues. We will see more expenses related to this issue in the coming months. YTD, we have spent almost \$27k on repairs and maintenance.

September is a 5 Sunday month. Hopefully we will see a slight bump in receipts.

F. OPEN COMMENTS:

Reminder that the Council needs to help hand out Stewardship Packets this Sunday, before and after both services.

G. CLOSING PRAYER: Pastor Erin led us in the Lord's Prayer as the closing prayer.

H. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

MEETING DATE: October 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Pastor's Annual Evaluation

PROPOSED ACTION: Accept and implement a plan for the 2024 annual evaluation of First Lutheran Church's two pastors using the framework developed by the Southeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA in the document "A Review Process for Rostered Ministers and Congregation Council."

BACKGROUND: Section C12.04.d of the First Lutheran Constitution states that the Congregation Council shall "...maintain supportive relationships with the rostered minister(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment." The Southeastern Iowa document provides the framework for a cooperative evaluation process that involves each pastor and the Congregational Council. Pastor Erin's initial evaluation process in February, 2023 was a cooperative process which included three members of her Mutual Ministry Committee and herself. This proposed process will involve the Congregation Council as specified in the FLC constitution.

SPONSOR: FLC Executive Committee



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## **A Review Process for Rostered Ministers and Congregation Council**

The Southeastern Iowa Synod recommends rostered ministers and congregational leaders to engage in an annual review. The review provides space for a formal conversation about where the congregation has been in the past year(s) and sense where God is calling the congregation in the coming year(s) in shared ministry. The commitment to an annual review/conversation keeps the congregation and rostered minister accountable to one another and to the ministry to which has been entrusted to the congregation.

A significant reason for a rostered minister and congregational leaders to engage in an annual review is to give careful consideration to the continuing education that will help the rostered minister to develop the skills, to have the experiences, and to gain the knowledge that will help her/him to most effectively lead the congregation into the future to which they sense God calling them.

### **Suggested Steps**

1. The rostered minister and the council agree together on the date and time to engage in the review.
2. Ask the rostered minister to answer in writing the questions listed under “Rostered Minister Self-Evaluation”.
3. Simultaneously, ask the congregational council to individually answer the questions under “Evaluation by/with Congregational Council”.
4. After giving the council some time to work on that as individuals, gather the council without the rostered minister, share the Rostered Minister’s Self-Evaluation, and engage the council in a discussion centered on the ten questions they have worked on. Someone should keep notes (not minutes!!!). This should be considered “Executive Session.”
5. A small group (executive committee, personnel committee or other) meets with the rostered minister. A summary from the council discussion is shared with the rostered minister. The rostered minister also shares his/her self-evaluation with the small group.
6. In that time together, there may be opportunities to talk about goals for the coming year (both individually for the rostered minister and for the rostered minister and council working together), some preliminary plans for continuing education, and some strategies for making the work of the rostered minister and the council more effective. Once some of those goals are identified, they may be used to assist in the evaluation the following year.
7. A summary of the conversation is shared with the council.





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## **Rostered Minister Self-Review**

1. In the past year what has given you the most joy and sense of fulfillment in your ministry?
2. What areas of ministry are most challenging or frustrating for you?
3. What do think you are really good at in your role as rostered minister?
4. In what areas of ministry did you experience growth?
5. What do you like best about the congregation?
6. With what do you struggle most in serving in this congregation?
7. What do you think has been our greatest accomplishment as a congregation in the past year?
8. As we look to the coming year (or years), and the ways in which we sense God calling us to grow in our shared ministry, in what part of your role as a rostered minister do you want/need to grow to most effectively lead us?
9. For that growth to occur what skills do you need to develop, what experiences do you need to have, what knowledge do you need to gain?
10. List classes, seminars, conferences you attended this year as a part of your continuing education.
11. How did your participation in these events enhance your ministerial abilities?
12. What are your continuing education goals for the coming year?
13. In so far as your leadership role permits you, what are your plans/goals for the congregation in the coming year?



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## **Review by/with Congregation Council**

1. What are some of the most memorable events or happenings of the past year?
2. As a congregation, have there been missed opportunities this year? If so, what are they?
3. What are our rostered minister's three greatest strengths?
4. As we look at the total ministry of the congregation, what are our three greatest strengths?
5. What do we as a congregation, as congregational leaders need to do to build on the strengths listed in questions 3 and 4?
6. Where can our rostered minister more effectively help us in our ministry?
7. We would like to have our rostered minister consider spending more time doing...
8. We would like to have our rostered minister consider spending less time doing...  
*(This question is especially important if there are "more" things you want your rostered minister to do.)*
9. What three goals should we be working on this coming year?
10. What specifically do we need to do to work toward meeting these goals and the goals the rostered minister has set for him/herself and the congregation?

**Worship and Music Ministry:** Preached at eight Sat/Sun services and led/presided at six Sat/Sun services, one memorial service on Sept. 20, and all-church retreat worship on Sept. 21. Prepping for Stewardship Sundays and upcoming Reformation Sunday, All Saints Sunday, Reign of Christ/Gratitude Sunday, and Advent season.

