



STORIES OF GENEROSITY

2026 Devotional



CAMPAIGN PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you alone are worthy of our worship and love. Inspire our faith as we share your love with the world and welcome more of your children into this community of faith. As you have given us so much make us generous to bless your church and strengthen our witness so that all may know the joy of salvation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

MATTHEW 5:14 – 16

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Welcome to this time of reflection and prayer as we embark together on the *Inspire Faith* capital campaign.

You hold this devotional in your hands because we believe that generosity is first and foremost a spiritual practice – a faithful response to the abundant grace God has poured into our lives. Before we ask anyone to consider a financial commitment to expand and upgrade our narthex and first floor, we want to invite you into something deeper: a conversation with God about what it means to be a generous disciple of Christ.

The improvements we’re planning are significant. A welcoming narthex and reimagined first floor will create spaces where faith can be nurtured, where strangers can become friends, where children can grow, and where our community can gather for generations to come. But buildings, no matter how beautiful or functional, are never the ultimate goal. Our true hope is that these spaces will become holy ground – places where people encounter the living God, where faith is ignited and strengthened, where love is practiced in tangible ways.

That’s why we’ve named this campaign *Inspire Faith*. We believe that when we create environments that welcome, nurture, and equip God’s people, we participate in God’s ongoing work of transformation in our community.

This devotional is not simply about raising funds. It’s about examining our hearts. It’s about remembering that everything we have – our time, our talents, our resources, our very lives – is a gift from God. Generosity, then, becomes our joyful response to that reality. It can take many forms: financial giving, certainly, but also volunteering, praying, encouraging, serving, and sharing our gifts in countless ways.

As you journey through these devotions, we invite you to ask God how you are being called to respond. Not out of obligation or guilt, but out of gratitude and love – for the God who first loved us, and for this First Lutheran community that has been a source of blessing in your life.

May this be a time of spiritual renewal for each one of us, and may our collective generosity inspire faith for generations to come.

Pastor Michaela Eskew

I support the church. I support the church in capital campaigns for the same reason I give my monthly offering and for the same reason I volunteered long before I ever worked in ministry. I do all of this simply because I love the church – the body of Christ. I love the vision of a people committed to God’s work in the world: bringing healing, wholeness, and abundant life.

The church is the community that loved me when I was a kid trying to make sense of a new home and a new family. The church is where people taught me about a God of love and showed me how my life could be part of God’s work to remake the world into a place of peace and joy.

I’m not in the church I grew up in anymore, but I give to the church where I am because I’m grateful for those who built a place where I could grow in faith. I didn’t help build our sanctuary

or Gathering Place, or our bathrooms, narthex, or kitchen.

Yet I have been fed, welcomed, and cared for in those spaces because people before me contributed, planned, and built with hearts full of hope for the ones who would come after them.

And so, I’ll give to this campaign too – out of gratitude for those who made room for me, and with prayerful hope that someone not yet here will be blessed by what we build today.

When I think about building the church – whether that means a physical structure, a ministry, or any part of our life together – I think of that little 10-year-old kid in Utah walking into a church for the first time. I remember a warm Sunday School room, a patient volunteer teacher, and a congregation ready to embrace a new family stepping into a new chapter of life.

I will spend the rest of my life giving what I can to the church in gratitude for those who provided for that child so many years ago. And I give, trusting that there is a whole world of children just like him who need the church to be ready for them.

Written by Pastor Travis Norton



Let's just say my spiritual upbringing was subpar at best. What I took from my youth experience was only to fear God. Fast forward to my mid 20s, when I lost my mother to cancer. I was devastated, had a six-month-old baby, and felt totally alone. To the best of my reasoning, I knew that God was mad at me and decided he would take my mother as my punishment.



Being a bit on the stubborn side and having learned to keep feelings buried deep inside, these feelings about religion and God stayed with me for many, many years. Then one day while standing with a friend at our kids' track and field day, I had one of my only open-hearted religious conversations with her. She invited me to join her at First Lutheran. My response was that God would not want me there and that I didn't think the people and pastors would accept me since I had not been to church for so long. Her response was, "This congregation and the pastors are the most supportive and least judgmental people she had ever met." I joined her that next Sunday, listened intently to Pastor Peel's sermons week after week, and slowly learned to let my guard down and trust that through it, all God has me.

God has been patient with me, he has placed many pastors, relatives, and friends in my life that have helped me let go of all my harbored misconceptions. He has allowed me to still be angry at times, to still be pigheaded at times, but I ask him to stay by my side and scream just a bit louder when I am not hearing him. Those seem to be the times he sends in his reinforcements – a friend that lifts me up, a pastor's sermon that hits right in the heart, and always his voice telling me, "I am here, right by your side."

