

First Lutheran Church - The First 150 Years

1872 - 2022

“To God Be The Glory!”

1869 - 1872 **Norwegian arrivals** planted the seeds of the Lutheran faith. They desired to keep a sacramental life before churches had been established. Simon Olsen's family members were the first Norwegian immigrants to stop in this area, and they settled near Pebble Lake. Other Norwegian families soon arrived. They gathered together in homes and called their church **Den Norske Evangeliske Lutheranske Kirke**. When the families of Christian Aurland, Eric (Bakken) Bach, John Back, Thorsten Bjorgum, Gunder O. Dahl, Jens O. Fossen, Arne Gunderson, **John Haave**, Gunner Hammer, Knute Harris, Ole Huseby, Magnus Geving Johnson, Asle Lunde, Tollef Olsen, Tollef Satre, Knute Sletto, and O. M. Wick arrived, they became the **Charter Members/Founders of The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1872.**

The Haaves, Husebys and Bjorgums traveled together through Minnesota with only one ox-drawn covered wagon.

*Mr. and Mrs. John (Olive) Haave came from Norway in 1867. John farmed, and had short term jobs through the winters and summers. In 1871, they came to Fergus Falls and soon his grandson Andrew and wife Martha arrived, remained and joined our church. Andrew and Martha had five children, the eldest being daughter **Hazel Stubbs (Orville)** who lived and grew up in Fergus Falls and in First Lutheran. They had two daughters who grew up in Fergus Falls and in our church during the Pastor Preus years. The two are: **Sandra Stubbs Crawford** of Crystal, MN, and **Susan Stubbs** of Seattle, WA. Both remain in close contact with First Lutheran friends yet today, in 2023.*

John Haave bought a grocery store in 1884, served several terms on the Fergus Falls City Council, and one term on the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners.

1869 - 1872 “Missionary Pastor” Reverend Olaus Augustus Normann

Olaus Normann was a member of the 1866 graduating class (the very first graduating class) at Luther College in Decorah, IA. In 1869, he graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis with the first class of Norwegian students. He accepted a missionary call to be a pastor west of St. Paul, MN and also was a missionary pastor for the area known as Park Region which was between St. Cloud and Otter Tail County. This missionary pastor had approximately 30 stops a year on his visitation schedule. His services with the Fergus Falls Norwegian Lutherans were months apart. Rev. Olaus Normann, 1845-1933, was buried at Pelican Lake Cem. in Ashby, MN. His wife, Britha Steffansdatter Holum, 1851-1889, was buried in St. Olaf Cem. in Dalton, MN. Their children were Augustus Immanual, Stephen Theodore, Halver Martin, Anna Caroline, Caia Matina and Inneborg Jensine.

1871 The **Ugeblad newspaper** was the first Norwegian - language newspaper in the Fergus Falls area except for the Normana Banner which had been launched in 1860. The Ugeblad was going out of business so owner, John Schroeden, sold it to Adoniram J. Underwood. A.J. had already been the owner of a Fergus Falls paper but saw the need for the Norwegian - language paper to continue and it did, to a circulation of 2,000 in Otter Tail County. The Rodhuggeron newspaper had also been established with views more radical than the Ugeblad, and surpassed Ugeblad with a circulation of 4,000 in 1893. But Ugeblad carried on with international news from Norway and Denmark, national news from Chicago and Washington, and state and local news from Fergus Falls. In 1896, the Ugeblad declared itself an independent reform paper. In 1909, it had a new owner from Norway, Ole P. B. Jacobson. In 1914, Nels T. Moen, son of a Norwegian immigrant, became the next owner. On May 1, 1938, the Ugeblad became the Fergus Falls Ugeblad (The Fergus Falls Weekly Newspaper) and continued to publish in both Norwegian and American until 1946.

1872 - 1875 Reverend Torjus Vetlesen

Torjus Vetleson was born on October 16, 1841, in Norway. His parents were Vetle Torjussen, 1814 - 1893, and Karen Kristine Frantsdatter (Frants daughter) 1820 - 1848. Torjus was named for his younger brother Torjus who died eleven months before him. Torjus had a total of 13 brothers and sisters because after his mother Karen died In 1848, his father Vetle married two more times. In 1869, Reverend Vetleson took a missionary pastor position to work in Otter Tail County. In 1869, this farmer/pastor organized the St. Olaf Lutheran congregation. In 1870, Hedemarken Norwegian Evangelical Church was organized by Rev. Vetleson and his first sermon was held at the home of Iver Skistad, in what is now Oscar Township, on November 24th. Rev. T. Vetlesen led the service and also baptized ten children. On May 22, 1871, Ingeborg A. Norman married Rev. Torjus. Torjus helped establish the Norwegian Grove Church, and the Pelican Lake Church near Ashby, MN, and served the Aastad community as their pastor at Rock Prairie Lutheran Church. Rock Prairie members built their poor farmer/pastor a home. The family lived there until the mid 1880s. In 1871, he came to Fergus Falls and soon was asked to charter a Norwegian Lutheran Church which he agreed to do. Rev. Torjus was with our Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls from October 10, 1872 and into 1875. His wife Ingeborg died on September 18, 1885, while giving birth to their 7th child. Baby boy Ingvold lived. Their children were (and these are the correct spellings): Karen Christine Vetleson Berge, William Wetleson, Annunciata Vetleson- a baby who died, Alexander Wetleson, Anna Vetleson Rygh, Martin Norman Vetleson, and Ingvold Benjamin Vetleson. Reverend Torjus Vetleson died on June 17, 1886. He was buried at Rock Prairie Cemetery in Elbow Lake, MN.

- 1872 The morning of October 10: Our **first worship service** was held in the First Presbyterian Church because it was the only church building in Fergus Falls at that time. Reverend Torjuis Vetleson was invited to lead the service and also to attend the meeting that took place later on that evening on October 10.
- 1872 The evening of October 10: At the home of Christian Aurlund, supporters of the Norwegian Synod met to **organize a congregation** under the leadership of Reverend Torjus Vetleson. Reverend Vetleson then left the area for about 4 weeks because he had to complete his month-long round to churches in Otter Tail County.
- 1872 October 18: Reverend Johan Bergh wanted Fergus Falls to have only one organized **Norwegian Lutheran congregation** and thus urged Reverend Vetleson's young congregation to unify with his church. The offer was turned down.
- 1872 November 24: Church officers met at Sheriff Michael Anderson's home to plan **Incorporation proceedings** and take advantage of George B. and Carrie Wright's offer for a free village lot.
- 1872 Other Norwegian immigrants moved into the area, joined the church and also joined the rank of **Charter Members**. They were the families of Cornelius Peterson, J. C. Knoff, Ole Sampson, Lars Lund and Peter Rosvold.
- 1872 December 13: While **Incorporation paperwork** continued a building committee was formed. The members included Christian Aurlund, John Haave and Lars Lund.
- 1872 The very **first Communion Service** was held in the log home of Ole Huseby located in Dane Prairie Township, four miles east of Fergus Falls. It was led by Rev. Vetleson. The goblet they used had been brought from Norway by Mrs. Huseby. It is now in First Lutheran's Heritage Hall in 2023.
- 1872 A number of **Civil War Veterans** settled in Fergus Falls during this year. In all of Otter Tail County, a total of 1,037 Civil War veterans came and made numerous contributions to the county as early pioneers, business men, township organizers and much more. Knute O. Sletto trained in Wisconsin with 91,000 men before heading off to war. Knute died at 94 years of age in 1937. He was the **second to the last surviving** Civil War veteran in Otter Tail County. (Civil War 1861-1865)

*William Morrow was **the last surviving veteran** in Otter Tail County and died on July 20, 1942. William Morrow had a farm by Ottertail, lived in Fergus Falls for over 24 years and was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Fergus Falls.*

Every major war had First Lutheran members who served as part of the Armed Services or as Military Volunteers.

- 1873 The Rolling Prairie Church north of Fergus Falls and the Norwegian Evangelical Church of Aurdal Township (Wall Lake - eight families) joined **Pastor Vetlesen's Fergus Falls congregation** for pastoral services. The Bagstevold congregation of Erhard also joined in 1875. The Rolling Hills merger dissolved in 1880, and the Bagstevold merger dissolved in 1881.
- 1873 On March 6: **Mary Gunderson**, daughter of Arne and Johnny Gunderson, a Charter Member, was **the first child baptized** by Rev. T. Vetleson in this congregation.
- 1873 The **Dane Prairie Township South Cemetery** came into existence when Magnus Geving Johnson and his wife Sine generously gave some of their land for a cemetery. This was not officially recorded anywhere but three Trustees were put in charge of the cemetery: Ole A. Huseby, Bjorn Estgaard, and John Hindrum. The first burials there occurred around 1878. On May 18, 1883, County Records show the transfer of this land from the Johnsons to our Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- 1873 June 22: The **Incorporation process** was finalized.
- 1874 Spring: Now the congregation **built its first church** at the corner of Deak Avenue and Sherma Street on land given to the church by the Wright family of Fergus Falls. It measured 30 ft X 36 ft X 16 ft.

1875 - 1878 Reverend Dorotheus Johnsen Growe

Three charter members of the church issued a call for an almost full-time pastor in 1873. Rev. D. J. Growe received and accepted the call, but did not leave Bergen, Norway until 1875. He had to fulfill his mission obligation in Norway first. He was ordained in WI on July 8, 1875, by Rev. H. A. Preus. Rev. Growe's first service here was on August 4, 1875. He also served two other congregations during this time and departed from all three in 1878. In 1894, after serving other churches in ILL and MN, Pastor Growe accepted a call at Trinity Lutheran in Brainerd where he remained until he resigned in 1900. He experienced frustration with the congregation because the people wouldn't help with the business of caring for the church building and parsonage, that is except for the Ladies Aid, about which he said, "I wish all the members of the congregation worked as hard as the women in Ladies Aid ". The members talked him into staying but things did not change. Trinity Church was struck by lightning and burned in 1903. A new church and new furniture were built, insurance was paid, and then Rev. Growe resigned again. He felt another pastor would be better at that time, but he would remain until a replacement was found, in late 1904. In June of 1905, Reverend Growe gave his last sermon.

- 1875 September 4: Rev. Growe's **first marriage ceremony** in the congregation was that of Bernt Nicolae Johnson and Inger Larson Lune.

- 1875 October 12: Eli Anneus was born to Erik and Kari (Bakken) Bach. **Eli was the first child born** into the congregation.
- 1875 December 8: The **first Confirmation Service** was held with eight students in attendance: Lars Ouse, Magnus Ouse, Nels Lunde, Ando Rosvold, Theo Sjordal, Amalie Aurland, Louise Sorenson, and Osine Amalie Halvorson. Rev. Grove led the service.
- 1876 The **first parsonage** was built with Pastor Grove's family being the first occupants.

1878 - 1908 Reverend Ole Nilsen Fosmark

O. N. Fosmark was born in 1853, in WI to Nils Olsson Olsen (born 1816 in Norway) and Britha Betsy Johnsdatter Olsen (born 1833 in Norway). Ole had seven siblings. He attended Luther College in Decorah, IA from 1869 to 1875. Ole's wife Sarah was born in 1861, in WI. Rev. Fosmark served our church for 30 years. He was pastor during the building of our second church in 1880. It was built on the site that First Lutheran is on today in 2023. Rev. O. N. Fosmark was instrumental in establishing the renowned Park Region College of Fergus Falls, MN which was ready for classes on October 16, 1892. In 1908, Rev. Fosmark resigned from the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Fergus Falls and moved on to serve churches in North Dakota. He died on January 14, 1916 in Grand Forks ND.

The next 15 listed events all occurred under Reverend Ole Nilsen Fosmark's impressive tenure- through 1906.

- 1878 January: **A women's group, Ladies Aid, was informally organized** at the home of Bertt Johanson with twelve ladies in attendance. These ladies were Charter Members of the church because whole families were considered Charter Members once the head of the household became one. This group was determined to support their new church in any way possible. Meetings were held in homes every third Thursday from 1:00 to 5:00. In 1881, the women elected officers. In 1908, committee minutes began to be recorded. In 1909, women began meeting in the church basement. In 1918, a Constitution was adopted and a second one adopted between 1935 and 1938. In 1950, it was revised and brought up to date in 1958.
- 1878 October 19: After just four years of having built a small church, a need for a larger structure was identified, and the **congregation voted to build once again.**
- 1878 November 23: On this date **a building committee was elected.** It consisted of Magnus Johnson, O. M. Wick, John Hindrum, John Haave and Halvor Back who were Charter Members and/or Trustees. Halvor Back was awarded the construction bid with the assistance of Martin Bach and Thomas Agern.

- 1880 Early 80s: **A choir was organized** under the direction of Mr. Lars Lynne. John C. Knoff, a Charter Member, sang in the choir and occasionally directed the choir. John Knoff and Cornelius Peterson led the congregational singing until an organ was purchased.
- 1880 September 5: A decision was made to also build a **new parsonage** but it was not to be finished until the main church was completed.
- 1880 November 19: Our **second church** was completed on the corner of Court Street and Junius Avenue. It was 36 by 60 ft with a 12 by 24 ft choir loft at a total cost of \$140,000.
- 1882 This was a **momentous year for Fergus Falls**. The Grand Hotel was built, the very first High School graduating class was honored, and the National Guard Unit-Company F was formed.
- 1882 The church received its **first bell in 1882** and it continues to ring in 2023.
- 1885 October 3: A **deadly circus train wreck** involved the Northern Pacific Train carrying John Robinson's circus and menagerie. Four cars became detached and traveled backwards gathering speed moment by moment. The caboose and three sleeper cars broke away because the brakes could not efficiently slow down the speed. There were about 200 people in the cars. The three cars were tossed about and splintered and the caboose was torn into fragments. There were terrible screams and crying with many able to still crawl out from under the wreckage. James Wilson- the watchman from Cincinnati, Samuel Blair- who joined the circus the day before, William Roberts- of Wadena, George Krouse- of Cincinnati and Charles Wallace- of OR were killed. Twenty were badly injured and everyone else had some type of a lesser injury. James Wilson's friends from Cincinnati telegraphed and requested that he be buried here and his grave to be marked. But the personal marking was not done. Burial of all five men was arranged through Woodham and Lounsbury Undertakers with all five interred in a mass grave in the South Dane Prairie Cemetery. The grave marker wasn't engraved until 1975, and then was scripted incorrectly. It read, "In Memory of **20** Circus Workers Who Died In October 1885."
- 1892 March 31: **Park Region College** was established as a corporate body in the spring of 1892 by members of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of Park Region in MN. It became an academy right away. Our own **Reverend Ole N. Fosmark** gave the vision for this school. Classes began on Oct. 16, 1892, in a building on the Boynton Block of Washington Avenue. In 1900, a railroad magnet, James J. Hill, sold some property (on which the present day Hillcrest School stands) for \$30 an acre with earnings between \$35,000 to \$40,000. In 1901, the new school was built to a size of 134 ft by 78 ft. It had a brick edifice, a first floor of classrooms, a chapel, a library, a reading room, a reception room and office. Academy, commercial and music were

the three areas of instruction. The dormitories were in the top three floors. Staff and students did not move in until January 1902. In 1909, a college department was added. Many changes later, Park Region Campus became the Fergus Falls Lutheran Brethren Schools which previously had been located in Grand Forks, ND. This building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1893 **Fergus Falls Township (Section 21) North Cemetery** came into existence. The land was given to the church by Friedrich Spirkerman and his wife Minnie. Additional land that would enlarge the FF Township Cemetery was obtained from the State of Minnesota (State Hospital land). County Records show that this was deeded to the church on March 10, 1893, and recorded as such on March 30, 1893.

1894 **H. M. Normann** was the **first “Son of the Congregation”** to be ordained a Lutheran Pastor at our Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. H. M. was the son of Rev. O. A. Martin. H. M. went on to finish school at Park Region College in Fergus Falls in 1895. In 1903, he received a Theological Degree at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

1895 The church’s **first senior ushers** were P. O. Field and Olaf Schei. Olaf Schei was born in Goodhue County, MN in 1868, to Johannes P. and Barolina (Rosvold) Schei who had come to America from Quebec and made Fergus Falls their home. Olaf later managed a clothing store with J. H. Grass and later bought the business.

1901 - 1903 Supply Pastor- Reverend Severin Elicius Sigvard Meisel

S. E. S. Meisel was born on November 27, 1863, in Norway. He attended Chicago Theological Seminary in 1892 and perhaps Augsburg Seminary the year before that. In 1893, he was ordained and his first title was “Norsk Lutherske Prestor in Amerika”. Rev. Meisel became a part of the Norwegian Synod (Norske Synode) in that year. From 1901 through 1903, Rev. Meisel served at our church with Reverend Ole Fosmark and also served at Park Region College in Fergus Falls. A supply pastor was much like a substitute teacher. Because Rev. Fosmark had a growing church and served it all alone, Rev. Meisel was called in to assist from 1901 to 1903. In late 1903, he served a congregation in Garske, ND.

1906 The **Young People’s Society (YPS)** was organized. It later became known as Luther League.

1908 - 1828 Reverend Skak Joakim Nikolaus Ylvisaker

Rev. Ylvisaker was born in MN on October 8, 1832. His parents were Niels Thorbjornsen Ylvisaker, 1832-1877, and Kirstine Hundrun Orbeck Ylvisaker, 1833-1929. When Niels died in 1877, Kirstine then married Andreas Cornelius Erstad. Rev. S. J. N. Ylvisaker married Emelia (Millie) Estrem, 1876-1953. She was the daughter of Ole Olsson Ostrem, which connected her to several Estrems in our church’s history. S. J. N. and Emelia had 7 children: Walther O. (later Walter),

Harald J. (not Harold), Rudolph E. (also a pastor), Lois G. (Ben) Kannenberg , Miss Valborg Ylvisaker, Helga McNeil (?) Ylvisaker, and a baby that lived briefly in 1933. Rev. Ylvisaker had a parish in Mayfield, MN (1898-1900); Zumbrota, MN (1900-1907); and came to First English Lutheran in 1908. In 1916, he took a paid leave for one year, and then stayed with First English into the spring of 1928. He led this congregation through the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic in 1917-1918, through the 1919 Fergus Falls Cyclone, and the church rebuilding. Because church records were destroyed in the cyclone, no one will ever know what challenges Ylvisaker faced from 1908 - June 22, 1919. And records from the church's beginnings were also destroyed. Any records that the Archives has ownership to from the early years have come from congregation members, from organizations and from business groups in Fergus Falls. From 1931 through 1946, Reverend Ylvisaker served the Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Stanwood, WA. Because he led the remodeling, the building or rebuilding of several churches in his career, Pastor Ylvisaker became known as "The Builder of Churches".

(Two of the earliest Sunday School teachers under Rev. Ylvisaker were Mr. and Mrs. John Rovang who both taught for nearly 30 years.)

1910 - 1913 **O. T. Nelson was the first church janitor.**

1912 April 15: The RMS Titanic sank in the North Atlantic Ocean.

1912 December 1 40th Anniversary

1912 December 1: The **Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Fergus Falls had grown to 350 souls.** The daylong celebration began with worship conducted by Rev. Ylvisaker and the guest preacher was his brother Rev. I. D. Ylvisaker of ND. The Ladies Aid served the noon meal, and the afternoon program included musical numbers, a presentation by former pastor- D. J. Growe who outlined the history of the church and recognized several Charter Members of the church still living. Since 1872, there were 763 baptisms, 500 weddings, 427 confirmands, and 230 funerals.

1914 July 28: World War 1 began and continued until November 11, 1918. The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917.

1914 - 1931 John Saxhaug, whose given name was **Johannes Ellingsson Sakshaug, was our second janitor.** His salary was \$100 in 1915, and he received a raise in 1916 to \$125 a year. His daughter, Ellen Saxhaug, owned a tiny Bible dated 1906, and it is on display in First Lutheran's Heritage Hall.

1915 The **Dorcias** women's group was formed to raise money for missions.

1916 April 4: **Gertrude Gilbertson** was born. In 1940, she married **Edwin Larson** at Kathryn, North Dakota. Gertrude and Ed had two children, Margaret (Maggie) and David.

Ed died on January 12, 1990. David died on December 3, 1994 at age 45. Gert still graces us with her presence in 2023, at the age of 107.

1916 - 1917 Interim Reverend Dr. J. Walter Johnshoy

Joseph Walter Johnshoy was born on January 21, 1891 in Starbuck, Minnesota to Hans and Mari Knudsdatter. J. Walter married Helga M. Larsen on August 5, 1914 in St. Paul. Rev. S. J. N. Ylvisaker was on a year's leave of absence to raise money for the Lutheran Memorial Fund, and Reverend Dr. Johnshoy stepped in. Upon leaving Fergus Falls, J. Walter and Helga headed to Moorhead, MN where J. Walter became a college professor at Concordia College. They had six children. Reverend Johnshoy's brother, Reverend M. Casper Johnshoy, compiled and arranged "The Great Deliverance, A Sacred Cantata in 1922". It was dedicated to our First English Lutheran Church and is displayed in Heritage Hall.

1916 Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church's **1916 Annual Report**: Rev. Ylvisaker was on a leave of absence and he retained his salary that year, but no record of a salary for Interim Pastor Johnshoy was found, except for a \$5.00 gift from the Dorcas ladies. Dorcas gave \$126.43 to Home Missions, plus \$145.27 to China Missions, and \$30 to put a Chinese girl through school. The Annual Report also showed that \$81.00 was spent on wood and M. J. Fossen was paid \$0.70 for a mop. Tuning the organ cost \$10.00, and painting the parsonage was \$61.95. Total given in offerings for 1916, was \$2,012.81.

1917 - Early 1918 There were **other Norwegian Lutheran Churches** in the area and English Lutheran Churches also. Strong conversations were being held to consider possible mergers but our Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church made the decision to hold off from uniting with other churches at this time in our history.

1918 February 22: **The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Ladies Aid** gave a reception for the boys who were going into service in WWI. Many guests came, the food was exhausted, and the ladies worked tirelessly.

America did not enter the war until April of 1917 because our country was not prepared to send soldiers over to France right away. Many boys did not enter training or leave the US until March 1918 or later.

1918 March 7: **The signing of the Certificate of Incorporation** to change our church's name drew a large crowd. The former **Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church** now became **the First English Lutheran Church** with a membership of 350 souls. We were the first church to move from Norwegian services to English services.

1918 April 18: The ladies of the Norwegian Evangelical Church of Fergus Falls disbanded. On March 7, the church had changed its name and so the ladies quickly became **First English Lutheran Ladies Aid** under Mrs. C. O. Estrem's leadership. The ladies met in

the church parlor for the purpose of making all changes official. Their constitution was adopted on this day giving directions as to elections, officers, committees and a first annual meeting. In 1936, there were 130 members. Dues collection began at \$0.10 a meeting but only if you were in attendance.

1918 - 1928 Reverend Skak Joakim Nikolaus Ylvisaker returned.

Reverend S. J. N. Ylvisaker pastored through the 1918-1919 Spanish Flu epidemic. He survived the 1919 Cyclone but due to the church records having been destroyed by the 1919 cyclone, many of the challenges he faced and factual church history would never become known.

1918 Autumn: The Cloquet - Moose Lake Forest Fire of 1918.

Years before the fire, there had been great pine forest harvests for lumber. Wood stumps and waste had been left behind and then came the drought. Railroad track sparks started 5 or 6 major fires and some smaller ones which burned 250,000 acres, \$73 million in damages which would be over a billion today. In Cloquet - Moose Lake alone there were 453 deaths, 52,000 nonfatal injuries and 1200 homeless. Thirty-eight small communities were destroyed and this raised the total number of fire deaths to near one thousand. This fire is known as the United States' worst fire of all time. (In second place would now be the Maui Fire- Lahaina of 2023, but with so many people missing who would later be included in total deaths, the two fires may be ranked differently.)

1918 and 1919 During these two years Minnesota had major theaters of tragedies for Minnesotans and the soldiers coming back from WW 1. Soldiers tried to get home but got sick or died as they traveled through regions in the states spreading the 1918 Spanish Flu. Soldiers with families and homes in the NE corner of MN came home to death and destruction caused by fires. Lastly, Fergus Falls soldiers who had come home on or after June 22nd, came home to the Cyclone's death and destruction.

1919 June 19: The **First English Lutheran Ladies Aid had their last afternoon meeting** in the church. On June 22, 1919, their church was destroyed. On August 14, the Ladies Aid met at the home of Mrs. Cornelius Peterson to decide what challenge they should take on first. On August 22, the Ladies Aid met at 1:00, to clean the "tar paper" covered wrecked basement. Not until December 29, 1920, was the Ladies Aid able to meet in the rehabilitated basement.

1919 June 22: **A cyclone** destroyed the church at Court Street and Junius Avenue. Members **Jens O. Fossen and his wife were killed** that day and were included on the list of cyclone deaths published in the Fergus Falls Free Press on June 25. Jens and his family had immigrated to America in 1865. They sailed for 14 weeks to reach Quebec, then rode down the St. Lawrence River to Chicago, and over to WI so Jens could help harvest fields. The family moved west by train and came into MN in an ox drawn covered wagon. They traveled north to Otter Tail County

where Jens took a homestead in Dane Prairie. The family's first home was a dugout and as soon as they were able to they built a log cabin. They had one of the finest farms in the county. There were five Fossen children: Mickel, Gurine, Louise, Ole, and John. Jens, wife Kerstine Gurine Ole and his sons George and John. All were buried in the South Cemetery.

- 1919 As the **remains of the church** were being picked through, only two surviving treasures were found, the church's bell (found 200 ft SE of the church) and the baptismal font. Both were put into the new church in 1922. That baptismal font was later replaced with one that matched the new altar. Pieces of the wood from the original altar were made into a carving that had two large Greek letters which are the first 2 letters in the name of Christ. Two smaller letters stand for Alpha and Omega. In 2022, it was put on display in Heritage Hall.
- 1919 August 14: The **Ladies Aid met at the home of Mrs. Cornelius Peterson** to decide which challenge they should take on first. It was a hard decision since the whole church had been devastated.
- 1919 The congregation **refurbished the church basement**. A temporary tar paper roof was put over the subfloor. A wood furnace heated the 20 ft. long area for the winter. Much of the work on the church was performed by congregation volunteers.
- 1919 August 22: The Ladies Aid met at 1:00 to clean **the "tar paper covered" basement**. It was not until December 29, 1920, that the Ladies Aid was able to meet in the rehabilitated basement. Much of the work on the church was performed by congregation volunteers. Some services were held in the basement and some in the Orpheum Theatre which had just been built.
- 1919 September 11 to December 17: Since First English Lutheran and Bethlehem Church had both lost their churches to the cyclone, they worked together to **continue services also at the Cozy Theatre downtown**. Soon after, meetings began with the goal of deciding whether to maintain separate English and Norwegian congregations or to merge.
- 1919 December 12: A decision was made to **sell the damaged parsonage for \$250**, build a new roof over the basement and repair it in a manner that would render it survivable for the coming winter. Then on December 17, First English Lutheran notified Bethlehem Church that the offer to **merge had been voted on and was declined**. On December 17, a seventeen member building committee was elected. They met every Thursday afternoon at the farm home of Edward Peterson. The cyclone had almost destroyed the uninsured parsonage which was valued at \$5000 (but sold for \$250), and the \$15,000 wooden church was only insured for \$5000. The replacement church would cost \$140,000 because city code had by now determined that all new public structures must be made from brick.

- 1919 October 16: First English Lutheran mailed clothing to New York for the **Polish Relief Fund**. The freight cost \$22. Two days later the membership had collected \$105 for the same fund which was amazing considering 4 months earlier the church had been destroyed by a cyclone. But the people of the church knew how traumatic the Soviet invasion of Poland had been. In August 1920, Poland defeated the Red Army in a hard - fought battle in Warsaw.
- 1919 In this year the church began supporting homes for children who were orphaned. One was called the **Wild Rice Orphan Home** in Twin Valley, MN and the other was the **Lake Park Orphan Home** in Lake Park, MN. Lake Park opened their doors in 1895 and Wild Rice in 1898. Orphans at Wild Rice came from ND, SD, WI, MT, NE, Ontario and Saskatchewan. From 1899 until 1931, the Wild Rice Home had 616 children come and go through its doors. On March 18 at 11:00 PM, a dreadful fire started in the dormitory but the children and staff made it out in only their nightclothes. They somehow crowded into the superintendent's residence. After that Lake Park took as many of the orphans as they could and the two facilities merged into one orphan home.
- 1920 January 11: The congregation approved the **construction plans for a Gothic style church**. A contract with the John Lauritzen Construction Company was signed by the church Trustees on May 23, 1920, but construction had begun before this date. Sixteen men were on the building committee along with Rev. S. J. N. Ylvisaker. The cost of the church would be about \$140,000.
- 1920 - 1921 **First English Lutheran's organ** was a Hamlin Pipe Organ valued at \$1,200.
- 1921 January 26: At 7:30 PM, the first "**All Church Birthday Party**" was held. Everyone was to come "with as many cents as you are old". This money became a donation to help with building costs. Food and musical treats were also a part of the event.
- 1921 The **Ladies Aid pledged \$5,000** towards the rebuilding of the church.
- 1921 The **Sunshine Committee** was organized by the Ladies Aid and was active until 1948. They provided flowers, cards, visits, food, and clothing to those in need. They also helped provide funeral lunches for those in need. Funding came entirely from donations. It soon became necessary to have fundraisers. They sold dozens of donuts, cookbooks, second additions of cookbooks, and refreshments for meetings.