**Pastoral Acts:** Caden Kasperbauer baptism, Cole Dalby memorial service

**Ministry with Leaders:** Vitality Initiative cohort meeting and two FLC VI team meetings, budget committee, one regular staff meeting plus fall staff planning meeting, three individual staff check-in meetings, executive committee. Currently working on staff annual reviews.

**Ministry of Care:** Pastoral care in Sept. included (but not limited to) office visits, phone calls, and hospital visits.

**Ministry with Visitors/New Members/Evangelism:** I send a postcard that I created to all first-time visitors who fill out a connect card from pew racks or online. We receive only a couple of these each month. Led FLC 101 classes (newcomer classes for those considering membership) on Sept. 15 & 22 (eight people attended at least one session and five are being received as new members on Oct. 6). I've scheduled the next FLC 101 sessions for February 5 and 19, moving them to Wednesday evenings.

**Ministry of Communication:** Three pastor's weekly word articles in *First Things First* and stewardship letter and materials.

**Ministry of Faith Formation:** Led four Wednesday Bible study sessions (currently using the book *Bible Women: All Their Words and Why They Matter*); met via Zoom with ELCA Gather leader about starting a Gather network in Lincoln (ELCA young adult ministry).

**Ministry with Youth/Children:** Two Sunday kids' messages, Baptism meeting with parents, prayer pillow faith milestone event for 3- and 4-year-olds.

**Ministry of Fellowship/Service:** All-church retreat – worked with Sharon to finish prepping and hold all-day, intergenerational event at Camp Carol Joy Holling; planning upcoming Reformation Sunday activities.

**Ministry with the Larger Church:** Hosted Lincoln-area Cluster clergy for a quarterly meeting; have quarterly follow-up Zoom meetings with group from Women in Ministry conference in August.

**Continuing Education:** All-day clergy text study in Ashland (meets every six weeks); Faith+Lead (through Luther Seminary) webinar.

Other:

**Sabbatical planning:** I will be eligible for sabbatical in 2026 and plan to apply for a sabbatical grant through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program. Applications for 2026 sabbaticals will open this November and will be due in mid-March 2025. The Lilly Program encourages a congregational team to help develop the pastor's sabbatical plan along with the congregational component, so I plan to put together an FLC team.

Coming Up:

**Upcoming Ministry Away:** Continuing education: taking a reading week in So. Dak. Black Hills Oct. 7-13 (includes one Sunday); Nebraska Synod Fall Leadership Gathering in Kearney Oct. 21-23

**Upcoming Vacation:** Nov. 25-Dec. 1 (one Sunday)

## Associate Pastor Report

October 4, 2024

September 11 – Faith Coalition of Lancaster County

12 – Cluster Gathering at First

21 – All Church Retreat

22 – Confirmation Sunday rehearsal

25 – Justice in Action Clergy House Meeting

October 5 – Doug Rothgeb Ordination

6 – Fall Festival

12 – Howat Inurnment

21-23 – Fall Theological Conference

November 3 – All Saints' & Confirmation Sunday

11 – Micah 6:8 Meeting

There are several things to celebrate this month. When I was in Omaha, I had an intern who was studying at Wartburg through the Collaborative Learning program. He has graduated and received a call to serve in Council Bluffs. Doug will be ordained October 5 in Council Bluffs and Lori and I will of course be there to celebrate with him.

Confirmation Sunday is just around the corner. We will be having it on November 3<sup>rd</sup> because of the Halfsy. Four of our young people will be affirming the promises made for them at their baptisms and take another step in their faith journey. Thank you to all the parents and loved ones who have helped these four get to this stage in their faith lives. You making this a priority is what ensures your children see church as a priority.

Justice in Action gathered area clergy for a clergy only house meeting. It went really quite well and I think opened a few potential avenues of cooperation between congregations outside the framework of Justice in Action. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in house meetings here at First. At the end of the day it is in everyone's best interest to live in a community that is happier, healthier, more secure, and more just. First's participation in Justice in Action is an important step in living out our promise to be disciples who work for justice, peace, and love in all the earth.

Peace,

Pr. Andrew

## **Sharon Hardel's Sabbatical Report (July 29 – September 15, 2024)**

I began my Sabbatical recovering from Covid that I got on the ELCA Youth Gathering Trip to New Orleans, I tested positive through Sunday July 29<sup>th</sup>, which was my first day of Sabbatical, so I had a lot of catching up on housework that I was not able to do the prior week. I got caught up, met with my Spiritual Director on Tuesday, July 30 (postponed from prior week), and Kent and I headed out of Lincoln on Wednesday July 31.

Our first stop was Cuyahoga National Park in Ohio. We had a bed and breakfast reserved at Brandywine Falls. We enjoyed hiking around the falls and other parts of the park. It was so peaceful, and we enjoyed the quietness and sound of the flowing water around us. We also enjoyed a scenic train ride through the town of Peninsula to Akron where we heard the history of the area from the train steward. It was a good way to start the relaxation and renewal process of my sabbatical.