Written by Karen Busovsky

First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colorado Springs was founded in 1892. It had 48 members. This congregation decided to build a “Lutheran Chapel” for their sanctuary. In our archives there is a small, tattered, cardboard-bound notebook listing the names and contributions those members made toward the cost of the chapel. Some folks gave five cents; \$2 was a major gift. Many names are followed by “donated a week of work.” The Ladies’ Aid Society raised nickels and dimes holding “bazaars” especially featuring hand-stitched fancy handkerchiefs. The chapel was completed in 1896. The final tally for the construction was \$6,124. Surely these, our “saints who have gone before,” shine in our memory. We are the beneficiaries of their “Capital Campaign.” The chapel still stands at the corner of Platte and Weber, a testimony to “good and faithful servants.”

I am personally thankful that for over 130 years generation after generation of First Lutheran members have carried forward this legacy of giving. We are the beneficiaries of many a “Capital Campaign.” Our church campus today is a testimony to “good and faithful servants” – of the past, the present, and now our future.

Written by Mike Olsen



As members of First Lutheran Church for over 40 years, we have been inspired time and again by the generosity of our faithful members. We’ve been part of two capital campaigns over the past 35 years, and the unfailing ability of our congregation to meet our financial goals as we looked to the future has been nothing short of amazing. Likewise, through God’s unfailing grace, we always seem to be able to meet our planned yearly budget goals through our yearly ingathering every fall.

Knowing we are members of such a generous and forward thinking community of faith inspires us to look past the impact of our pledge on our personal finances and aspire to prayerfully consider a larger pledge (sacrifice) for the greater gifts our church will provide to benefit our congregation, our community, and our world.

Written by Mark & Mindy Mahler

The first time I taught Sunday School at First Lutheran was the 1985 – 86 school year. I was newly married and pregnant with my first child. It was a class of eager second graders. I can clearly remember preparing lessons for them the night before class and praying that I could impart just a little bit of biblical wisdom to their young minds.

Fast forward many years and I was a confirmation guide for both my son's and daughter's classes when they were in Eighth and Ninth Grade. Spending time with them and their classmates on Sunday mornings and during the retreats at Rainbow Trail brought so much joy to me during some very difficult times in my life. They asked hard questions and I always told them that I was learning much more from them than they were from me.

I continued being a confirmation guide on and off for several years after my own children were in college and grown. One of my last classes had a few "rowdy" boys and I questioned almost every Sunday why I was doing this and if I was even getting through to them on any level. It seemed to be a struggle just getting them confirmed but we all made it through. Several years later, when I happened to run into one of those young men at church, he gave me a big hug and told me that I had really played a huge role in his faith journey, and he thanked me for not giving up on him. That encounter meant more to me than he will ever know.

We need to keep showing up for our youth as they are our future. Have faith in them and inspire them. They (and we) have so much to learn!

Written by Cathie John-Fenell



I will be honest here. Faithful generosity was not something that was modeled for me when I was growing up. My family was marginally religious; we went to church on Sunday, but left immediately after Mass. My mother was de-churched after an experience which deeply hurt her. As a result, my father took us to Mass, but only on Sunday.

I didn't learn that church was more than a building until I met my husband in college. We started going to University Lutheran Chapel and I met a pastor who taught me the Christian faith and later confirmed me. Jon and I found a church home in Michigan. And when we moved here, we joined a church in town. We attended weekly, raised our children in the church, and sang in the choir for 30 years. We supported the church regularly through those years, both in time and tithe. During the pandemic, we became disconnected as several close friends left, and we didn't feel like we belonged there anymore. I was feeling lost and hurt and was ready to follow my mother's example and de-church.

Three years ago, we joined First Lutheran Church. I watched worship online, looking for ... something. Pastor Travis preached on Thomas, and I was so moved that I came to church the next week. I attended quietly over the summer and Jon joined me soon after. First Lutheran has been a place where I feel cared for. It's a place where we can use our gifts to serve the Lord. In the music ministry, Eric shepherds us as we serve, covering us in Word and prayer every week. I feel a sense of belonging again.



None of that happens without the support of the Church – and by that I mean the members who support each other, directly and indirectly. I have faith that God uses our gifts in ways that I'll never know on this side of heaven, just as others' gifts, offered in faith years earlier, saved me at critical points in my spiritual life. To God be praise, in all that he works for good.

