

FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church · Birmingham, AL

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Rev. Thomas Lampella, Pastor

[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen Is There a Limit?

When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. - Luke 4:40

I've heard a lot of talk lately revolving around how quickly this summer flew by. Yes . . . you are reading the September *First Impressions*. I don't know about you, but there were a lot of things I hoped to get done and a lot of things that I hoped to experience, and I never got the chance. It seemed like a lot of stuff got crowded out. Some of what it was important stuff. And I have to confess, some of the stuff that I let crowd out the important stuff was really not so important.

At this point, families with school age children or grandchildren are faced with the beginning school year. That

means carpooling, sports practices and games, band practice, supervising homework, and the list goes on. For others, there is the beginning of NCAA and NFL football. It does take time to watch all of time to watch all those Saturday and Sunday games. Then there is the Church. It seems like every congregation that I know of starts up its new program year with all kinds of important activities accompanied by an expectation that you will be there for each one of them.

I was reading about an event from the life of Jesus recorded in Luke 4:40-44. Maybe it was that all of the expectations of the season seemed to be

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Community Events

- 9/6: Three Dog Night, Lyric Theatre
- 9/7-8: Artwalk, Downtown Loft District
- 9/7: Steven Curtis Chapman, Lyric Theater
- 9/13-30: *Hello Dolly*, Virginia Samford Theatre
- 9/15: Five Points Market, various merchants
- 9/16: Trucks by the Tracks—Food Truck Festival, Railroad Park
- 9/22: Fall Fair, First Lutheran Church



(cont'd from pg. 1)

crowding in on my life, but whatever the reason, it read completely different to me. Let me explain.

I never saw before that the people brought the people brought *ALL* who had various kinds of sickness. It jumped out to me that this simple sentence was saying that they cleaned out every corner of sickness in their community and brought *EVERYONE* affected to Jesus. There was nobody that was overlooked or left. They were all brought to Jesus. It looks like they were on a mission. I could speak volumes on this, but that is not the part that amazed me. The next part of the sentence says that he laid his hands on *EACH ONE* and healed them. This is saying that he wiped out *ALL* of the sickness in the community. Not only that, he cast out the demons that were there. Again, I could go on about this, but this is not the amazing part either.

Now, listen to the next part. "At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place." He was going to rest, refresh, and spend time with His Father as He often did. Then it goes on to say that the people from the town came out to find Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them. That is the part that startled me. I wondered what Jesus said to those who reproached Him for going to bed after the end of a day like that.

At this point, Jesus revealed His true mission. He said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." It is evident that He was clear within Himself. He had a mission, He had priorities, He would not be taken off track.

For me, it spoke of the importance of doing my homework. It is a great time of year to revisit my personal mission and my priorities. I want to encourage you to settle spiritual battle that takes place when there are multiple pulls on your resources of time, treasure and talents. Remind yourself that there really are limits to your capacity. Following this example and other from the life of Jesus, we can see His affirmation of that reality.

Commit yourself to align yourself with God's priorities for your life. I guarantee it will free you to walk in peace. You will experience a sense of freedom to serve Him and His kingdom.

God Be Praised!
Pastor Tommy



Facilities News Fall Work Fellowship

We will have a Fall Work Fellowship at First Lutheran Church in October. (A date will be set to try to avoid Auburn, Alabama, Vanderbilt and Alabama A&M football games) This will be for general clean up for the Church inside and out to get ready for the Advent season and, in general, just to tidy up where it is needed. The date being considered is October 6 but will be determined by Pastor and the staff.

Once staff decides which day is most appropriate, an announcement will be made in Church in ample time to get prepared for the work to be done. We will prepare a general "To Do" list and place it on the Bulletin Board outside the Sacristy.

This event is an opportunity to spend quality time with one another and to get the church looking good.

Lunch will be provided for all who attend.

Stan Weir,
Facilities Ministry Coordinator

Joy of the Lord

It's the little things that determine the big things.