After our visit to Cuyahoga, we headed to PA where we met Kent's sister, brother-in-law, and niece and her husband for dinner. We had a nice visit and then headed further east to meet up with my extended family at a chicken BBQ reunion. It was great to visit with extended family and see many that I haven't seen since 2021. We left the reunion and headed south to Family Camp at Camp Nawakwa in Arendtsville, PA, part of the Lutheran Camping Corporation. We enjoyed week of Bible Study, led by my friend Chelle Huth, focusing on the curriculum used at the ELCA Youth Gathering "Created to Be" with some adaptations for the camp setting (and adults). I obtained a copy of this curriculum and am happy to share it at adult forum or as another bible study opportunity. At camp, we enjoyed relaxing and playing games with friends that I have not seen in several years, worshiping in nature (although it rained for several days due to hurricane Debby so we couldn't be outside as much as we would have liked), and hiking through the woods. I also had the chance to go see my cousin's son in the musical "Oliver Jr.". He has been in many musicals over the last few years, and it was wonderful to have the chance to see him. Before we left PA, we visited with friends and took a trip to Longwood Gardens, which was beautiful, and my family had a cookout at the family farm by the river (which was very high due to the hurricane). My nephew and his wife gave Kent and I the good news that they were expecting, they hadn't told others yet but wanted to tell us in person since we were there. It was very hard to keep the secret for a month before they finally made the announcement publicly.

We returned to Lincoln the evening of August 12 and I took the next day to unpack and put things away. Then I began my volunteer work at The Center for People. I helped 9 days in the Food Distribution area by sorting items for on the shelves, stocking the shelves, and helping people shop for food items. It was astounding to see how many people came through during my 3-hour shifts, most days serving over 500 (6 hours open to serve). I got to work with some great people and hear about the needs in the community. I look forward to volunteering whenever possible in the future and taking our youth there on days off school to volunteer as well. There are many opportunities to volunteer there from helping in the food distribution area to helping immigrants learn English. Please feel free to contact me if you have an interest in volunteering.

We left Lincoln again on Friday August 23 for Minneapolis MN to help Kent's friend celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday at a Twins game. On the way, we stopped at Sioux Falls, SD to explore the falls and enjoy lunch and ice cream, what a beautiful place to rest and people watch. We also visited Pipestone National Monument in Pipestone MN. This was by far the most Spiritual moment I had on my sabbatical. We enjoyed a short film in the visitor's center that was very informative about the area and the traditions of the Native Americans that still quarry the pipestone. We explored the visitor center and went on a guided tour with one of the rangers. After the tour, we continued exploring the trails, and as I walked, I felt so connected to the earth that I didn't want to leave. The sound of the stream flowing, the breeze blowing through the trees and wildflowers on the prairie and seeing the prayer flags tied to the trees made me appreciate the hallowed ground and the people that have been there for thousands of years. My mother-in-law told me the pictures I took made her feel like she was there, which made me very happy. I highly recommend visiting if you get the chance since it is only a 4-hour drive from Lincoln.

We did make it to Minneapolis and had breakfast with Kent's cousin and his family before going to the baseball game. Unfortunately for Kent, the Cardinals lost but we enjoyed the game in style since his friend had a suite rented for the evening. We worshiped and had brunch with Kent's friends he worked with at Camp Carol Joy Holling Sunday morning before leaving Minneapolis. Once back in Lincoln, it was time to help at Kent's Ataxia Group's golf tournament on August 26 at Tiburon Golf Course in Omaha. We spent the day at a prize hole and enjoyed sharing about Ataxia with the golfers as they came through. We spent the final week of August and the first week of September in Lincoln relaxing at the pool and canning peaches and vegetables as well as a PSU watch party with the PSU Alumni in Omaha.

My final weekend away was September 7 – 9 in Schuyler NE at the St. Benedict Retreat Center where I participated in the Cultivating Compassion Retreat, a focus on self-compassion was a perfect way to begin closing out my sabbatical. This retreat gave plenty of time to look inside myself and learn skills to be kinder to myself and others. The facilitators were wonderful and gave us many practices and take-home resources. The retreat center is gorgeous and so peaceful, I plan on returning for more retreats in the future. Cultivating Compassion is one of the things I am most excited about sharing with the congregation from my sabbatical. I hope to implement the practices into my daily life and share them with others as I think we all could use more self-compassion in our lives for the sake of the world around us.

Upon returning from the retreat, I spent the final week of my sabbatical organizing my home office room (I can now see the floor and walk into my computer without having piles to step over) and relaxing at the pool at my apartment complex.