Written by Vicki Heinecke

We serve as stewards for future generations. With time, this responsibility has gained significance for me, guiding my actions and decisions. Reflecting on the support and resources provided by those who came before us at First Lutheran, it is clear that our current congregation benefits from their generosity and foresight. Without their contributions, our congregation would not be as strong or vibrant as it is today. We now have the responsibility to preserve and build upon these foundations for those who will come after us. I believe it is both appropriate and necessary to do what I can to fulfill this responsibility with a smile on my face and joy in my heart knowing that I have done a little to ensure that future members are afforded the same opportunities to worship and thrive.

Written by Tad Goodenbour



Oh God from whom all blessings flow! We have always been generous in our giving to the church and to others! We were given this gift of giving from our parents! “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give – not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver!” (2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV).

Written by Lois Peel

“Have you been to the Peel House?” This was the first question Pastor Carrie asked me when we began talking about the grand opening. I remember that day we walked in the door and my face said a thousand things at once, much like the faces I see at events we host. My heart was overjoyed at the beauty, and my head said – the members have done a wonderful thing.



After the opening, Pastor Carrie offered me the job of working in the Peel House. I remember thinking how important this job would be. We have to pass this on to the next generation. We have to preserve this wonder for the future. This house became a mission all on its own.

The Peel House has become a beautiful space for members and non-profits to host events for a minimal donation. It has brought much joy to all the people who have used this space and to those who attend the events. We have a very gracious group of volunteers who come to share their gifts of hospitality. The blessings are given in plenty and received with grateful hearts.

We see a lot of members attending events in the Peel House ... old and young. We see many adults who have come back to visit, remembering how they played in the house when they were children. This grows on you. It stretches your own faith and helps you to keep your focus on God's mission. It has been a glorious gift that we at First Lutheran have been able to share. It has seen elegant weddings and youth pancake dinners. It has reached into our community, sharing a warm space for trick-or-treaters, and has even been a refuge for those who needed a space when their power was out and their homes were freezing.

The next generation of caretakers are growing up so fast. I am so very thankful to have this time to prepare this mission, to nurture it, grow into it, and to eventually pass it on to the next generation of Lutherans. A mission that moves people to know that God's house is a place for all people. A mission to help those who lean into our community and help in so many ways to make the world a better place for everyone. A mission that says First Lutheran is here to help and to give from ourselves to make the world a joyful and loving place.

Thank you all for the gifts you have given to make the Peel House an amazing blessing for the community. May this blessing continue to overflow for our future generations; and may the gift continue to be opened, and the faith of those to come continue to grow so abundantly that you will want nothing more than to pass it on.

God is so good, all the time ...

Written by Pamela Haines

When I was eight years old, my mom routinely sent me out to mow the lawn. I would yank the starter cord on the old push mower over and over, but the mower wouldn't start. In a fit of frustration, I'd give up and charge back into the house. My mom would tell me to take five minutes to pray about it and try starting the mower again. After five minutes and a quick prayer, I would go back out, yank on the starter cord, and sure enough, the mower would roar to life. This same pattern repeated many times – I was convinced it was my prayers and God's intervention that started the mower. When I was 13 years old, I learned more about lawn mower carburetors and discovered that there was no miracle, just a flooded carburetor that needed time to aspirate. My prayers were a farce, my budding faith was teetering.

It took years for me to realize it was through my prayers for that old lawn mower that God was teaching me about patience and his abundant grace. While I was forever giving up on the mower, God was never going to give up on me. He didn't need to intervene with a miracle to start the mower. He wanted me to simply to be in relationship with him, to be faithful for the long haul, to show up day after day, to be generous with my time and talents in small ways.

Again and again over the years, when I fall short of expectations, when my words and actions damage relationships or when I struggle with my faith, I know God will never give up on me. He continues to invite me to yank on that starter cord one more time, to stay in relationship with him, to accept his grace, and to abundantly share my time and talents.

Written by Chris Lieber



Several years ago, we belonged to a church that was considering a major expansion. Because there were four different services each week, the church council decided to have two weekend afternoon meetings where people were invited to “stand and be heard.”

At the meeting we attended, two or three members voiced concerns about their personal financial ability to give extra to the church for the expansion. They felt they could not afford to commit any additional money to the church. Then a man who looked to be in his 30s stood up to speak. He looked around at the people gathered there and said, “You can’t afford not to.” He went on to say that he and his wife had prayed about their commitment and discussed it several times during the past week. They believed God was in control of their lives and their finances, and they would have enough for their needs even if they made a generous commitment to the expansion.