"Thou has been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord..."
- Matthew 25:21b (KJV)

Christ Care Ministry Looking Up

“MY VOICE YOU SHALL HEAR IN THE MORNING, O LORD; IN THE MORNING WILL I DIRECT MY PRAYER UNTO THEE, AND WILL LOOK UP.” - PSALM 5:3 (KJV)

Are you a morning person? You know, the “top of the morning early bird,” grabbing the first earthworm of the day. Or ... are you at the other end of the spectrum? Yes, the one who needs an 8-mule team just to drag you to the coffee pot where you stand still until the final drop of that black-as-oil concoction slides down the back of your throat and pries your eyes open slowly. I would like to think that I fall somewhere in-between, truth being told, I’m pretty close to an 8 mule team kind of guy ... especially as the days pass a lot quicker now.

But oh, I do enjoy my morning coffee along with mild mornings out on the deck swing where I can have morning devotion time with the Father while sipping that fresh cup of joe. A quiet environment alone with God and his Word ... well, let’s just say it doesn’t get any better than that.

Reading and contemplating upon God’s Word in the silence of one’s soul where God is all around you, where His Holy Spirit does not ever leave you alone is indeed an awesome thing. I remember one individual talking about those quiet moments as ones where the Holy Spirit brings you into an “Aha” moment(s). The “Aha” moments are those moments of enlightenments where you see God’s great love for you. His greatest love for you is this ... God Himself came to this world as a small baby (incarnate) and that child Jesus, His Son, grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him and this God-man died for each of us on the cross ... while we were still sinners. This is our Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

So beloved, in the mornings and all through the day, call out to God in prayer and “Look Up!” Blessings and miracles are at hand. God is indeed near. Peace.

Pastor Tom Lackey, Christ Care Minister

Worship Ministry Whose Sacrifice Is It?

OUR relationship with God requires sacrifice and forgiveness, but it is not our sacrifice. We could not and would not give up a thing for God. Sin goes far too deep in us. It has twisted us all out of shape, making us hardly recognizable to the one who made us. We push God away, hiding behind excuses of being too busy to find time for him or of not being inspired by our church or of not having an answer to some question about the meaning of suffering or—you name it; the variations are limitless.

Behind these excuses we hide our hostility toward God. We hide it even from ourselves. We are constitutionally incapable of sacrificing ourselves for the real God; our

nature will not let us forgive him. We can forgive others, conditionally, because they are weak like us. We cannot so easily forgive God for being perfect, for knowing everything, for being above us, for being our maker. We cannot easily accept absolute, eternal dependence. It is the ultimate insult to our pride.

Consequently, our “sacrifices” for God easily become manifestations of our sin, not our love for him. We use them as a bargaining weapon: “If I do this for you, God, will you do this for me?” We try to use these sacrifices to control his behavior and bring him down to our level. But this will never lead us to deeper intimacy with God.

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(Worship Ministry—cont'd from pg. 4)

If we are to know him, we must know him as he is: our perfect, all-knowing God who sacrificed himself for us when we were helpless. He gave up, not just his glory to become a man, but his own life - the just for the unjust, the deserving for the undeserving. His initiative broke the barrier. Ours not only could not, it would not ...

God placed on Jesus the sin of the world: our rejection of God ... He absorbed our full rejection, sacrificing his life to it. When anger was absorbed, it lost its power. Then we could begin anew, forgiven by him.

- By Tim Stafford, Christianity Today Magazine

Charles Craig, Worship Ministry Coordinator

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry 1 Samuel 3:1-21 - A Call to Serve

One of the most difficult theological concepts to comprehend, I believe, is that of call—that the Lord calls us to a specific vocation. Most Christians can accept the idea that pastors and other church professionals have received some sort of a call—why otherwise would they willingly choose such a job. Yet, few Christians understand that the Holy Spirit moves in their lives in a similar way to pastors and calls them as well.

God called Samuel and Samuel responded in faith, **“Speak Lord for your servant is listening.”** It is to a rebellious, faithless, selfish, unjust people that Samuel is called to serve. Samuel is to speak God’s word to the people, to call them to faith and to a renewed relationship with God. If the truth be told, Samuel was called into a situation that isn’t that different from the one we are in. In an increasingly secular society, fewer and fewer people seek to live in a relationship with God. Most people follow after their own gods, and their world revolves around themselves. The time in history and the geographical location may be different, but the people are the same.