During my sabbatical, I had the privilege of worshiping with various Lutheran Congregations in PA, MN, and NE as well as being welcomed to worship at the Catholic service while at the St. Benedict Center. I took some photos of ministries I liked and took some notes in the bulletins to bring back and share with staff and anyone interested in seeing what other congregations are doing (from worship to offering collection). It was one of my blessings to worship at Tree of Life Lutheran in Harrisburg PA where one of my former youth and a friend provided guitar music for the worship service, he even wrote the Kyrie they used and he shared it with me. I felt I also was able to be fully present in worship since I didn't have to think about everyone I needed to check in with about an upcoming event and what we were going to do in learning and youth group later.

I am grateful to First Lutheran for allowing me to have this opportunity and am looking forward to my return to the congregation renewed and reenergized.

Thanks, and Blessings to you all,

Sharon Hardel, Dir. of Youth and Family Ministry

## Sharon Hardel's Report to Council August 2024 – October 8, 2024

My Sabbatical Report is attached as my report for you to read.

I returned from Sabbatical on September 16 and hit the ground running getting ready for the Congregational retreat on Saturday September 21. I met with Pastor Erin to see what was still needed to do to prepare and got the snack foods, prayer station supplies, group building games, and craft items.

I helped prep food and lead a small group for Discipleship University on Sept. 18. It was nice to reengage with some of the youth in person that evening. I also helped lead a Lego activity with the DU students and parents on Oct. 2.

I checked in with the youth on Sunday September 22 during the Learning Hour. Jenna Troutman and Dave Schmitter were leading the discussion, and they were doing a good job and didn't have any concerns or needs that weren't taken care of for this week or the previous start up week on September 15. On September 29 the youth participated in the Realm training during Adult Forum. Some of the younger students were getting bored and didn't have phones, so I took them downstairs for conversation, and our older youth (Anna and Maya) stayed to help members who needed assistance with their devices. I will be leading the discussion on October 6 and Jenna will be helping me.

The youth group will be helping with the Fall Festival on October 6. Many of the youth are either helping with Bingo calling or Pumpkin Painting. The 2 activities that were scheduled in September during my sabbatical did not occur as far as I know. I believe Stephen Fisher was registered to go to the Synod youth event on Sept. 8, but he told me he didn't go and the Intergenerational event that was being planned for Sept. 15 did not happen.

Over the summer, I was asked to serve on the Lutheran Center Governance Board by Pastor Liz Kocher, and I said yes. We had our first meeting Aug. 27. Our September 17 meeting was rescheduled to October 15.

On Sept. 25 I facilitated my first Toward Right Relationship Roots of Justice workshop at Messiah Lutheran in Ralston NE. I was trained as a facilitator over a year ago after participating in 2 workshops in 2022. I learned of this program through Lisa Kramme, former NE Synod Faith Formation Director when looking to host an event like what was done at our Youth Worker's Extravaganza in 2022. The Lincoln Youth Leaders hosted an event for youth at the Lutheran Center in 2022 around Indigenous People's weekend. If there is ever any interest in doing a program at First Lutheran for a wider audience, please let me know.

I attended staff meeting on Oct. 1 and have set up my annual review with Pastor Erin. Laura and I met to look over possible Christmas Pageant ideas and are waiting to meet with Judy Bailey for more conversation.

I am working on Oct. events for youth – Fall Break Service opportunity and trip to Rocca Berry Farm, and beginning to work on High School Youth registrations for the Nov. 22 - 24 Synod SHINE retreat, post cards went out yesterday, and the summer July 2025 Synod Youth trip to Nashville TN. I am encouraging middle school students to register for the Camp Carol Joy Holling Fall retreat Nov. 8 – 10 and am looking into a summer trip with a congregation in Pickrell to South Dakota in July featuring a deep bible study and adventure trips to Wind Cave and Mt. Rushmore. I am also continuing to look for Sunday Learning helpers, Mark Mesarch will be joining the team after Nov. 3.

Blessings,

Sharon Hardel

## September 2024 Council Report

FaithTrek has met 3 times now, and we are settling into a well oiled machine. I enjoyed teaching a Lego lesson over building your house on a rock versus sand, then the cherubs built their own houses and watched as the sand house fell over in a “flood”. We have teachers set up until December, but would like to work with Pastors Andrew and Erin to recruit non parental members to be teachers. I truly and passionately believe that our church survival depends on the learning and engagement of children. Don't be surprised if I ask to do a temple talk or demo a “typical lesson day” for an adult forum. I'm happy to do so.

Gratitude Sunday will be an intergenerational event with Lego blocks as well, and I have met with Pastor Erin on how to engage the community of the congregation for the month of November.



Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Graulty



Director of Worship and Music

August 2024

### Sunday Musicians

August 4                    Brian Niebuhr, Connie Kisling  
August 11 8:15            Kathy Havelcek-Cook, Sherri Cotter,  
                  10:45            The Niebuhr Quintet (Brian, Erin, Aden, Will, Xander), Summer Family Choir  
August 18 both            Jazz Team (Tony Anderson, Kristi Fisher, Bob Schoettger)  
                  8:15    Kristi Fisher, 10:45    Eliana Frank Genis,  
                  10:45    Jazz addition (Christian Paulsen, Anna Wemhoff, Martha Tanner)  
August 25 8:15            Kari Hoeft  
                  10:45            Men's Chorus, Gordon Youngquist

### Saturday Musicians

August 3, 17, 24, 31 – Christine Carman            August 10 – Masako Bacon

### Overview

**Worship in Activity Center:** Last two weeks of August, worship services were held in Activity Center due to the air handling fan motor issues (no cold air) in sanctuary. By Grace of God and works of Steve Lenzen, Doug Lind-Olson, and Janis Strautkalns's, the transition of setting up worship elements in Activity Center went smoothly.

