

FIRST Impressions

What's INSIDE

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- 1 Pastor's Pen
- 1 Church Calendar Link
- 1 Local Events
- 3 Serve & Celebrate Ministry
- 4 Worship Ministry
- 5 Christ Care Ministry
- 6 Call Committee Update
- 6 Joy of the Lord
- 7 LWML News
- 8 Birthdays & Anniversaries
- 8 August Worship Team



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Pastor's Pen The Gift of Simplicity

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Mark 10:15)

This time of year, as a new school year begins, many are focused on the task of teaching children. Jesus however reminds us how important it is to learn from children.

Jesus used the occasion of people bringing little children to him as an opportunity to give his followers a needed lesson. The lesson concerned the importance of right attitude in receiving the kingdom of God. Jesus told them

Continued on page 2

Local Events

Saturday Mornings: The Market at Pepper Place; www.pepperplacemarket.com

7/22 through 8/7: Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*, Red Mountain Theatre; www.redmountaintheatre.org

8/5: Art on the Rocks, Birmingham Museum of Art; www.artsbma.org

8/12: Books, Bands & Brews, Avondale Brewing Company; www.booksbandsbrews.swell.gives

8/19-21: Jurassic Quest, BJCC; www.jurassicquest.com

8/22-28: Sidewalk Film Festival, various downtown venues; www.sidewalkfest.com

8/27: Taste of 4th Avenue Jazz Festival, Historic 4th Avenue Business District; www.4thavenuejazz.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

that “whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” For any parent or teacher of young children it is clear that the Lord was thinking of their marvelous capacity for wonder and their receptivity for listening and learning. The psalmist expressed these same thoughts in writing about God’s glory above the heavens being chanted “by the mouths of babes and infants” (Ps 8:2)

How wonderful is this gift of simplicity and spontaneity that we see in some children! How blessed are those adults who have been able to maintain this childlike quality of life! I have come to discover that my hobby as a bird watcher has aided my life long faith learning in the same way. Bird watching requires you to be totally involved. Listening and looking in silence as you gather as much information as you can about the subject you are focused on for as long as you are allowed. Size, beak, wing bars, tail, coloration, feet, location of markings, habitat, song, call, eyes, and flight pattern. What is familiar and what have you never noticed before. I use the same approach with the word of God.

Many of us allow our busy lives and the cares of the world to so crowd our lives that we lose this childlike simplicity. The story in Scripture makes it clear that in this respect the disciples had lost their simplicity. Preoccupied with their own agendas, preconceptions, egos, and intellect, they considered the children to be an interruption to an important theological discussion they were having with Jesus. That is why our Lord was indignant with their insensitivity to the needs of the children and the attitude with which they approached him. “Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it”

Our Father, we pray that the simplicity of Jesus would be the hallmark of our lives. May our knowledge and intellect never be barriers to our continuing growth in our faith and life with him. Amen

In His Peace,
Pastor Schultz



Worship with us Sundays at 10:15 a.m. in person or via Facebook or YouTube.

Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry Faith is the Key - Hebrews 11:1



Now, Faith is like seeing it rain on a cloudy day,
in spite of the stormy weather,
there always comes a beautiful sunny day.

But when my faith was weak, I asked God
“Is there more to life than just to struggle then die?”
He said,

“I shall surely bless those who are willing to try!”

Then I asked, “What does that mean?”

He said,

“Keep me first and thou shall conquer they dream.”

“What must I do?”

“Those who endure to end are just a few!”

He continued:

“Man cannot possibly understand how much I care,

In the midst of hardship and grief,

Am always there.”

Finally he said,

“No matter how difficult life gets – Faith is the Key . . .

You shall overcome If you keep believing in Me!”

- Author Unknown

Blessings,

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry

Worship Ministry

Spiritual Blessings in Christ Jesus – Ephesians 1:3-14

Reading Paul's epistle to the Ephesians and listening to the words that the Father is saying through Paul, we hear the blessings that we are to receive for those belonging to our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." We are also blessed with earthly blessings. Paul tells us that we were chosen before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Our Lord predestined us to be adoptions as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the pleasures of His will. He chose us for the purpose of predetermining our destiny to make us His children. He graced us. To the praise of the glory of His grace, He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved, who is Christ. Grace, that undeserved favor, unearned blessings, and unmerited kindness...grace is giving us something we do not deserve at all. Our Lord redeemed us. In Him we have redemption through His blood. We were slaves to sin, to death, to fallen flesh and a to hell. We were hopeless with minds that could never know God, and with hearts that could never seek His righteousness. Our Lord Jesus took on human form, came into the world, died on a cross, poured out His blood as a sacrifice for our sin. He paid the price to buy us back.

Another spiritual blessing is that of an inheritance which we have obtained in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, being a gift of a Father to His children. Furthermore, Paul tells us that in Jesus Christ, we after listening to message of the truth, the gospel of our salvation, having believed, we are sealed in Him with the promised Holy Spirit given as a guarantee of our inheritance looking forward to the redemption of God's own possession – that's you and me – to the praise of His glory. When we think about our salvation and spiritual blessings, there is only one direction that is toward God.