1922 November 26 50th Anniversary

- 1922 November 26: The two morning services became one on this day for the **New Church Dedication Ceremony**. It was dedicated to the people who sacrificed and persevered during the building undertaking and believed in the future of First English Lutheran. Even though the church was finished one year before this date, the

dedication had been postponed so it would be held on the 50th Anniversary. Ten clergy participated and this far outweighed any other congregational event to date. An estimated 1,000 people attended the events of the day. (The church now had a building debt for several years due to World War 1 inflation, and the scarcity of big machinery during church construction.)

- 1922 November 26: The **evening service commemorated First Lutheran's 50th Anniversary**. Reverend Dr. L. W. Boe, president of St. Olaf College, was the featured speaker and focused on the pioneers who accomplished great things due to believing in spiritual things. God was their reality. John P. Haave and Knute O. Sletto were present and were the only two surviving Charter Members. This service was limited to the capacity of the church. Music was led by Professor Carsten Sperati and Reverend J. Walter Johnshoy. The first 50 years of the church had 948 baptisms, 612 confirmations, 614 marriages, 275 funerals, and the membership was then at 675.
- 1922 Pastor Ylvisaker headed a committee of Fergus Falls pastors to enlist the public school officials for their cooperation in **organizing midweek religion instruction**. There were not any written records of this happening in the 1920s or 1930s or 1940s. but Mary Jane Harris Ross (a life member) recalled her mother being a teacher for the classes and of course Mary Jane was a student. Later the Annual Meeting Report stated **that Tuesday School** was in operation from 1956 to 1976. Next the public school system switched the Tuesday classes to Wednesday. Our enrollment then was at 92 students. First Lutheran discontinued involvement in midweek instruction in 1985 because of the difficulty of securing teachers.
- 1923 November 24: A **charter application for a new Boy Scout troop** was sponsored by the First English Lutheran Men's Club. It was approved in 1924 by the Park Region Council which was represented by Elmer Walstrom who was the Commissioner/Scout Executive. Troop #4 was now one of two Boy Scout groups in Fergus Falls at the time. The other troop, designated as #2 and later #302, was sponsored by Grace United Methodist Church which had been chartered on October 10, 1923. The first scoutmaster of Troop #4 was Elvin Grandrud with O. J. Lee (clothier business), O. C. Boyum (banker) and S. J. N. Ylvisaker (pastor) as committee members. The first scouts became Charter Members and included 14 scouts ages 12 to 15 years old: Raymond Tostenson, Lloyd Vigen, Orell Boyum, Johnnie Boyum, Arthur Boyum, Clarence Erickson, Arnold Erickson, Edwin Fossen, Howard Halverson, Evert Hame, George Hartman, Olaf Olson and Chester Rosengren. Troop 4 later changed to Troop 104 and in 1960 it became Troop 304 and that stayed through the life of Scouts at First Lutheran. Church member Lester Leitte joined the scouts in 1924 as a 12 year old. He became an Eagle Scout in 1931. He had 58 years of continuous membership for which he received the Silver Beaver Award for outstanding contributions to scouting.

There were at least 21 scoutmasters in our history. Several scoutmasters volunteered for more than one term, and a few volunteered for decades. Some of those dedicated people were: John Leitte, Lester Leitte, Steve Leitte, Harold Nirschl, Verner Josephs, Innas Partain, Russ Anderson, Ken Toso, Michael Partain, John Dieseth, Gary Eckley, Dan Rosendahl and Keary Toso.

- 1924 October: **The Mens Club now became The Brotherhood.** It enlisted men in the church for active service in promoting programs for boys such as Boy Scouts; uniting men for stronger impact in the community; and bringing men together for Christian fellowship. During WWII, the Brotherhood sent gifts to First English Lutheran's Armed Service members and their first mailing included prayer books and letters. The Brotherhood became affiliated with the International Brotherhood in 1951 and continued as a club until 1959.
- 1924 First English's **membership was at 600.**
- 1925 The transition from having a **Church Board to a Church Council** took place. The pastors continued to be the president of the Council.
- 1926 The church **membership was at 750.** The Annual Budget was \$4,476, and Pastor Ylvisaker's salary was raised to \$2,000.
- 1926 **Pioneer Home Beginnings:** A group met to assess the need for a home for the aging. In 1927, the need was confirmed and Articles of Incorporation were written. In 1928, a general building contract was given to J.P. Johnson at a cost of \$46, 276.00. It was built and dedicated that same year. In 1953, an addition was added at \$130,000 and opened in 1954. Many changes took place over the years up to 2023 with the buildings, titles, policies and sponsoring churches. First English Lutheran, Bethlehem Lutheran and Zion Lutheran were the "sponsoring churches" for many years.
- 1926 **Easter:** This was the **Dedication Sunday for Votteler- Holtkamp- Sparling Organ.** It was purchased by the Ladies Aid who had saved money for three years- \$10,800. This replaced the original pump organ (valued at \$1,200) that was destroyed in the cyclone of 1919. Our new organ was the largest in Minnesota at the time. It had 1600 pipes and 2 octaves of chimes.
- 1926 December 25, 6:00 PM: The First English Lutheran Church's **Christmas Program** included Choir Director C. E. Sperati leading the vested adult choir in singing "While Shepherds Watched". He also led the vested children's choir of 150 singing all the congregational songs and all were accompanied by pipe organ and piano. Reverend S. Y. N. Ylvisaker's sermon was titled "A Savior, Christ The Lord".

1928 - 1946 Reverend Selmer Lawrence Tallakson

Rev. Tallakson was born on May 5, 1884 near Willmar. His father was Neils Tallakson, 1858-1941, and his mother was Helen Anderson Tallakson, 1860-1947. Rev. Tallakson was the oldest of eight children. He attended Willmar Seminary, Luther College and Luther Seminary. Rev. Tallakson was a man of big stature with great physical strength but it could not compare to his leadership strengths during his 18 year tenure. His wife was Clara Midthun, 1891-1983, and they had two children- James and Helen Ann. Upon Rev. Tallakson accepting the call, the Ladies Aid hosted a Sunday evening reception on April 22, 1928, for the new pastor and his family. When he took the call to First English he inherited a \$35,000 debt and then had to guide his congregation through the Great Depression. But his size, dedication, and sincerity made him a powerful speaker and pastor. The church's first radio ministry was started and broadcasted one Sunday each month thanks to Rev. Tallakson who took over the leadership. This long-running "Morning Watch" Program began in 1939 and continues today in 2023. In the early days of his pastorate, Rev. Tallakson brought church families together every Sunday night for a potluck supper and activities. Financial woes still kept a presence in 1929, and the church council was forced to borrow \$1,000 from the Ladies Aid. The church continued to lose ground and had to seek out loans to pay interest and salaries. Pastor Tallakson left First English Lutheran in 1946 and was an interim pastor in various churches in WI, MN, and ND for ten years. He died of a heart attack in 1956 and was buried in Willmar.

- 1928 The earliest **Parochial Report**, also called a Parish Report and later called the Congregational Profile, was found in the Archives and dated January 1 to December 31, 1928. The document was filled out in red pencil, blue pencil, lead pencil and black pen with division and addition problems written across the margins. Pastor Tallakson was pastor of First English Lutheran at that time with 272 confirmed males and 296 confirmed females. There were a total of 803 "souls" in the congregation. Sixty-four children and nine adults were baptized. Fifteen adults and three children died that year. Ninety-one members were "dropped". The total contributions for the year came to \$11,931.27 and benevolences totalled \$2,431.27.
- 1929 The **Sunshine Society** (not to be confused with the Sunshine Committee) was organized under the leadership of Mrs. Hilda Slind with a group of ladies representing all of the churches supporting the Pioneer Memorial Home. The Society's aim was to bring the Word of God to the residents as well as providing a wonderful opportunity for them to meet old friends and make new ones. On meeting day, the Society women dressed in their best, and decorated the room as though they were having company, because they were. The society remained active for 30 years.
- 1929 May 17: The **Ladies Aid** voted to furnish a room at **St. Luke's Hospital** in Fergus Falls.

1932 **Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation (LDR)** was organized and the women were dedicated to mission work. Our Dorcas Society, which had been in existence since 1915, decided to mesh with LDR in 1933 and was a dominant force in the life of the church. Their first year efforts aided an Indian mission in Wisconsin (with clothing, etc.) and in Alaska (\$). The Shishmaref Station Mission in AK received monetary donations from this group in 1932 to 1947. There was a High School LDR in 1937 and a Ruth Circle LDR in 1943. These girls/women sewed articles from dresses to baby bibs and gave it all to Lutheran Welfare in Mpls.. They gave time to residents in the Pioneer Home and donations to the Lake Park Children's Home. The group worked with other church organizations to help retire the church debt. The women supported the church music programs and the library. They had one or two planning meetings each month, had meetings to sew, Bible studies, elected officers, and held annual meetings. The LDR or Dorcas LDR was in operation from 1932 - 1968.

1932 - 1942 **Oscar Steinbach was janitor.**

1933 August 13: **Lewis and Ida Tomhave's daughter Alvera died** on this date at the age of 22. The previous winter her health had begun to fail and area physicians were not able to help. The family was advised to go to Rochester and she had a surgery for an intestinal tumor but death occurred two days later. Alvera's parents, family and friends, gave a beautiful brass cross to the church in her memory. It continues to sit on the Sanctuary altar in 2023. (Mr. L.F. Tomhave 1883-1952, Mrs. L.F. Tomhave 1884-1949, and daughter Alvera M. Tomhave 1912-1933).

1934 **Mrs. C. O. Estrem organized a Reading Club.** The first meeting lasted 1½ hours with 6 to 10 attendees. During the first gathering it was decided to take action that would lead to the creation of a library. In 1935, the Ladies Aid provided assistance with their fundraising abilities and by 1937, 300 books lined the shelves of the library with additional books donated by Ladies Aid Divisions. Mrs. Combacher was the librarian until 1938. Overdue books would cost the reader 5 cents per book.

1934 **Daniel** (4 mos.) and **David** (5 mos.) and **James** (2 yrs.) **Walvatne** died of the measles in April, May and June. Daniel and David were twins. All three were buried in the South Cemetery. Their parents were John and Clara Walvatne. The boys had 10 older siblings: Esther b1914, Florence b1916, Joseph b1918, Raymond b1919, Walter b1921, Helen b1923, Leo b1925, Edwin b1927, Dorothy b1928, and Jeanette b1930. Nine of the siblings were born in Iowa, and their sister Jeanette and the 3 young boys were born in Fergus Falls.

1935 **August - August 1938 Assistant Pastor John Carlot Wisnaes**

John was born on March 26, 1885, in Hickerson, ND to Rev. Rasmus J. Wisnaes and Emilie Bredeson Wisnaes. On November 24, 1921, he married Lulla Glimme, They had one daughter, born in 1923, Mrs. Lois Cecilia (F. E.) Youell. The family lived in Fergus Falls from 1930 - 1941. In 1934, Rev. Wisnaes taught at Park Region

and was a member of First English Lutheran. On March 4, 1935, he was hired as an assistant pastor for just four months. In August 1935, his job was extended and an extension again occurred in March of 1936. In 1942, John was drafted and entered WW II. Lulla Wisnaes was the church's organist for many years. She died on August 16, 1971, and Pastor John Wisnaes died on December 13, 1973, in Fargo, ND.

1936 The church **membership was at 965.**

1936 The church was still **in debt at \$28,200.00** on the building of the new church and parsonage. The total cost of the new structure was \$112,880.00.

1936 February: **Assistant Pastor Wisnaes** came up with the idea to **sell bricks**, at \$1 a piece for members to purchase. When a member purchased a "brick" his or her name went onto a rectangle drawn on an inside wall of the church. This was to signify "buying back the church". In the first year of the "brick fund" only \$543 was collected. Pastor Wisnaes continued to work on the church's financial affairs through 1938. His name was recorded on our membership list until 1942.

1936 December 25: First English Lutheran's **Christmas Program** began with Mr. Carsten E. Sperati directing the adult choir in "Sing O' Heaven". Reverend Tallakson's sermon was titled "The Eternal King In A Borrowed Crib". Mrs. Tallakson sang "Gesu Bambino".

1937 January 23: **Seventy-two new members** were welcomed into the church at the Annual Meeting putting the membership at 1,000. This event had a large attendance even in the presence of another flu epidemic.

1937 April 29: **Mr. Carsten Sperati's death** was a distinct loss to Fergus Falls. He had been Music Director at Park Region Lutheran College, and then Choir Director at Fergus Falls High School. He was also Choir Director at First English Lutheran Church for 17 years up to the time of his death which was determined to be caused by a cerebral hemorrhage. He was 45 years old. His wife Martha Johnson Sperati died in 1971, daughter Beverly in 2003, son Charles in 2006, and son Carleton in 2009. Rev. S. L. N. Tallakson officiated at his funeral on May 2, 1937. Carsten was buried in Decorah, IA. (Carsten's father, Dr. Carlo Sperati, was the Band Director at Luther College.)

1939 - 1945 World War II

1939 September 18: **Park Region Lutheran Hour (radio ministry)** went on the air with only Revs. S. L. N. Tallackson from First English Lutheran and Herman J. Muus of Bethlehem Lutheran Church participated to see what kind of response they would get. Responses were positive and on September 18th, regular sessions were set up and Revs. H. C. Alden and P .K. Lawrence joined the radio project. The devotional ministry was on Station KGDE in Fergus Falls, MN. On October 1, 1941 the broadcast became known as Lake Region Morning Watch. On September 29, 1942 a theme song,

“Rock of Ages” was selected and then the broadcast ran from a studio in O’Meara’s Department Store. In 2022, Heritage Hall added a framed picture of the 1945 studio. In 1940, the name changed to **Lake Region “Morning Watch”**. Now in 2023, it is Minnesota’s longest running radio program- 84 years- and is simply called **Morning Watch**. It operates out of the KBRF Radio Station at 8:45 every weekday morning for 15 minutes.

1940 - 1941 Intern Engebret Olaf Midboe

He was one of two first church interns hired during the Great Depression. Church members were solicited to pay for his salary. Engebret was born on May 18, 1916, to Tobias and Margit Midboe. He attended Concordia College; Luther Seminary 1940 to 1943; interned at First English Lutheran in Fergus Falls for one year; married Helen Bernice Bondy in 1943; was in Pierpont, SD, 1943 to 1945; attended Princeton, NJ Seminary from 1946 to 1949, became an interim pastor at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hoboken, NJ from 1947 to 1952; and was Chaplain in the US Army from 1945 to 1946, and again in 1952 to 1954. He was the Ex. Sec. of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, NLC from 1954 to 1966. In 1966, he became pastor at Shepherd of the Valley in Rockville, MD. Pastor Engebret died on March 4, 1992 at age 75. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA. His wife Helen died in 2015 at the age of 97 and is buried beside Engebret.

1940 March 7: **The second “All Church Birthday Party”** was held. Once again everyone was to come with “as many cents as you are old”. Three hundred guests sat at four long tables in Fellowship Hall, each table representing a season of the year. Girls from the Senior Luther League were waitresses. The money raised went to fund education needs.

1940 March 20: Reverend Tallakson presented a First English Lutheran Resolution to the City Board. **It protested the opening of a liquor store in Fergus Falls.** The resolution was put into the meeting minutes and into the Public Press- the local newspaper at that time. Christian groups in Fergus Falls wanted to prevent physical, social and spiritual harm created by the liquor evil.

1941 - 1942 Intern Obert A. Rust

Obert was the second intern hired during the depression. The church members were once again solicited to pay for a second intern. Obert was born in Ferryville, WI on October 8, 1915. He attended Luther College and Luther Seminary in Decorah, IA, interned with First English Lutheran, and graduated from seminary in 1942. He married Florence Churness in 1944, and entered Army Chaplaincy in 1946. Reverend Obert A. Rust died on August 3, 2010.

1941 December: **Lutheran Stars was organized at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Benson.** This was a group of mostly “at home” mothers who could not attend Ladies

Aid because they needed to be home with the children. But after 2 years these women automatically became members of the Ladies Aid. (And perhaps brought their children along?) In 1945, the Lutheran Stars made improvements to the Social Room at church but fell short of funds for the purchase of asbestos flooring. The Stars asked the Church Council if they could help out. The Council gave them \$100 and the flooring was ordered. In February of 1951, the Stars gave \$100 to the Church Council to start plans for enlarging the Sunday School facilities. In March of 1951, Council President Elton read a letter from the Stars expressing their concerns once again. In April, the Council sent the Stars a letter assuring them that their Council and the Building Committee were studying the problem. In 1956, the Stars furnished and decorated the Mother's Room off of the Narthex.

- 1942 **Lena Overwick of Fergus Falls passed away.** Not many knew of Lena Overwick. She was born in Norway in 1854. When her father died, two of her sisters lived in an orphanage because the family was so desperately poor. Lena immigrated to the U.S. in 1872, to earn enough money to bring the rest of her family to the U.S. When she first arrived here in 1882, Lena worked in the Forest Picket Dry Goods Store. (A dry goods store sells anything that does not have liquid in it.) Lena loved working with the fabrics and trimmings. She enjoyed making her own homemade hats from those items. Eventually she opened her own hat business and became a very successful professional milliner. She consistently advertised in the Fergus Falls Ugeblad, a Norwegian-language newspaper, as well as in the Weekly Journal. Our Archives' Annual Reports from 1911 - 1930, show that Lena gave yearly offerings to our First English Lutheran Church. She died at age 88. In her Will she planned to share some of her wealth in Fergus Falls. And she generously did. When asked what our church might like to have, the church chose to ask for a sterling silver, three piece, coffee/tea service, and we received one. In 2022, the Archives Committee was pondering where all of the silver plated and sterling silver pieces, that were found about the church, had come from. Some had been locked up and some had not. One day, Missy Hermes from the Otter Tail County Historical Society asked if we had a silver service set given to us by Lena Overwick. We weren't sure but we were soon able to identify the set. Now, in 2023, the silver service has been properly labeled and displayed in Heritage Hall. The mystery was solved. A mystery that we didn't even know needed solving. Upon Lena's death, her Will stated that \$800 of her trust was to go to Lake Alice's beautification and preservation. There is a historical marker on the NE corner of the lake commending Lena's generosity. Today that monetary gift would equal \$14,683.19.
- 1942 February: Mrs Chester Rosengren, chairman of the **choir robes project**, bought material and met with seamstresses at church for directions. The robes had to all be cut at one member's home, and then taken home by different sewers to be completed by Easter.
- 1942 Easter: The Ladies Aid sent every **Military Service Member a Christmas Card** with a one dollar bill tucked inside.

1942 After reading many **new membership documents from the early years** of the church, it soon became obvious that transferring a membership from one church to another was not an easy task. **Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Willson** (Lenore Harstad) of Rogers, ND, and son Larry Douglas were moving to Atwater, ND in 1940. They had to take along a formal Certificate of Dismissal from their pastor at Rogers' Bethel Evangelical Church that declared they were members in good standing. In 1942, the Willson family made another move, to Fergus Falls. Again they had to take along a document to prove they were in good standing within their church. This document was beautifully scripted and notarized with the dates of births, baptisms, confirmations, a marriage, with a note, "**The Willson's** are heartily recommended to be a member of any Lutheran Congregation Of Their Choice". When they picked First English Lutheran Church as their next home church, they had to visit with the pastor, attend new membership class, Be introduced to the congregation one Sunday. and the next Sunday the congregation had to vote on their membership and then they were welcomed with opened arms.

1942 October 11 70th Anniversary

1942 October 11: People with speaking parts in **this anniversary worship service** were Rev. S. J. N. Ylvisaker, Rev. S. L. Tallakson, children of the late Rev. O. N. Fosmark, daughter of the late Rev. D. J. Grove, and Dr. S. T. Normann who is the son of the late Rev. O. A. Normann. Also during the service, the choir and director Miss. Nora Lunde performed a special festival number. A Confirmation Reunion during the festival was organized by Rev. Tallakson.

1942 October 11: **The first "Son of the Congregation" to be ordained** a Lutheran pastor, was **Pastor H. M. Normann**. He was the featured speaker at the 70th Anniversary Ceremony. His father was Rev. Dr. O. A. Normann who was an Otter Tail County missionary pastor of 30 congregations in 1869.

1945 January 10: The **church indebtedness was paid in full** and A Celebration Party with supper and games was enjoyed by all. Special music was provided by Mrs. G. J. Mouritsen who played a violin solo. From 1938 to 1943, collection efforts had to be stepped up, pledges needed to be collected, a few bills went unpaid, and the Ladies Aid provided another loan. Rev. Tallakson had convinced members to contribute \$5,000 a year on top of supporting the annual budget. It took several years for this to happen but at the end 1945 the mortgage bond was burned.

1945 The **head ushers** were Louis F. Tomhave and Olaf J. Schei.

1945 September 25: **An evening ladies group was organized** thanks to Lincoln School Principal Hylde Isaacson's efforts. Several working women felt left out from church participation because they couldn't attend daily meetings and they did not feel a part of the women of the church. Their first meeting was held in Jane Thorpe's home with newly elected president and teacher Mrs. Philip Kjaglien taking over the helm. The

group agreed that the home meetings would start with devotions, business, a topic of Bible study followed by planning and sewing on their mission projects. They called themselves **The Lutheran Professional and Business Women of First Lutheran**. It was decided that the first year's project was to make gifts for children at **Lake Park - Wild Rice Children's Home**. They also worked to raise money to provide the parsonage with an electric stove; made clothing articles which were sent to missions in Madagascar and Alaska; made quilts to sell and raise money for missions; helped the Ladies Aid with bigger projects; made Christmas gifts for State Hospital patients; donated to the Red Cross; gifted money to pastors and interns; provided for a needy family; made a large altar hanging; made Easter Baskets, and much more. In 1954, they changed their name to the **Mary/Martha Guild**. In October of 1960, Pastor Preus asked the group to join the large group of Ladies Aid women. The Mary/ Martha Guild remained a viable group until their last meeting on which they voted to disband. On December 19, 1961, the women joined the ALCW organization.

1945 November 6: **Luther Crest Bible Camp near Alexandria was officially formed** by The Fergus Falls, Milaca, and Glenwood Bible Camp Association. Our church has supported Luther Crest activities and sent thousands of children and/or families to camp from 1945 to the present year, 2023.

1946 Newspaper clipping: "Mrs. O.I. Brandvold entertained members of the **Igloo Club** at a delightful Christmas Party in her home Saturday afternoon. Gifts were exchanged around a lighted Christmas tree. Two of the members who have held offices for many years were each presented with a gift from the group of 18. Gifts were also collected for The Christian Literature Society in China and for a needy family here at home. Several of the women in the club were wives of Charter Members.

Igloo Club Notes of interest:

1. There were not any records to explain why this group of women was called the Igloo Club.
2. A photo of the group was found and one woman was absent from the party. So someone cut out her face from another photo, and glued it onto the 1946 photo. It looked as though she was floating in the background.
3. After some research, it was discovered that this group supported Chinese Christian Literacy. In 1949, when the People's Republic of China was formed, missionaries left the country and so did Christian books. In 1951, a Council on Christian Literacy for Overseas Chinese was founded (CCLOC) to provide books and money to publish or purchase books for Christians in China. In 1965, The Council changed its name to Chinese Christian Literary Council (CCLC). This Council continues today, in 2023 and is a nonprofit group who cares for the spiritual aspirations of the Chinese people and Chinese churches. (The Igloo Club had fortitude!)

1946 From this year forward, **the congregation elected the Church Council President**. Dr. C. O. Estrem was the first church member to be elected president.

1946 April 7: The **Ladies Aid served a “Welcome Back” Dinner** to honor all who had been absent in service to their country during World War II. The Mens Club helped plan and assisted in serving 340 meals.

1947 - 1974 Pastor Christian K. Preus

Christian Keyser Preus was born in WA on May 11, 1909, the first of six children born to Rev. Ove J. H. Preus and Magdalene Forde Preus. He graduated from 4 colleges and studied at 2 others. Chris was part of the merger committee that shaped the American Lutheran Church. On September 2, 1935, in Oslo, Norway, Chris married Dorothy Bollum of Minneapolis. They had six children: Anthony, Jonathan, Madelyn, Elizabeth (Betty), Janet and Margaret.

Chris served as pastor of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Perth Amboy, NJ from 1936-1947. Then he received a call from First English Lutheran Church of Fergus Falls. Pastor Preus’s call went out in 1946 but he opted to finish his studies at seminary. The church would wait. The Service of Installation was on February 4, 1947. Pastor Preus had 13 interns between 1955 and 1967 with Intern Wesley Haugen (1955-1956) taking on pastoral duties for nearly 7 months while Chris fought hepatitis. After serving our church for 27 years, then becoming an interim pastor in OR and followed by preaching in northern MN churches, Pastor Preus died on January 9, 2000.

Pastor Preus very much enjoyed directing children’s choirs and teaching confirmation classes. One year all of the confirmands memorized First Corinthians: Chapter 13. Chris commented that they deserved a reward, and a student suggested that Pastor Preus take the whole class out to eat. Taking up this challenge, Pastor Preus and his wife Dorothy put on a turkey dinner for the whole class. The confirmands wore crowns and were treated like royalty.

Pastor Preus Quote 1: After being asked how he manages to keep going when he spends time reading sad scripture, listening to others’ problems and disappointments, Pastor Preus said, “Whenever I have read one sad piece of Sabbath scripture I try to find a pleasant passage so that my reading to the people ends on a pleasant note and I do this with myself. When I’m feeling down I let my thoughts go to thinking of something that turned out good or project my thoughts into the future on something that has a chance of turning out good. So I manage to survive the unhappy and unpleasant incidents” (April 1987)

Pastor Preus Quote 2: “My idea of preaching is to explain the meaning of text right from the Bible. One doesn’t have to be an orator, or a great speaker, one can lisp, stutter, and a lot of other things, but if he manages to explain to the congregation what this text means, then he’s done his work, because it’s the Bible that is speaking to the people. The business of the preacher is to preach Christ and His Resurrection.” (April 1987)

- 1947 February: First English served a **Mother/Daughter Banquet** for 400 guests.
- 1947 May: First English **served 400 guests for the Junior/Senior High School Banquet.**
- 1947 - 1948 **Missions supported during this year included:** Red Cross, Cancer Drive, Kennedy Institute, a mailing of food and clothing in 12 boxes to Lutheran pastors in Germany, Lutheran World Relief, San Francisco Sea Men's Mission, Concordia College, Missionary Residence at Concordia, Madagascar Hospital, Crippled Children's Home in Jamestown, ND, and the Ebenezer Home in Minneapolis, MN.
- 1947 Summer: **The Young Couple's Club was organized** by Pastor Chris and Dorothy Preus. The young couples, with no more than a combined age of 80, became Sunday worship greeters and also had many enjoyable meetings planning activities inside and outside of the church. The first year there were about 25 couples. In 1956, the age limit was dropped due to members of the club aging and still desiring to participate. The word "Young" was then removed from the name of the club. The last recorded Couple's Club minutes were dated November 1967.

1947 October 10, 11, 12 75th Anniversary

- 1947 This three day church anniversary was known as the **Diamond Jubilee**. Reverends S. J. N. Ylvisaker, his son Rudolf (Duffy) Ylvisaker, H. M. Normann, and Christian Preus presented programs throughout the three days. Reverend S. L. Tallakson was to be a part of this anniversary, but the day before his doctor advised him to not make the trip from Grand Forks, ND. Mrs. Tallakson was able to attend. Activities included: worship services, a banquet, music and G. E. Oyloe directed the Senior Choir, confirmation reunions, and a historical program. Also at the Celebration, J. C. Knoff was honored as the oldest member of the church- age 92. He was a Charter Member of the Men's Club, also known as the Brotherhood, and the earliest recorded church treasurer. Also present were the oldest living confirmands, Arnde Huseby and John Fossen. The very first church ushers were also recognized, Olaf J. Schei and P. O. Field.
- 1947 The church **membership sat at 1,100 members**. In 75 years, there had been 1577 baptisms, 1245 confirmands, 1037 marriages, and 156 burials.
- 1947 Two friends, **Mr. C. E. Boe and Mr. John Wilshusen, wed two sisters, Mary and Margaret**. C. E. and John took their brides home to Wendell, MN. Both women were teachers. The Boes joined our church in 1936 and Mary served in leadership roles in Sunday School, Tuesday School and Vacation Bible School from 1947-1985. She also worked with Augustana, Bethlehem and Zion to recruit teachers and prepare schedules. Mary gave 38 years of service to our children. Mary's own words, "The energy we expend to improve the quality of life here is its own reward. Whatever

I have given...I have received many times over.” In 1949, the Wilshusens joined First Lutheran. From 1955-1975, **Margaret Wilshusen** was the church’s financial secretary, a job she truly loved. She also assisted her sister, **Mary Boe**, with Sunday School.

- 1948 The Reverend S. J. N. **Ylvisaker died** at Stanwood, Washington on March 26 at seventy-four years, five months and eighteen days. (as printed in the newspaper)
- 1948 The **first public address system** was installed.
- 1948 The **first church Music Committee** was formed. The members were: Conrad Peterson, Emily Rosengren, Ethel Braaten, Dr. Glenn Mouritsen, Neal Morstad, and Ed Larson.
- 1948 - 1960 **Conrad Blegstad was the Senior Choir Director** for 12 years. He was a college friend of Pastor Preus who had encouraged him to accept the position.
- 1948 A **Spring Convention of the Women’s Missionary Federation** took place at First English Lutheran. The theme was “Christ First”, and 400 women were in attendance.
- 1949 A **new Constitution was adopted**, and with this came changes to the church’s leadership. The Church Council would manage the congregation and its members were to be elected. The pastor would remain a member of the church council but could not be elected as an officer. Deacons and Trustees were to be appointed, and formalized committees became the norm. **And now, because of constitution revisions, women could be a part of the Church Council. Alvida Underwood and Stella Halverson were the first women to be elected.**
- 1949 June: The **Ladies Aid served 380** for the Junior/Senior High School Banquet. The theme was “Wagon Wheels Westward” in keeping with the MN Centennial.
- 1949 December: Pastor Preus finally got permission to buy badly needed **folding chairs**. The Council had put off the purchase for 8 months. One hundred chairs were ordered from Olson Furniture at a cost of \$5.00 each. Some are still floating around the church in 2023.
- 1949 - 1950 During these two years **our faithful ushers were**: Leland Anderson, T. H. Mickelson, Eddie Fossen, Elwin Peterson, B. K. Soby, W. A. Ebersviller, Kenneth A. Gunderson, Charles Underwood, Orris Runningen, and Ernest Aas.
- 1949 - 1974 **Dorothy Preus became the full-time organist** in 1949. Lorraine Killion was the substitute from 1967 to 1974.
- 1950 **First English Lutheran Church sponsored a German refugee Kritz Kronberg.** He lived at the Preus parsonage while he helped with the tuck-pointing of the church.