We were only a few years from retirement at the time. We didn’t want to work past our retirement age. But those words just kept bouncing around in my head: “You can’t afford not to ... you can’t afford not to ... ” We prayed and talked, and it didn’t take us long to figure out we **could** afford to make a commitment, and we did.



We retired early. We’ve never had to worry about paying our bills. We’ve traveled to places we never dreamed of seeing. We’ve helped grandchildren through college and even taken them to places they had never dreamed of seeing.

We’ve signed and submitted our pledge card for this capital campaign.

We can’t afford not to!

Written by Georgie Bever

My faith journey began at the post office drop-off window in the late '60s. I had just graduated with my bachelor's degree in education. Then my next question: what does my future hold? Growing up as a shy farm girl in Colorado, the last thing I would imagine for my career would be as a teacher in front of a classroom of students not much younger than me. Guess what? I was offered a high school teaching contract to begin in the fall. Now what?

There I was standing at the post office window ... last day to accept or not ... pen in hand ... "sign or not sign?" Little did I know but God had been (and was) working with me all along! With a deep breath, I scribbled my signature on the dotted line. Done.

I still did not realize that Someone had been with me all along! And after 36 successful years of teaching, I retired. Looking back, God was with me all along! And so began my walk with God.

What I learned from this experience was that whatever decisions we make relate to faith and trust. Malachi 3:10 says that God is asking us to fully trust him and he will direct and bless our lives. We faithfully pray that what we do today will benefit others tomorrow, no matter where we are in life's cycle.

Through faith and trust, the *Inspire Faith* campaign is our response to God that we are here to provide for future generations.

Written by Jan Larson



There are times when generosity feels easy and almost effortless. Donating money or giving time and energy to support a cause for something that touches my heart is what I want to do. There are times when I am trying to listen to what God wants me to see and hear, but I am in a self-absorbed spiral. In those times, I am grateful that my faith has brought me to a church that helps me to see the sign-up list in the Gathering Place or an email message that helps direct my attention to the needs of others. First Lutheran has prompted me to see and walk with homeless people, work with middle school youth on Sunday mornings, and to recommit to helping Lutheran Family Services (LFS) sponsored refugees.



In the process of sharing what I can, God's generosity pours back into me. The open hearts and minds of middle schoolers talking about difficult concepts gives me joy. The expression on an unhoused person's face when they smile as they hear their name remembered and their presence acknowledged gives me hope.

Last year, I helped an LFS-sponsored refugee from Venezuela who needed a ride to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and assistance to determine why she had not received her Social Security card. She did not speak English, and I do not speak Spanish. A friend with fluent Spanish

and generous faith agreed to be available by phone to help translate information needed to straighten out this potentially devastating situation. I witnessed the generosity of the SSA employee who patiently listened through the phone translations and carefully went through all the documents until the administrative error, one that occurred when this refugee woman entered our country, was found and resolved. As I drove this woman home, with tears in her eyes, and through her phone Duolingo app, she was able to say, "Thank God for people who help." I felt blessed.

Written by Andrea Artley

When I think about First Lutheran, I think about the people who first welcomed us here, the words of encouragement and forgiveness spoken week after week, and the quiet moments when faith was strengthened in ways I didn't expect. Long before I arrived, others gave generously so this place could exist for us. Now, I find myself asking what it means to do the same for those who will come after us.

As part of the *Inspire Faith* campaign, our congregation is entering a three-year season of renovation and renewal. I have the privilege of working alongside others from our church – pastors, volunteers, architects, and contractors – who are all seeking to be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us. This work has reminded me that building is not just about planning and progress, but about trust: trust in God's guidance and trust in one another.

Jesus says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock" (Matthew 7:24 NRSV). Our foundation is already firm. The renovation before us is simply a way of building upon that foundation so future generations can gather, worship, and grow in faith.

As we consider our own commitment over the next three years, I am reminded that this is how faith is inspired – when we trust God enough to build for a future we may not fully see. We give because we believe God is already at work there.

Written by Andrejs Bocek



Having been a confirmation mentor for several young ladies in our congregation, I have witnessed firsthand the value of creating a space where youth feel welcomed and encouraged to ask deep questions about faith and life. These challenging conversations have inspired me to reflect more deeply on my own beliefs. My hope is that First Lutheran will continue to nurture this environment – not only for the benefit of each young person's growth, but also to help them to make meaningful contributions to our community and society.