**Transitioning from Summer to Fall:** It is always fun to have special summer music groups and college returners during summer months. We sent off new college students away and started working with new youth. Especially we are so grateful that Aden, Will, & Xander Niebuhr blessed us with their musical offering for many years. We will miss all those college musicians until next holidays, but also are excited about new young people coming up to share their gifts. Adult Choir kicked off their regular year on August 28 with a great turn out with welcoming a few new members.

**Worship Assistants** – As always, it is hard to fill the worship assistant roles. Thank you to those who served in multiple roles and times. Some people expressed their appreciation to have readers and the processional back in fall.

We continue to seek for the 10:45 Head Usher/Coordinator.

Respectfully submitted,

Masako Bacon

*soli deo gloria*

# COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

September 2024

by Kathleen Simley, Communications Director

## SPECIAL AND COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Here's a snapshot of my special and collaborative activities for September:

- Continued collaborating with the Stewardship Committee by interviewing and filming Anna Wemhoff, Fred Ohles, the Brandon and Shanon Meyer family and Tom and Amy Thorpe. I published three videos featuring these individuals sharing personal stories about how their lives have been positively influenced by community, connection and grace - aligning with our Stewardship campaign theme, "Cultivating Love through Community, Connection, and Grace." The videos were broadcast on Sunday mornings in the Commons, featured in the weekly e-newsletter and shared across social media platforms. Additionally, I updated the Stewardship webpage weekly, providing insights into our progress toward the \$750,000 pledging goal.
- Participated in meetings with the Fall Festival Planning Team as we prepared for the event on Sunday, October 6, from Noon to 3:00 PM. Throughout the month, I focused on designing, publishing and sharing promotional materials for the festival. This included creating flyers for 900 students at Morley and Pyrtle Elementary Schools, families from Las Abejitas, local senior living centers, Lincoln ELCA churches, the UNL Lutheran Student Center and attendees at the First Friday Jazz concert on October 4. Additionally, an article was published in the Lincoln Journal Star's Neighborhood Extra edition on September 28. I also contributed an article to an e-newsletter and a Facebook post through Macaroni Kid, an online resource for local family activities. Promotion efforts extended to First Lutheran resources, including social media, e-newsletters, the church website, TV slides, First Glance bulletin inserts and a mailed postcard to all members. I personally reached out to the Nuer community with invitations as well. Beyond promotion, I took the lead in recruiting festival volunteers. We have assembled an incredible team dedicated to planning this year's festival, with each member playing a vital role in what's sure to be a welcoming and enjoyable experience for everyone!

## MY WEEKLY TASKS

- First Glance Insert
- First Things First E-Newsletter
- FaithTrek E-Newsletter
- Sunday Worship Livestream
- TV Slides
- Facebook, Instagram and News posts (daily)
- Publish Sermon Online
- Publish Adult Forum Session Online
- Readers for Sunday Worship

## MY MONTHLY TASKS

- Digital Sign
- Website Updates
- First Friday Jazz Concert
- First Look E-Newsletter

# COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

September 2024

by Kathleen Simley, Communications Director

## SPECIAL AND COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS (CONT)

- Promoted the first concert of the 13th season of First Friday Jazz that begins on October 4 with social media posts and a paid ad.
- Set up the online sign-up for worship assistant volunteers for October, November and December and successfully recruited readers for the worship services during this period.
- Provided support for Realm and assisted members in activating and setting up their personal accounts on three Sunday mornings. A special thank you to Judy Bailey and Lyle Petersen for their invaluable help. Additionally, I led an orientation session on Realm for members on September 29 during the 9:30 AM learning hour. I will continue to explore ways to encourage members to join Realm and offer educational opportunities on how to navigate it. By the way, have you activated and set up your Realm account yet?

## QUARTERLY REPORT: INSIGHTS AND THOUGHTS

I am including a quarterly report of our communication reach during the third quarter (July-September).

Here are a few highlights of what you will find within the report:

- Our website traffic and reach increased from the previous quarter.
- Our social media reach showed a decrease from the previous quarter; however, it aligns more closely with our historical performance during the third quarter or summer months. We tend to see a drop of engagement with social media during this time frame.
- Our social media following showed a slight increase from the previous quarter.
- Our 67% average open rate for First Things First continues to be impressive when compared to the national average open rate of 43% for faith-based emails.