1950 The **first Council under the new Constitution** included a Brudig, two Fossens, a Daehlin, an Enstad, an Albertson, an Elton, a Christopherson, a Haugen, and a Dieseth. The first president under the new constitution was John Dieseth.

1950 - 1953 The Korean War

1950 - 1960 During **these ten years many names repeated themselves** in the lists of committee members, council members, cemetery committee members, officers, chair people, staff, etc.: Fossens, Kronemanns, Mouritsens, Larsons, Wermagers, Rosengrens, Sunds, Hesbys, Ebervillers, Draxtens, Leittes, Boes, Swensons, Brendeckes, Wilshusens, Petersons, Smedstads, Barsnesses, Henkes, Halversons, Dorns, Norbys, Claypools, Underwoods, Maus, Nesses, Mesnas, Guttormsons, Glorvigens, Smiths, Jaenischs, Bjorgums, Brudvigs, Aases, Sandersons, Seashores, Sobys, Atkinsons, Hansons, Palmers, Eltons, Tomhaves, Morstads, Jacobs, Johnsons, and Dieseths.

1950 Leisurely walks led Pastor Preus and Dorothy to **Fossen Woods**. They discovered that a church member, John Fossen, son of Jens O. Fossen, Charter Member of our church, owned the property. Pastor Preus asked John if the church could use the property for church activities. John agreed and it became a popular spot. Later, Pastor Preus asked John if his family would give the property to the church. Unwilling to donate the property, John said he would do a 99 year lease at the cost of \$1.00 a year. Boy Scouts and Luther League Youth used this area for campouts quite often. Pastor Preus would join the Boy Scouts for Sunday morning worship, then walk and sing his way over the hill and get to church in time for the first service. The property continues to be in a natural state in 2023. And yes, the church still has a valid lease until 2049.

1950 April: The **organ went silent for the next 6 months** for a total dismantling and remodel by Mr. and Mrs. Gottfred Nelson of Dalton, MN for \$5,000. Forty miles of 24 gauge wire and 600 steel springs were replaced. When finished the organ was larger by 73 pipes plus the 150 pipes that had never worked since the original organ of 1920-21 was built. Gottfred Nelson had repaired and rebuilt many organs in MN and even worked on St. Mark's Cathedral in Minneapolis, MN.

1950 November 6: **Once again organ music filled the sanctuary.**

1951 January: First English Lutheran Church's **membership was at 1,550.**

1951 The congregation **approved a campaign for the Building Fund.**

1952 September 24: First English Lutheran and Bethlehem Lutheran each had their own **Dedication Service for The Lake Park - Wild Rice Children's Home**. The building of three homes began in 1949 after the ELCA picked Fergus Falls as the site. One building housed the superintendent and personnel with the other two for children.

1952 The **Children's Parish House Appeal** began. It would not be long before 500 children would be attending church education classes, and the need to grow drove the appeal. Included in the project were private Sunday School rooms, a youth room, a children's chapel, and a large private choir room. A total of \$265,000 was needed. There were 24 Church Council members during the planning and construction of the Parish House.

1953 April 3: Pastor Preus placed the care of the altar and Sanctuary in the hands of a group of women which would become known as **The Altar Guild**. The women cared for altar linens and other furnishings, arranged for flowers, prepared communion vessels, cared for the pastor's and children's choir robes, and even helped the children dress into their robes before they sang at Sunday services. Their responsibilities changed with time due to custom changes, parament and banner space needs, and a new altar. As was tradition, the 11 charter members of the Altar Guild were listed in documents by their husband's names. Sometimes the list began with the word "Mesdames", which stands for women, but then the husband's first and last names were still named.

1953 May 3: The **Parish House ground-breaking** ceremony was held.

1953 - 1971 Pastor Preus asked for a **Board of Deacons** to be established to assist him in many areas of church service. Fourteen men formed such a group and elected officers. (One could be ousted from the group if he didn't support the congregation through offerings or actions.) In 1967, Pastor Preus asked the group to begin visiting the ill who were hospitalized, to have devotions at home meetings, and set up a system of families partnering with families so they could be prayer companions.

1953 - 1970 **Avis Dieseth** directed our choirs for 17 continuous years. She began her choir directing career working with Directors Conrad Blegstad (1948-60), Thelma Legreid (1949), James Hegvik (1955-57), Geneva Eschweiler (1960), and Pastor Preus (1954-60). Dorothy Preus, who accompanied some of the choirs, remembered those years as very enjoyable as "Avis was so well prepared and chose such good music."

1953 December: In the **Ladies Aid Annual Report**, it stated that 1953 had been a year of blessings to the honor and glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They sent 646 pounds of clothing, through Lutheran Welfare, to **Germany and Korea**.

Gratefulness for the new Parish House was also shared along with these words, "The women, as well as the men, planned, worked, donated, sacrificed and prayed for the enlargement of our Church Home."

1954 First English Lutheran had a **membership of 1,900**.

1954 Pastor Preus actively pursued the **installation of a permanent altar**. Louis B. Bersback of Minneapolis designed the altar and also remodeled the woodwork in the Chancel.

John Larson of Starbuck, MN did the intricate wood carving in white oak. The marble altar was purchased from Sunderland Brothers Monument Company in Omaha, NE. The 5000 pound altar was made of colorosa travertine with a pink kasota stone platform.

1954 June 27: This date is marked with two events, the completion of the church's addition with **The Children's Parish House**, plus **the Dedication**. Pastor Preus said, "We can say that the building committee planned wisely, and the builders put more than steel and stone into it, they put their hearts into it." Furnishing the new space on was an ongoing project for several years following the building's completion. Donations, pledges, collections, memorials and a Lutheran Brotherhood loan all helped reduce the building debt. Memorial Gifts honoring pioneer church members provided many of the furnishings. This historic event included an open house with tours given by the Luther League youth, and refreshments. Pastor Preus heralded this as the "great event of the year." On March 22, 1959, the Chapel was finished and furnished by the Ladies Aid, the Altar Guild, the Mary and Martha Guild, the Dorcas LDR but mostly by Personal Memorials. The total cost of the Parish House Project was \$265,000.

1955 December 25: This thank you was written on Christmas Day in Munich, Germany and received by Pastor Preus many months later. *Dear Pastor Preus, I wish to thank the congregation and you for the wonderful Christmas card I received this Christmas and for all the Lutheran papers I've received in the past. I've always enjoyed reading them. It always makes me feel closer to home, my family and friends.*
Sincerely Yours, Robert Hanson.

1955 March 9: The Ladies Aid made plans to **remodel the church kitchen**. After all, they had spent hundreds of hours a year in the kitchen and it was definitely time to modernize. The remodel was a benefit for everyone. The project was completed in June 1956. And cost \$13,000.

1955 - 1975 Vietnam War (US ground combat did begin until 1965.)

1955 - 1956 Intern Wesley Haugen

Wesley Norman Haugen was born on April 13, 1931 in Staples, MN to Norman and Luella Haugen. He was baptized in 1931, and confirmed in 1946. He grew up in Gethsemane Lutheran in Minneapolis. He schooled in Staples and graduated in 1949. He then attended Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, graduated in 1953, and then was off to Luther Theological Seminary. On December 12, 1954, Wesley married LuAnn Turmo in Kindred, North Dakota. He interned in our First English and right away in 1955 he took over pastoral duties for Rev. C. K. Preus who had contracted hepatitis and was in the hospital for one

month and bedridden at home for 6 months. Wesley told the Council that if they were willing to accept what he had to offer, he would take care of everything, even all the preaching. He was also granted special permission to do burials. The church had 1,984 members at that time. Wesley's gifts of faith and service benefitted the congregation and the Preus family. The **Haugens** had four children. **Wesley** served many churches in several capacities and was elected the Bishop of the Eastern North Dakota District and Synod. Reverend Wesley Haugen of Moorhead, MN died Sunday, September 6, 2015.

1956 January - June 1956: **Pastor Christian Preus battled hepatitis.**

1956 May: **The Ladies Aid gave lifetime memberships** to three of its members: Mrs. Max Kronemann Sr., Mrs. C. O. Estrem, and Mrs. Henry Brendecke in appreciation of their dedication and years of service.

1956 - 1957 Intern Duane Tollefson

E. Duane Tollefson was raised in a Lutheran pastor's home in several cities in MT. He graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in 1952. He served in the US Army during the Korean War, 1952-1954, and was a Lieutenant in a M.A.S.H Unit. On June 9, 1957, he married Donna Erickson, and then returned to Luther Theological Seminary and graduated in 1958. His ordination was on June 15, 1958 in Fergus Falls.

1957 - 1999 In the **Church Archives**, seven large memorial binders were found with records of those who died and the lists of memorials given in their honor. It was noted that not one woman was listed with her given first name. So if Jane Smith died, the church records would state that Mrs. John Smith died.

1957 - 1962 **George Nelson** was our custodian. George, with the help of his wife Hilma, were credited with our church being known as the cleanest and tidiest church in town. George retired in March of 1962. Both George and Hilma were faithful to the church and its people. George died in 1974, and there were several types of memorials given in his honor, even a repainting of the church parlor.

1957 **Five longtime Ladies Aid members died in 1957.** Mattie Ness (71) died on March 14, in her home from a heart issue. Bertha Teisverg (71) died on March 17, after an operation from which she never fully recovered. Martha Thoreson (77) died on April 21, on Easter morning, cause not given. Edna Harry (61) died on October 25, cause not given. Gladys Hartman died on December 2, cause not given. A year of sadness for the Ladies Aid.

1957 June: The congregation had a **Farewell Bridal Party** for Intern Duane Tollefson and bride-to-be Donna. They received many generous gifts from our congregation.

1957 September 7: Sunday School age children listened to a **new program called "Children's Chapel"**, at 11:45 AM, on Station KGDE, in Fergus Falls. Forty-six stations carried the 15 minute children's worship service on Saturday mornings. More than 2,000 children were enrolled in the program. Young people who could not get to regular Sunday School because of weather conditions, distance, or ill Health, tuned in to the broadcast. Pastors advertised that parents should make this a weekly family event.

1957 - 1958 Intern William (Bill) Redman

William Edward Redman, Bill Jr., was born on November 15, 1933, in Rochester, MN. He was born to William and Elsie (Rosenbrock) Redman. William grew up in Austin, MN. He graduated from St. Olaf College in 1955, and in 1957 he married Phyllis Hedlund. He graduated from Luther Theological Seminary in 1959. In his introduction to First English Church he said, "I am just plain Bill and I hope it will continue here." Before he and Phyllis left First English, the congregation gave the Redmans A Farewell Party titled "This Is Your Life" on September 3, 1958. Pastor Preus and Jim Nesting led the whole show with family members and good friends from college coming on stage at just the right moments, to share stories (mostly humorous) of their lives. Bill said, "I never knew that one year could be so rewarding, rewarding to know such wonderful people, and to be received with so much warmth, has been a thrill." On Sunday, June 14, 1959, Bill was ordained and was called to serve as an assistant pastor at Mount Carmel Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa, WI.

1958 The church **membership was 1,836.**

1958 May 9: **The Mother-Daughter Banquet** was held in Fellowship Hall with a total of 400 guests. It was a Bridal Show with gowns from several generations. Wedding gowns dated back in time to 1897, 1892, 1906, 1911, 1912, 1935, 1940, 1946 and 1947. Mrs. C. O. Estrem (chair) and the Ladies Aid planned this banquet and would do a second Bridal Banquet several years later. *(It seems that most special events in Fellowship Hall were recorded as having an attendance of 400 guests. It has been decided that this number was simply used to signify that Fellowship Hall was full.*

1958 June 11: On this date, 27 baby names were entered into the **Cradle Roll Program** at a gathering just for them. In first five months of 1958, First English received 27 new members! Three little girls- Julie Lundstad, Betty Rasmussen, and Gail Snustad provided one musical piece at the gathering. They sang "Little Boy Blue".

1958 **To allow for church expansion and parking lot space on Block 36, property acquisitions began for the rest of Block 36.**

1958: the Richard and Dorothy Noren house purchased and moved off site
1960: the Ida Osman house came up for sale and was purchased for \$8,500
1961: the Fergus Falls Gospel Tabernacle's property was purchased

1963: the First Baptist Church property was bought, but the church was razed and the the parsonage was kept for housing our interns or associate pastors
1965: North Pacific Railroad Property - a triangle shaped strip by the tracks was bought
1967: the John and Dagne Utne property - included a warehouse
1972: the G. W. and Mary Fran Ebersviller house purchased on September 6
1980: the Roy Yell estate - the house was removed
1987: the First Baptist parsonage (had housed our interns and associates)
1987: a four-stall garage - was purchased and removed, had been used to board horses
1988: First Lutheran's parsonage, built after the 1919 cyclone, was sold to Dan and Kathy Rosendahl, the brick facade was removed, and was then moved off site
2023: *There is one property on the NW corner of the block that hasn't come up for sale.*

1958 June 8: The **congregation voted to approve a \$35,000 loan to a congregation in Nisswa, Minnesota** so they could build a new church. The \$35,000 was promised to them over 3 years and they had 20 years to pay it back. For several years after, our Christmas and Sunday School offerings were cash contributions to The "Nisswa Church of the Cross". In 2022, Nisswa's membership was 1,570, the average weekly worship attendance was 420, Wednesday nights were full of activities and worship, and Sunday worship services were live-streamed.

1958 September 20: A **Congregational Dinner was held to honor Sunday School** teachers. Three hundred were in attendance. After the meal the families dispersed to the Sunday School rooms to meet their children's teachers. Alma Christopherson was recognized on this day for 23 years of teaching service in Sunday School.

1958 November: At this time the **Lake Park - Wild Rice Children's Home** in Fergus Falls accommodated 20 children ages 5 to 14 of all religions, and were given 24 hour a day care by 12 staff members. The County Welfare handled all their cases.

1958 - 1959 Intern O. B. Fjelstad

Orning B. Fjelstad was born on February 12, 1933, in OR. He soon went by the nickname "OB". At Pacific Lutheran University he met Gloria Kvinge and they married on August 7, 1955. OB also attended Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul. His first ministry was in Seward, AK. It was in Alaska that their three sons, Stephan, Daniel and Eric were born. The family survived the Great Alaskan Earthquake. The family moved to WA and daughter Gretchen was born. His wife Gloria died in WA and years later OB married Wealthea Groth in ID, on February 10, 1997. Pastor Fjelstad died on February 7, 2019 in WA. Wife Wealthea and daughter Gretchen preceded him in death.

1959 - 1960 Intern Edgar Larson

Edgar M. T. Larson was born in Tacoma, WA. He graduated from Pacific Lutheran College. He married Betty, a registered nurse. Edgar was assigned to our church in March but his first day would not be until September 1, 1959, the same day that he and Betty's first child was due to be born. Edgar and Betty were hoping to find summer

jobs in Fergus Falls because they wanted to make connections before his internship began. In the summer of 1960, Edgar, Betty and Baby Karin returned to St. Paul for Ed's final year of seminary school.

1959 **Sunday School records showed that there were 500 children**, 50 teachers, and three sections of Sunday School. A year later the count was up by 50 students.

1959 March 22: **The First English Chapel was dedicated** in a special service held on Palm Sunday morning. The Adult Senior Choir and special guests proceeded to the chapel for the dedication while the rest of the congregation heard the service through the public address system. The choir sang, "Salvation is Created" by Tschesnokoff, followed by the reading of the memorials by Intern O. B. Fjelstad, and the reading of The Rite of Dedication by Pastor C. K. Preus.

Memorial Gifts To The Children's Chapel:

An organ was given in memory of E. R. Johnson.

Three art glass windows on the north side of the Chapel **and three art glass windows** on the west side were given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Eli A. Back by their two daughters Ruth and Louise. Eli was the first child born into our congregation in the year 1875. Eli's parents, Erick and Kari, were Charter Members of our church. Some family members of the original Bakken family, went from Bakken, to Back, to Bach and even switched back again.

An altar and pulpit were given in memory of Dr. C. O. Estrem who was a leader in our church and in the community. The furniture is used right now, in 2023, in the Narthex for small group worship services.

The altar cloths were given by the Altar Guild.

Altar candlesticks and bases, and a cross were given in memory of Mrs. Ben Jaenisch by her husband and children. The gifts are still used in 2023, and are in the Narthex.

An altar chair was given in memory of Mrs. Henry Oluf (Emma) Halverson, a dedicated and long time Altar Guild chairperson.

Another altar chair was given in memory of Mrs. Gladys (Nick) Noack. Daughter Lynn Ouren and her family continued to be members of our church in 2023. Nick's second wife Marlene continued to be a member in 2023.

The baptismal font was given in memory of Candice Lynn Stout. Candice Lynn was born on March 17, 1954 and she died on March 18, 1954. Her parents are Harley and Irene Stout.

The baptismal bowl and a few pews were given in memory of Mrs. Chris H. Larson, who was born in 1895 and died in 1956.

Two large framed pictures, "Escape To Egypt" and "The Road To Emmaus", were given in memory of Linda Bordson. Linda, daughter of Burnett and Arlene Bordson was born in 1955 and died in 1957 from an infant/young child cancer known as neuroblastoma which attacks the nerve cells. Both pictures were located and now, in 2023, are on display in Heritage Hall.

A museum case was given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Olaf Schei. They were owners of a clothing and shoe store in downtown Fergus Falls. The museum case displays many old but cherished pieces of our church's history. The case stands in Heritage Hall.

A large table and 6 chairs were given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Henry G. Dahl. These pieces are still used in a Sunday School room in 2023. In a 1940 Census, it stated that Henry and wife Laura had three children and a negro maid named Hattie Cremmens. They lived on Cavour Avenue in Fergus Falls for many years and were long time members of our church.

More pews were given in memory of Mrs. Elisa Anderson, Charles Baker, Mr. and Mrs. I. J. Boyum, Dr. C. O. Estrem, Henry Brendecke, John Fossen, Mrs. P. K. Grinager, Mrs. John Grindeland, Ted Halverson, E. A. Isaacson, E. R. Johnson, Mrs. N. T. Moen, Albert Nelson, Albert L. Nelson, Ethan Pelvit, Mrs. Andrew Runningen, the Rix's Twin Babies, Mrs. P. K. Peterson, Arnold Spiten, L. F. Tomhave, Anton Trosvig, Oscar Trosvig, Mary Ann Wagner and Mrs. Harold Weise.

The Mary and Martha Guild, the Dorcas LDR, Mrs. and Mrs. Conrad Meints, and Mr. and Mrs. David Harris were able to help finish out the purchase of the **last pews**.

The piano was given by the Ladies Aid who worked diligently to earn money to be able to purchase this gift for the Chapel.

The Chapel Room itself was given by all members of First English Lutheran Church.

The Chapel Story

In 1810, Erik Olsen Bakken was born in Norway. He and wife Kari's first son, Haagen, was born in Norway in 1831. By the time Haagen married he'd changed his last name from Bakken to Back. Second son John followed the lead. The next three children, Erik E., Halvor E., and Karen went with the name Back also. Child six, Martin E. changed his last name from Back to Bach. The last two children Ole E. and Eli A. kept the name Back.

Now the story focus changes to child number eight - Eli Anneus Back. In 1875, he the first child born into our Norwegian Lutheran Church. In 1898, Eli married Anna Patrene Gunderson and they had two daughters - Louise and Ruth.

In 1959, the girls, one in California and one in Illinois, made a connection with Pastor Preus and asked to be able to give a monetary gift as a memorial to their parents Eli and Anna Back. They wanted their gift to be used towards the chapel's stained glass windows. All correspondence happened through typed and handwritten letters mostly between the sisters and Pastor Preus or Pastor Preus and Conrad Pickel Studio of Waukesha, WI. - the window company. The cost of 3 windows on the west side of the chapel and the 3 double sided windows on the north side was more than the sisters had offered but because of their relationship with Pastor Preus they added more and paid for everything. Pastor Preus promised to let them know when the Chapel

Dedication would be so they could plan to attend. In late 1956, Pastor Preus got very ill with hepatitis and had to be absent from church for many months.

It was not until March 22, of 1959 that the Chapel Dedication occurred. One month after The Dedication, Pastor Preus remembered his promise to the sisters. He wrote two letters of apology and told Louise and Ruth all about the dedication and the wonder of their windows. He hoped they could come and visit sometime.

In 1963, Pastor Preus found out that Ruth “had departed this life” so he wrote Louise a letter of comfort. He told her that “the people of First English Lutheran Church would be sharing in her grief”.

From 1956 to now in 2023, the wonder of the chapel windows and the love of two daughters for their parents have been treasured by the congregations of our First English Lutheran and our First Lutheran Church.

- 1959 Spring: Twenty-five confirmands were adorned in **new Confirmation robes**. Forty-one church members sewed robes or prepared the food on sewing days, men and women.
- 1959 June 29: Our Church Council authorized **the establishment of Choir School** and it was organized and promoted by Avis Dieseth and Lonnie Ness. Grades one through seven were included and met Saturday mornings. Classes were held in worship, music, and art along with choir rehearsals. Providing a variety of learning experiences was a major focus. Christmas programs, drama productions, travels to perform at other churches, and choir camps were part of the variety. By 1970, the increase in Saturday activities sponsored by the school and community for both boys and girls, made it necessary to close the Choir School. It was a very difficult decision to make.
- 1960 **Boy Scout Troop #104 now became #304** and retained that number until the last Boy Scout Charter was issued on February 28, 1983.
- 1960 To the usual church mission list, new **mission work** was added. The Ladies Aid stitched hospital gowns and garments for New Guinea. They put together many activity kits for children overseas, and contributed money for the Plymouth Youth Center.
- 1960 Early 1960s: An organization in Fergus Falls for **young adults** was started to provide a time for spiritual growth, fellowship and socializing. It was for unmarried Lutheran 18 year olds and older singles to get together on two Wednesday evenings a month for social outings. Meetings for the group were usually held at Bethlehem Lutheran.
- 1960 March: First Lutheran’s **Basketball Team won the Church Championship** for the 5th straight year. Team members were: Jeff Dosen, David Estrem, Larry Dorn, Steve Le Grand, Steve Emerson, Vic Halvorson, and Richard Vigen.

1960 September 11: The congregation and Preus relatives filled the Fellowship Hall for the **Celebration of the 25th Wedding Anniversary of Reverend and Mrs. C. K. Preus.**

1960s Mid Years: The youth choirs began performing **Biblical Musicals.**

1960s - 1970s **International Dinners** were popular with each event having a menu that included foods from different countries such as: English roast beef, Hawaiian baked ham, Mexican bean fiesta, and Norwegian flat bread.

1960 - 1961 Intern Allen Hermeier

Allen Hermeier was born on September 7, 1936 to parents Elmer and Amanda Carlsborg Hermeier. Allen grew up on a family dairy farm. In high school, he was active in speech, drama, football and debate and graduated in 1954. On August 18, 1957, he married Helen Ardys Ruen. Allen and Helen had three children: Steven, Elizabeth and John. Allen graduated from Luther College in 1958, and Wartburg Theological Seminary in IA in 1962. From 1962 - 2000, he served in four MN Lutheran congregations. Allen retired in 2000, had interim roles in three churches and settled in Waterloo Ridge Dorchester Church for 11 years up to his death on Tuesday, April 4, 2017, two days after his last sermon.

1961 January 30: The Ladies Aid became the **American Lutheran Church Women, the ALCW.** The Dorcas LDR joined the ALCW at this time. LDR stood for Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation and the purpose was mission work. (After 1968 the name LDR was replaced)

1961 April 5: The congregation established a fund to aid students from our church who were going to attend a Lutheran college or seminary. It was known as **LEAF - Lutheran Educational Aid Fund.** The award was to be in the form of an outright grant with the hope that \$1500 to \$2000 would be given out each year.

1961 - 1962 Intern John Charles Westby

John Westby was born on March 16, 1937, in Jackson, MM to Winfred and Florence (Becker) Westby. He was baptized and confirmed at Our Savior's Lutheran in Jackson. He graduated from high school in 1955. He attended Concordia College, and Luther Theological Seminary and graduated in 1963. He married Valerie Halvorson in 1957. In the summer of 1961, John managed Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria. After his internship was done, the Westbys were given a "Mock Trial" Farewell Party. The judge was L. E. Wermager and the attorney for the Westbys was Paul Hofstad. The issue at hand? Had the Westbys fulfilled their internship commitments? It was proven that they had. In May of 1963, John accepted a call as a missionary to Brazil.

1962 - 1963 **Leonard Sethre** was our janitor.

1962 Church membership was at 2,000.

1962 October 14 90th Anniversary

1962 October 14: **First English Lutheran Church's 90th Anniversary** was celebrated with a special morning worship service, a recognition dinner, an afternoon social time, and a historical program. Dr. O. G. Malmin, a former editor of the Lutheran Herald, was the guest speaker at worship and at the dinner. The Carol, Chorister and Chapel Choirs, plus Dr. Robert Estrem and Mrs. Melvin Legreid, provided music during the worship service. **Charter Members who were honored included:** Knute Harris, John Haave, Christian Aurlund, John Back, Ole Huseby, Thorsten Bjorgum, Gunder Hammer, Jens Fossen, Arne Gunderson, Magnus Geving Johnson, Lars Ouse, Knute Sletto, Ole Sampson, Tollef Olsen, Asle Lunde, Simon Olsen, Peter Rosvold, Tollef Satre, G. O. Dahl, Eric Bach and O. M. Wick. The guests and public were treated to an afternoon play reenacting pioneer adventures and rugged living. It had been adapted from the book "Muskego Boy". Avis Dieseth and Lonnie Ness were the directors, with Virginia Mouritsen as narrator.

1962 - 1963 Intern Kenneth Tonnesen

Kenneth joined First English Lutheran as an intern for one year and was present to experience the church's 90th Anniversary. On August 25, Ken and Carol said their good-byes to our church. Kenneth was ordained in 1964 in Staten Island, NY and then went to a new mission congregation in FL. Kenneth and wife Carol had one child, a son Phil, who became a pastor like his father. Phil was part of the North Carolina ELCA Synod and was the Assistant to the Bishop still in 2022. While he was an assistant to the bishop he was also the interim pastor at Messiah of the Mountain Lutheran Church in Burnsville, North Carolina. Father Ken was co-interim pastor with his son whenever Phil's job took him away from the Sunday pulpit.

1963 February 24: First English Lutheran Church's congregation adopted a new corporate name, "**First Lutheran Church of Fergus Falls**". Trustees in attendance were Carroll M. Henning, Earl C. Hanson, and B. K. Soby. Richard C. Hefte was the Notary Public.

1963 - 2023 The **Church Library** consisted of two small bookcases with antique glass doors in 1940. The librarian from 1940 to 1958 was Emma Brendecke with assistance from Julia Harris from 1947 to 1958. In 1963, Orlyn Pederson built a new cabinet, added it to the two old cases, painted it all avocado green and placed it along the south wall in Fellowship Hall. In 1979, that unit was moved to the Quilters' Room with additional shelving installed for their use. In 1985, the Library and other resource materials were moved into the new Media Center which was constructed alongside the new elevator. In 1993, the Ladies Aid (Circle One) became known as the Library Circle. Later the Library's avocado shelving was moved into the basement and into the Decoration Supply Room to be used for storing glass decorations. (If only the avocado cabinetry could talk.)

The Media Center then became the Educational Supplies and Resources Room. The Library was moved to the second floor, and 2023, is managed by dedicated women who have library classes and do the purchasing.

1963 - 1964 Intern R. Timothy (Tim) Hepner

Tim Hepner was the son of Frank and Marie G. Hepner from Columbus, OH. He was the oldest of four siblings and the other three were sisters. At the time of his internship Tim was not married. Tim graduated from Capital University in Columbus, OH. Capital U. was a former liberal arts church college with 1400 students. While at Capital Tim sang in the choir and made several tours with them. Tim was finishing his middle year at Luther Seminary before he interned. He was eager to come and work with Pastor Preus. Tim and wife Pat had three children, Eric, John and daughter Lynn. Tim died in 2017 in Golden Valley, MN at the age of 78. He was survived by his wife Pat and the children.

1963 - 1974 Visitation Pastor Henry R. Romness

On April 7, 1963, Pastor Romness became **First Lutheran's first visitation pastor**. Henry Romness was born on February 6, 1892 to Mr. and Mrs. John Romness. He grew up in Belgrade, MN and graduated in 1909. He taught school for 2 years and graduated from Luther College and Luther Theological Seminary. In 1920, Henry married Olga Knutson. He pastored in Jersey City for five years and had been the pastor in Barnesville, MN for 34 years before coming to Fergus Falls. At the end of 1964 he reported that he made 1,129 home visits and 300 hospital visits. He was instrumental in starting the Seminary Endowment Program so that seminary students could receive help from First Lutheran Church. **The Church Council declared August 25, 1968, as Pastor Romness Day for his 50 years of faithful service to the Lord. Pastors Preus and Romness conducted a Norwegian language service which hadn't been done for approximately 95 years.** Mrs. Olga Romness died on

September 26, 1971, in Fergus Falls. Pastor Romness retired in 1974, and died on January 24, 1975. Twelve pastors served as honorary and active pallbearers. Bishop Cecil M. Johnson, Pastors C. K. Preus and Curtis Rotto shepherded the service which was held in First Lutheran Church.