Written by Julie Furstenau



Since joining First Lutheran back in 2023, I have been blown away by the way that the congregation is overflowing with generosity. Being able to fundraise for over 90% of the cost of our youth mission trips and ELCA Youth Gathering trips is truly remarkable. Our congregation has continuously shown its support for the development of our youth by helping make these meaningful experiences as accessible to them as possible. Thank you for making our church a place where the youth are invited into the rest of the church and not pushed to the outside. We feel integrated and, more importantly, we feel loved. It is truly special to be a part of a church that values being intergenerational.

Written by Colton Laptad

We love because God first loved us. As I reflect on my life, it is still amazing to me that I am a Christian. I was climbing Mt. Rainier and found myself in a bad situation where one wrong step would have ended my life. As the fear took hold of me, I turned my life over to God and prayed, “God, if this is my time, I submit my life to you.” I felt an incredible calm come over me and I was no longer afraid. That allowed me to overcome my fear.

Having given myself to God’s amazing grace, all Holy Spirit work of course, it propels me to be part of God’s mission. People have asked me how I became a pastor, which is crazy in itself and a story for another time, but as I reflect on my life, I can see God at work through me and through God’s church.

This love of God propels me to serve God by serving people. This means that all of me, not just a portion, belongs to God. This means that I am part of something bigger, part of a mission to reclaim the world for the sake of Jesus Christ. The Lord’s Prayer guides us with the words, “On earth as it is in heaven.” This means as long as one person is far from God, we have Holy Spirit work to do. This means that as I give, I give for the sake of the world, all in the name of Jesus.

Holy God, instill in us a sense of gratitude and amazement that you would come to this earth to save us. It is beyond comprehension, but it fills us with hope, love, and generosity. Amen.

Written by Pastor Glenn Zimbelman





The Holy Spirit founded the church in the first century. Since then, the church has found itself persecuted, facing trials and disagreements, ultimately having to decide what it will stand for and what it will not. As every Christian before us has tried to do, we seek to follow Christ's example. Many know the "golden rule," to love others as we love ourselves, but Jesus calls us even further – to love others as *he* loves them. That has been the church's call in society since the beginning.

We are in a moment in time that is experiencing more loneliness and separation than connection and community. In a world that often tells us to pursue success alone, we know the truth. We are healthiest in community, when we can lean on one another in the bad times and celebrate with one another in the good times. Even as the wider church seems to be on the decline, I am confident that God's glory is not to be found in a building, but in the people of the church.

First Lutheran is engaging in this capital campaign to extend our space in the Colorado Springs community, both literally and figuratively. While the money that will be given to the *Inspire Faith* campaign will go to building materials and skilled artisans, it is our witness in this community that will leave a lasting impact. First Lutheran is seeking to inspire faith in a world that desperately needs it, to offer a message of hope and healing that Jesus first began thousands of years ago. This is our time and our chance to add to church history. We will continue to be a place where people feel seen, heard, and loved – a place of inspiration that stands as a light in the darkness.

Written by Pastor Michaela Eskew

Volunteering at Vacation Bible School (VBS) in the summer of 2024 (“Camp Firelight”) was a new experience for me and a booster shot for my faith. My wife Julie and I were asked to design and execute activities for the science portion of VBS with the help of K.I.C.K. Team teenagers. Although I have done literally thousands of such programs over the years, I had never done science activities for any groups at First Lutheran.

VBS was unique and rewarding for many reasons. First of all, the dedication of the adult staff and volunteers was awesome, with an incredible level of organization. Secondly, the kindness, professionalism, and “commitment to fun” shown by the K.I.C.K. Team from our church was inspiring. Watching these teenaged faithful followers of Christ was humbling, to say the least. However, the most rewarding part of the entire VBS experience was being able to work with the dozens of kids of all ages attending our activities. Most of these kids were not even children of members of our church. These kids were genuinely excited about being there. They could not help but see that the people at First Lutheran loved them and cared about them.

I was honored to be able share our faith and Jesus’ love with these kids. We should never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit to start these kids on their faith journey while attending VBS. I am thankful to God that we have the people, facilities, and foresight to start the youngest of his children on the road to understanding the good news of Jesus Christ.

Written by Ron Furstenau



“For God so loved the world that he gave ...” (John 3:16a NIV)

The driving force in my life is the belief that God calls all of us into intimate relationship with God-self, that God longs to be close to us more than we will ever long to be close to God, that God delights in us and continually invites us to delight in God. Because we were unable to navigate our own way to God after the tragedy in the Garden of Eden, God sent to us Jesus, who himself became the Living Way back into fully restored relationship. And why? Why did the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit choose to give God-self to us and for us? Because of love. Full stop. Love.