It continues to be a challenge generating valuable data from Facebook on our livestream viewership and reach. The best information I am able to gather is that the number of replays of the recorded worship services ranged from 257-743 with an average viewing time of almost 3 minutes from July through September.

# **COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY**

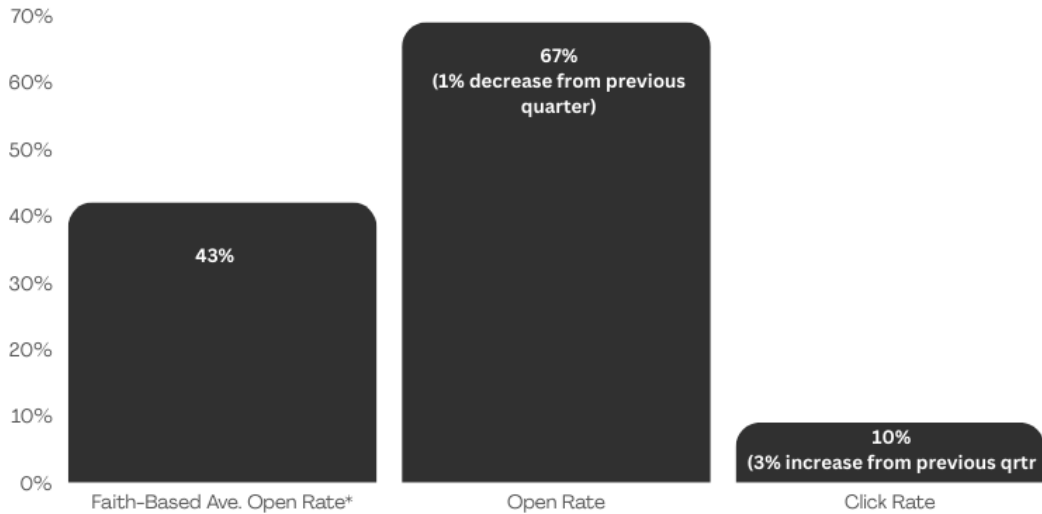
**September 2024**

**by Kathleen Simley, Communications Director**

## **PERSONAL UPDATE**

I will be unavailable most Sunday mornings in October through November 3, as my daughter, Rebecca, is preparing for her wedding on November 2. In the lead-up to the big day, numerous pre-wedding plans and parties will occupy my weekends. Additionally, I will be taking time off from October 28 to November 1 to welcome out-of-state and international guests. However, taking time off does not equate to stepping away from work entirely; I still need to fulfill my weekly commitments. The real challenge lies in completing a week's worth of work ahead of time, allowing me to enjoy my time off without stress. I will return to the office on Monday, November 4.

# FIRST THINGS FIRST WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER OPEN RATE

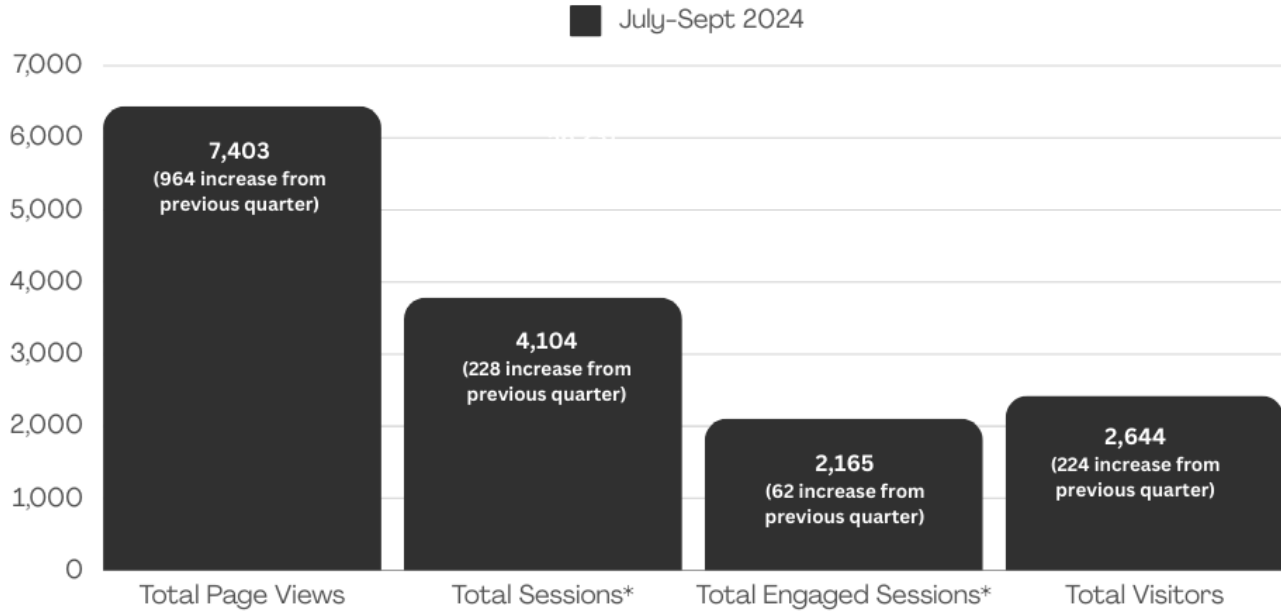


Remarkably, while our open rate dropped 1% this quarter compared to the last we still maintain a very high open rate for First Things First, when compared to the national average open rate for faith-based emails! We gained seven new subscribers for a total of 545. The click rate for an email measures the contacts who received the email and then clicked on any link in the email. This is an important number. It shows us how interested or engaged our contacts are. We maintained a very high average click rate of 10% this quarter compared to the national average of 2.28%.