1964 - 1974 **Jesse Skramstad** was head janitor. He had several assistants during this time: Harvey Hanson, Rod Anderson, Jeff Heyen and Ollie Christianson.

1964 June 1 - 12: **With Mrs. C. E. Boe as Vacation Bible School Superintendent**, VBS ran very smoothly considering the large number of students that showed up for all day VBS. Here was the breakdown: preschool- 44 students, kindergarten- 40, 1st grade- 41, 2nd- 41, 3rd- 35, 4th- 45, 5th- 34, 6th- 43, and 7th- 66.

1964 - 1965 Intern James McGowan

James McGowan was born on July 30, 1936 in Minneapolis, MN. His parents were Leo and Catherine McGowan. From 1954 to 1957, he was in the US Navy. He married Marilyn Ann Rue daughter of Don and Naomi Rue. The McGowans had 5 children: Jim Jr., Kathy, Jay, Krisi, and Kelsey. Jim attended 2 colleges in SD and Luther Theological Seminary in MN from 1962 to 1966. He interned at First Lutheran from 1964 to 1965, and was ordained at First Lutheran by Pastor Chris Preus. After his ordination at First Lutheran Church on June 5, 1966, he began serving the Foxhome and Vukku Lutheran Parishes in Foxhome, MN.

1965 The Ladies Aid had grown to include **14 Circles**. The average attendance per Circle was 13 to 16 women.

1965 First Lutheran Church confirmed **39 confirmands**, and graduated **47 high school seniors**.

1965 **Sunday School enrollment was at 688 students**.

1965 **Christabel Jacobs and Chris Hefte** were hired as Education Coordinators. When Chris Hefte moved on to another position within the church, Christabel was the Director of Education for 15 years.

1965 The **Senior Luther League** bought a television for The Children's Home in Fergus Falls. (First Lutheran supported this Home for many years.)

1965 **Operation Bootstrap of Africa** was founded by a Lutheran missionary named Reverend J. David Simonson. He served in Africa for over 40 years. The relationship between David Simonson and First Lutheran Church was like a spiritual synchronicity.

1965 - 1967 **Lonnie Ness** was brought on staff as the **Music Coordinator**. **Lonnie died from cancer in 1967**. A red "Sanctuary Lamp" was given in memory of Lonnie. Members contributed gifts of money for this memorial for 30 years. A record album, "Sing To The Lord", was made in her memory by the Chapel and Chancel Choirs. Al Jacobs, church member and High School Band Director, was granted permission from the School District 544 to have the recording done in the Roosevelt High School Gym. The bright yellow and blue record album was put on display in Heritage Hall in 2023. In 2023, the "Eternal Light" continues to hang above the pulpit to signify the eternal presence of God.

1965 August: The plans for a **First Lutheran Foundation** were formulated as a legal corporation completely separate from the rest of the church. It was set up for the purpose of holding, investing, managing and disbursing of funds that have been left with the church for the benefit of First Lutheran Church, and the American Lutheran Church,

and its various institutions. On January 18, 1966, the Foundation was in full operation. At the end of 1982, invested funds totaled \$137,478.74 and at the end of 2021, the total was \$2,444,912.44.

1965 - 1966 Intern Thomas Charles Barthelmeh

Thomas was born on February 12, 1932 in WY. His parents were Robert and Thelma Mead Barthelmeh. Thomas married Loveda Larb in 1957. At the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, Thomas enlisted in the Air Force and was trained as a Special Weapons Technician. After his discharge he received a Call in St. Paul, MN. Thomas and Loveda had 3 children: daughter Loveda Ann, son Thomas, and daughter Geri Bjork. Thomas attended the University of North Colorado, Colorado State College and Luther Seminary. He interned at First Lutheran Church for one year and was ordained in 1967. He was an assistant or interim pastor for several MT congregations. In 1992, his wife Loveda died. Thomas took a leave of call for 3 years. He married Mary Ann Zochert from Miles City, MT, and retired in 1997. Thomas died on December 4, 2013, in Miles City and was buried there.

1966 February 19: **Dorothy Skramstad** became our church's first paid, part-time church secretary.

1966 June 19: This was Commissioning Day for **Nels and Helen Snustad** for their Lutheran World Relief Service to India and South America. They faithfully sent monthly letters back to their home church and each one was printed in our Messenger newsletter.

1966 June: This was the first year that **Vacation Bible School** was not programed with Augustana Lutheran or under the direction of Mrs. C. E. Boe. Mrs. Boe had just retired from this position which she had carried for 14 years. At the same time she had directed Tuesday School for 18 years and Sunday School for 20 years.

1966 September through May 1967: Archival **Sunday School Records** listed every "perfect attendance" student in each grade during this school year. Sharon Jacobs (Al and Christabel's), Valdeen Merz (Henry and Florence's), Margaret Skramstad (John and Dorothy's) and Mary Runningen (Ray and Joan's) were the only "perfects" in the large 10th grade class! These four women see each other at 1969 class reunions or remain in Christmas Card contact and still share fond memories of their church.

1967 - 1968 Intern Carlton Jerome Shaw

Carlton Shaw was born on October 8, 1941 in Forest City, IA. His parents were Everett and Eleanor Carlsen. He graduated from Waldorf College in 1961, Concordia College in 1963, Luther Theological Seminary in 1968 and was ordained in 1968. He went on to serve congregations in New York. As of July 2023, he lives in Lake Mills, IA.

1967 The Fergus Falls **Washington Junior High School was destroyed by fire**. The Public School had to run all senior high classes in the morning with junior high classes all afternoon. **Confirmation classes** had to meet in the mornings for two years while a new school was being built on the site of the Fair Grounds in the northeast corner of the city.

1967 The **first Boys Bell Choir** was formed, for a brief term, under the direction of Lucy Wing.

1967 **Two old garages** on the church property came down, and a smaller one was built.

1967 January 23: **First Lutheran, Bethlehem, and Zion accepted ownership of the Pioneer Memorial Home**. Board members included three representatives from each church. On October 18, 1928, the first Pioneer Home had been constructed for 18 residents. In 1953, an expansion was completed in which added 31 more beds. In 1971, a chapel and another addition were added. The latest changes in 1967 include an addition of 39 more beds, a new kitchen, a dining room, a beauty shop, and an activity center. The Dieseth Memorial Chapel was in memory of Ellen Dieseth, a long-time First Lutheran member.

1968 - 1971 **Avis Dieseth** was the Director of Music and directed **300 voices** in 1969.

1968 April 28: **First Lutheran's military service numbers**: 38 members are in the Armed Services, nine of those are in Vietnam, 3 of those are from other churches but married First Lutheran girls, and 23 of the 38 are overseas.

1968 - 1971 Associate Pastor Curtis Rotto

Curt was born on May 11, 1938, in Minot, ND. His parents were Rev. I. M. and Jonette Rotto. Curt's father died in 1954, when Curt was 16. Jonette was left to raise 9 children by herself. In May 1971, Jonette, mother and school teacher, was named Minnesota Mother of the Year. Curt graduated from Luther College in IA in 1960, married Ann in 1961, and graduated from Luther Theological Seminary in MN in 1964.

The January 23, 1967 Annual Meeting Ballot had five questions for the congregation to answer.

1. Call Curtis A. Rotto as an Associate Pastor?
2. Discontinue printing church members names and yearly contributions in the annual reports?
3. Establish a prayer partnership plan?
4. Accept ownership of the Pioneer Home?
5. Elect a new board?

All of the questions received a resounding "Yes" from the congregation. So Curt A. Rotto was called on May 14, 1967 to come on board in a church with over 2000 members. But the call took five months to process and then took another five months due to a delay in the Rotto family's move to Fergus Falls. The intern's house had been remodeled for this family of five: Curt, Anne, Knute, Kari Jo, and Hans. Pastor Curt's life was full of many

titles: son, brother, student, paperboy, farm helper, athlete, husband, father, intern, chaplain, associate pastor, certified CPE supervisor, EAP counselor, pastor, grandpa father-in-law, committee member, member of board of directors, task force member, chemical dependency coordinator, counselor, member pastor, friend and Child of God. Curt Rotto was the guest pastor for the 150th Anniversary Celebration on October 9, 2022. In 2023, Curt and Ann Rotto continued to be members of First Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN.

- 1968 April 1: **Dorothy Skramstad** became the first, full-time church secretary. She retired in 1991 and had faithfully served the people of First Lutheran Church for 23½ years.
- 1968 June 9: The **7th Annual Boy Scout Canoe Derby** was underway. All had to meet at 8 AM for a church service at the Otter Tail Lake Campground. At 9 AM two classes of racers took off - ages 13 to 15 and ages 16 to 19. They raced 25 miles and they finished about 4 PM. Troops from all over the area, including ND troops, gathered for this event. In 1968, First Lutheran's Troop 304 had to defend its first place finish for the last three years.
- 1968 September 22: **Forty-one people** became members on this day. In the 60's this was about average for each month's New Members Sunday.
- 1968 October: First Lutheran Church had **seven church choirs** with a total membership of 304 singers. The Cherub Choir had 17, Carol Choir 35, Crusader Choir 38, Chorister Choir 42, Chancel Choir 32, Chapel Choir 95, and Senior Choir (over 18 years old) was at 45.
- 1969 The **Brotherhood** disbanded and and the **Boy Scout sponsorship was taken over by First Lutheran Church.**
- 1969 February 18: **Dr. Robert Estrem**, wife Helen and daughter Susan were commissioned by First Lutheran to serve in **Madagascar** as medical missionaries. They left on February 22 and returned on April 14. After a presentation of their work while in Madagascar, the congregation started to work. Much was needed over there. Dr. Estrem pressed the need for **an x-ray machine unit** for Manambaro Hospital. Money went into the x-ray fund and then sewing machines began buzzing. 35 student technician jackets, 170 hospital gowns made from mens shirts, bandages were made from old sheets, 12 receiving blankets and 25 diapers were made, and 35 bandages were knitted. All were ready for mailing plus a large box of toys and a collection of \$1,775.66 for the x-ray fund. Archival Records do not state when the x-ray unit was purchased, installed or in operation but First Lutheran continued to send money. (In a letter from Madagascar in 1979, it talked about the use of an x-ray machine unit.)
- 1969 The **Motion Choir was started by Hope Erickson.** This worship group of girls interpreted hymns and Bible passages with movement and dance.

1969 The **Children's Drama Program** was formed under the leadership of **Renola Ellig**.

1969 - 1983 Bethel Bible Series: First Lutheran Church was one of the 123 congregations in the nation which introduced the Bethel Series on a congregational-wide level. In September of 1969, First Lutheran members who were interested in becoming a Bethel Bible Series teacher, were interviewed and interviewed a second time in November. In December, the names of 15 members eager to become teachers were announced to the congregation and then began their training in January 1970. Our Associate Pastor, Curt Rotto, had already been trained as a teacher and had set up the Bethel Series Course in the church he had just recently served in. At the end of 1970, church members were offered the course which involved 3 seven-week units with the Old and New Testament each getting one whole unit of study. Wednesday night at First Lutheran soon became Bethel Bible Study Night. The first class of study began with 160 enrolled adults. In 1971, Curt Rotto and five other Bethel Series Teachers provided a Bethel Winter Unit on eleven Sundays for the Ninth Grade Sunday School. In 1971, Pastor Rotto left First Lutheran so Alta Hemingson and Chris Hefte managed the Bethel Series. By the early 1980s, a total of 269 members had completed the program. Members who finished the program wanted more Bible studies so the church brought in a program known as New Dimensions in 1982 which concentrated on Christian marriage, Christian law and daily living. An Adult Forum began meeting on Sunday mornings in the late 70's, and the Tuesday Morning Good News Women's Breakfast Group began a Bible Study in 1983. The Men's Monday Morning Bible Study had begun in the early 1980s.

1969 December 14: The **First Lutheran "College Leaguers"** presented "O Worship Me" - a modern drama, with Bill Sampson as soloist, the Motion Choir, and 2 congregational hymns. The drama included Jeff Boe - First Speaker, Rhoda Henning - Second Speaker, Jon Seashore - Commander, Mark Waage - Paul, Van Ellig - the Prisoner who was a Priest, Michael Partain - Third Man, and Dorothy Preus - Organist. The play was about the complete destruction of civilization by an evil military force and only one surviving Christian, the Priest. Renola Ellig was the director, Judith Halverson led the Senior Choir, and Virginia Mouritsen directed the Motion Choir. Michael Partain handled properties, Gail Davenport - lights, Vicki Hanneman - publicity, Jim Nesting and Bruce Jacobs - sound, and Lucille Kroneman was in charge of costumes. An offering was taken at the door with Christmas Coffee and sweets served by the "New York Bound" Leaguers in Fellowship Hall.

1970 November 8: **Children from the Children's Home** were guests of the Senior League at a Carnival in Fellowship Hall. Games, contests, a fishing pond, a gypsy fortune teller, and a weight guessing by Wayne Ronning were only a few of the thrills and excitement experienced. Prizes included popcorn, kool-aid, and caramel apples prepared by Judy Halverson's senior Leaguers. All of the booths were operated by the Leaguers. At the end of the evening a movie was shown in the Youth Room. (Judy Halverson was also the High School's Admired Orchestra Director.)

- 1971 - 1972 **Barb Larson, wife of the Associate Pastor Dean Larson**, was the Director of Music at this time.
- 1971 Fall: The American Lutheran Church promoted a **three-year Confirmation Program** with weekday and Sunday sessions. The ALC encouraged congregations to drop the long-standing tradition of confirmation classes and begin individual or small group Instruction. Close to retirement, Pastor Preus was hesitant about starting his congregation on an entirely new path, but he finally decided to go along with the ALC's ideas. He set up a list of requirements for an individual confirmation program, and students were confirmed when they met the requirements, whether it was in January or May. For the first time in the church's history, in 1973 and in 1974, there was not a confirmation class to gather for the traditional picture. The old class method was resurrected in 1975, when Pastor Jack Hustad came to First Lutheran.
- 1971 The drama group performed the **musical "O' Jonah"**. The front of church became a lake with a huge "half of a boat", a whale, and singing sailors.
- 1971 January 17: The Council authorized the **rebuilding of the pipe organ** and in 1972, it was dismantled and reconstructed with 27 new ranks of pipes totalling 1870 pipes plus chimes.
- 1971 February: **LeAnn and LoAnn Anderson (daughters of Russell and Alice Anderson)** with other Senior Class members and the Chapel Choir, created a Youth Service titled, "Where In This Old World Are You Going?". It was based on people who fearfully wondered how they could survive in such a messed up world. Is there any hope? Is there even a future? These people had neglected their faith. They needed to trust God and lean on The Master Of The Light, and remember His hand is always there to catch them. The group performed this service at First Lutheran and 3 other area churches. Their assistants were Avis and Bob Dieseth, Judy Halverson, Curt and Ann Rotto and Jim Nesting.
- 1971 **First Lutheran's Motion Choir** had begun 1969 under the leadership of Hope Erickson. In 1971 Virginia Mouritsen became the director and she admitted it took a lot of concentration and patience on her part. The group and director picked the hymns they wanted to interpret and turned the words into motions. To be effective one had to feel the words, it all had to come from the heart. The members were truly praising their Lord in their own personal way. (Written in the Youth's Monthly Newsletter known as the Caretaker - originally called The Message.)
- 1971 - 1972 Three members of the **L. E. Wermager family** of First Lutheran Church entered into religious service. Youngest son Marc was ordained by Pastor Chris Preus on January 17, 1971 and became a **Son of the Congregation**. Brian Wermager had been ordained on June 13, 1971 by Pastor Chris Preus, and had become a **Son of the**

Congregation. Pastors Brian Wermager and Curt Rotto were speakers at Marc's Ordination. Brian returned to Fergus Falls in 1976-1977 as an Associate Pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls. Daughter Sheryl was called into mission work in Tanzania, Africa in 1971. She became a **Daughter Of The Congregation**. She returned home after one year to get married to Richard Engan in 1972. Both returned to Tanzania until the end of Sheryl's missionary assignment. Richard worked a volunteer with Reverend David Simonson in the Operation Bootstrap Program.

1971 May 16: **Associate Pastor Curt Rotto resigned** from his position at First Lutheran. He moved on to attend training in the area of Clinical Pastoral Education at Hazelden, Center City, MN.

1971 June 29: The **Board of Deacons made changes to the Constitution**. Pastor Preus was in attendance and involved in all discussions. The changes included:

1. Allowing whole families to come to the altar, with 5th graders and older being able to have communion, and children younger than 5th grade would receive blessings.
2. A change that was only moving forward on a trial basis involved confirmation and this program would allow students to go through confirmation at their own speed. They would be confirmed when they had finished all requirements. This meant The Rite of Confirmation at First Lutheran would be occurring several times a year.

1971 - 1973 Associate Pastor Dean Larson

Dean Larson was born on May 21, 1940, in WI, and was the son of Reverend Ernest G. Larson. Dean grew up in Minneapolis, MN. He graduated from Augsburg College; taught high school mathematics in Buffalo, MN; and entered Pacific Lutheran Seminary in Berkeley, CA. He married Barbara Beglinger on August 13, 1966. They had two children, Karl and Heidi. In 1973, he received a call from Gaylord, MN where he served for 12 years. On June 6, 1971, he received a call from our First Lutheran Church to become our associate pastor following Pastor Curt Rotto. His first day at church was August 8, 1971.

1971 November 21, 1971: The **Pioneer Home** had their Dedication Service with 10 pastors present to read scripture. Reverend Otto Dale was the presiding pastor.

1972 July 1: A contract was given to **Judith Halverson** to become the Junior High Choir Director. She was also the Orchestra Director at Roosevelt Senior High. **Carolyn Sund** was given a contract on this date to become the Chorister and Carol Director. **Beverly Nesting** received a contract to become the Cherub Choir Director. **Leighton Erickson** became the Chapel Choir and Senior Choir Director. Their contracts were effective for one year.

1972 Church **membership was at 2,223**. There were 492 students in Sunday School and 60 teachers. Wednesday School Release Time had 120 students and 14 teachers. Vacation Bible School had 140 students and 17 teachers.

- 1972 The **first church directory** was published and it coordinated with the church's Centennial Celebration. Gen Mollerud was the first chairperson of a directory committee.
- 1972 May: A **professional fund-raising company led the way for the creation of a Centennial Fund** which would cover the costs of adding an organ chamber, bolstering our mission work, paying off a past debt, redecorating portions of the church and paving property for additional parking. The congregation raised \$110,000 within 3 years.
- 1972 October 1 - April 1, 1973: Church member, **Dr. Robert Estrem**, began a six month leave of absence from the Fergus Falls Medical Group to spend time as a volunteer surgeon for two months at an Arizona Navajo Indian Reservation, and the same for four months in New Guinea. This opportunity came about as a result of spending two months in 1968, in Madagascar after a request from personal friends there. Dr. Estrem had developed an increased interest in Lutheran Mission work. The organization that supported him was known as HOPE (Health Opportunity for People Everywhere). Dr. Estrem was in charge of four wards consisting of 35 beds in each one for his months in New Guinea. The hospital complex was a World War II Army building dismantled and moved 100 miles down the coast from the town of Finschhafen. Some of his most unusual cases dwelt with infections particularly bone disease in children, a mouth cancer caused by chewing the betel nut which actually was a powerful addiction for those people, a large number of bleeding cases, leprosy, and malaria. When asked if his mission work was worth it, he replied, "Yes. Contrary to what people think, the primitive people of New Guinea have the same fears, the same reactions to pain, sorrow and happiness as persons of other cultures". (In 1972, the population of New Guinea was 2.2 million people. Only about 3,000 were Asian from other non-native groups. The island of New Guinea is second in island size to Greenland. Over 700 different languages and dialects are spoken there.)

1972 October 1, 10, 14, 15, 22 100th Anniversary

- 1972 October 1: "A Celebration of Religious Drama" was presented by the Covenant Players of California. In the afternoon, a 100th joint event, for both First Lutheran and Bethlehem, was a Norwegian Service held at Bethlehem.
- October 10: The church women wore Norwegian clothing, presented a historical program, and prepared Norwegian food for the guests.
- October 14: Past and present church members gathered for an informal gathering, an evening banquet, and a drama production on the history of the church.
- October 15: The long abandoned black hymnal was brought back for the worship service.
- In the afternoon past and present choir members came together for a song-fest.
- October 22: First Lutheran, Bethlehem and Zion Churches had a joint worship service at the Fergus Falls Senior High School. Pastor Preus was the celebration preacher.

- 1972 November 20: **Mrs. Alma Amelia (Anderson) Christopherson** died. Alma was born on April 20, 1902 and lived for 70 years. Memories of her have to do with her role as the Sunday School Chapel Leader and as a women's clerk at Norby's Department Store. She loved the children at church but required respect in the Chapel- for each other and for church property. Each Sunday she began Chapel time with singing to children who had just celebrated birthdays. The birthday children would bring their birthday pennies to the front of the Chapel and slowly drop them into a glass globe coin bank as everyone counted the pennies out loud. Alma picked out the Chapel songs and always sang with gusto. Alma is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Fergus Falls. (Alma's husband, Arnold J. passed in 1949,
- 1973 February 23: This date marks the **Dedication of the Rebuilt Pipe Organ**. The Mutchler Pipe Organ Company of Hudsonville, Michigan, rebuilt it in 1972 for \$39,800. Anderson Brothers Construction built the new loft for \$9,000. The project took two weeks for Installation and had a total cost of \$51,000. Other than minor repairs in 1988, the organ performed well for 18 years. In 1991, necessary repairs came to \$18,000. In February 1997, leaking roofs caused damage, and Lance Johnson of Fargo, North Dakota made repairs. The chapel organ was used during the repair time.
- 1973 **May Graduates:** Only counting First Lutheran members: High School 23, Church College 3, other College or University 21, FF State Junior College 15, FF State Junior College (Legal Office Certified) 2, FF State Junior College (Medical Office Certified) 1 and Vocational School 3.
- 1973 **Fall - August 1974: Student Intern Mark S. Marty**
A student intern is a part-time temporary employee, enrolled at an accredited institution which contributes to the intern's training. Mark lived in one of the parsonages. The Archive Records show that he changed Senior High League's name to "The Family". He stressed that the program was the student's program, there would be goal setting, sharing of decisions. and having the freedom to make time to care about each other. "The Family" had Bible Studies- picked by youth, rap sessions- their choice, going out to eat- their choice, holiday parties- youth planned, and collecting for good causes. On October 28, "The Family" went Trick or Treating for Unicef" followed by a homemade picnic. On October 31, 7:30, "The Family" went swimming at the Fergus Falls Junior High School followed by pizza. The cost per student? Fifty cents. On August 25, 1974, Mark S. Marty led the two services and each was followed by dessert and coffee. Mark kept records of attendance at "The Family" events. He was happy with the attendance numbers.
- 1974 **Pastor Chris Preus resigned.** He made the decision to retire from full-time ministry, 38 years after his ordination, and 27 years after serving First Lutheran Church. On June 2, during his last Sunday with his congregation, a Celebration of Ministry

honoring was held during the worship service and in the afternoon from 2:20 - 4:30. There was clanging of cymbals in the service processional at his request. But even with the cymbals Pastor Preus's tears managed to seep out. The Senior Choir presented a musical comedy, "H.M.S, Dotty-For" to honor Dorothy's retirement also. Dorothy said, "It was a celebration in a way, but also a sad occasion for us. We are leaving a big chunk of our lives behind."

- 1974 June 29: Pastor Christian **Preus officiated at his last wedding at First Lutheran.** He married David and Vicki Hanneman in an evening wedding with a reception of cake and coffee in Fellowship Hall.
- 1974 July: **Pastor Chris and Dorothy left Fergus Falls** and retired to their Lake Kabekona home near Laporte, MN.
- 1974 - 1976 **Lorraine Killion and Bruce Jacobs** became our organists.
- 1974 Winter: Our adult **men's basketball team won the Church League Tournament.** They defeated last year's champions- Bethlehem! Congratulations went to Dave Retzlaff, Ronald Nirva, Gerald Toso, Tom Greenagel, Steve Legrand, Lee Runningen, Luther Kamrud, Gene Steinbach and Curt Rotto.

1974 - 1979 Pastor Jack Hustad

Jack Roger Hustad was born on February 23, 1931, in South Dakota to Holger R. and Vera (Dunlap) Hustad. In 1936, the family moved to Montana where Jack graduated in 1949, from Helena High School. He graduated from St. Olaf College in 1953, and from Luther Theological Seminary in 1957. From 1957 - 1959, he served three smaller congregations in MN. He married Helen Peterson in 1960. They had three children: Mikkel, Anne-Lise, and Kristor. From 1962 - 1971, Jack served a church in Overland Park, Kansas, and then was installed as the new Senior Pastor at First Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls on June 30, 1974. "While Pastor Jack Hustad served First Lutheran, the membership of the congregation was the largest in the history of the church. It was over 2,000 baptized souls." When the Hustads left in February of 1979, they followed a call to First Lutheran Church of Richmond Beach, Seattle, WA. At this point Helen Hustad became a pastor in her own right. She committed herself to the work of the American Lutheran Church. She taught, volunteered on boards, was a member of several committees, participated in ALC workshops, and was recognized for her dedication, her intellectual gifts, and her communication strengths. Jack and Helen Hustad had a "late - career volunteer ministry". In the 1990s, the Hustads served international congregations and seminaries in 15 countries throughout Europe, Africa and Asia.

(Upon his arrival, Pastor Jack Hustad received a shepherd's hook which was passed from Pastor Preus to him in June of 1974. The staff had been made by the boys in Vacation Bible School.)

1974 - 1980 Visitation Pastor Iver Hastad

Iver G. Hastad was born on April 17, 1907, in Gerro Gordo, Lacqui Parle County, MN. His parents were John L. and Jonetta (Moen). Iver graduated from St. Olaf College and Luther Theological Seminary. Iver married Adelaide Winge in 1935, and they had 3 children: Alice, John and Ann. Pastor Hastad served at churches in South Dakota, Colorado, and Minnesota. In 1973, he retired from full-time ministry. Iver then became a visitation pastor at our First Lutheran Church from 1974 to 1980. Pastor Hastad died on October 7, 1989 in Lacqui Parle County, MN.

1975 - 2000 All About The Quilting ...

1975 - 2000 Quilting at First Lutheran Church had its genesis or beginning in October of 1975. Because quilting has been a rich part of First Lutheran Church's history, and the connections to people inside and outside our church have never faltered, it is important to recognize the gifts of these highly dedicated women. Forty-eight years of quilting, and just as many years of handwritten journaling, have provided church members with proof of the relationship of faith between God's handiwork and the quilters.

1975 Bazaar plans and the Pearl Berge's donation of a Dresden Plate quilt top was the onset.

1976 Solveig Halbakken (ALCW Pres.) set in motion a red, white and blue centennial quilt.

1976 - 1977 Quilters completed 14 quilts, worked 1083 hours, and received \$1049.

1977 Women's Circles 2 & 3 joined the quilters to help with prep and sewing of many quilts.

1977 - 1978 A decision was made to keep records for every quilt stitched. Fourteen quilts were made and six were tied, 1813 work hours and \$1100 were made in this time.

1977 - 1979 Completed 13 quilts, tied six *quilts*, worked 3625 hours and made \$1870.

1979 - 1980 Completed 16 quilts, tied one quilt, worked 8086 hours and made \$1617.

One Example Of A 1979 Quilt Record:

*Quilt for Dorothy Halsness

*For a grandchild

*Started on October 11

*Quilting time of 120 hours

*Quilting days 7

*Women's hours 2

*Paid \$50

And so it continued. More women's circles joined the craft and fellowship. Quilt design names included: Hobo Quilt, Red Dog and Cat, Pink Bunny, Americana, Gingham Dog and Calico Cat, Dresden Plate, Sunbonnet Girl, Blue Bunny Baby, Pink Block Baby, Butterfly, Jacob's Ladder, Rolling Stones, Crazy Patch, Rails, and The Tree of Life. The quilts were sold at bazaars, specifically ordered or finished, given to Lutheran World Relief, donated to Luther Crest's fundraising auctions, or made for our pastors.

One Example of A 1992 Quilt Record:

Ellen Gudding made a Log Cabin quilt in lavender and green from the material given by the Dieseths when they closed their quilt store. Preparation time 31 hours, quilting hours 155, hemming hours 16, for a total of 202 hours. Jeanette Enstad bought it for \$225.00.

1975 - 2000 **Quilters from the past, just to name a few:** Gertrude Larson, Laverne Morstad, Sadie Henning, Dorothy Halsness, Irene Bjorklund, Lila Greenup, Hilma Nelson, Ann Kjaglien, Ella Norgaard, Signe Barsness, Judi Nord, Nora Kamrud, Ellen Gudding, Selena Mesna, Alice Morstad, Ida Mae Bjorgum, Pam Herfindal, Kathy Ortloff, Phyllis Anderson, Stella Jyrkas, Pat Haldorson, Pearl Berge, Emma Lundell, and Katie Haugrud who continues to quilt at church in 2023.

1975 - 1995 The grand totals for the years of operation from 1975 to 1995 were:

454 articles - quilts of many sizes, lap quilts, wall hangings

52,323 hours of volunteer work

and \$49,908 was received.