First Lutheran Church is a place where real people with real lives full of mess and goodness, and hope and sorrow, and joy and loss come and do life together, joined in love by a gracious, saving, and gathering God. The gifts we give in faith now will enable the church in the future to continue welcoming people into a beautiful space where they, too, can be touched by God's love. What a joy to be able to participate in the continuing gift of that love into the world!

Written by Lori Duncan

Faithful generosity has been passed down to me by many generations. My great grandparents were charter members of a German Lutheran church in Pennsylvania. My mom would share stories of her and my aunt attending services with their grandparents. My great grandparents came home from church one day with a baby; three children had been orphaned and my great grandparents took the baby and raised her as their own while other members of the congregation raised the other two children. I can't think of anything but faithful generosity when I remember this story.

My parents divorced in the 1970s and my mom went back to work, something she hadn't done since the early 1950s. I'm sure there were times when my mom's faith wavered, but she never lost her faith. She lived frugally because it was important to her that she tithe to the church. She was inspired by Luke 6:38: "... give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (NRSV). My hope is that I can pass along the faithful generosity I have witnessed by my stewardship to First Lutheran.

Written by Brenda Bocek



Sitting in the Jamaica airport last January, I was next to a University of Missouri student, one of about 60 returning from a Jamaican mission trip. She explained their faith mission, and that gave me the opportunity to briefly state my simple faith statement as well.

I have always explained to others what I call the big three, in reverse order: 3. “For it is by **grace** you have been saved through **faith** – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9 NIV); 2. (Luther’s “Aha!” moment) “This righteousness is given through **faith** in Jesus Christ to all who **believe**” (Romans 3:22); and, lastly, 1. “... that whoever **believes** in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

These are simple and easy and joyful expressions of God’s gift. What a pleasure it was to exchange Christ with the student and myself. As an aside, many of the students were making notes in their Bibles and trip journals, and not on cell phones. What a gift we have at First Lutheran to provide and continue to provide an atmosphere of Christian love and learning with both property and equipment, as well as each other. Thank you, Jesus.

Written by Terry Hjelkrem



Long before I married my pastor husband, before I became a deacon, and after I bought my first house, I started tithing. I remember that moment distinctly. I was at the dining room table writing checks (before online banking) to pay my monthly bills and I had a conversation with God. You've promised you would supply what I need if I simply trust. So, I'm going to trust. I'll give ten percent of my income, and I'll write that check first, before any other bills get paid. And we'll see what happens!



Significantly increasing my giving was a leap of faith for me because my bank account was scraping bottom every month. But interestingly enough, after I started tithing, my bank account didn't get any lower. What I did notice was that my relationship with money changed. I didn't need to go shopping as much. I started asking myself – do I really need this? Or can I wait and get this later after I've saved up? Why do I have multiple store credit cards?

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" Matthew 6:21 (NRSV). I find it interesting that our hearts **follow** our treasure. Our hearts go where we place our treasure, not the other way around. It is a matter of priority – is our relationship with God top on our list or further down? Giving generously to God changed my relationship to money and deepened my relationship with God. Where is your treasure? Your priorities? That is where you'll find your heart.

*Good and Gracious God,
You have given us so much; help us trust you with all we have so we may give generously and
deepen our relationship with you. Amen.*

Written by Deacon Janice Zimbelman

Years ago, I read a book by Lynne Twist called “The Soul of Money.” She was a fundraiser for global poverty projects and was interested in the world’s wealthiest women becoming active in projects to alleviate global hunger and poverty. What she discovered in her decades of travel was that while the poor needed the wealthy to transform their lives, the rich needed the poor to fill their hearts and souls with purpose and meaning. Giving transformed their lives and empowered them to know they could make a difference in the world.

She tells the story of bringing a group of very wealthy women to a small village in the Middle East. The U.S. delegation had tea with a group of women who had lost everything in a war – husbands, many children, and the means of supporting themselves. They lived in tents along the road. The wealthy guests were moved by their stories. The refugee women spoke of their vision to open a tea house for travelers on the busy road where there were many miles without a place to stop. Not only was the teahouse built, but the American women also developed a passion for using their resources to lift people out of poverty. Their lives were changed.

This story reminds me of a scrappy group of people God brought together to form the Millennium Development Goals, which cut the rate of extreme global poverty in half in less than 15 years. A young tech millionaire, who had probably never contributed to charity, met with a pastor, a rock star, and a prime minister to discuss solutions to poverty. The work led to the creation of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has contributed more than \$100 billion to global health, development, and education. I suspect the foundation became more important than the tech company.