Every one of us has received a call at the time of our baptism. The Lord has called us by name and proclaimed that we are his son or daughter and that he is well pleased with us. We have been adopted into God’s family, and called to be followers—disciples—of Jesus Christ.

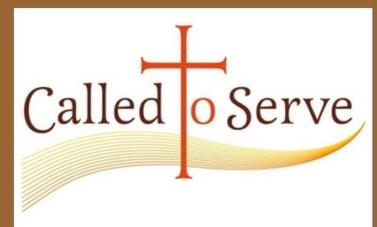
The Lord also has a specific call for us. God calls some into the ministry. The Spirit moves in the lives of others and calls them to be teachers, firefighters, financial counselors—and the whole gamut of vocations. Hearing our call and answering it gives us a sense of identity and a sense of purpose.

So, what is your call? Have you heard God’s calling to you? Have you answered the call and know that you are where God wants you to be, doing what God wants you to do, and that it is no coincidence that you are at this time and place?

Our nation and our world need to hear the word of the Lord. The only way that is going to happen is through our actions and deeds. We have a call. Let us be true to that call and honor the Lord in our lives.

Blessings,
Lorenza Robinson
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry Coordinator

*Message contributed by
Rev. Dr. Kevin Ruffcom,
Desert Streams Lutheran
Church, Surprise, AZ*



LWML News

Our **Fall Fair**, September 21st at 9 am--1 pm, features the LWML ladies and Highland Park neighbors' sale of hand-made crafts. This event raises money for the special projects selected by our LWML. Each year the members of First Lutheran Church's Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) select three projects for their mission outreach. One is an international mission, another is a national, and the third is a local charity.

Our international charity is a **Lutheran World Relief (LWR)** project to assist Niger. LWR works to break the cycle of poverty by improving agricultural production and investing in sustainable land use. LWR uses a climate smart agricultural approach in Niger to promote environmentally sound practices with improved cultivation methods and crop varieties.

LWR also promotes animal husbandry as an important means to bolster the productive capacity of rural families in Niger. With a focus on women--often the most vulnerable of the population in times of crisis—LWR provides breeder goats and training for their reproduction and care. For more information visit: <https://lwr.org/where-we-work/niger>

Everyone will recognize this national charity, **St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital** located in Memphis, Tennessee. The mission of St. Jude's is to advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment. Consistent with the vision of founder Danny Thomas, no child is denied treatment based on race, religion or a family's ability to pay. Visit <https://www.sjm.com>

Locally, so many people in our state benefit from the **American Cancer Society Joe Lee Griffin Hope Lodge** in Birmingham that we felt this charity touches many people. Hope Lodge offers peace and comfort to families and their loved ones who are receiving medical treatment in Birmingham. The Hope Lodge staff and volunteers are committed to providing a nurturing home away from home for their guests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Hope Lodge is less than a mile away from our church and close to all of the major medical centers in Birmingham. The Lodge has 33 private guest rooms with bathrooms, and fully equipped community kitchens for food storage and preparation. Patients and their families enjoy the gathering areas, great rooms, and dining rooms. Even the laundry rooms are stocked with supplies. Every effort is made to provide a home-like setting where families and patients may share and support each other while receiving treatment. Visit their website at <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/support-programs-and-services/patient-lodging/hope-lodge/birmingham/about-our-facility.html>

We are asking your help to support these mission projects by donating craft items, cookies, baked goods or any handmade gifts to sell at this year's event. Neighborhood craftsmen may participate by renting a table for \$15 to sell their crafts. The \$15 fee goes to our selected charities and their sales go to their pockets. Please contact June Weir for additional information at junerweir@gmail.com.

Don't forget to shop the Fall Fair—there will be lots of Christmas items and yummy baked goods available! [CLICK HERE for more information.](#)



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22,
9 AM - 1 PM**

Crafts | Christmas Decorations | Gift Items

Proceeds Benefiting Lutheran World Relief,
St. Jude Children's Hospital, American Cancer Society
Joe Lee Griffin Hope Lodge

www.firstlutheranbham.org