2000 January: A new year with the same dedicated focus.

2000 March: The quilters took off time so that they could make stoles for the confirmands.

2000 June 19: Bazaar month so several quilts were tied and completed by this date.

2000 July: Time off for vacations, illnesses, etc. (actual journal entry)

2000 November: Spent 280 total hours making a double wedding ring quilt, received \$500.

2000 December: The "To Do" Quilting List, with 44 quilts to be made or finished, had 33 checked off projects, and 11 waiting to be started. (In the mid 80's, records showed a list of 93 quilt orders and all but 16 were checked off. Quilters love to: sew and quilt, have deep connections with their quilting friends, have coffee breaks with shared bake goods, receive fabric donations, teach volunteers to tie quilts, problem solve with quilt top patterns, and be involved in the mission of serving God and others.

1975 February 1: Twenty year tenured financial secretary **Margaret Wilshusen** resigned. She was 76 years old and her family in Michigan wanted her to spend more time with them. She had prayed and agonized and wept about whether or not to stop the work she loves, and leave the wonderful people she has had the pleasure of working with.

1975 - 1978 **Harvey Hanson was head janitor**, assisted for three years by Vernon Tomhave.

1975 July: First Lutheran Church **sponsored a Vietnamese refugee family** for resettlement in Fergus Falls. Betty Hess made sure the Le Ngoc Hao family of 4 were comfortable in their apartment and with their new life. In 1977, First Lutheran co-signed the purchase of a home for them. In 1978, the family moved to California due to our severe winter weather. As of 1997, the family had become very successful with two sons being employed by NASA.

1975 - 1977 Associate Pastor Kirk Anderson

Kirk Elliott Anderson was born on March 20, 1946, in Rochester, MN. His parents were Bror and Trude Anderson of Cottonwood, MN. He graduated from Cottonwood High School in 1962, St. Olaf College in 1968, and Luther Theological Seminary in 1972. Mark met his future wife Sandy Jones at St. Olaf College. He interned at the University of CA Hospitals in 1972, and was ordained in Marshall, MN at First Lutheran Church. He accepted a call to First Lutheran Church on August 4, 1975, as the Associate

Pastor. He was the youngest minister to ever serve at our church. His primary duty was working with family ministry and outreach. Kirk formed the Family Life Task Force of eight members and together they had many family evening events in 1976 to identify church family needs. He also formed twenty small groups for a Life Enrichment Program to increase the "traffic of prayer and love" among the church members. Pastor Kirk, wife Sandy and son Nate left First Lutheran on August 31, 1977, to accept a call to Christ The King Lutheran Church in Phoenix, AZ. Later Kirk married Sheri Brown and they had three sons. In 1992, Kirk became a Lutheran Brotherhood agent and was still an agent in 1997.

1976 April 12: A **complete revision of the Church Constitution** was ready and had taken dedicated work to get it completed.

1977 - 1983 Cheryl Colantonio **Kjos was hired as Director of Music**. She was the organist, directed all the choirs, and coordinated three Renaissance Festivals. Cheryl and Pastor Jack Hustad introduced the new Green Worship Hymnal to the congregation.

1977 **Jean Dahling became the first woman elected as a president of the Church Council**. In 1951, Jean volunteered to go to Korea during the Korean Conflict. She was one of the Red Cross Grey Ladies who daily served lemonade and up to 5,000 donuts to the soldiers. She had taught Language Arts in schools all over Minnesota but mostly in Fergus Falls. She and her friend Carol Leafblad took a leave from their careers in 1966, and went to Moses, Alabama to teach during the Civil Rights upheaval. They wrote a book titled "Sweet Freedom" and baked bars, both to sell and raise money for the people they served. They were also sold in the Fergus Falls schools and at First Lutheran.

1977 April 28: First Lutheran's **First Garden Fair**. Fellowship Hall was full of tables displaying yummy foods for all to sample. Recipes were published for the guests.

1977 - February 1980 Associate Pastor Mark Anderson

Mark Anderson came to First Lutheran Church right after his ordination on August 28, 1977. He was called on August 14. He was installed as an Associate Pastor on September 4, 1977, when the membership was over 2000 souls. Mark had attended Augsburg College, Waldorf College, Concordia College, Luther Seminary from 1973 - 1974, and 1975 - 1977. He and his wife Sue had 2 sons, Erik and Geoffrey. At First Lutheran Mark took part in the outreach evangelism, education, music and worship ministries. He also was the student chaplain at the FF Community College. In January of 1979, upon Pastor Hustad's resignation, the Church Council designated that Pastor Mark Anderson would be responsible for the church's pastoral ministry during the interim when there wasn't a senior pastor. A three member Pastoral Advisory Committee was appointed to assist Pastor Anderson and the church staff until a full-time senior pastor was called. (Pastor John Westby was called in July 1979.) Pastor Mark returned to associate pastor work and then left First Lutheran in February 1980. A farewell reception

had been held on January 13. Mark went on to be an associate in a church in Billings, MT, then back to MN to serve as a pastor in Fertile, MN. In 1988, Mark moved back to CA to serve as an associate pastor. He and his family had one more move in 1997 which was to another CA church.

1977 December 24: **Christmas Eve at First Lutheran** included: a **Candlelight Service** at 3:00; a Nativity Service with Chorister, Carol, and Cherub Choirs at 4:00; Christmas Music at 5:15; and a Nativity Service with Senior and Junior Choirs, and the Chapel Choir at 5:30. Families with smaller children were encouraged to attend the 4:00 **Service on Christmas Day morning** which included Christmas Music at 9:40 and a Christmas Service at 10:00. Jack Hustad, Iver Hastad, and Mark Anderson were our pastors.

1978 - 1986 **Richard Bjorgum was the church janitor** and was assisted by Gilford Runningen and Ken DeWitt for short tenures. Rick is related to a church founder Thorsten Bjorgum. Richard and his family continue to live in the area along with many other Bjorgum families.

1978 **Puppet shows** became popular with the youth and continued to be until 2019. Early photos show Janet Preus with puppeteers, and later photos show Brian Becker, youth leader and Sunday School teacher with the puppeteers.

1978 A **second Vietnamese family** was sponsored. Nguyen Vui, wife and two daughters came on a fishing boat in 1977, after the Communist take-over. They had lived in a Phillipines' camp for eight months before relocating. The two children had to be hospitalized when they arrived here but recovered well. Lucilla Anderson made sure that they had everything they needed. The family moved to FL in 1979, to be near Vietnamese family and friends.

1978 The **Lutheran Book Of Worship** switched colors from red to green. Around 2006, its color changed back to red. The red hymnal is still with us in 2023.

1979 Luther League went through a significant change when a **new program called BASIC** started up. The letters stand for Brothers and Sisters In Christ, but the new name did not survive long. It quickly changed back to Senior League and Junior League - all that was missing was the word Luther.

1979 - 1984 August Pastor John Westby

In 1961, John Westby was an intern at First English Lutheran. In 1963, he and his wife Valerie were co-sponsored to be missionaries in Brazil by First Lutheran. Son Charles was born in Brazil. In 1971, John served a church in CA and there Sarah was born. For seven years he served the American Lutheran Church's Division for World Mission and Interchurch Cooperation. John was called to First Lutheran on April 22, 1979. The family came to First Lutheran Church in July of 1979. In the

spring of 1984, First Lutheran Church was in conflict over the direction their church was going. There was dissension, polarization, anger, and communication breakdowns. Pastor Westby's leadership was regarded by a number of people as partisan and thus he would not be able to function as pastor to a whole church. Bishop Gilbert Lee and Assistant Milan Davig were invited to come to First Lutheran for many interviews with individuals and groups. It was soon apparent to both of them that Pastor Westby would not be effective in fixing things. The division in the congregation ran too deep. John Westby offered a resignation. Bishop Gilbert Lee directly handled the resignation and the process thereafter. Pastor Westby's resignation was effective August 31, 1984.

1979 - 1990 The "**Narthex Addition and Refurbishing Project** involved 11 years of work from the ideas/research/loan stage to the dedication year. The actual construction took place from March 10, 1986, to May 6, 1990.

1980 July: **Marcus Hess and his wife Nancy Olson Ness** were ordained the same day. Nancy was ordained at her home church- Bethlehem, and Marcus at First Lutheran. Marcus Hess then became a **Son of the Congregation**. Nancy became a Daughter Of The Bethlehem Congregation.

1980 The congregation **co-sponsored a Laotion family** of eleven members with the churches of The Morning Watch.

1980 November: The **first Renaissance Fair** was a day-long event of drama, music, arts, and food. Dana Gust and Cheryl Kjos were important to the success of this event. Special arrangements had been made for an appearance by "Martin Luther".

1980 May - 1984 Associate Pastor James McGowan

Jim was born on July 30, 1936 in Minneapolis, MN, the son of Leo and Catherine McGowan. He was baptized in 1936 and confirmed in 1958. He graduated from high school in 1954, spent three years in the U.S. Navy, graduated from Augustana College in SD, graduated from Northern State College of Aberdeen, SD, studied at Luther Theological Seminary and interned here at First Lutheran. He served three parishes after becoming ordained in 1966. James McGowan interned at First Lutheran from 1965-1966. Fourteen years later, on June 30, 1980, he was called to First Lutheran. Jim was installed at our church on August 10, 1980. Jim and wife Marilyn Ann Rue had five children- Jim, Kathy, Jay, Krisi, and Kelsey. In June of 1984, Northwestern Minnesota Bishop Gilbert M. Lee removed Associate Pastor James McGowan from the staff of First Lutheran Church and the clergy roster of The American Lutheran Church because of sexual misconduct. Most members knew nothing about the actual circumstances surrounding his departure. They were told it was for "conduct unbecoming a pastor". Eleven years later, the truth was finally revealed. It came in a letter dated, June of 1995, from Bishop Lee's successor,

the Rev. Arthur V. Rimmeried. The bishop wrote, "You need to know that James McGowan was dismissed as a pastor and removed from the clergy roster as the result of multiple sexual offenses with women in the Fergus Falls area, including some women in your church..."

"We are extremely saddened that this is part of our history."

"Healing is hampered when there is silence."

"The church must declare the truth."

- 1981 - 1994 **Holiday Progressive Dinners** became a congregation favorite for 14 years. Preparation for the December event each year began in October with advertising, menu choices, recipe collecting, cost control, volunteering of chairpeople and home sharing, and then sign-up. Everyone in the congregation is invited and the final guest tally changed a few times before groceries were purchased. The Archives kept the plans, menus and recipes for each of the 14 years the event existed, except for 1991, the notes are missing. Someone may still have them in their home archives!
- 1981 August: **The Refugee Committee** prepared for the Tesfzghis Ethiopian family. The family's arrival was delayed by several months and the father did not arrive until December. Maashio Tesfzghis came but had left his 7 family members behind in Germany due to red tape entanglements. He lived with George and Carolyn Sund and got a job at the Broen Home. The rest of the family came on May 12, 1982, into Fargo. Twenty-six church members went to the airport with him and then 41 people were ready with a potluck when they got back to Fergus Falls. Within 5 months all of the children were in school and both parents were employed. They moved into a home in October. Maashio went to school to become an airplane mechanic and graduated in 1986. The family eventually all moved to Dallas, Texas where Maashio was employed as an airplane mechanic. George and Carolyn visited the family in Texas in 1988, and all was well.
- 1981 **Stephen Estrem, son of Dr. Ralph and Ruth Estrem**, was ordained at First Lutheran. He was known as a "**Son of The Congregation**" because he had been called into ministry and ordained in his home church.
- 1981 The **Special Friends Program was created**. Over 80 people volunteered to become visitors. Each visitor chose or were assigned an elderly or shut-in church member once a month. In 1996, 23 members were visited on a regular basis. In September of 2022, the program was about to have a revival. But due to Covid, people were questioning how they were supposed to keep themselves and others safe from the powerful viruses. Finding volunteers to be a part of this program was a struggle. Further work with the Special Friends Program was put on hold.

- 1981 **The second Renaissance Fair** was designed to recreate the famed Renaissance. This was when the rebirth of classical art and learning occurred. The purpose was to provide a way for people to gain an appreciation of our Lutheran heritage.
- 1982 January 24: **The Constitution and By-laws were amended.**
- 1982 September: A new social activities group for couples and singles 55 and older began and was called **New Dimensions**. It was a loosely formed group designed primarily to Serve as a fellowship organization. In 1983, about 55 members participated. In 1987, a name change occurred due to a suggestion by Visitation Lauren Youngdale. It became **Shalom Fellowship** and met for the next 3 years meeting every third Wednesday for lunch, communion and a short program. Under Pastor Youngdale's leadership an average of 65 members attended on a regular basis with several Pioneer and Broen Homes residents in attendance also. After 1990, the Shalom Fellowship attendance slipped due to the fact the nursing homes were now providing programs much like First Lutheran Church's. On January 1, 1993, a vote by the few remaining Shalom Fellowship Members discontinued the program.
- 1982 The **Food Shelf** was organized in Fergus Falls with Helen Prischmann and Lucille Anderson co-chairing First Lutheran's committee. In the year 2023, the Food Shelf continues to play a vital part in feeding hungry families.
- 1983 This year's** pictorial directory was dedicated to Mary Boe for the 36 years of service given to Sunday School, Wednesday School, and Vacation Bible School children.
- 1983 **Planning began to install an elevator.** A quote of \$48,000 was first given but rose to \$75,000 in 1984 because the construction was going to require much more renovation than first planned. The Church Council decided an elevator would have to wait until all of the \$75,000 was raised first. Thanks to the generosity of two members, Hilma Nelson and Melvin Lyksett, construction and elevator installation occurred in 1985 with a dedication during a worship service in May of 1986.
- 1983 The **third Renaissance Fair** was held to mark the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. Co-chairs were Sue Kilde and Carol Hegerle. This was to be the last Fair.
- 1984 6:45 AM Wednesdays: The **Good News women's group** began to have Bible Study every Wednesday at Haugen's Restaurant.
- 1983 The **last Boy Scout Charter** was issued with Scoutmaster Leonard Mitberg and John Dieseth, Duane Gubrud, Omer Germundson, Bruce Nilson and Boyd Johnson as committee members.
- 1984 Fall: **"Search", weekly Bible study program began.** It was a more in-depth study of the Bible and was part worship, part lecture, and part discussion. You had a choice of

an evening class or morning class. Marilyn Berg did the coordinating with others becoming discussion leaders and Bible Study leaders. This series went on for several years and considered a big success.

1984 October - February 1990 Visitation Pastor Lauren Edward Youngdale

Lauren Youngdale was born on January 25, 1924 to Arthur and Olga (Norlin) Youngdale in IA. He grew up on a farm near Dayton, IA. Lauren served three years in the U.S, Armed Forces in Kansas as a surgery assistant in the Winter General Hospital. He graduated from Luther Junior College in NE, and Augustana College and seminary in ILL. He married Norma Anderson on June 30, 1950. Lauren and Norma had seven children: Philip, Linda, Paula, Mark, Carol, David and Angela. Lauren brought his family to Fergus Falls where he served Augustana Lutheran Church for 15 years. While Lauren served as Visitation Pastor at First Lutheran Church, he was also the Chaplain at the Pioneer Home until 2001. Norma died suddenly on October 16, 1997. Lauren married Ingrid Trobisch in 1999. Lauren died on December 13, 2012 at PioneerCare. Lauren's lifelong passion was to live his life as an Apostle of Christ. And he did- singing along the whole time.

1984 Cheryl Kjos, Director of Music, resigned to move on in a new direction.

1984 Sept. - 1985 May: **Wednesday School and Sunday School statistics:** Wednesday School Staff- 15 adults; Sunday School teachers- 44 adults; several substitutes; Sandy Pearson was the Sunday School Superintendent, and Vicki Hanneman was the Education Chair on the Council.

1984 **Julie Swanson came on staff** and took over the Joyful News Choir, the Celebration Singers, and the Senior High Choir.

1984 - 1986 **Harriet Wicklund and Janet Preus** took on the directing of other choirs.

1984 - 1996 **Julie Swanson was the Education Director** for 12 years. By 2000, Julie was directing 2 choirs - Joyful News and Celebration Singers. By 2003, she was concentrating her efforts into directing Sunday School Musical Programs. For approximately 19 years Julie was an important link in the Music Ministry Program.

1984 September - September 1985 Interim Pastor Roger Grow

Roger Grow and Carol were married in 1963. They had 2 daughters, Sarah and Susan. Pastor Roger graduated from the University of MN and Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul. His first church was Glenwood Lutheran Church in Glenwood, MN. Pastor Grow was an interim pastor in Osakis, Starbuck and Marshall, all located in MN. He was a pastor in Albert Lea, MN and also in Mukwonago and West Allis, WI. From 2004 to 2014, Pastor Grow served seven interim positions. In 2016, he became the interim pastor at English Lutheran in LaCrosse.

In times of transition, an **interim pastor** will guide a church through conflicts and disputes which are preventing the church from moving forward. Other times an interim pastor is needed to help work through the grief over the death of a pastor. Pastor Grove stepped into a situation at First Lutheran Church where heartache and turmoil were fresh. Pastor Davig from the Synod Office met with the Church Council August 13, 1984. He explained what had to be done for First Lutheran to heal and how to make that happen. **Pastor Roger Grow** was fully aware of what his role would be and was willing to serve the people for one year. He resigned on July 23, 1985, but stayed on until September 1985, due to the result of a pastor declining the call to come to First Lutheran Church.

- 1984 - 1987 **Linda Mellon became the Coordinator of Music.** Linda had loved being a part of anything musical at First English Lutheran/First Lutheran Church. As a little girl she sang her heart out. When she became a teenager she joined friends in putting on shows with songs that she had easily memorized the words to. In 2023, she continues to do the very same things: sing her heart out, joins friends in musical shows, and easily read, memorize, and direct songs with groups of singers and bell ringers.
- 1984 **An elevator was installed** and this was a very big blessing.
- 1984 December: **Progressive Dinners** began at First Lutheran. The first year's menu Included hot wassail, appetizers, sesame lettuce salad, stuffed beef tenderloin, potatoes, Glazed carrots and Mistletoe Mousse.
- 1985 January: **The First Lutheran Church Volleyball Team** scored a pair of impressive "moral victories " on December 30th over the Bethlehem and Federated teams which were both loaded with "ringers" from the FFPLV (Fergus Falls Professional Volleyball League). The scores were not shared back home at church because "what's in a score anyway". First Lutheran easily won the important "Volleyball Danceline Competition" and the "Giggling and Gabbing By More Than A Group Of Eight Females Playing Volleyball Competition". Following the elaborate awards ceremony ,which rivaled the Olympic ceremonies for pageantry and spectacle, the team was treated to a sumptuous feast of Italian lefse at the coach's home.
- 1985 - 2023 **Keith Melberg was hired as the church organist in 1985** and had previously played organ at Bethlehem Lutheran Church for five years previously. His words, "I like it here at First Lutheran Church. It is family. It becomes family if you participate and get to know the family. I hated the pandemic, coming to church and only having 10 people here. It was very hard. I enjoy playing during Christmas and Easter seasons the best." Keith has 4 four children and eight grandchildren. He presently, in 2023, accompanies the Adult Senior Choir and plays in the Hosanna Handbells Choir. His congregation has always felt he was an incredible asset to the church's music ministry

- 1985 April: The Chorister and Cherub Choirs, under the direction of Julie Swanson, presented **“The Rainbow Express”**. It was a seriously fun musical about God’s promise to Noah and to us. There were two time options- April 12 at 11:00 and 4:00 at our church.
- 1985 August 3 - 12: The **ALC National Youth Gathering in Denver, Colorado** was a five day gathering of over 30,000 youth for hours of worship and fun. First Lutheran had 40 youth and five counselors attend gatherings at Purdue University. Interim Pastor Roger Grow and his wife Carol, Mark Thompson and his wife Mary, and single Dawn Anderson all were in charge. The theme was, “Proclaim Him Lord Of All”.

1985 November - March 1998 Pastor Eberg Duane Tollefson (Used Duane, not Eberg)

Duane Tollefson was born to Eberg and Florence Tollefson and lived his childhood in MT. The family later moved to MN and he graduated from Pacific Lutheran University. He served with a M.A.S.H unit in the US Army during the Korean War. Pastor Tollefson lived in Fergus Falls in 1956 - 1957 as an intern under Pastor Preus. He met Donna Erickson, a teacher at Fergus Falls High School. Duane and Donna had a double wedding with Donna’s twin sister Carol, at First Lutheran in Alexandria, MN, on the last day of Duane’s internship in June 1957. Duane graduated from Luther Seminary in 1958 and was ordained the same year. Duane and Donna had three children: Mark, Marin and Sari. From 1958 to 1962, he served in OR, and then in WA at St. Matthew’s Church. On August 25, 1985, he accepted the call to First Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN, and was installed on November 17, 1985. Highlights during his tenure included: an enormous four year building project which included expansion and refurbishing and a fundraising effort to cover the building expenses; introducing Sister Thea Bowman to the congregation which created a flood of emotions that stayed with the members through 3 years of mission work for Canton, Mississippi and beyond. Pastor Tollefson said that, “the key to life is to have the presence of Christ in it. If I didn’t have Christ in my life, I wouldn’t be fully human and fully alive.” Pastor Tollefson gave his last sermon on March 8, 1998. The congregation held a retirement reception in the afternoon with humorous skits, fellowship and dessert. Duane and Donna retired to their lake life in Alexandria, MN. Pastor Tollefson died on March 17, 2007, in Rochester, MN at the age of 76. On April 4th, a memorial service was held at First Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls.

- 1986 **Mark Noren, son of Richard and Dorothy Noren** of Fergus Falls, was ordained a minister of the Lutheran Brethren Synod in 1986. Mark grew up across the alley from First English Church and spent many hours of his youth at church- usually playing. This allowed him the opportunity to get into areas of the church the janitor didn’t even go. The Noren family original’s home was purchased by our church in 1957. Mark credits his convenient access to church, and the dedicated efforts of many fine Sunday School teachers and volunteers who faithfully served the church over his his first 18 years, for his decision to become a minister. Mark is the grandson of Anton and Mary Aas, early early church members, with Anton working on the 1920 church

construction project after the devastating destruction of the 1919 Cyclone. Mark founded two churches and served several congregations in his career. Mark and wife Gail continue to reside in MN in 2023.

- 1986 **Harriet Wicklund was hired as the Senior Choir Director** and continued for 23 years. She is the longest serving choir director in the church's history. Today in 2023, Harriet continues to be involved with the Senior Choir, plays bells with the Hosanna Handbells Choir, assists with worship service planning, and at the services themselves. She is a gem for First Lutheran- a constant, soft spoken presence for all ages.
- 1986 October 18: "**No Small Af "Fair"** was a total success with good food and clowns (thank you kids) with crafts, baking and food to purchase. The Chair women were Frances Burau and May Ann Kronemann.
Here is the **Chili Recipe** For 400 at 8 oz. a serving.
52 pounds of hamburger
15 pounds of onions
1 pound of chili powder
½ pound of paprika
½ cup salt (continues on next page)
4 #10 cans of crushed tomatoes
4 # 10 cans of tomato puree
5 bunches of celery, chopped
4 #10 cans kidney beans
- 1986 November 2: The guest preacher was **Nancy Hess**, a native of Fergus Falls. She had just returned from serving two years in South Africa.
- 1986 November 23: **Pastor David Simonson**, a missionary to Tanzania, was the preacher. Simonson had given 30 years of service to Tanzania, ministering to 13 rural congregations as well as originating "Operation Bootstrap". Seven hundred fifty primary school buildings have been constructed and put into use under this program. Following the service a potluck was held in Fellowship Hall.
- 1986 November: **ALCW Reflections**: The women had fund raising projects, congregation centered activities, and participated in ten Love Days to make and/or buy 153 quilts, 12 blankets, 16 hospital gowns, 20 health kits, 12 school kits, 25 sewing kits, and two large boxes of bars of soap.
- 1986 December 12: The congregation had deemed it advisable to **amend and revise the Constitution and By-laws** and on this date the changes were accepted.

1986 - 1987 **Madeline Herman was the Education Assistant** while the church awaited the arrival of a permanent Education Director. **Carolyn Koerselman of Elbow Lake** was later hired as our short-term, part-time Education Coordinator for five months. She planned curriculum and directed Vacation Bible School and Sunday School.

1987 January: **The work of collecting, preserving, and displaying historical church items began in earnest.** Marian Kohlmeyer, Laverne and Neal Morstad, and Chris and Dick Hefte volunteered to gather as much as they could in preparation of the 115th Anniversary on June 28, 1987. On June 13, 1988, the Council appointed Marian Kohlmeyer as the official Church Archivist. She appointed a committee consisting of Signe Barsness, Ruth Boe, Jean Dahling, Avis Dieseth, Christabel Jacobs, Gertrude Larson, and Dorothy Skramstad.

1987 - 1989: Ministerial Assistant Philip Westby

Philip was born the son of Frithjof and Olga Westby and was schooled in SD. He married Eunice A. Peterson in 1946. He graduated from Augustana College in SD in 1947 and from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN in 1950, and was ordained the same year. Philip served two parishes in SD and then spent 23 years as a senior pastor at First Lutheran in Alexandria, MN. While he was at First Lutheran in Alexandria, he admitted to three counts of sexual misconduct near the end of his tenure there in 1983. By 1987, Synod Bishop Lohr had been made aware of it all and terminated Philip's rights to help with ministerial activities anywhere, even the ones he was doing at our First Lutheran Church by this time. Our pastors and staff were not made aware of Pastor Phil's charges before they hired him. In 1988, Pastor Westby went only by Membership Development Director and was given one main role, to organize a program called, "The Twelve Tribes".

1987 January 18: Pastor Phil Westby organized "**The Twelve Tribes Of First Lutheran Church**". When God's people had left Egypt to return to the promised land God told Moses that the people needed to be organized into a Holy Nation. Moses needed to delegate responsibilities. Each must know and do his part. Moses organized and so did Phil Westby. First Lutheran's 12 groups were named after Moses' tribes. The groups were geographically formed within Fergus Falls, with 56 families to a group, for a total of 675 families. The families were to notify the pastors of members moving, new people in an area, alert the office of members who are ill, invite the unchurched to church, and pick a sponsor for a new member in the area. Each group/tribe would meet once a year to share fellowship. A tribe's purpose was not to do food service or do work details around church or raise money for the church, but to form a closer knit community in our own church and outside of our church.

A Four Year Narthex Addition and Refurbishing Project 1986 -1990

- 1986 Mar. 10 - A Long Range Planning Committee began the study of building needs
1987 Feb. 16 - The Planning Committee's findings were endorsed for a three phase project
1987 Mar. 9 - Steering Committee began work
1987 June - Approval of a Court Street./Union Avenue parking lot with a connecting ramp
1987 Oct. 11 - Festival Worship at Middle School- approved Building Plan and Fund Drive
1987 Nov. - Court Street. parking lot completed and the County leased 45 spaces
1988 Mar. 7 - Building Committee formed
1988 Mar. 14 - Yeatter Hennings Ruff Architects Ltd. hired
1988 June - Parsonage removed; volunteers cleaned 6,000 bricks to be used in new narthex
1988 Aug. 8 - Bids for construction opened and rejected
1988 Dec. 19 - Project re-bid
1989 Jan. 29 - Approval of renovation of Fellowship Hall and construction of Narthex shell
1989 Apr. 5 - Fellowship Hall work begins and excavation for new building addition
1989 Apr. 16 - Old Fashioned Sunday and Ground Breaking Ceremony
1989 Aug. 6 - Approval to complete entire main floor of Narthex/Office addition
1989 Sept. - Contract with Hetland, Ltd., and Lightbenders Glass for stained glass windows
1989 Sept. 10 - Fellowship Hall opened for Sunday School classes and activities
1989 Nov. - Union Avenue parking lot is completed
1989 Dec. 10 - First use of the new Narthex
1990 Jan. - Offices are moved, freeing up five extra rooms for Sunday School in Parish House
1990 Jan. - The project cost was \$700,000. By January 1988, \$522,000 in pledges and cash and work donations had come in. The "Buy A Brick Program" to raise funds was particularly successful. Several generous monetary donations came forward on and after Dedication Sunday. To God Be The Glory!

- 1987 May 10 - 12: Immanuel Series **Speaker- Preacher Evangelist Bill Vaswig**, spoke on Spiritual Renewal during five sessions of emphasizing "The Word, Prayer and Healing".
- 1987 June: The congregation **approved the design of the Court Street and Union Avenue parking lot** with a connecting ramp.

1987 June 28 115th Anniversary

- 1987 June 28: **Bishop David Preus was the guest speaker on Anniversary Day.** It was a day of remembering, visiting, and enjoying special music, a noon meal gathering, and an informal afternoon program. The program included oral histories, displays of church artifacts and photographs. A special fund for establishing a space in the church to preserve our history, was launched on this day. Because of generous donations the fund helped with refurbishing Fellowship Hall and also the large hallway on the east end. The hallway eventually became Heritage Hall.

1987 October 12: The Church Council recommended and approved the organization of the **Good Samaritan Fund**. This fund received money from the Christmas Basket Fund and from individuals and groups. The money was to be dispersed at the discretion of the pastor or as designated by the giver. The Good Samaritan Fund operated well for about 35 years. Due to changes in pastors, Covid19, and the increase of people with serious needs, First Lutheran Church now, in 2023, has a partnership with The Salvation Army. All of the funds received at church go directly to this organization and dispersed from there. People who come to our church doors or from within the church in need of hot meals, a hotel room, groceries, clothing, and gas money, etc., are directed to or taken to The Salvation Army.

1987 Because of another synod merger, **the American Lutheran Church Women** (ALCW), had **their name changed to Evangelical Lutheran Church Women** (ELCW) and years later became WELCA.