What do these stories of wealthy people have to do with me? I am not rich or a global leader. There was a time when I believed that what was invested in financial assets grew, and what I donated was gone. That was a view of scarcity rather than God’s abundance. I now realize that what I donate is an investment in my own heart and soul. It has changed my view of the possibilities of God’s work in my life. We are not all called to the same generosity, but what we give changes our relationship with money and with God. What God has given to us is priceless. What we give to God is also priceless.

In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches that earthly treasures are temporary, but what we store up in heaven will never fade. May God bless us with an open heart.

Written by Susan Bolduc

First Lutheran does an amazing job answering the “what if” question long before it comes to light. Pastor Travis wanted to entice younger individuals and families, and we’re now in year two of the contemporary service. Thinking back to one of Pastor Carrie’s sermons, “Make it weird,” we absolutely have to be open to talking about our relationship with Jesus, be open to praying with people, and actually pray with them, don’t just say you will.

If each member of our church talked to just one person about Jesus, think of the possibilities. Change is scary, stepping out of your comfort zone is scary, but maybe a few kind words to a stranger, or one of the new faces you see at church, could do more than you think. Let’s all try to make talking about Jesus as easy and normal as talking about the latest TikTok video or Facebook post.

We all have our own stories that make us who we are. We all struggle with life in some way or another. A simple connection with someone might be all it takes. Jesus does amazing things every day. So let’s pray on it, make it weird, and be open to talking about Jesus and our faith, because people need that kind of love more than anything right now.

Written by Stephanie deGuzman



Oh, the freedom of college! I was a freshman in college before I was not required to go to church every Sunday. I maintained my church attendance habit for the first few months, but when the snow began to fall, a different story unfolded. Sleeping in became much more appealing when “the weather outside was frightful.” Soon, I was not worshiping at all, except for the daily half hour of chapel that we, as freshmen, were required to attend. I reveled in my cozy Sunday mornings until one Sunday, late in February, I woke up thinking, “Something’s missing.” Soon, I was tramping along the four blocks of snowy sidewalks to the nearest Lutheran church. It felt good to be back.

Now, as I think about that experience, I realize that the niggling thought of “something missing” on a cozy Sunday morning was God’s voice inviting me back. To what? To a structure that had formed the outlines of my childhood. To the sound of the organ and human voices singing familiar hymns. To a worshiping community of faithful people – and some, like me, not so faithful. Since then, everywhere I have lived I have looked for a church home. A worshiping community grounds me, uplifts me. I believe that to truly belong somewhere, I need to participate with my presence, my time, and my resources.

Moving to a new community later in life is no small thing – new church, new home, new friends, new doctor, new dentist, and new geography. I feel welcomed and accepted at First Lutheran. The current capital campaign is my opportunity to give back by committing myself to a firm amount, to challenge my comfort zone by putting my trust in God and his benevolence. I look forward to First Lutheran’s “new look” as the congregation strives to fulfill its mission. Thanks be to God for vision, mission, and the people who guide us along the way!



Help me be a faithful servant who patiently tolerates the mess and confusion of a major renovation as our community accommodates itself to our growth. May we remain faithful to our commitments to our church community and one another. Amen.

Written by Joanne Larson

Recently Pastor Carrie called our attention to the unexpected way Jesus arrived among us. He was a helpless infant in a remote stable far away from the seats of power. She reminded us how frequently we experience his ongoing presence among us in ways so unexpected that we do not see it.

Thirty years ago, I felt the presence of Christ after an unexpected phone call from Deacon Joan Kuehn. She called to ask if I could help with lights and sound for a new Easter season program that would feature real people in period-correct costumes with the setting of historic religious artwork. It would be accompanied by Scripture lessons and special music. I listened carefully but I just couldn't picture what she was talking about. It sounded like an elaborately costumed, well-lit stage production. But at that time, First Lutheran had no stage, no lighting equipment, and a woefully undersized sound system. However, what First Lutheran did have was faith, a commitment to share that faith with the whole community, and the assurance that all things are possible with God's help.

Over the past 30 years, Gallery of Living Art has evolved with new volunteer actors and stage crews, different scenes, new music, modern lighting, better staging, and a bigger sound system. But first and foremost, Gallery of Living Art is an opportunity for all of us to work together in sharing with our whole community the most important story ever told.

It's a big project for First Lutheran and it's just one of many ways our church shares and serves. I think that says a lot about who we are as a church, and it says even more about who Jesus is among us.



