

# FIRST Impressions

## What's INSIDE

A Publication of First Lutheran Church · Birmingham, AL

- 1 Pastor's Letter
- 1 Community Events
- 1 Church Calendar Link
- 2 Called to Serve & Celebrate
- 3 From the President
- 3 LWML News
- 4 Christ Care Ministry
- 4 Evening Prayer
- 4 Joy of the Lord
- 4 Called to Serve & Celebrate
- 5 Worship Ministry



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Rev. Thomas Lampella, Pastor

[View our Church Calendar](#)



## Pastor's Pen March Madness

*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* -- Philippians 3:14

In this state, there is a time of the year when normal life seems to stop. Nearly everything is put on hold. Saturdays become centered around one thing . . . SEC Football. It is nearly impossible to survive any day of the week without hearing about Alabama or Auburn Football.

However, there is another season. It is called basketball season. And as we approach March, whether we are interested or not, there will be advertisements and discussion of this thing called "March Madness." In fact, they have already begun. This may not be such a big

deal in Alabama. But, as I write, Tennessee is ranked #1 and Kentucky is ranked #5. I'll tell you it is a big deal there.

I write this, not to get you interested in Men's NCAA Basketball, but as I watched a promo advertising the event, I got to wondering about the name. After some research, I found that the term came about because of the frantic nature of the tournament. If you lose only one game, you are out. There is no chance to move on. No more chance to move toward the goal for the prize.



*Continued on page 2*

## Community Events

- 2/28 - 3/3: *Annie Jr.*, Virginia Samford Theatre
- 3/1-2: ASO Presents *The Revolutionary: Beethoven's Third Symphony*, Alys Stephens Center
- 3/1-3: Birmingham Ballet: *Swan Lake*, Samford University Wright Center
- 3/1-3: Cottontail's Village Arts, Crafts & Gift Show, BJCC
- 3/8-10: Alabama Ballet: *The Sleeping Beauty*, BJCC
- 3/21: Kacey Musgraves in concert, Alabama Theatre
- 3/26: Jackson Browne in concert, Alabama Theatre
- 3/28- 4/7: *Man of La Mancha*, Virginia Samford Theatre



*(Pastor's Pen...cont'd from p. 1)*

Romans 6:23 comes to my mind. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The first half of the verse reminds me of the panic or desperation of March Madness. One loss and the team is out. One sin and you deserve eternal death. The thought stirs up anxiety.

Satan has used this heightened level of concern to bring accusation, guilt, fear, frustration and a sense of defeat into our mind. He attacks us daily with these thoughts. I've heard even strong, mature believers express the frustration of this constant attack on their minds and hearts. It can cause us to doubt God's promises. We can feel so unworthy. Making it through challenge after challenge seems impossible. And, guess what! It is.

Yet, our Heavenly Father reminds each of us constantly through the Word and Spirit that He still unconditionally loves us and keeps His promises. His biggest promise is eternal life in Jesus.

He calls us out of desperation and despair to joy and peace. Even in the middle of March Madness we can know with certainty that Jesus has attained the goal on our behalf. He pressed on. He gained victory over the grave. This Lenten and Easter Season we will "Behold the Man" that has won for us "the prize."

God Be Praised!  
Pastor Tommy

## Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry Why I Love Sunday School

**God's Will is being Done...**we have a desire to see God's will accomplished in our lives and the lives of others.

**God's Love is being Shared...**and our part is to show and share it with our congregation.

**God's Word is Studied and Taught...**we study it so as to follow it in our daily walk.

**God's Work is being Done...**time, talent, treasure.

**The Lord's Day is being Observed...**we gather to keep the day holy.

**God's People are Assembled...**our desires are for the blessings of fellowship and friendship.

Sunday School fellowship is a gift from God that renews our faith, uplifts us, and strengthens us. It is spiritually healthy and one could argue, spiritually essential! We all need other believers to share our joys and challenges, to pray for one another and yes, even a shoulder to cry on if needed.

In Christ,  
Lorenza Robinson  
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry Coordinator



## A Note from the President

*“So the last will be first, and the first will be last: for many are called but few are chosen.”*

-Matthew 20:16.