1987 **A Bell Choir (men and women) was organized** under the direction of Linda Mellon. Before this time Linda had already had several musical roles in the church. When she was 19, she was asked to teach the K - 4th Grade Choir. She continued leading choirs while her girls were growing up. She started two Bell Choirs (chimes) for youth- grades 7-8, and a 9-12 choir. For Christmas programs Linda encouraged Sunday School children to be a part of a Chimes' Choir.

1987 - 1990 Pastor Duane Tollefson and wife Donna brought **Stephen Ministries** to First Lutheran. They attended training, trained 23 Lay Ministers in 1988 who learned how to provide one on one ministry. They assisted the pastors with counseling of those in need: such as grieving, divorce, job loss, chronic illness, etc.. The Lay Ministers had to make a two year commitment. No one dropped out. In 1989, Pastor Lewin Clefisch trained the second group of committed members. The Christ Care Program was developed by the Stephen Ministries and First Lutheran attached itself to this small group ministry a bit later.

1988 January 1: The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (**ELCA**) formed. It included the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church (AEL), and the Lutheran Church of America (LCA).

1988 February - February 1994 Associate Pastor Lewin Clefisch

Lewin Clefisch was born on November 2, 1944, in Manchester, Iowa, was baptized and confirmed in Immanuel Lutheran Church in Iowa. He graduated from Wartburg College in 1966, Wartburg Theological Seminary in 1970. He interned in Ingleside, ILL. He married Larrel Anderson on May 25, 1968. They had two children, Krystal and Nathaniel (Nat). Lew was called to First Lutheran on November 25, 1987 and installed on February 7, 1988. Projects he was personally involved with were: an International Vacation Bible School program, sponsoring a Ukrainian Seminary student, Senior High and Junior High Youth Gatherings two of which were in TX,

Boy Scouts, and a single parents support group developed with the help of friend Carolyn Tonneson). From Fergus Falls the Clefisch family moved to Elbow Lake where Lewin served United Lutheran Church. Lew and Larrel had four grandchildren. Larrel died in PioneerCare in Fergus Falls, MN in 2014, Lew married Karen Hermann. She died in 2019. January 10, 2020, he married Elmira Hogness. Lew Clefisch died on September 5, 2023. The suddenness of his death was shocking to his family and friends. He had recently been joking around with a pastor friend about who would live the longest. Both believed the other would. But true to form, Lew had his funeral plans all laid out, and left for the presiding pastor, an outline for the sermon.

- 1988 **One of the largest gifts in the history of First Lutheran Church was received** after the death of former First Lutheran Church member Henry I. Fossen. The church received \$68,000 through a trust set up by Henry and his wife Irmgard in 1983. (Irmgard died in 1987.) Henry was born to Ole J. Fossen and Olive Satre Fossen on August 18, 1896. Ole was the son of Jens O. Fossen, one of our church's Charter Members. Henry was in the Navy in WW1 in France, came back to attend the U of M in St. Paul, and moved back to Fergus Falls to work in the family Fossen Feed and Seed Store. He married Irmgard Ziemer, a milliner at the O'Meara Department Store, on September 1, 1929.
- 1988 - 2022 **Steve Hosch worked as the church's custodian part-time for 34 years.** His flexible time schedule and ability to move large objects made his service "one-of-a-kind"!
- 1989 April: Immanuel Series Speaker, **Sister Thea Bowman**, made a three day visit visit to speak on "Sharing the Good News". Her powerful words, her strength during advanced cancer, her singing, and her commitment to the Holy Child Jesus School of Canton touched lives and changed hearts.
- 1989 Under the leadership of Pastor Duane Tollefson **four Prayer Chains were organized** with eight to ten people in a chain/cluster. In 1995, this program was updated to allow for more involvement and record keeping. This type of intercessory praying continues today, in 2023, with those praying now known as Prayer Angels.
- 1989 September 24 - 26: Immanuel Series Speaker- **Sister Mary Jose Hobday**, a Franciscan nun of Seneca Iroquois descent, was based out of Holy Names College in Oakland, CA. Her themes included: "A Greening of the Spirit"; "Your Call To be Creative with God"; "Gratitude, Creativity and Joy"; and "Prayer and Shifting Summits."
- 1990 February: With the new addition to our church completed came a new need for landscaping and maintaining the grounds. The biggest need was people to be a part of the **new Garden Club** and begin planning for the springs and summers of 1990 and 1991.

1990 February - 1997 Pastor Emeritus Waldemar Anderson

Waldemar was born on March 17, 1914, in Ashby, MN. He graduated from Ashby High school in 1932, Augsburg College in 1937, Augsburg Seminary in 1940. He married Thora O. Torvick of Moose Lake, MN and they had three sons: Dan, Bruce and Lowell. Waldemar served 6 parishes before coming to Fergus Falls in 1980. He first was the Visitation Pastor for Zion Lutheran until February 1, 1990 and moved on across town to First Lutheran Church. He had been called on February 1, 1990. Pastor Waldemar served as our Visitation Pastor until June 1994, and again for another three months in the fall of 1994 and then he retired. Pastor Waldemar was granted the title "Pastor Emeritus" from the First Lutheran Congregation affection of Fergus Falls. This is given to a retired pastor whose congregation "is moved" with and gratitude for their relationship. Waldemar and Thora remained members of First Lutheran Church until their death- Waldemar in 1999, and Thora in 2014. They both were grateful for the many inspiring people they met while sharing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- 1990 May 6: Dedication Sunday. The **four year labor intensive, \$700,000 building project** was complete. Our Dedication Sunday included two complete Dedication Services with Hosanna Handbells, Senior Choir, Cherub and Chorister Choirs. The Music Directors were Harriet Wicklund, Julie Swanson, and Linda Mellon and the soloist was Allan Magnuson. We had four instrumentalists - Jenny Hanson, Beth Berg, Brian Berg, and Kari Wahl, and two organists - Keith Melberg and Pamela Melberg. Pamela Melberg was also the pianist. Our church pastors were Duane Tollefson, Phil Westby, Lewin Clefisch, Waldemar Anderson, and Loren Youngdale. The morning church services were truly overflowing with dedication.
- 1990 The **new stained glass windows** were not all completed by the May 6 Dedication. Some members felt it was too much of an expense at the time. But the building committee felt the windows were too important to the overall design of the building and should be put in. An impasse was resolved when the stained glass company offered an obligation free plan for purchases and installations. Thus, the windows were all completed and not one has ever been removed due to lack of payment or a desire to change the look of things. The windows were designed by David Hetland of Fargo, North Dakota and fabricated by Lightbenders Glass Studio in Fargo.
- 1990 May 14: Three hundred boxes of clothing, household items and book donations left for **Canton, Mississippi**. David Sundberg donated his time and transportation costs for delivery of two shipments now.
- 1990 - 1991 Persian Gulf War
- 1990 June 6: **Operation Bootstrap walk** - five ELCA churches participated and \$2,482.61 was raised to go towards a \$3,000 classroom in Tanzania.

- 1990 July: The women of First Lutheran packed up clothing for **Eunice Simonson's Backdoor Clinic** in Arusha, Tanzania. The women mailed baby shirts, one-piece pajamas, T-shirts, complete outfits, diapers and blankets. Half of the very young children die in Arusha every year from pneumonia brought on by lack of warm clothing.
- 1990 Examples of **mission work performed by First Lutheran Church** in this year: adopted children from the Holy Child Jesus School in Mississippi by providing and sending clothing so they could sell it at the school rummage sales to cover school operating expenses; gave \$600 to each of 4 partner churches- Holy Cross Lutheran in Maple Lake, Faith Chapel in Bagley, MN, Peace Lutheran in Dickinson, ND, and Victory Lutheran in Chula Vista in CA; gave Christmas gifts for the Women's Crisis Center; gave hours to Jail Ministry; gave money to Lutheran Social Services and Lakeland Hospice; provided food and money to the Community Food Shelf; money to Sister Joann Blomme and sister Julian Betts of Marks, MS for Christmas meals, food, clothes and toys for the families they serve; and made Christmas Food Baskets and bought gifts for First Lutheran's needy families. And there were more...
- 1990 October: The **Garden Club created a Wish List** of plants needed to complete the landscaping projects Carolyn Schmidt and her committee had been working on during the summer of 1990. This list included names, sizes and costs of trees, bushes, vines, annuals, and perennials. Within two months all the items were checked off.
- 1990 October 7: **Super Senior Sunday**. This was planned to honor all First Lutheran members aged 80 and over with a luncheon, music and program. Rides were available.
- 1990 October 13: **Fall Fest Time** 9:30 to 1:30: 9:30 was coffee and caramel time, 10:00 the Bazaar and bake sale began, 10:30 to 1:30 lunch was served and unsold items were auctioned off. Bazaar Chairs were Jane Dixon and Helen Watkins.
- 1990 November: **Sunday School attendance** for ages 3 through grade 12 - 323 children.
- 1991 February 2: **Scout Sunday** for Boy and Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls and Brownies. God and Me Awards were given to Steven Rehm and Amber Lembcke. God and Family Awards were given to Kurt Rosendaht, Eric Toso and Mitchell Wagner.
- 1991 April - Lent: At this point in our history we had **4 Partner Congregations**; Holy Cross Lutheran in Maple Lake, MN; Faith Chapel in Bagley, MN which served the Native American population; Peace Lutheran in Dickinson, ND which were doing their best to operate in a depressed oil economy; and Victory Lutheran in Chula Vista, CA. The Lenten offering folders this year provided enough to provide each of these congregations with \$600.

- 1991 April 21: **Boy Scout Troop 304 was reorganized and rechartered**, with Gary Eckley as the scoutmaster and Keary Toso as the assistant scoutmaster. Pastor Lewin Clefisch was on the committee along with Omer Germundson, Sue Toso, and Ken Toso with 5 young scouts. Keary and Sue Toso's son Eric was in Boy Scouts from 1991-1999.
- 1991 May 7: **Dr. Al Kohlmeyer** began volunteering twice a month to provide counseling to our members.
- 1991 The **AIDS epidemic** had reached its second decade. Americans thought the worst was over because the media had cut back on broadcasting about it. But the new infections of HIV and the numbers of full-blown cases continued to rise sharply and would for at least the next few years. The drug AZT slowed the progressions of the disease but never eliminated it. At the end of 1990, more than 150,000 Americans had been diagnosed with AIDS and $\frac{2}{3}$ of them had died. It was predicted that by the year 2000, 25 to 30 million people will be infected with HIV internationally.
- 1991 June 5: The **4th Annual Operation Bootstrap Walk** followed the usual route from the Courthouse to Pebble Lake. Enough money was raised to build another Classroom.
- 1991 September 1: On this date our church member **Dick Hefte began walking in the Operation Bootstrap Walk in Tanzania.**
- 1991 December: Fifteen Boy Scouts were registered and **by July 1997 the membership was at 38 scouts.**

1993 - 1999 Pastoral Counselor Ralph Pedersen

Ralph was born on September 12, 1938 in Camrose, Alberta, Canada to Richard and Anna Pedersen who were immigrants from Denmark. In 1956, Ralph attended the Lutheran Bible Institute and graduated in 1958, entered Augsburg College that same year, graduated from Luther Theological Seminary in 1966, and was ordained at at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Ralph married Renee Grothe on September 13, 1959, and they had four children: Bradley, Kevin, and twins Teresa and Michelle. They have 7 grandchildren and two great grands. From 1966 to 1977 Ralph served three churches- McCloud, ND, Twin Valley, MN, Oslo, MN, and then did clinical training in chemical dependency at Hazelden Treatment Center in Center City, MN. The family moved to Fergus Falls and Ralph began employment at the Regional Treatment Center as a Chaplain on the drug dependency units. The family became members of First Lutheran Church. In 1993, Pastor Tollefson asked Ralph to become a part-time pastoral counselor at church at the same time that he continued his chaplaincy work. Ralph was to fill in for Dr. Al Kohlmeyer who became ill shortly after the initiation of the new support program. He faithfully served the congregation for 6+ years and resigned in 1999. Now he had more time for his woodworking hobby. First Lutheran has several of Ralph's "gifted wooden items" around the church. Ralph

continues to make this guiding principle of his life: "There is no solution for presence."
This principle becomes real when he makes the "Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi" his own.
Ralph and Renee continue to be members of First Lutheran Church in 2023.

- 1993 The church's historical preservation (Archives) was advanced with the formal establishment of **Heritage Hall** which runs along the east end of Fellowship Hall.
- 1994 The **famine in Africa** continued. Eunice Simonson's Backdoor Clinic was being overrun- no food, no money, and no medicine. David Simonson was asking for donations in increments of \$1000. For every \$1000 given, 7 tons of maize could be purchased and delivered to feed the hungry. Twenty-two donors came through right away so David's plea was working along with the Holy Spirit's guidance.
- 1994 October 28 - 30: **Immanuel Series Speaker- Walter Wangerin, Jr.** provided 6 sessions of varying topics from: the universe, to cultures, to families, to individuals, to an informal time of sharing and asking.
- 1994 First Lutheran provided prayer and financial support to **Valeri Tchijik, a Russian Seminary Student** at Luther. Valeri preached at First Lutheran on May 7, 1995 and shared an emotional sermon on Russian life and his faith.
- 1994 The Evangelical Lutheran Church Women (ELCW) became the **Women Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (WELCA)** and thus it stands in 2023.
- 1994 November: **Work began on the 125th Anniversary** which was to be in 1997. Committee members were Merald Enstad- co-chair, Robert Dieseth- co-chair, Avis Dieseth- music, Al Jacobs- worship, and Christabel Jacobs- special events. (By the time the 1997 anniversary year was over, 250+ people had given of their time and talents to make the 125th Church Anniversary a success.)
- 1994 November - May 1, 1999 Associate Pastor Ray Blank**
Ray Blank was born in Lincoln, Nebraska and grew up in Inwood, IA. He graduated from West Lyon High School in Inwood, WI in 1984, Wartburg College in 1988, and graduated from Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA in 1992. Ray interned at St Olaf Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge, IA under the supervision of Pastor Allen Hermeier who had been an intern in our church. He was called on October 2, 1994, and began working at First Lutheran on November 13, 1994. He was responsible for the youth two-thirds of the time and one-third general ministry. Under Pastor Blank's leadership, formation of 3 distinct youth groups developed: Kids 'n Company grades 3-5, Posse grades 6-8 and Mob grades 9-12. The youth did ski trips, canoe trips, National Youth Gatherings, mission trips, lock-ins and 30 hour famines. Pastors Blank, Aga, Anderson and Tollefson had all ages covered in their ministry to the people of First Lutheran. Pastor Ray resigned on May 1, 1999. He had written this in his letter to his congregation, "You have been good to me. You have been

good for me. You have pushed me to look at myself in ways I was not willing to go before. You supported me as I tried to understand my own alcoholism and what it means for me as a Child of God. You have helped me be a better preacher, a better person and a better pastor. For all of these things I am grateful.”

1994 December - 1997 Visitation Pastor Rhuben Aga

Rhuben was born on January 18, 1932, in Redwood Falls to Reverend Rhuben O. Aga Sr. and Irene Lillian (nee Juell). His boyhood was spent in Mankato and in Pasadena, CA as a teenager. He attended college in CA, entered the Navy in 1954, and served for over 20 years. He was in active duty in Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Hawaii. He was a reservist and retired as a Lieutenant Commander. He married Peggy Jean Finn in 1957 and they had three children: Beverly, David, and Peter. Peggy and Rhuben divorced in 1996 but remained good friends. Reuben entered Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul in 1967, was ordained in 1961, and became a U.S. Naval Reserve Chaplain at Iowa State. He served nine congregations in his career and his last two were First Lutheran Church and Zion Church in Fergus Falls, MN. Rhuben married Dian Sjobeck in 2009, and they spent many years traveling and spent summers on Lake Lida in Otter Tail County. Pastor Rhuben died on September 20, 2019, in Apple Valley, MN. His favorite morning prayer was, “Good Morning Lord! I love you. What do you have planned today? I want to be a part of it!”

1995 The **Christ Care Ministry** began at First Lutheran in May. This program involved 12 active groups with 6-10 members in each, and monthly meetings. The groups studied the Gospels and learned how to share the care of Christ with each other. Leaders and participants worked to grow as Christians so that they could share their faith outside the church as well.

1995 June 7: **Operation Bootstraps 7th Walk**- their goal was for 5 classrooms which they named “Strive for 5”. As of 1995 Operation Bootstrap had been in operation since 1965.

1995 December 10: The congregation was treated to “**Christmas Around The World**” with 125 children. Each grade represented a country. The setting was a ship, two sailors and many international travelers. The program was directed by Julie Swanson. A free - will offering went to the Women’s Crisis Center.

1996 - 2018 **Cindy Larson came on staff** on February 10, 1996 as the Education Assistant. She had been a kindergarten teacher and was a mother of three. Cindy had several years of practice with children before she came to First Lutheran. She gave 22 years of love and care to the children and teachers of our church.

1997 October 12 125th Anniversary
(Special events took place all year long.)

1997 Anniversary Theme: “O God Our Help In Ages Past”.

- Jan. 19: Old Fashioned Sunday, vintage clothing, with liturgy from a 1913 black Lutheran Hymnary (The Hymnary is on display in Heritage Hall.
- Feb. 2 - 4: Immanuel Series Speaker- William Lazareth on our Lutheran Heritage
- Apr. 19 - 20: Immanuel Series Speaker- Al Stagg on Laughter For Living
- May 10: Wedding Dresses Bridal Show
- May 11: Operation Bootstrap Mud Sunday
- June 4: Tenth Operation Bootstrap Walk
- June 15: Homecoming Sunday with former pastors and musicians plus a program (in 125 years: 3,276 baptisms; 2,952 confirmed; 1,733 marriages)
- July 13: Mission Sunday with worship, mission talks, and a potluck supper at Dan and Kathy Rosendahl’s beautiful home- the old church parsonage
- Sept. 7: Rally Sunday with John Ylvisaker- church musician and composer
- Sept. 28: MaaSAE School Sunday with David and Eunie Simonson
- Oct. 5: Super Senior Sunday with 70 seniors being honored with music and gifts
- Oct. 11: An Old Fashioned Supper with anniversary committee members as guests
- Oct. 12: Joint Festival Worship at the Middle School Auditorium with Bethlehem Church (organized on 08/13/1872) and First Lutheran Church (10/10/1872).

1997 The book, “**Blessed... to be a blessing**” was published in remembrance of the first 125 years. The book itself was a blessing and continues to be one in 2023.

1998 “**The Cross Under The Acacia Tree**”, written by Jim Klobuchar, was published and told the story of David and Eunice Simonson’s Epic Mission in Africa.

1998 April 15 - June 1, 1999 Interim Pastor Robert Possehl

Bob Possehl served Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls as the Associate Pastor of Youth and Education in 1988. Over the next ten years, he used his specialized training as an Intentional Interim Pastor which meant moving ten times. In November of 1998, Bob signed a contract to be the Interim Senior Pastor at First Lutheran and agreed to remain until the arrival of a full time permanent senior pastor. He was provided housing in a two bedroom apartment with a home maintenance benefit, a continuing education “one day a month leave” for study expenses, a travel allowance, and his monthly salary. In March 1999, Pastor Possehl’s letter in the Messenger was titled “Whose Journey is this Anyway?” He said we have to trust church leadership, accept the hard choices that change can bring, stand together in decisions and recognize that we will survive. His last sermon was Sunday, May 30, 1999

1998 March 15 - February 1, 1999 Interim Visitation Pastor James O. Tonneson

Jim attended Concordia College of Moorhead, MN. This was where he met his wife Carolyn Suzanne Heuer with their first date being on April 21, 1965. The couple celebrated that date just as they celebrated their marriage anniversary which was June 24, (1947). Jim also attended Dakota Lutheran Academy in Minot, ND. They

were blessed with three children: Mark, Scott and Kimi. Jim signed a Contract for Interim Visitation Pastor Services on March 15, 1998, at First Lutheran with an ending date of February 1, 1999. Pastor Jim served a total of seven churches with his ministry beginning and ending in St. Paul, MN. Carolyn died on December 1, 2022.

1998 May - End of September 2015 Reverend (Chaplain) Harry Olson of PioneerCare

Harry interned at Augustana Lutheran in Elizabeth, MN. For the next nine years he was the parish pastor at two churches in North Dakota and also was a hospital chaplain. Harry worked and trained at Mayo Medical and Chaplain Residency. In 1998, he received a call to the Pioneer Retirement Community in Fergus Falls. His Installation and Open House were Sunday, May 17, from 2:00 to 4:00 at Pioneer's Celebration Center. Harry retired in 2015. PioneerCare CEO Nathan Johnson said, "Harry was the face of Pioneer and had been truly faithful to our missions." Harry provided spiritual care and support for residents and their families, volunteers, and the staff in Pioneer Suites, Pioneer Cottages, Pioneer Point and Care Center. In 2023, Harry and Mary Lou remain members of First Lutheran. They have two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah. (Pioneer Memorial Home was established in 1928 with the sponsoring congregations of Bethlehem Lutheran, First Lutheran, and Zion Lutheran. In 1998, Augustana and Hope Lutheran Churches also became sponsors. PioneerCare continues to have a Christ-Centered purpose in 2023.)

1999 March - August 2016 Pastor Saul Stensvaag

Saul George Stensvaag was born on January 10, 1950, in Minneapolis, MN to Mohn Monrad and Hannah Ovidia (Mehus) Stensvaag. Saul attended Augsburg College and graduated in 1972. He married Mary Kay Johnson on August 20, 1972. Saul graduated from Luther Seminary in St. Paul in 1979 and in this year became a missionary pastor for the American Lutheran Church in Hakodate-Shi, Japan from 1979 to 1985. He also served in Sapporo, Japan from 1985 up to the family's move back to MN to serve in Normandale, MN. On March 7, 1999, Pastor Saul accepted a call to serve as Senior Pastor of First Lutheran where he remained until 2016. Sunday, May 9, 1999, was his first service here. May 23, 1999, was Saul's Installation Sunday. All of the Stensvaags shared talents with First Lutheran that influenced the programs and the life of our church. A few of the highlights during his tenure were: planning and traveling with youth on several trips including Tanzania; attending youth sporting and music events to show support for the youth from First Lutheran and the community; organizing Advent and Lenten Task Forces every year to provide themes and props that enhanced the messages of the season. Pastor Saul's favorite theme was "God Comes Down In Love". A large downward arrow in front of the sanctuary symbolized how "Our God always comes down to us" and at Christmas he comes down in love to be born in a stable. During Advent and Lent the congregation would come to church wondering what surprise Pastor Saul had for them that day. For seventeen years Saul didn't allow things to become boring at First Lutheran. He wanted all the members to experience

“wonder” when they came to church. On September 18, 2016, the congregation had an Appreciation Celebration and Potluck for the Stensvaags. Pastor Saul moved on to do interim work in Minnesota and the family resides in Minneapolis, MN in 2023.

2000 July - August 2001 Associate Pastor Amy Larson

Amy's parents are Dr. David P. and Helen Chamberlain Anderson. Amy graduated from Luther College in 1996, and Luther Seminary in 2000. She was ordained on July 9, 2000. Amy married Pastor Matt Larson who was the assistant to the Bishop of the SE MN Synod. Amy Zalk Larson received a letter of call on June 11, 2000, to become First Lutheran's Associate Pastor. Her call was a bit different. It defined that she would pastor here from July 1, 2000 to August 31, 2000; then work in East Africa from August 2000 to July 2001; and then return to First Lutheran from August 1, 2001 to January 2002. From January 2002 to August 16, 2005, Amy continued on as Pastor of Education and Family Life. Her next position was at Luther College as the Campus Pastor. This position was very timely for Amy because her husband Matt was a chaplain in the National Guard and was to be deployed to Iraq soon after she left First Lutheran. Amy and family would have the support of her family and Matt's family with Luther college students able to help with children Nate and Abby.

2000- 2001 Part-time Pastor James O. Tonneson

Pastor Jim held two part-time positions, both at the same time, while serving First Lutheran while Pastor Amy Larson was in East Africa. Jim was part-time visitation pastor and part-time associate pastor from August 6, 2000 to August 31, 2001.

2001 - 2021 War In Afghanistan

2002 - 2023 **Anne Taylor joined the Music Ministry** at First Lutheran in 2002 and had played the organ for 20 years before that. Anne became our fill-in organist but also served the congregation by playing piano for choirs and presently plays for the Worship Team which provides musical ministry at the Blended Worship service on the second Sunday of every month. Anne's gifts have been greatly appreciated since the first day she came on board as a staff musician.

2002 The **first youth trip to Tanzania, Africa** with Pastor Saul Stensvaag.

2003 - 2011 Iraq War

2003 October 11 and October 14 of 2006: WELCA planned the **Tour of Tables** in Fellowship Hall. Women signed up to host a table by working with a favorite theme to decorate their table in high fashion, with humor, by season, or eccentrically. WELCA prepared the meals.

2004 September - March 2007 Visitation Pastor Stanley Richard Larson

Stan Larson was born in 1937 on the family farm in Underwood, Iowa. He was the son of Louis and Carrie Christopherson Larsen. He was the fourth of five boys and earned his keep by milking his own cow at age five. Stan graduated from high school in 1954, Dana College in NE in 1960, and Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN in 1964. Stan married Ruth on August 24, 1963 and they had 4 children: Sarah, Miriam, Soren and Kristen. Stan had 50 years of ordained ministry and served rural and small town parishes in ND and at First Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN. Stan and Ruth built a home on Silver Lake outside of Battle Lake and they retired there. While he served at First Lutheran, on Christmas Eves, at the 11:00 PM services, Pastor Stan would tell a personal Christmas story and then tenderly sing "Oh Holy Night" while his daughter accompanied him. He was known as a humble and gracious man. He died as he lived, trusting in his Savior.

2005 **Fellowship Action Teams-** Responsibility Samples: Feb. 13th Valentine Game Night; Mar. 22nd Augsburg Choir Concert; Apr. 23rd Maasae Girls Choir Supper; all Wed. Lenten Luncheons; all Summer Sunday Morning Coffee gatherings; Financial Secretary - Gerry Perleberg's Retirement Party; Aug. 7th Farewell Party for Pastor Amy Larson; Aug. 14th Summer Worship and Picnic at the Pebble Lake Picnic Shelter; and a Nov. 23rd Thanksgiving Eve Supper after the 5:30 service- for 200 guests. It was a relief when your month was over and another relief when you remembered you were not on duty for the next 12 months.

2005 May: **Senior students received fleece blankets** as a gift from the church. Darlene Berge led this project, and it has continued to the present time, 2023. The average number of blankets gifted to students is 13 a year.

2005 May 30: The **second Tanzania Team traveled to Africa** under the guidance of Associate Pastor Amy Larson.

2005 Pastor Saul Stensvaag and Youth Director Chris Richards **involved the youth** at Luther Crest; in Mission Work (home remodeling); in a 30 Hour Famine; in the Harvest Dinner; and in Wall Climbing. It became "Youth VS Two Men" most of the time.

2005 Summer: **Softball season** began with all games being played on Monday nights. First Lutheran was known for having talented teams.

2005 June 15: The **8th Annual Fergus Falls Area Operation Bootstrap Walk-** all funds raised went towards building materials for the Ketumbeine School in Tanzania which served 475 students. Teachers' living quarters were also lacking since eight teachers lived in one mud, stick, and dung house. Previous Bootstrap Walks provided money to build two new classrooms, rehab the old ones, helped build four girls' dormitories, a dining hall, and a new latrine for dorms.

2006 **Fellowships Action Teams' Responsibility Samples:** all Summer Sunday Morning coffee gatherings; annual kitchen cleaning; August Outdoor Worship Service; Boy Scout Pancake Feed; October 29th potluck supper and movie- "Ma and Pa Kettle"; Thanksgiving Eve Soup Supper and Pie Sale at 6:30 after the church service; and a December 3rd Concordia Concert Bus Trip.

2006 July - July 2010 Education and Family Life Pastor Matthew John Philaya
Pastor Matthew was born on October 14, 1972. His parents were LeRoy and Sylvia. His father died in 1999 and mother died in 2003. Matthew has three sisters and one brother. He graduated from Concordia College and Luther Seminary in St. Paul in 2004. Matthew and wife Jennifer have two children, Thomas and Elizabeth. In 2005 and 2006, he was on a multi-pastor staff at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, MN and then began his 4 year tenure at First Lutheran in Fergus Falls in 2006. In 2010, Matt and Jen moved the family to Montevideo and he served Salem Lutheran Church and remained there until December 19, 2017. He then moved on to work for the SW MN Synod.

2007 **Fellowship Action Teams' Responsibility Samples:** making Welcome Bags for church visitors; summer Sunday Morning Coffee gathering; the very first Operation Bootstrap Africa Walk at 5:30 from the County Courthouse to the Pebble Lake Picnic Shelter; Aug. 9th Summer Outdoor Worship; Relay For Life Cancer Fundraiser; and December's trip to the Concordia Christmas Concert.

2007 March - November 2011 Visitation Pastor Roger Hanson
In the March Messenger of 2007, it was recorded that the new Visitation Pastor's Contract was being checked over by the Council, and Roger Hanson's name was written beside it. The church had nothing to worry about. Pastor Saul Stensvaag would comment about Roger Hanson in his Pastor Reports in the Messengers: "Pastor Hanson has fit in very well with the staff members. He has a gift of never appearing hurried. His kindness and compassion are appreciated by all. The church secretary, Pastors Matt, Roger, and myself, meet to get updates on the 60 folks on Roger's visitation list." In the December Messenger of 2011, Pastor Roger thanked First Lutheran for being so caring and helpful. He had worked nearly five years at First Lutheran. He resigned near the end of November and his last Sunday as a pastor at our church was on December 4.