When consolidating all emails sent during this period, encompassing FaithTrek Weekly Blast (for parents of 3-year-olds to 5th grade), First Look (for middle and high school parents) and death notices we upheld an outstanding 69% overall open rate.

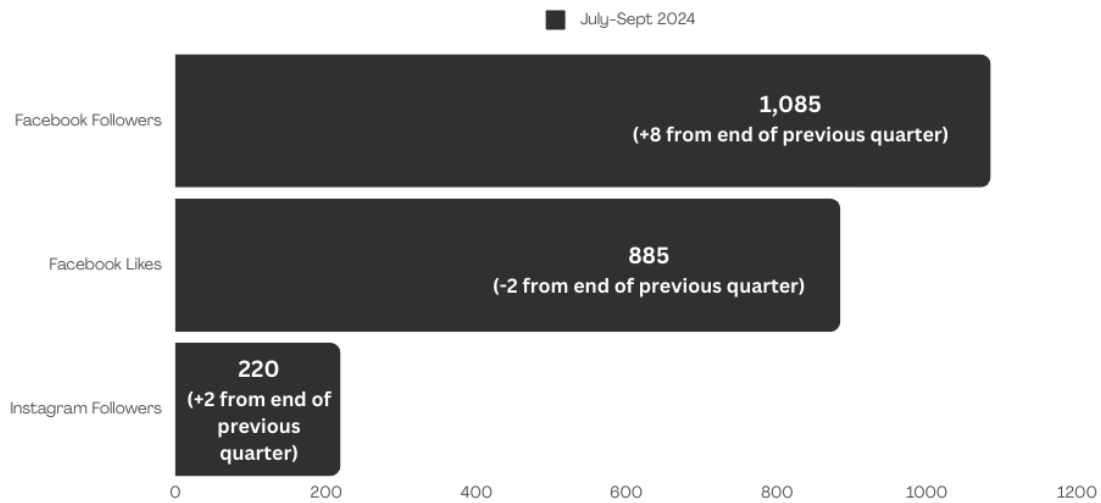
\*According to a report published June 2024 by Constant Contact

# WEBSITE TRAFFIC



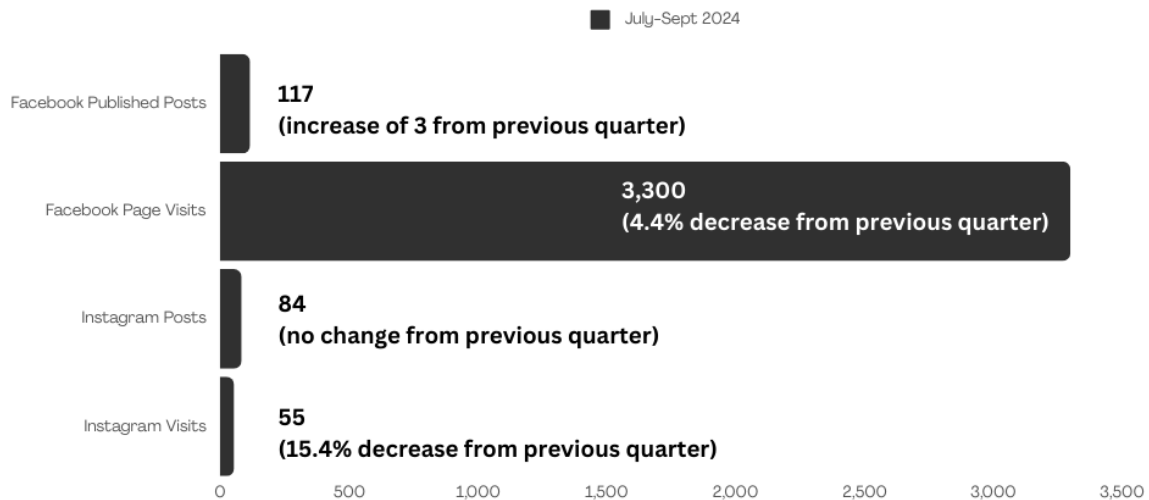
\*A session is tracked as a session whenever a user first lands on our site. An engaged session is a session that lasts longer than 10 seconds or has at least 2 pageviews or screenviews. It's worth noting that we had a significant increase in our website traffic this quarter compared to the previous. of the 2,644 visitors to our website, 2,535 of them were new visitors. Notably, the top three pages for viewership continue to be the same as last quarter - Home Page, Calendar and About Us.