Written by Dave Rose

Daily, I am reminded during my morning devotionals that you can make a difference, but it takes faith and action. My encouragement comes from reading Philippians, where I receive the same inspiration that the Apostle Paul had in prison – to see joy amidst suffering and find contentment through faith. I have been a long-term member of First Lutheran, and I have repeatedly said that it is through service attendance that my life's rudder has been kept straight. Call it focusing on core principles, values, or choices that simply prevent me from drifting aimlessly. First Lutheran has given me meaning and direction.



Today the Rock of my life is now asking for help and support as we embark on the renovation of the narthex. The renovation will send a message to our members and the community at large that we are a robust, vibrant congregation that is building on the past and preparing for the future. I have had the pleasure of serving on the renovation committee and believe you will be inspired by the committee's focus on sustainability and resilience for current and future needs. But most of all we need your support and trust for our new beginning.

Written by Gary Bradley



Every Sunday morning I have the privilege of standing in front of a group of people, leading them in worship, praying with them and for them, and wondering what might be on their minds and hearts this week. Sometimes as people are leaving and I'm shaking hands, I might get a glimpse of what is going on, a snippet of life shared with me or a quick ask for a minute of my time. I love those moments and find them as sacred as the worship we just shared. But what I love even more are the people who are still lingering in the worship space, having caring conversations about life, what moved them during worship, or meeting someone new and bringing them to the Gathering Place for coffee and hopefully more conversation.



First Lutheran is a place where relationships matter, where worship is the center of our lives together, where our faith grows in love for Jesus and for the sake of the world. I love that we have the opportunity to use our faith to inspire others, to welcome them, and to walk alongside them. This devotional is to go alongside our capital campaign, and when we use those words, I think we go to money first, but I encourage you to go to faith first. Remember what it is that brings you to church on Sunday morning, what encourages you to have relationships with those you encounter in church and the world, and what inspires your faith to be generous with your time, relationships, and your love for Jesus with those around you.

Dear God, let our faith encourage us to have open hearts and minds to your call for us to love our neighbors and be faithful to you. Let us find ways to serve you that are generous with our time, our gifts, and our firstfruits. Amen.

Written by Pastor Carrie Baylis

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE

In Holy Week, we journey with Jesus to the cross.

PALM SUNDAY • SUNDAY, MARCH 29

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP at 8, 9:30, and 11 a.m.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP at 10:15 a.m.

MAUNDY THURSDAY • THURSDAY, APRIL 2

SERVICE OF THE SHADOWS AND
HOLY COMMUNION at 7 p.m.

GOOD FRIDAY • FRIDAY, APRIL 3

READING OF THE PASSION AND
VENERATION OF THE CROSS at Noon

FAMILY SERVICE at 5:30 p.m.

TENEBRAE (Service of Darkness) at 7 p.m.

HOLY SATURDAY • SATURDAY, APRIL 4

EASTER EGG HUNT at 10 a.m.

DECORATING THE FLOWER CROSS AT 10 A.M.

EASTER VIGIL (the first service of Easter) at 6:30 p.m.

*On Easter Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection
and victory over death.*

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD • SUNDAY, APRIL 5

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP at 7:45, 9, 10:15, and 11:30 a.m.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP at 10:15 a.m.

Easter Breakfast in the Peel House from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.



GALLERY OF LIVING ART 2026

A unique and powerful presentation of Christ's life, passion, and resurrection, told through 13 staged life-size works of art, with thoughtful music and Scripture.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13 • 7:30 P.M.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14 • 2 AND 5 P.M.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15 • 3 P.M.

Free admission

Free childcare in our professionally-staffed nursery

Doors open one hour prior to each presentation

JUNIOR GALLERY OF LIVING ART

Designed especially for families, with a shorter presentation and a backstage tour!

SATURDAY, MARCH 14 • 11 A.M.

The Art of Neighboring

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS | 6 TO 7:30 P.M. | GATHERING PLACE

Join us Wednesdays in Lent for a soup supper, a presentation on practical ways Jesus helps us become good neighbors, and thoughtful discussion around the dinner table. Each evening will conclude with Holy Communion. The nursery will be open for young children, and special First Kids sessions will be offered for children Kindergarten through Grade 5.

- WEEK 1** February 25: *Who are My Neighbors?*
- WEEK 2** March 4: *Making Things Right with Neighbors*
- WEEK 3** March 11: *Loving Difficult Neighbors*
- WEEK 4** March 18: *Talking about Faith with Neighbors*
- WEEK 5** March 25: *Comforting Grieving Neighbors*
- BONUS WEEK** Thursday, April 2: *Jesus, the Perfect Neighbor*



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