2008 **Fellowships Action Teams' Responsibilities Samples:** having a conversation with Augustana and Bethlehem in regards to gathering information on how they organize their fellowship activities; pondering how to get more ladies to join Ladies Circles; discussing the possibility of a large February social event with Pastor Matt noting that there will be a wedding at church on Feb. 14th and a Youth Gathering Fundraiser on Feb. 29th; a discussion about the possibility of trying a lunch and movie event on a Sunday, plus all of the other regular responsibilities.

2008 April 13: C. **Jon Rosengren (1939 - 2006)** left a **generous and a significant monetary** gift for lighting enhancements in the sanctuary and narthex. The gift is in memory of the Rosengren Family.

2010 August 16: **Reverend J. David Simonson**, retired pastor of the the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and well- known missionary in East Africa, died on August 16, at his home in Arusha, Tanzania. Rev. Simonson (age 80) had spent more than 40 years working with the Maasai Tribe and may have been best known for starting Operation Bootstrap- Africa (OBA) in 1965, which raised millions of dollars to build schools. (David's wife, Eunie, continues to live in Tanzania in 2023 with her children caring for her and giving her all the love she needs.)

2011 November 2 - June 15, 2017 Associate Pastor Jennifer Rose

Jennifer and her husband Matthew both grew up in Stoughton, WI. Jennifer received a music major from Luther College in IA. Then she did her seminary work at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. Matthew studied there at the same time and Jennifer clearly remembers that they were "dirt poor", living on student loans and a couple of odd jobs. Her first call was to Bethel Lutheran in Herman, MN from 2007 to 2011. While Jennifer served at Bethel, husband Matthew served in Barrett, at Hope Lutheran. Jennifer's second call, November 2, 2011, came from our church and Matthew was called to Hope Lutheran also in Fergus Falls. Jennifer and Matthew had 4 children who were loved by our congregation which also provided many babysitters. Jennifer and family left Fergus Falls in 2017, and went on to serve at Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hartland, WI in May of 2018, and they remain there today in 2023.

2012 **Another group of youth traveled to Tanzania** and spent time at the Plaster House in Arusha. This home is supported by Operation Bootstrap Africa. Children from all over Tanzania come here to prepare for, or recover from, orthopedic surgery. First Lutheran youth brought a variety of caps, sunglasses and toys for several ages of patients.

2012 **Organ work** began once again and on August 27, 2020 the organ had a total of 35 ranks of pipes totalling **2500 pipes in all**. The two pipe rooms were now maxed out. Allen Moe, who had completed this expansion of pipes, also tunes the organ every two years.

2015 September 1 - February 2016: **Lawrence (Eric) Vigessa** was First Lutheran Church's Senior Choir Director.

2015: September 1 - August 31, 2021 Visitation Pastor Stanley Satre

Stan Satre was born in November of 1932 and is now, in 2023, 91 years old. He met his wife Bev at St. Olaf College and they married on December 19, 1954. They had five daughters from 1955 through 1964: Mary, Kristen, Susan, Rebecca, and Kathleen. Stan ministered to congregations from 1958 to 1996. After his last

full-time pastor position in Minneapolis, MN in 1996, he served as a retired pastor in five states. After the family was raised, Stan and Bev traveled the world by leading tour groups, and sailed the high seas. They moved to Fergus Falls in 2006 to be closer to the family and the family cabin on Walker Lake, MN. Bev, in particular, loved their cabin. Stan, in particular, loved ringing the bell for four or five Sunday outdoor church services at nearby Camp Nidaros. Stan became an interim pastor at Bethlehem Church in Fergus Falls in 2010. In 2015 to 2021, he was the visitation pastor at our church. On June 3, 2018, First Lutheran celebrated Stan's Ordination Anniversary of 60 years (June 6, 1958) at First Lutheran Church. Pastor Stan retired in 2021. Stan and Bev lived at 524 West Alcott. Daughter Rebecca (Becky) died on July 9, 2023. Stan's wife Bev died 7 days later. Pastor Stan said, "My hope and intention throughout all of these years has simply been to share the Peace." Pastor Stan was at First Lutheran's Worship Service on Sunday, August 20, 2023, serving God's people just by being present.

2015 October 16 - March 31, 2020 **Katrina Johnson** was First Lutheran's bookkeeper and for a time also the office manager. When Katrina resigned, the church was unable to give her a proper send-off due to the Covid-19 epidemic. A small staff party was held at a later date.

2015 Pastor Jennifer Rose took the youth to a **Paintball Tournament**; to Winnipeg to do mission work at "Second Harvest" which was a food rescue charity; and to a Twins Game.

2016 Pastor Jennifer Rose and Lorri Holt traveled to **The Black Hills** with the Senior Fly Youth.

2016 November - July 2017 Interim Pastor Erick Thompson

Erick signed a Letter of Agreement for Interim Pastoral Ministry on November 1, 2016. He was known as a "working preacher" because he was a reverend and a doctor at the same time. He served our church for a short time when we didn't have a senior pastor or an associate pastor. Erick agreed to stay full-time from Nov. 1 to November 1, 2017. But he left First Lutheran earlier than planned because he'd received a call to John's Lutheran in Fargo, ND.

2017 April 9: Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast was served by the First Lutheran Youth. Breakfast was in Fellowship Hall from 9:30 to 11:00 AM. A free-will donation helped fund Mystery Mission 2017.

2017 April 16: **Easter Sunday Worship** was at 8:30 and 10:00 AM in a sanctuary filled with spring flowering plants positioned around an old rugged cross. A children's Easter Egg Hunt was held between services.

- 2017 April 23: Today was **Holy Humor Sunday**. It always occurs after Easter. Members were invited to come, worship and laugh. They were treated to jokes from the pulpit, unusual clothing, and lighthearted music.
- 2017 April 27: **Taste of Spring Annual Salad Luncheon** and Bake Sale were in Fellowship Hall from 11 AM to 1 PM. Tickets were \$7:00. Members signed up bring a salad, make bars, and/or volunteer to help in some capacity that day.
- 2017 May 13: A Son of the Congregation**, Jeff Fitzkappes, was ordained on this day at Trinity Lutheran in Montevideo, MN. Jeff parents are Steve and Gayle Fitz of First Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls. He and wife Kate have 4 children: Nina, Simon, Junia and Ava.
- 2017 June 12-15: **Butterflies Vacation Bible School** for birth to 5 year olds was designed to be an exciting time for parents and /or a special adult to spend time learning and sharing God's love with their children. This year the theme was "Geared Up For God". Linda Mellon and Vicki Hanneman were the team teachers.
- 2017 June 16: Walkers gathered together at MSTSC in Fergus Falls from 5 PM to 11 PM. This was to raise money for **Relay For Life** to help fund cancer research.
- 2017 **Summer:** The **FLY group and the older youth** worked hard by having fun. They played Frolfing (frisbee-golf); had a movie night at the theater; had a Mystery Mission Trip; participated in Fam Jam (family fun time with the whole family); and enjoyed a Beach Party at Pebble Beach.
- 2017 August 15 - May 2018 Associate Interim Pastor Marcus Kunz**
 Marcus Kunz has a history with churches named First Lutheran. In 1960, he went to kindergarten at First Lutheran Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. In his growing-up-years Marcus lived in Texas, Tennessee and Missouri. Twenty years later he was a youth worker at First Lutheran in St. Joseph, MO where he was introduced to Martha Halls. He attended Valparaiso University and the University of Chicago. and once again met Martha Halls while they were students at Luther School of Theology in Chicago. They have two sons- Daniel and Andrew. While at First Lutheran for one year, Marcus and Martha offered a lot of positive energy to a congregation that was very anxious about its future. Upon finishing his interim position in Fergus Falls, he continued as an interim pastor for a short term at the Peace Grue Lutheran Parish in Ashby, MN.
- 2017 - May 18: **The Savannah Sipping Society**
 The OWLS (older wiser Lutheran souls) traveled to the Old Log Theatre in Excelsior. For the cost of \$46.00, a theater ticket and ride on a coach bus could be purchased. This was a comedy about a group of unique Southern women who needed to escape the sameness of their day to day routines.

2017 August 15 - June 2018 Senior Interim Pastor Martha Halls

Pastor Martha signed a Letter of Agreement for Interim Pastoral Ministry on August 15, 2017. She agreed to stay one full year or longer if a new senior pastor was not found. Martha was ordained on May 26, 1985. She served in the interim ministry in 3 states for 22 years and taught courses on human identity and relationships at the University of Northern Iowa. Martha and Marcus have 2 sons Andrew and Daniel. She served for one year with her husband, Marcus Kunz- also our interim pastor. Here are the words of Pastor Martha, at our Prayer Service, one day after Ryan Cheshire killed his wife, then himself, and left three young traumatized children.

"I am proud of our church. You have been the church. You came together to support each other including the emergency and law enforcement officers. First Lutheran right away supported the Cheshire and Benson families, their co-workers and neighbors. You came to worship and pray, to give hugs, offer friendships, make coffee and bars, express concerns, share feelings and grieve. You have found ways to assist our little ones as they navigate the difficulty of this news. You have offered kind words of affirmation to the staff, musicians, Pastor Marcus and myself. Thank you for being the church!"

2017 September: **The Wollan family** gifted a new table and chairs to the church library in memory of Val Wollan. She was an avid reader, a 39 tenured first grade teacher who loved teaching reading, and a devoted member and leader of the library committee until her death. Valdine Lona Weiss Wollan was born on January 10, 1935 and died peacefully at home on January 17, 2017.

2017 **Janel Trosvig** became First Lutheran's Senior Choir Director. From August 9, 2020 to December 31, 2020, she had a temporary lay-off due to the Covid epidemic. Janel turned in her resignation in early 2021.

2017 The Sunday School theme for the year is "**Wild About Jesus**"! Psalm 148: All creatures on Earth, come and praise the Lord! Every wild and tame animal, all people young and old together, come and praise the Lord!

2017 September 17: Confirmation students and everyone in grades 8-12 packed up and headed to **Thunder Road** in Fargo for lazer tag, go-carts and supper.

2017 **Love Days Quilters** continued to meet on Mondays from 9:00-3:00 in the Quilting Room. Anyone could join the fun of sewing quilts for Lutheran World Relief and for

local needs. They cut fabric, iron, sew or tie and enjoy morning coffee and lunch together. Every year they also made school kits, baby care kits and personal care kits.

- 2017 Wednesdays- these were always **FLY Day** during the school year. The church van and the Otter Express bus picked kids up at school and brought them to church for a delicious snack in Fellowship Hall. Some children then went off to the youth room to study, some went to choir, FLYK-4 played games with an adult, FLY5-7 spent time with Pastor Martha and Pastor Marcus spent time with confirmation students. Supper was served to all children and their families. One Wednesday in October of 2017, 80 humans went home full and happy.
- 2017 November 2: The **16th annual Thanksgiving Dinner** was prepared and hosted by First Lutheran youth and adults. It featured turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, corn, rolls and bars. (In 2016, 500 people came through the doors between 5:00 and 7:00.) Church members worked, provided all of the food, greeted guests, and of course, cleaned up.
- 2017 November 15 at 7:30: **Family Feud Night!** Grades 8-12 invited their families for a game show that was specially designed for fun and learning about our Lutheran faith. There were game options for those who did not want to play Family Feud.
- 2017 November and December **Advent Season:** Wednesdays included Advent Worship and a soup lunch at 12:10. Advent supper was at 5:15 to 6:45 with Advent Vespers at 7:00. Confirmation students were able to count attendance at Advent Vespers as their confirmation instruction.
- 2017 December 9: It was **ROCK-N-BOWL** time at Northern Aire Lanes. It started at 10 PM and the evening included bowling, eating, strikes, bright lights, turkeys and laughter.
- 2017 December 12: First Lutheran Church delivered plates of **Holiday Cookies** to shut-ins and to members who were no longer able to bake.
- 2017 December 12: All women of First Lutheran were invited to the annual **Christmas Tea** at Pioneer Pointe in the dining room from 2:00-3:00.
- 2017 December 16: The First Lutheran Church Council delivered **Christmas Food Baskets** to many families in need. The baskets included a frozen turkey breast, bread, fruit cocktail, margarine, jello, cranberries, potatoes, etc..
- 2017 December 16: The OWLS members were bused to a performance of **The Nutcracker at the NDSU Festival Concert Hall**, at 2 PM. It was performed by the Fargo- Moorhead Ballet Company. The dancers, the aerialists, the choreography, the extravagant costumes, the professional musicians, plus dining out for dinner, all made this event delightful.

- 2017 December 17 at 11:00: The annual **Sunday School Christmas Program** was enjoyed by everyone, except for one little tearful girl in the front row. The Christmas Story of Jesus' Birth was presented by actors, soloists and choirs.
- 2017 December 24: **Christmas Eve** service at 10 AM - was "We'll Sing All Your Favorites".
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service was at 3 PM.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service was 5 PM.
- 2017 December: **First Lutheran reached out!** 85 pairs of warm socks went to the Salvation Army; 200 pounds of collected food went to the Fergus Falls Food Shelf; the Giving Trees provided gifts to A Place To Belong, Someplace Safe, and Lake Region Recovery Home; 75 plates of cookies were delivered to First Lutheran friends, and 54 Food Baskets went to families in need in the Fergus Falls area.
- 2018 January: **Kristy Wicklund** became First Lutheran's Part-time Education Director. She continues in that position today, 2023. She is truly passionate about serving the children of First Lutheran and the community. She gets paid for a certain number of hours a week but she gives many more hours of time without pay. All for the benefit of the children.
- 2018 February: The Church Council approved the "go ahead" to complete the final **upgrade of the pipe organ**. With dedicated funds still in the account, additional gifts coming from memorials, a gift from the Church Foundation and fundraising efforts, all made the timing right. Moe Pipe Organ Company of Wadena completed the work in the Spring of 2020.
- 2018 February: Sunday School Superintendent **Cindy Larson resigned**. She loved her role at church but needed to be free to help with grandchildren and elderly parents especially on weekends. Her church was grateful for the years she served First Lutheran's children.
- 2018 March: **Laurie Whitehead** joined the church staff as a part-time office assistant. Her parents became members of First Lutheran when she graduated from Pelican Rapids High School. Laurie spent 33 years working in administration at the Fargo VA Medical Center. She married Dale who is semi-retired, they've joined First Lutheran, and Laurie has been volunteering in the church office. Dale and Laurie have two grown children, son Dane (Emily) and daughter Katelyn.
- 2018 April 1: **An Easter Egg Hunt** was scheduled between Easter Services. Eggs and children everywhere!
- 2018 April 7 - 8: Sixth to eighth Graders' **Lock-In** at 8:00 PM for a night of games, movies, food, fun with friends, and more.

- 2018 April 15: **Volunteer Recognition Sunday.**
- 2018 April 15: **New Member Pizza Party** from 5:00 to 6:30.
- 2018 April 21: The **Spaghetti Fundraiser** for the youth attending the National Youth Gathering in Houston, TX in June was a great success.
- 2018 April 22, April 29, and May 13: Meetings were scheduled to get parent input on changes that may happen as the **Sunday School Department plans** for the future.
- 2018 April 26: **A Taste of Spring Annual Salad Luncheon and Bake Sale** from 11 to 1.
- 2018 April 29: **Spring Tea Party**, “Styled To A Tea”.
- 2018 May 6: The **10th Grade Milestone Class** was at 10:00 and the Blessing was in the Sanctuary during the 11:00 worship service.
- 2018 May 13: **Teacher Recognition Sunday.**
- 2018 May 20: It was the **last day of Sunday School** for the 2017-2018 school year.
- 2018 May 20: **The 11:00 Confirmation Service.** The 17 confirmands were: Isaac Anderson, Hope Fletchall, Madisen Hinsverk, Callie Knudson, Hailey Knudson, Karley Kugler, Koryna Loomer, Grace Opatz, Luke Opatz, Jacob Opatz, Svea Smestad, Ian Stumbo, Raven Vallevand, Charlie Vaughn, Emily Werner, and Sam Western.

2018 June - December 31, 2021 Pastor Gretchen Elise Enoch

Pastor Gretchen’s calling had taken her across the United States, from Washington D. C. to California and a half dozen states in between. Her first pastoral call was to Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in the Minneapolis, St. Paul area from September 2013 to May 2017. Her second call was to Trinity Lutheran Church in Long Lake, MN, from February 2018 to June 2018 as their interim associate pastor. Gretchen Elise Enoch became the first woman senior pastor in our church’s 150 years’ history. Her Installation was on Sunday, July 22, 2018. She was the first pastor to be married while serving our congregation. She married Kirby Herman on May 23, 2020. She became the second of two First Lutheran pastors to have served during an epidemic. Rev. S. L. Tallakson pastored through the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918. Pastor Gretchen pastored through Covid-19. She was instrumental in arranging for worship services to be provided online during Covid-19 so people would not be separated from their church. In early December 2021, the Church Council and Pastor Gretchen decided it would be best if she resigned due to health concerns.

The steps in the resignation process moved forward. But on Christmas Eve 2021, Pastor Gretchen experienced a crisis. She was given support, her husband Kirby was called and she returned home safely. Gretchen's last sermon at First Lutheran Church was on Christmas Eve, 2021, at 3 PM.

- 2018 June 4 - 7: **Butterflies and Preschool 2 Vacation Bible School.**
- 2018 June 27 - July 1: Thirteen youth went to the **National Youth Gathering** held in Houston, Texas. The excited youth included: Morgan West, Matthew Pajari, Karley Kugler, Svea Smestad, Grace Opatz, Jacob Opatz, Emilie Koch, Alison Koch, Olivia Becer, Madisen Hinsverk, Brandon Hinsverk, and Riley Hinsverk. The adult volunteers included Jolene Roers, Calie Anderson, Ashley Shuck and Lewis Roers. Over 30,000 youth attended from across the U.S.
- 2018 June 28 - August 30: Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:30- **Bible Studies** with Pastor Gretchen.
- 2018 July and August: Five **FLY** (First Lutheran Youth) activities : tubed on the Ottertail River; went to Hotel Transylvania 3; bussed to Valley Fair; had pizza and movie night in the Youth Room: and volunteered at the Food Shelf.
- 2018 Mondays in July at 12:30: Members joined Pastor Gretchen with sack lunches for small group **"Get To Know Your Pastor"** visits.
- 2018 July 16 - 19: **Vacation Bible School/Luther Crest Day Camp** at First Lutheran with kindergarten through 6th grade.
- 2018 July 17 and 18: **American Red Cross Blood Drive** at First Lutheran
- 2018 July 19: **OWLS** (older wiser lutherans) outing to Glenwood to dinner and to "The Life and Music of Frank Sinatra" Show.
- 2018 September 9: **Rally Sunday**, new time - 10 AM, Sunday School Theme: Hooked On Jesus.
- 2018 September 9: The 8th through 12th Graders went to **Thunder Road** in Fargo, ND from 1:00 - 7:30.
- 2018 The School Year: The **Children's Choir** met on Wednesdays, in 2018 - 2019, after FLYK-6, from 4:30 to 5:15.
- 2018 October: The FLC youth hosted a **Food Drive**. They collected nonperishable food items, personal hygiene products, and plastic grocery bags for the Fergus Falls Food Shelf.

- 2018 September: Prayer Chains became **Prayer Warriors** with reorganized chains. The warriors were placed in a group that would be notified by phone, email, or text. The warriors could choose the group that would be a good option for them.
- 2018 November 8: First Lutheran's 16th **Annual Harvest Dinner** was in Fellowship Hall from 5:00 to 7:00. The church offered free dinner that included homemade turkey, mashed potatoes, vegetables, rolls, and bars. 580 guests enjoyed a wonderful evening of food and fellowship!
- 2018 December 1: The 92nd Annual **Concordia Christmas Concert-** members left on an Ottertail Coach bus at 2:00 for the Emmy Award-winning Concordia Christmas Concert. They were entertained by 350 singers in four ensembles and a symphony orchestra.
- 2018 December 13: All First Lutheran Women were invited to a **Christmas Tea** from 2:00 to 3:00, at the Pioneer Pointe Dining Room.
- 2018 December: **Funds for the Morning Watch Program** were needed. The cost was \$29 a program and with 260 programs per year, it was approximately \$7540. Morning Watch was, and still is, a great outreach and public relations tool for the ELCA churches in the area.
- 2018 December 16: **The Sunday School Program**, "What Christmas Is All About", was at the 11:00 Worship Service and was followed by a church visit from the Trowbridge Creek Petting Zoo Animals.
- 2018 **Christmas Delivery:** It was a tradition for Slumberland Furniture to donate beds to Children through the "Homes for the Holiday" program in Ottertail County. First Lutheran's Love Day Quilters donated quilts so that each child would receive a new quilt with his/her new bed.
- 2018 **Donations were generous** once again with 80 Cookie Plates, 43 Christmas Food Baskets, and gifts for needy children being delivered in time for Christmas.
- 2018 December 24: Christmas Eve** Services were at 3:00 or 5:00.
- 2018 December 25: The **Christmas Day** Service was at 10 AM.
- 2018 The **First Lutheran Church Foundation** gave funds not previously disbursed, to help local organizations. (Done annually.) This year's monies went to the Salvation Army \$2, 250, Fergus Falls Food Shelf \$2,469, Food Cards \$1,500, United Way Backpack Program \$1,000, Someplace Safe \$1,000, Meals By Wheels \$500, A Place to Belong \$1,000, Shop With A Hero \$400, and Jail Inc. \$400.

- 2019 January 7: What goes up, must come down. A call went out to all of the **undecorating angels** to help out and then be treated to a potluck luncheon at Pastor Grethen's home.
- 2019 January 27: The **Annual Meeting** was held following the 9:30 AM Worship Service.
- 2019 February 10: A **Family Sledding and Ice Skating Party** was held at Cleveland School from 1:00 to 3:00.
- 2019 Two **Circles named Sarah and Hannah** met faithfully once a month on a Wednesday. Sarah Circle met at Pioneer Pointe and Hannah Circle met at church.
- 2019 **First Communion Classes and Faith Milestone for ten 5th Graders.**
- 2019 January: **Calie (Rittenour) Anderson** became First Lutheran's Administrative Assistant and Youth Director. She was baptized and confirmed here. Calie has two sons Connor and Nolan. She very much enjoys the outdoors and her barrel horses.
- 2019 **Lenten Worship:**
 March 6: Ash Wednesday, At First Lutheran - Passport To Life
 March 13: At First Lutheran - The Wilderness
 March 20: At Augustana Lutheran - Capernum
 March 27: At Zion Lutheran - Sea of Galilee
 April 3: At Hope Lutheran - Samaria
 April 10: At Bethlehem Lutheran - Bethany
- 2019 March 10: **Family Game Night**, 4:00 - 6:30, in the FLC Youth Room.
- 2019 March 19: **Tubing** at Andes Tower Hill from 1:00 to 3:00.
- 2019 March 22, 23: The **FLY 10-12 Lock-In** began at 9 PM on the 22nd, and ended at 8 AM on the 23rd. It was a night of pizza, games, movies and fun!
- 2019 April: **The Mutual Ministry Team** started as a carry-over from the First Lutheran Church Call Committee for an associate pastor and includes the same members. The Mission Statement designed by the Team stated: The Mutual Ministry Team of First Lutheran Church supported and encouraged the ministers and ministry of First Lutheran. The Team acted to strengthen the ministry of the pastor, lay professionals and the congregation. It shared in support and concern for all the players with encouragement, prayers, and the Team's Holy Spirit. Team members were: Linda Mellon, Steve Fitz, Leslie Flugstad, Ann Rotto, Michael Wicklund, Pastor Gretchen and Church Council Liaison - Steve Guttormson.

- 2019 **April FLY K-6 Activities:** Met every Wed. after school to play, worship and have fun. April FLY 7-9 and FLY 10-12 activities: Served a Pancake Breakfast, had Rock N Bowl, and 8th and 9th graders had Confirmation Classes.
- 2019 **Palm Sunday and Holy Week:**
April 14: 9:30 Palm Service with a Festival, and Pancake Breakfast from 10:30 - 12:00.
April 18: 7:00 Maundy Thursday Service with the ten 5th Graders' First Communion.
April 19: 7:00 Good Friday Service
April 21: 9:30 and 11:00 Easter Services
- 2019 April 28: The **Minnesota Boys' Choir** from the Twin Cities came to First Lutheran for a 1:00 concert. The singers' ages ranged from 8 to 16. Members Jack and Sandy Pearson had two grandsons in the choir. Before the concert the Boychoir and chaperones (100 total) were served brunch prepared by Terry Gervais and the Fellowship Committee.
- 2019 May 2: Fergus Falls "**National Day of Prayer Observance** at City Hall. People gathered by the flagpole to pray for America. (Love One Another Just As I Have Loved You. John 13:24)
- 2019** May 8: **Confirmation Rehearsal and Dessert Reception** at 6:30 for ten confirmands and their families.
- 2019 May 12: **Confirmation Service** at 11:00.
- 2019 May 19: **FLY K-6 Picnic and Clean Up Day** on First Lutheran Church grounds and at the George B. Wright Park, right across Union Avenue.
- 2019 May 19: **Senior Recognition Sunday.** The graduating seniors were Cole Knudson, Nycole Mouritsen, Matthew Oehler, Aaron Shelstad, Lilly Stumbo, and Madeline Trosvig. The Love Day Quilters made each senior a fleece blanket.
- 2019 May 22: The First Lutheran OWLS traveled by coach bus to the Old Log Theater in Excelsior, MN for **The Rosemary Clooney Musical titled "Tenderly"**.
- 2019 May 30 to August 22: **Twelve Step Spiritual Study:** Pastor Gretchen led a group of 30 adults through a thirteen-week, twelve-step Bible Study on twelve evenings, from 6:30 - 8:00.
- 2019 June 30: FLY 10-12 spent a day in Detroit Lakes **Frolfing** (frisbee and golf) and ate at Zorbaz.
- 2019 August 12 - August 15: **Camp Yahweh** for 1-5 year olds from 9:00 to 10:30. **Jesus 100 Day Camp** for K-6th grade from 9:00 to 3:00.

- 2019 August 20: Fly 7-12: 38 kids from Hope, Zion, Augustana and Bethlehem Lutheran Churches bused to **Valley Fair in Shakopee, MN**. It was a long but great day!
- 2019 August 25: **Joint ELCA Outdoor Service** at Hope Lutheran Church at 9:30 AM with a potluck meal after worship.
- 2019 **September Meetings:** Mutual Ministries Team on the 3rd, Altar Guild on the 4th, Executive Committee on the 4th, Foundation on the 9th, WELCA Board on the 10th, Church Council on the 10th, and Nominating Committee on the 12th.
- 2019 The theme for the 2019-2020 Sunday School Program was **“God’s Work, Our Hands”**. The Sunday School children practiced all year sharing God’s love through their hands.
- 2019 October 5: FLY 7-12 headed to **Alexandria to the ESCAPE ROOM**. (Easy to get to, hard to escape.) All met at the church parking lot at 10:15 and after everyone escaped the group had pizza and headed home.
- 2019 October: There were **forty-eight 7th, 8th and 9th graders in Confirmation this year**.
- 2019 October 12: Third to fourth graders hiked up **Inspiration Peak** to view the colors of the season.
- 2019 October 13: The second graders received their **Bibles** during worship. This has become an annual event for second graders. This day was also Pastor Appreciation Day.
- 2019 October 26: The **Confirmation Retreat** ran from 10:00 AM to 3 PM here at First Lutheran. The retreat was one of the requirements for confirmands.
- 2019 October 30: **Halloween Party and Trick-or-Treat for the Food Shelf**.
- 2019 **November Activities:** Operation Bootstrap Hour on the 3rd; Meals by Wheels Delivery on the 4th-8th; Harvest Dinner- the 7th; Generosity Sunday- the 10th; Blood Drive- the 12th; New Member Classes the 10th and 14th; New Member Sunday- the 17th; and the Thanksgiving Eve Worship followed by pie on the 27th.
- 2019 November 7th: First Lutheran once again offered a **Free Harvest Dinner** from 5:00 to 7:00 with turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing and the works for any guests from the community.
- 2019 November 13: FLY kids had been collecting food items for the Food Shelf in October and November. On this day, **World Kindness Day**, FLY kids delivered the food items to the Food Shelf, and then stayed to help organize new items.

- 2019 November 27: There was a joint **ELCA Thanksgiving Service** at First Lutheran Church. It began at 6:00 with musical selections by a combined ELCA Chorus and the Hosanna Handbell Choir. Fellowship and pie was provided following worship.
- 2019 **December Activities:**
- 4th-** FLY 7-9 youth helped Santa's elves pack gifts for families in need at the Salvation Army.
 - 8th-** The OWLS bused to the Harvest Moon Holiday - Prairie Wind Players in Barrett, Minnesota at 2:00 with dinner later at the Knotty Pine in Elbow Lake, MN.
 - 8th-** FLY 10-12 youth met in the Youth Room to package gifts for families in need at Someplace Safe. The youth also played Trivia and enjoyed Pizza.
 - 8th-** A Movie and Pajama Party for youth k-6th grades from 3:30 to 5:00. The Grinch Movie was a hit and so was the popcorn and pizza.
 - 12th-** All the women at First Lutheran were invited to the annual Christmas Tea at the Pioneer Point dining room. The traditional event was hosted by the Hannah and Sarah Circles.
 - 15th-** The Sunday School Christmas Program (A Classic Christmas) was at 11:00 and The Trowbridge Creek Petting Zoo Animals were guests at 12:00.
 - 17th-** New Member Sunday welcomed 22 new members to First Lutheran. They were introduced during the worship service.
- Also in December,** 50 Christmas Cookie Plates and 30 Christmas Food Baskets were delivered.
- 2020 January: **Automated lighting** was added to the main hallways and restrooms. This move was both for convenience and a money saver. A generous donor made this possible.
- 2020 February 9: FLY 10-12 youth went tubing down **Andes Tower Hill**.
- 2020 February: First Lutheran collected furniture and household items, and nice looking clothing for children. All of this was delivered to the **Welcome House Thrift Store**.
- 2020 February 10: **Gnome Sweet Gnome**, a Make and Take Craft, was held at 7:00 in Fellowship Hall. All women of the church were invited for a time to connecting, crafting and snacking.
- 2020 February: **More February activities:** Girl Scouts on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, Al-Anon, Men's AA, Senior Bible Study, Caregiver Support Group, Cookie Monster AA, Women's AA, weekly Staff Meetings, Mondays Love Days Quilters, and Fridays Morning Watch with a First Lutheran pastor.
- 2020 February 26: **Ash Wednesday** at First Lutheran with our pastor. Ash Wednesday Services were at each ELCA church. The theme for the season, "Life In the Shadow Of The Cross".