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING



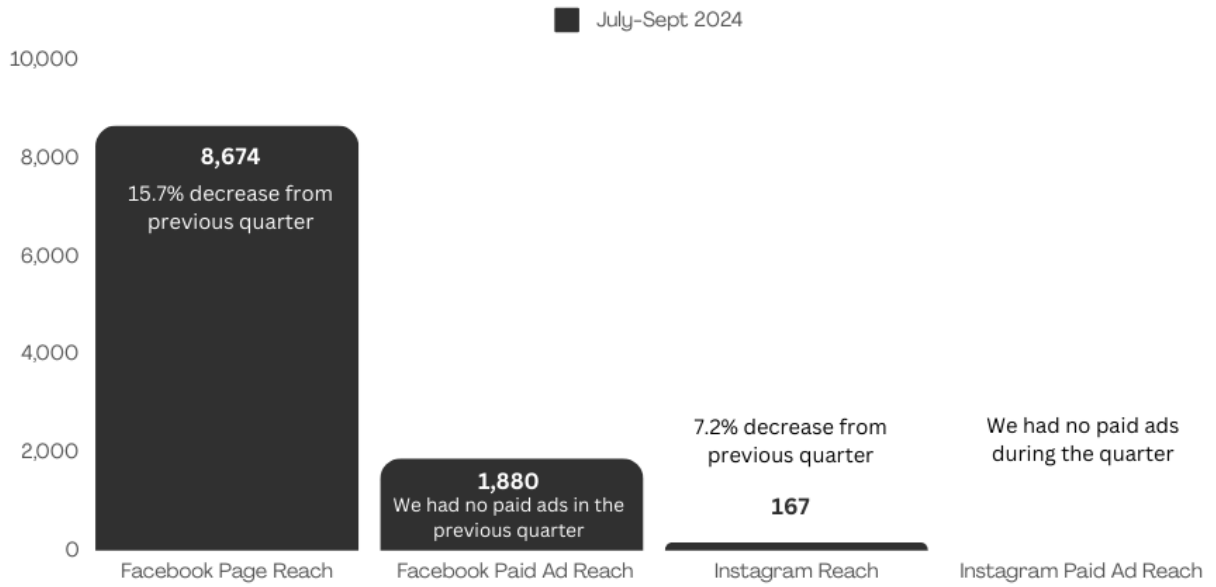
We continue to maintain a steady following of our social media pages without additional paid promotion. However, one thing to note is that of the 8,674 people reached with our Facebook content this quarter, 7,929 of them were non-followers. This means we have a lot of people following our page without being an “official” follower.

## SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT



- Facebook post with highest reach - Fall Festival, published September 18
- Facebook post with highest reactions - Fall Festival, published September 18
- Facebook post with most comments - 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering Memories, published July 15
- Instagram post with highest reach - Pastor Heidi Youngquist's Installation, published August 19
- Instagram post with highest reactions - Pastor Heidi Youngquist's Installation, published August 19 and the departure of our high school youth to the ELCA Gathering, published July 15

# SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



While this quarter's reach dropped compared to the previous quarter, it aligns more closely with our historical performance during the third quarter or summer months. We tend to see a drop of engagement with social media during this time frame. The paid ad reach is from boosting the fall festival post and is as of September 30. This reach will continue to grow as the ad runs to October 6.



**First Lutheran Church  
Property Committee Minutes September 24, 2024**

Attending: Chair Norman Kempf, Rod Johnson, Cole Troutman, Les Carlson, Steve Lenzen, Bob Batterman, Janis Strautkalns, Steve Doolittle, Brandon Wiebelhaus, Richard Draper

Meeting time: 7:00 PM

Minute taker: Les

Approved minutes of the August PC meeting.

Agenda:

1. Steve L said there may be additional work on the parking lot late this week.
2. There was considerable discussion on the HVAC system repairs and costs. The new HVAC system motor is installed and operating as expected. Bearings in the old motor are being replaced and if needed in the future, the repaired motor will be used as a substitute. Steve L volunteered to investigate whether all sensors in the HVAC system are required which might result in some reduced HVAC costs. Questions were raised regarding funding for the HVAC repairs. Several PC members objected to part of the funding for these repairs being allocated from the maintenance reserve.
3. Brandon reported that he has been in contact with roofers regarding roof leak. There was discussion on the broken tiles on the North side of FLC, no action will be taken at present. Steve L agreed to a request from Bob to compile a list of bullet points identifying what delays in settling the ongoing lawsuit are costing FLC regarding roof repairs that have not yet been initiated or completed because the lawsuit is not yet resolved.
4. Steve L said Fall festival planning is going well. Steve L noted aspects of the festival where PC help could be used such as tent set-up which could occur on the Saturday before the festival.
5. Cole conveyed Pastor Andrew's request for grass on the now closed NW parking lot gate area.

Prayer: October Brandon W.

Note taker: Les