No one is so high or can rise so high that one need not fear that they could be made the lowest. On the other hand, no one has fallen so low that there is no hope of their becoming the highest, for by this all merit is reduced to nothing and God 's mercy alone is praised. It is said "...that the last shall be first and the first last".

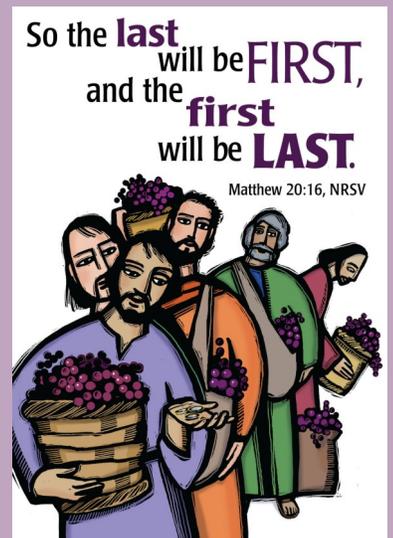
In saying, "The first shall be last" God takes away all of our pride.

In saying, "The last shall be first" God takes from us all despair.

We should all pray for God's strength to defeat pride that would prevent us from seeing and enjoying the true gifts of those around us and the value that it brings to our lives.

In Christ,

Stan Weir  
Congregational President



## LWML News

### Painting the Planet Purple

Now is the time to make your plans to attend the 38th Biennial LWML Convention in Mobile, Alabama, June 20-23, 2019. Join your LWML sisters "In Praise to the Lord," the convention theme based on 1 Chronicles 16:23-24a. Attendees will rejoice in the convention goal, "Led by God's power, as we praise and proclaim the Lord among all nations." Register to attend or volunteer at <http://www.lwml.org> or <http://www.gulfstateslwml.org>.

Zone 2 LWML, "Women of Vision" are having a Christian Growth Workshop here at First Lutheran Church on Saturday, April 6, 2019 from 8:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Registration fee: \$6.00

Please keep both events in your prayers. Hope to see you there.

Blessings,  
Sheree McGraw, President  
First Lutheran Church LWML



## Christ Care Ministry Infrequent Words: “Made Manifest”

*“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*  
- John 3:21 (KJV)

*Made manifest ... Manifest is a word we seldom use nowadays. It means “clear,” “evident,” and “plain to see.” As used in the context of John 3:16-21 and mainly in verse 21, the word merely refers to the deeds of the Christian. The Christian wants it *manifest*, evident, that his or her good works are done by God, not themselves. That’s why the Christian comes to the Light - Jesus. Light helps to make things clear, evident, and plain to see.*

Curiously, that Light itself is often described in the Bible as made manifest: *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live like Him”* (1 John 4:9). *“You know that He was manifested [‘appeared’ in the NIV and ESV] to take away our sins* (1John 3:5). *In Colossians Paul describes God’s plan of salvation as a “mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest [disclosed] to His saints”* (Col. 1:26). *Peter describes Jesus as “foreordained before the foundation of the world, but now is made manifest [revealed] in these last times to you”* (1 Pet. 1:20). *Quoting Isai-*

*ah, Paul says of the Messiah that He “was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me [that did not seek Me]”* (Rom. 10:20). *In his letter to Titus, Paul further enlightens us of the medium through which Jesus is made manifest, namely preaching* (Titus 1:3).

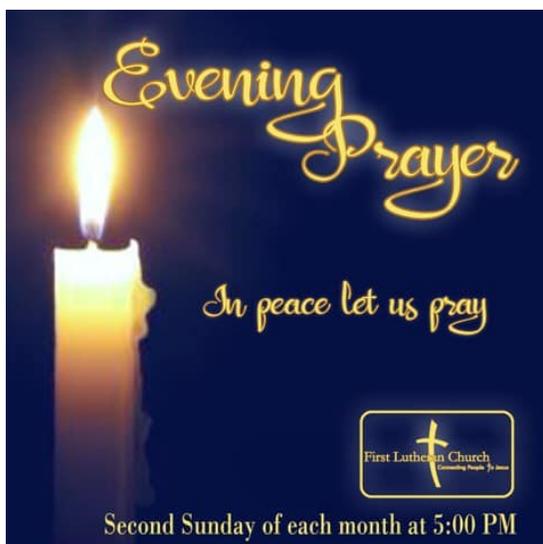
*Manifest* - it may be an infrequent word in contemporary usage and it may be nothing more than a descriptive word in our text. But it is definitely an entrée to a heap of Gospel elsewhere in the Bible.