In His Peace,
Charles Craig
Worship Ministry Chair

Christ Care Ministry

Which of You Shall Have a Friend?

“And He Said to them, ‘Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me: the door is now shut and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’.”

- Luke 11: 5ff

(see Luke 11:1-13 for the full context)

In the full context of our reading, one of the disciples has asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus gives to them the awesome heavenly gift of the Lord’s Prayer. Then He immediately follows up with the Parable of “*The Late Night Door Knock*” which is ripe with the word “**Friend.**”

The question, “*Which of you shall have a friend?* (v.5)” gives us the opportunity to find even more Gospel in the reading. The friend in the parable is just a friend—really nobody in particular—it’s just part of the parable, not something egging us on to find the spiritual equivalent. “*Friend*” does not stand for Jesus. As our *friend*, Jesus is far superior than the one in the parable who, by the way, acts a bit reluctant to get out of bed.

And yet, is *friend* just a casual, accidental choice of word? After all, it does occur four times in the parable. Although the word *friend* does not stand for Jesus, may it not remind us of Jesus? May it not remind us of the fact that He is, indeed, among many other wonderful roles, our *friend*? After all, He was called a *friend* of

publicans and sinners” (Matt. 11:19). Again, in Luke 12:4, Jesus calls His audience “*My friends.*” And in John’s Gospel Jesus calls a specific individual, Lazarus, “*Our friend.*” (John 11:11). Nowhere is it clearer than in John 15:13-14: “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends.*”

Moreover, this *friend*, Jesus, like another *friend* mentioned in the parable of Luke 11: 1-13, has “in his journey ... come to [us]” (v.6). From heaven above to earth He came for us and for our salvation.

Let’s go back to the question we started with: “*Which of you shall have a friend ?*” The answer is **all of us**. As the old hymn says, “***What a friend we have in Jesus***” ... and He is indeed with us now more than ever.

Pax,

Pastor Tom

Call Committee Update

On July 3, Pastor Gulseth declined our call to him. The Call Committee met July 10 and reflected on the decisions of both Pastor Miller's and Pastor Gulseth's decisions to decline our calls. The committee felt that the decisions were based on perceptions of administrative and ministry issues. Administratively it was felt that we need to address office secretarial and administration support so that the pastor is assured of weekly assistance. On the ministry side, the congregation needs to again be involved in community ministry. The church needs to demonstrate that we are actively involved in our community and that we have a future vision.

The committee discussed requesting additional candidates from District President Johnson or to consider calling a seminary graduate in the Spring of 2023. It was decided that the committee would explore these options and meet to discuss them in early August. In addition, before the next meeting the committee members will review the interview questions developed by the committee, and consider short term projects that the congregation can accomplish.

Glen Thompson, Chairman
Call Committee

Joy of the Lord



LWML News

Painting the Planet Purple with Servanthood

1942 -2022 -- 80 YEARS of GOD'S GRACE

Praying the Lord's Prayer

You cannot say the Lord's Prayer and make one selfish plea,
You cannot say the Lord's Prayer and even once say "me,"
For it's our, our, our, and it's us, us, us.
And the fourth time it's our, and the fourth time it's us.
You cannot say the Lord's Prayer and once say "I,"
You cannot say the Lord's Prayer and once say "my,"
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and not pray for another,
For when you ask for daily bread, you must include your brother.
For it's us, us, us, and it's our, our, our.
As free from selfish motive as the fragrance of a flower,
For others are included in each and every plea.
For from beginning to the end it does not once say "me."

- Poet unknown

Today and always, we are surrounded by **HIS** grace and mercy.
Serve the LORD with gladness.

Sheree McGraw, President
First Lutheran Church LWML





FIRST LUTHERAN STAFF

INTERIM PASTOR

Rev. Kurtis Schultz

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Rev. Kurtis Schultz

MINISTRY COORDINATORS:

CHRIST CARE

Rev. Tom Lackey

OUTREACH & INREACH

Vacant

SERVE & CELEBRATE

Lorenza Robinson

FACILITIES & PROPERTIES

Stan Weir

WORSHIP

Charles Craig

FIRST IMPRESSIONS EDITOR

Heather Lackey



MAN UP! Meets the 4th Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. All men are welcome to join us for a time of fellowship, prayer, and devotion.

Contact Lorenza Robinson for information on post-pandemic MAN UP! meetings.

Birthdays & Anniversaries



8/6: Anthony McGraw

8/7: Boni Hoover

8/9: L'Tanya Sims

8/10: Austin Stallworth

8/12: Nelson Sharit

8/12: Ernest Washington III

8/13: Dot Claunch

8/24: Evelyn Veal

8/25: Jonathan Grund

8/14: Carol & Tom Lackey

8/28: Leslie & Charlie Hayes

Worship Team...August 2022

August 7

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz

Worship Asst: Robert Regulus

Reader: Robert Regulus

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

August 21

Pastor: Tom Lackey

Worship Asst: Charles Craig

Reader: Heather Lackey

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw

Music: Becky Schultz

August 14

Pastor: Tom Noon

Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw

Reader: Mike Halbrooks

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

August 28

Pastor: George Murdaugh

Worship Asst: Henry Mosley

Reader: Frances Robinson

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