“How can God use me in making His love for those around us plain to see?” you may ask. Well, a fresh start would be inviting someone to a one of our weekly Bible studies, or a Sunday morning worship service, or a monthly Evening Prayer service, or the coming midweek Lenten services. The opportunities are indeed there. My prayer is that God graciously uses each one of you in manifesting His love to others in Jesus Christ our Lord.

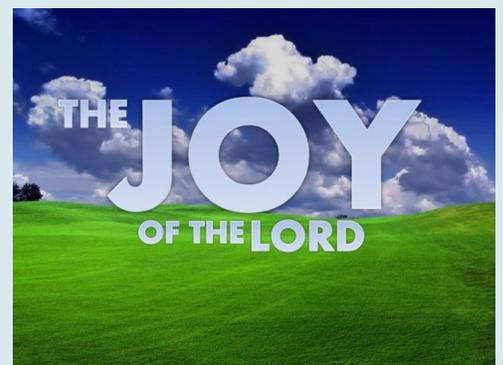
God’s peace,

Pastor Tom  
Christ Care Ministry

*Paraphrased and taken from Gospel Handles by Francis C. Rosow, © 2001 by CPH, St. Louis, MO*



Sometimes we are so busy adding up our troubles that we forget to count our blessings.



## Worship Ministry Justified

Have we done anything to be awarded justification before God our Father the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of all things that exist? The answer would be emphatically no. Why? Because of our sins and enmity (hostility) against a loving Father that created us. It goes without question that we are worldly people that are disobedient, untrustworthy, ungodly enemies of God just as Adam and Eve, who were undeserving of God’s love and justification because of their disobedience. The Apostle Paul says, “... while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” He tells us that Jesus was delivered up for our transgressions and raised for our justification. In fact, to be justified means “to be deemed right” and it signifies in the New Testament “to show to be right” or “to be declared righteous” by man concerning God. It also means concerning God, who is declared to be righteous before Him on certain conditions made by Him. Ideally, the complete fulfillment of the Law of God would provide a basis for justification in His sight. However, no such case has occurred in mankind and therefore no one can be justified on this basis.

It is sin that breeds the quarrel between God and man, it creates not only a strangeness, but hostility, and our Holy and Righteous God cannot in honor be at peace with a sinner while he continues under the guilt of

sin. Justification takes away our guilt and makes peace with God and it is the kindness and goodwill of God to us that immediately upon removing the obstacle of sin that peace is made. It is a fact that Christ died for sinners. Not only are we useless, but we are guilty and hostile. There would be no loss if we perish, but such whose destruction would have a great result to the glory of God’s justice. Nevertheless, God commended His love and magnified it and made it glorious. He discharged us from our guilt; we stand in judgement not as convicted criminals, but with our dignity and honor restored and secured.

The precious benefits and privileges which flow from justification should inspire us to be persistent to make sure to ourselves that we are justified and take the comfort it gives, and to do the duty it calls from us all. It is the precious stream of Christ’s blood that these privileges come flowing to us.

Charles Craig  
Worship Ministry Coordinator

## Lenten Midweek Schedule

	<b>Meal</b>	<b>Worship</b>
March 6	No Meal (Ash Wednesday)	6:00 p.m. - “A God Who Hungers”
March 13	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m. - “A God Who Thirsts”
March 20	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m. - “A God Exposed”
March 27	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m. - “A God Who Prays”
April 3	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m. - “A God Beaten”
April 10	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m. - “A God With a Mother”



Look for our Holy Week and Easter schedules in the next newsletter.