- 2020 March 1: **Fifth graders** had their Pottery Class to make **clay chalices** for Maundy Thursday's First Communion Service.
- 2020 March 1: **There was a Luau Party** in Fellowship Hall for FLY K-6 from 4:00 to 5:30.
- 2020 March 6 and 7: The **Church Council Retreat** was held in Fellowship Hall with other leaders of the church also in attendance.
- 2020 March: A **new handcrafted altar table** graced the Chancel space in front of the Sanctuary. This addition allowed a pastor to face the congregation during the Lord's Table's Words Of Institution. It was set up to create a sense that we are all gathered around the Lord's Table. The beautiful altar table was a gift from Ralph Pedersen.
- 2020 This year the five ELCA churches planned joint Wednesday Lenten Services known (in jest) as the **Traveling Lenten Show**.
- 2020 March 4: Bethlehem Church, 12:10 and 5:30 **Lenten Services** with a light meal.
- 2020 March 12: Hope Church, 12:00 and 5:50 **Lenten Services** with a light meal.

AND THEN...

THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC ENTERED MINNESOTA.

Covid-19 made an appearance in Minnesota with the first documented case on March 5th, 2020. March 8, 10, and 11 had new documented cases each day. On March 11, the University of MN closed all 5 campuses. On March 13, a larger group of cases were reported in the Twin Cities area.

March 13: Governor Tim Walz declared a State of Emergency.

March 18: Governor Tim Walz ordered all public and private schools to shut down on this day through the 27th. By this time most Minnesotans realized that this was going to become something bigger than they had ever experienced.

2020

March 18: First Lutheran Lenten Service, same routine. CANCELED

March 24: Zion, same routine. CANCELED

March 27 - April 10: The church was locked. Members could only call and leave a message or email.

March: Sarah and Hannah Circles. CANCELED

March: Confirmation interviews were lined up. POSTPONED

March: Lifetouch Photography Photos Sessions scheduled. POSTPONED

April 1: Augustana, same routine. CANCELED

April 1: The Church Messenger's Calendar did not have events scheduled in the boxes. But instead each box had the location of a piece of scripture intended to provide support. Every calendar going forward gave the sites to connect with Sunday Worship Services. (Youtube link on church's website, KJJK AM 1020, and Channel 977 FM 97.7) ONLINE

April 1: In the Church Messenger, Pastor Gretchen offered support to her church by suggesting that they google the hymn "Be Not Be Afraid" by Father Bob Dufford. She encouraged members to pray or sing this hymn as a means of hope during this time. Father Dufford is quoted as saying, "There was a fear, but it was a fear of going from one place to another, ending one thing and starting another. I didn't know what was going to come but I had this sense of the promise of God, "I go before you always."

April: Weekly Sunday School in Church. CANCELED

Weekly Sunday School Lessons were emailed to families in April and May.

April: Fly Activities. CANCELED

April 5: Palm Sunday: Each church had its own AM service. VIRTUAL

First Lutheran youth served breakfast for the congregation. CANCELED

The Palm Sunday Festival and Trowbridge Zoo Animals. CANCELED

April 8: Fifth graders made bread for the Maundy Thursday service. CANCELED

April 9: Maundy Thursday: Each church had its own service at 7:00. VIRTUAL OR CANCELED

April 9: First Lutheran's 5th graders' first Holy Communion. POSTPONED

April 10: Good Friday: a joint ELCA service at 12:10 at Bethlehem. CANCELED

The joint ELCA service at 7:00 at First Lutheran. VIRTUAL

April 12: Easter Sunday- the church was again decorated with flowers and the service was held. Only a few participants were allowed in the church with masks and spacing required at all times. VIRTUAL

April 20: The WELCA Conference 7 Spring Gathering included a meal, a meeting, and music by the Moline Sisters. CANCELED

April 21: Confirmation Sunday at 11:00. POSTPONED

April 28: Blood Drive. POSTPONED

2020 May: The **May Messenger's Calendar** came with a change again. This month short scripture pieces were printed in every box to offer easy to view words of support and comfort. ONLINE

2020 May: **Services** at church continued to remain closed all month. VIRTUAL

Sunday School lessons continued to be emailed out. ONLINE

FLY K-6 activities. CANCELED

More group sessions and committee meetings were being zoomed. VIRTUAL

Confirmation plans were still in the works. POSTPONED

2020 May: Pastor Gretchen and youth director Calie began **zooming with small groups of 7th, 8th and 9th graders**. It wasn't as successful as hoped due to technology issues, attendance issues, and home distractions during zooming. VIRTUAL

2020 May: The month of **mask making**. A goal of 300 homemade masks within a month would allow everyone to return to church services with a mask on. Even children size masks were sewn. **More than 300** were completed and delivered.

2020 May: The long awaited **pipe organ pieces** arrived so work on the organ began right away. Since the only use of Sanctuary was Sunday mornings and that had just a few participants, the work to rebuild part of the organ proceeded smoothly.

2020 May 4 - April 15, 2021: **Paul Haarstick** became First Lutheran's financial bookkeeper.

2020 May 27: The **Graduating Seniors Baccalaureate Service** was broadcasted at 6:30 on Facebook. ONLINE

2020 May 23: **Gretchen Elise Enoch and Kirby Herman were married** at their home by Swan Lake, outside on a sunny day, with a small gathering of family and friends.

2020 **May's Senior Sunday** was scheduled to be the last Sunday in May. The seniors were to receive fleece blankets made by the Love Day Quilters. POSTPONED

2020 June 1: The **Messenger's Calendar** again looked quite different. This month some boxes were blank, some had Zoom events and some had cheery little notes. ONLINE

2020 June 15 - December 20, 2021 Part-time Intern Lynn Melchior

Lynn Melchoir was the office manager of Zion Lutheran Church in Amor Township, Ottertail City, MN. She attended the U of Carlson School of Management and Administration, and also the U of St. Thomas Opus College. She studied at Luther Seminary with mostly online classes in a new program that made it more convenient for those who wanted to fulfill their dream of becoming a pastor. Lynn interned at First Lutheran Church from June 15, 2020 to December 20, 2021. She was known as Vicar Lynn. She was supported by a team of church members known as the FIT Team. Her FIT team quickly discovered that she was more knowledgeable in the operations of running a church than they were. Covid-19 spread to the region right before Lynn began her internship. It made things a bit complicated for an intern who was not allowed to make visits or even get into the church at times. But she persevered. Lynn was always professional and supportive of

her congregation. During her internship Lynn had Covid, her father had Covid, and her father Verle died. Her congregation hurt for her. Lynn and Rob Baardsen were married on August 28, 2021. Lynn graduated from Luther Seminary in 2021, and was called to serve at First Lutheran Church of Battle Lake, MN on November 22, 2022. Lynn and Rob, grown-up children Ryan and Katie, all continue to live and work in the Battle Lake/Vining area.

- 2020 June 30: **A Blood Drive** was held because the needs were great. Precautions were taken and a whole new set of protocols were followed.
- 2020 July: **Vacation Bible School** for children up to 6 years of age were introduced to "VBS To-Go". Volunteers assisted Education Director Kristy Wicklund with preparation, sorting and the filling of bags with VBS lessons, crafts and online links. Parents were advised as to how to safely pick up their children's VBS To-Go bags. ONLINE
- 2020 July: A special **notice came from the NW MN Synod Board**. It said: "All WELCA gatherings have been postponed for the remainder of the year. The plan is to "start over" with our 2020 calendar of events in 2021."
- 2020 July 22: FLY K-6 had a **Zoom Talent Show** at 6 PM. An event of Joy! VIRTUAL
- 2020 July 26: A long time missionary and a member of First Lutheran, **Eunice Simonson**, celebrated her 90th birthday at home in Tanzania. She received "well wishes" from her First Lutheran Church. ONLINE
- 2020 August: **More planned activities were canceled** but several spring postponements were finally held outdoors.
- 2020 August 1: Our **Graduating Seniors** finally received their fleece blankets. The Blessing Blankets were made by women who are happy to keep this tradition intact.
- 2020 August 9 and 23: **Confirmation was held in outdoor ceremonies** for confirmands and families. The 8th graders celebrated on August 9 and the 9th graders on August 23. Families brought their own chairs and sat in clusters of families. Only one confirmand and his/ her family came to the small kneeling railing at a time. There was a "laying of hands" and a blessing for each Child of God. This was a major change from First's tradition but still very meaningful. Confirmation pictures were taken outside. The confirmands wore masks for one picture but not for the second. For the second shot Pastor Gretchen slowly counted to three, the class quickly removed their masks, tucked them up the sleeves of their robes, held their breaths, and "CLICK"! VIRTUAL
- 2020 August 16: **Fifth graders who missed out on their Maundy Thursday First Communion** Service were able to gather in an outdoor service with their families and masks. VIRTUAL

- 2020 September - All Month: **Take Time To Pray and Meditate:** On Tuesdays from 12 to 2 and Thursdays from 4 to 6, there was an organist or pianist playing throughout the allotted times for spiritual nourishment. Printed prayers and scripture were available.
- 2020 September 13: Members were reminded to view the worship service on our website between 10:30 and 11:30, and drive to church for the “**Donut Holes and Coffee or Lemonade Drive-Thru.**” It was a success! (If we would have had regular worship and coffee hour inside, the treats would have been the same. VIRTUAL
- 2020 September 16: **FLY K-6 was at Roosevelt Park on Wednesday** after school, weather permitting. Kristy Wicklund met the children at the Kennedy School bus pick up/drop off area and all walked over to the park, for snacks, a lesson and no contact games. The Wednesday FLY K-6 would continue for the whole school year. (If the weather was inclement, the children were bused to the church for Fly K-6.)
- 2020 October: **Vicar Lynn Melchior’s Messenger Words**, “No matter what comes my way, I am good enough . No matter what comes your way, you are good enough. Yes, this year is different, but we are good enough. God loves us unconditionally. Nothing can separate us from God. Romans 8: 38-39 says it best.”
- 2020 October 4: This year’s **Sunday School theme was “Who is the Greatest?”** Sunday School Kits for October were picked up in the Narthex. If there was a need to have a kit delivered, a phone call to Kristy Wicklund was necessary. This monthly process was to continue each month till further notice.
- 2020 October 4: **Generosity Sunday** with worship was in the upper parking lot at 9:30. The guest preacher was Keith Zeh and Augustana Church was also invited. From 11:00 to noon, there was a **Drive Through Cinnamon Rolls and Juice line**, and a **Drive Up Communion line**. The service was VIRTUAL.
- 2020 October 16: **October Drive-in Movie**, another first for our church. “**Hotel Transylvania**” was viewed at 6:30 PM at the First Lutheran Upper Parking Lot. ONLINE
- 2020 October 18: **Member Appreciation American Legion Rib Meal** was provided with ribs, a potato and roll. This event was a **Drive-Through Only event** and members were asked to remain in their cars. Volunteers followed safety precautions and delivered all meals to the vehicles.
- 2020 October 19 to November 30: A Women’s **Bible Study** at 6 PM used “**Battlefield of the Mind**” by Joyce Meyer as a guide. All Covid-19 protocols were followed.
- 2020 November 1: **Bonfire, S’Mores and Charades!** FLY 7-12 gathered in the upper parking lot from 6 to 7. The youth brought their own chair, and beverage.

- 2020 November: **The FLY K-6 youth wrote and decorated cards for the residents of the Pioneer Care Center.** The cards included: “be safe”, rainbow colorings, heart colorings, “we care about you”, and “I hope to come and see you but I am from First Lutheran Church and I was told I could not see you, I feel horrible”. (Out of the mouths of babes.)
- 2020 November: **Words from Pastor Stan, our Visitation Pastor:** “Picture this. A person listening on the phone as someone says a Bible verse and sings an old, familiar hymn. It’s been more than 60 years since I became a pastor of the Christian church.... I could hardly have known that I would still have a good, caring ministry to do in my late 80’s. My thanks go to First Lutheran Church of Fergus Falls.... I get to do things for each of you who are members that you would find hard to do. I reach out to share your love and concern with more than 50 people who are homebound or ill, many in care centers, but also many in their homes. That contact, that touching is a vital part of the church.... I usually visit in person. These days I do it by phone and letter. I tell our friends as I write, every letter personally, that I have that particular person in mind and heart right at that moment. It is not as good as being there, but close.”
- 2020 December: **Gratefulness** goes to everyone who contributed warm hats, mittens and scarves to the Mitten Ministry; all who supported the Giving Trees with money donations; to those who provided presents for 28 members of A Place To Belong; to those who made monetary contributions to Someplace Safe; and to those who contributed to plus delivered 27 Christmas Food Baskets to needy members.
- 2020 December: **Gratefulness** goes to the Love Day Quilters for sewing 5 youth quilts which were given to Slumberland to go with new beds for those in need, and for sewing ten quilts that went to the Salvation Army.
- 2020 December 24 and 25: Both **Christmas services were virtual** with a few “in the church” members who created worship services that touched hearts and souls. All who had the means to watch or listen to stories and scripture about the birth of Jesus, found that “Christmas will be just as long as we have we”. Quote from The Grinch, 1966.
- 2020 December 27, 9:30: **A Virtual Christmas Talent Show** enticed some church members to join in on Christmas fun with children proving to be the braver personalities. A few of the talents contributed were: story telling by Kristy Wicklund; singing by Lucas and Amelia Wicklund - “In A Little Stable”; and a solo Christmas piece by Bennett Kettner. Perhaps this year’s First Lutheran Christmas had something in common with the 1919 First English Lutheran’s Christmas- the December after the cyclone. The congregation in both years had to figure out how to celebrate Jesus’ birth amidst tragedy and death.

Minnesota recorded 1,778,866 Covid-19 cases and 14,870 Covid-19 deaths.

- 2021 January: **First Lutheran followed the Fergus Falls School District #544** for closures, late starts, early dismissals and after school activity cancellations. This information can be found on the school website or Facebook page, local radio and news stations.
- 2021 January 6: This was pick up day for **Sunday School Kits**. The theme of the month was “Jonah and the Big Fish” with crafts, and playlists for stories and songs.
- 2021 January 19: Cities and towns around the country **rang church bells at 4:30** on this date as a **national moment of unity and remembrance** of those lives lost to Covid-19.
- 2021 January 31: There was a sign up to attend the 2021 **First Lutheran Church Annual Meeting** at 12:30 on January 31. The sign-up had to be before January 27. Prior to the meeting there was a “Pay It Forward Drive Thru American Legion Ham Dinner”. Members had been encouraged to call the office to reserve dinners before January 21. In order to form a quorum for the 2021 Annual Meeting, members had to step up to plate and sign up to participate in the zoomed meeting. VIRTUAL
- 2021 **February’s Sunday School Kit drive-thru pick up** was Wednesday, February 3rd from 3:00 to 5:45, under the church canopy.
- 2021 February: **Seventh and eighth grade Confirmation youth zoomed** classes at 6:30. VIRTUAL
- 2021 February: The ELCA **2021 National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis**, Minnesota, was scheduled for the summer of 2021. Thirty-thousand teenagers were eager for five days of worship and fun at the Minneapolis Convention Center and at US Bank Stadium. The theme was “Boundless- God Beyond Measure”. First Lutheran had their own group of teens fired up to go, POSTPONED
- 2021 February 17: The **Ash Wednesday Worship Service** that wasn’t! Devotions by Pastor Gretchen and music by Ty Stortroen were available on the church website all day. Drive-Thru pick up of prefilled Communion cups and ashes for home use were picked up under the canopy from 12 PM to 1 PM, and 5 PM to 6 PM. ONLINE
- 2021 **February 24th and March 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th Lenten Services**: There were joint worship services with Augustana and First Lutheran at 6:00 on Wednesdays. Attendance was limited to the first 50 people who had signed-up by calling the church office or had used the online link on the church website. IN-PERSON OR ONLINE
- 2021 February 24: **The Hosanna Handbell Choir** met for the first time since Covid-19 began. Only a small group of bell players were practicing, in the chapel, with masks, and self distanced.

- 2021 **March Activities:**
Sunday School Lesson Kits were picked up on March 3rd under the canopy.
FLY K-6 continued to meet at Roosevelt Hill on Wednesdays after school.
FLY 7-12 had a "March Into Spring Snowman Building Contest". Youth were to take a picture of their snowmen and send them to Calie. There were prizes for the Best Dressed, the Most Spring Like, and the Funniest.
Confirmands could now attend Confirmation Classes. IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL.
- 2021 April 1: **Maundy Thursday** Worship and 5th Graders's First Communion at 6:00. Masking up was still a requirement for anyone who entered the church.
- 2021 April: **The Senior Bible Study Class** return was a joyful one. Everyone had been missing everyone else. Class time was 10:30 on Fridays.
- 2021 April 2: **Good Friday** Worship at 6:00.
- 2021 April 4: **Easter Sunday** at 9:30 and 11:00 with Holy Communion.
- 2021 **Sunday's Children's Messages:** Kristy Wicklund and Vicki Hanneman teamed up to provide a mini service within a large service. Kristy and Vicki alternated Sundays, tried to match the mini lesson to the Gospel lesson, sat on the Chancel steps with the children + some parents + pastors, used props, and sometimes had give-aways.
- 2021 April: **Army National Guardsman C.J. Ward** was deployed to the Middle East for the next 9 to 12 months. Prayers were requested and granted.
- 2021 April: The First Lutheran Women of the ELCA (**WELCA**) had not met since the pandemic began.
- 2021 April 7: FLY 10-12 gathered at **Applebee's** from 4:00 to 5:00 for food and chatter.
- 2021 April 8: A nine week Bible and Book Study led by Pastor Gretchen began on April 8. The study was titled, "**Being Mortal**" by Atul Gawande. Gawande was a practicing surgeon and in his book he revealed the struggles of his profession.
- 2021 April 20: **Blood Drive**- volunteers were very much needed. The highest standards of safety and infection control were ensured.
- 2021 April 24: **Confirmation Retreat** from 10:00 to 2:00 at church.
- 2021 April 25: **Confirmation Sunday** at the 11:00 Worship Service.
- 2021 April 26 to 30: It was **Meals By Wheels** Week for First Lutheran's delivery crew. There were seven different routes to cover. Members followed Covid -19 protocol.

- 2021 **May Activities:**
4th: Discipleship Committee Meeting - Zoomed.
11th: Church Council Meeting at 6 PM - Zoomed.
12th: First Lutheran Grounds Clean Up Day from 4:30 to 6:00.
14th: Governor Tim Walz signed an Executive Order that lifted the masks mandate.
15th: FLY 7-9 and FLY 10-12 met at Dairyland.
16th: Graduating Seniors Recognition Sunday at 9:30.
18th: Mutual Ministry Meeting in Narthex at 12 PM.
24th: Staff Meeting at 11:00 in the Conference Room.
- 2021 June: The **Love Days Quilters came back to work!** They have returned to their regular hours from 9:00 to 3:00 on Mondays in the Quilting Room.
- 2021 June: **Tuesdays At The Park** returned. From 9:00 to 10:30, families went to NP Park to connect, meet new faces and let the children play.
- 2021 June 2: Ladies Night With The Junkyard Chicks** was a hit! A large gathering of First Lutheran women stenciled, painted and decorated "Welcome Boards" to place by their front doors. The noise level was high and the snacks were delicious.
- 2021 June 11: The **Relay For Life Event**, for the First Lutheran Team, was held at 5:00 at the Minnesota State and Technical College. The West Otter Tail Event was held on June 16 at the same site. First Lutheran raised \$5,352.00 with a West Otter Tail total of \$17,000.00.
- 2021 June 12: First Lutheran joined the Fergus Falls **Summerfest Celebration Parade** with a big shiny pickup, several youth and several adults in matching T-shirts, and hundreds of pieces of candy!
- 2021 June: **The All Time Hit Song, on the Hit Hymn List, was "Amazing Grace"!**
- 2021 June 29: **Vacation Bible School** with Luther Crest Counselors took place at Augustana Church. First and Augustana Lutheran joined forces for 4 days of worship, fun, games, singing and raising funds to provide gift cards for people in need. (\$475 was collected.)
- 2021 **July Activities:**
1st: Bible Study titled "Manna and Mercy, Thursdays at 1:00 in the Kairos Room.
Wednesdays at 5:30: Joined Vicar Lynn for her sermon series named "Living Our Faith In 2021" at Augustana Church. (A light meal was served at 5:00.)
8th: Ladies Night @ Fergus Brewing from 6:00 - 9:00 PM.
21st: FLY K-6 Lemonade Stand at 4:00.

- 2021 **Worship Buddies** were placed outside the Sanctuary, just sitting in a pew, waiting for little ones to cuddle with them during church. Just one rule, the Buddies have to sleep at church.
- 2021 August: **Calie Anderson resigned** as Youth Director and Administrative Assistant to take on a new full-time position. Her hard work and involvement at First Lutheran were very much appreciated.
- 2021 August: **Laurie Whitehead retired** but agreed to produce the Messenger on a short term basis. She was thanked for her years of sharing her expertise and constant friendliness. We wished her well in her retirement.
- 2021 August: **Two new office staff members, Kattie Meek and Katie Kaderbhai**, had been welcomed to First Lutheran. Kattie M. was the new part-time bookkeeper and Katie K. was the new full-time office manager.
- 2021 August: **Kattie Meek resigned** to take a full-time dream job in Underwood near her family home. The council regrettably accepted her resignation because she was doing well in her job in First Lutheran.
- 2021 **August Activities:**
Vicar Lynn continued her Living Our Faith Series on Wednesday evenings at 5:00, at Augustana Church.
1st: The Love Day Quilters had been accepting donations of school supplies for Lutheran World Relief. They had already sewn the bags and were eager to get them filled and shipped. This project is an annual one for the quilters.
11th: FLY 6-12 went on a Valley Fair Trip.
12th: Acolyte Training for 4th, 5th and 6th graders at 5:30.
26th: Outdoor Movie Night for all ages at 8:15 PM. "The Sandlot" was enjoyed by all.
- 2021 **September 5: IT WAS A GRAND DAY!**
First Lutheran Church returned to full in-person worship- masked or unmasked.
- 2021 **September Activities:**
12th: Sunday School Rally Sunday with a Sunday School Theme: Let The Children Come To Me." A dance party was held in the lower parking lot.
On Three Sundays in September, Sunday School became a large group class outside from 10:45 to 11:15.
In October, Sunday School returned to inside classes.
21st: It was Clean The Kitchen Day. Helpers worked from 8:00 AM to 4 PM.
22nd: FLY K-6 began meeting again on Wednesdays, after school at Roosevelt Park for a lesson, games and snacks.
22nd: Hannah Circle met in the Kairos Room at 1:00.

- 2021 October: **Doreen Oliphant** became the new bookkeeper/office assistant. Doreen grew up and continued to live in Foxhome, MN. She received her Business Education Degree at Minot State University and her Masters Degree in Education Leadership in 2015. She and her husband have five children and ten grandchildren.
- 2021 October 3: Part-time Visitation Pastor David Strom**
David was born on September 1, 1955 to Everal and Sylvia Strom. He and his wife Laurie raised two children, Katie and Evan. David worked five plus years as a Chaplain at PioneerCare in Fergus Falls. David signed a Letter Of Agreement with First Lutheran on October 3. He was installed as the Visitation Pastor on November 7. He continued in this role until August 28, 2022. This was his Second Official Retirement Date.
- 2021 October: **Congratulations to Katie Haugrud!** The WELCA Board announced that she was the recipient of the Mary Magdalene Award from the NWMN Synod Women. Katie had endless years of church involvement in: Sunday School, Church Council, WELCA, Boards and Circles, Bazaars, LWR Work, Quilting, Serving Funerals, Kitchen Work, and more. She served with grace, love and dedication!
- 2021 **Lifetouch Photography** arranged for another try at organizing the new church directory. Covid-19 had postponed this project for over a year. Photo sessions were available on October 11, 12, 13, and November 4, 5, and 6 of 2021.
- 2021 October and November: New Book Club dates were October 14, 21, 28, and November 4, 11, 18 on Thursdays from 12:00 to 1:00. The next book was **"In The Middle Of A Mess" by Sheila Walsh.**
- 2021 October 3, 10 and 17: The **Fall Craft Event and Canned Auction** was held in the Narthex after worship.
- 2021 October 10: It was **Gratitude Sunday** with guest preacher Pastor Blair Anderson. Following the worship an American Legion Meatball Dinner was served for all. Members could choose to use the drive-thru or use the outdoor seating areas.
- 2021 October 17: **Second Grade Bibles Milestones.**
- 2021 October 23: **Pastor Stanley Satre retired** as First Lutheran's Visitation Pastor. He is loved by his congregation and especially by those who could not attend church. If he was going to be delayed in making a personal visit he would write a note or a letter. One year he sent all of his special friends valentines because he would not be able to see them for one month. If he was asked to preach, he would, and then always have some kind of "treat" in his sermon - but not the food type. He would stand in the

middle of the sanctuary steps, find a way to work in whistling, a little ditty of a song, a finger play, a short personal story to go along with his lesson, or a joke. And some sermons included more than one! First Lutheran had several years of “treats”.

- 2021 October 29: **Trunk or Treat at the Fleet Farm** parking lot from 4:30 - 6:00. First Lutheran’s Kristy Wicklund joined the fun with a trunk loaded with candy.
- 2021 October 31: **Reformation/Halloween Party during Sunday School.**
- 2021 November 7: **The Butterflies Came Back!** Butterflies are an infants and 1 - 3 year olds who always come to Sunday School with a special adult. Mrs. Vicki eagerly checked in with all the little ones and did her best to distance them during story time. Now everyone at First Lutheran was back to Sunday School.
- 2021 November 24: A **Joint ELCA Thanksgiving Eve Worship Service** was at First Lutheran at 6:00.
- 2021 By this date, the decision had been made to continue both **Radio and Youtube coverage** going forward for all church services.
- 2021 December: **The Prayer Warriors became The Prayer Angels.** This had been a vital ministry for First Lutheran for decades. Once upon a time it was known as The Prayer Chains. Members were encouraged to consider becoming part of this ministry. The Co-chairs were Pamela Schrodin and Vicki Hanneman.
- 2021 **December Activities:**
- The 1st:** FLY 4-6 at Roosevelt Park Hill.
 - The 1st:** Advent Service at 6:30 with Vicar Lynn- “Water”.
 - The 2nd:** Cookie baking with 4th to 6th graders after school until 5:30.
 - The 3rd:** Cookie bakers had to have cookies to church on this day.
 - The 5th:** Sunday School and Christmas Program practices.
 - The 8th:** Advent Service at 6:30 with Pastor David- “Relationships”.
 - The 12th:** Sunday School and Christmas and Pajama Party for Sunday School youth.
 - The 13-17th:** Meals By Wheels week.
 - The 15th:** FLY 4-6 at Roosevelt Park Hill.
 - The 15th:** Advent Service with Pastor Gretchen- “Food”.
 - The 19th:** The usual **Children’s Christmas Program** was changed to a “For One And All” program titled, “Pop-up Christmas Pageant”. Everyone was invited to participate in The Nativity Story. Upon arrival at church you could pick a nativity character plus a prop or a piece of costume, and take it to worship with you. Example: when it was time for an angel to appear, everyone who had picked up an angel headband or wings, came to the front of the church and stood by the stable.

The Nativity Story became wonderfully entertaining. The Christmas Sing-Along that followed was in a quieter mode because many people were still wearing protective masks which softened the singing voices.

The 22nd: No FLY.

The 22nd: Advent Service with Vicar Lynn- Birth of Jesus.

The 24th: Friday- Christmas Eve Services at 3:00 and 5:00.

The 25th: Saturday-**No Christmas Day Service.**

The 26th: Sunday- Worship Service at 9:30.

The 26th: This was Vicar Lynn Melchior's last day at First Lutheran. She was given "A Coffee Hour and Cake Celebration". A ten year old church member Valerie Clark made a beautiful two layer round cake just for Vicar Lynn and her family. Vicar Lynn's step was to finish her last 5 months at Luther Seminary.

The 26th: No Sunday School or Butterfly Classes.

The 29th: No FLY.

2021 December 31: The church had **1,390 baptized members** and 1,154 confirmed members.

2022 **January: Pastor David's Letter As Printed in the January 2022 Messenger.**

"God's plans for us are designed to help us to relax and to give us hope; even though we will face our fair share of challenges and perhaps sadness in the coming year. Yet still, it is a comfort to know that God's intentions for us are good; good for me and good for you. I am not sure what form God's gifts to us will take, but He deals in life and bestows His gifts to us. He does not cause us harm....

As a congregation, we would like to think that we have our plans all mapped out and as long as we execute them successfully, the church will be in good shape by the end of next year. I am all for detailed planning; but sometimes life happens; changes occur and we are unsettled and become anxious as a result. Planning needs to be adaptable and above all, we need to realize that tasks and projects are secondary to meeting the needs of people when they are in crisis....

I would encourage you as members and friends of First Lutheran to pray for your pastors, your staff, and your Church Council as we close out 2021 and embark on a new adventure in 2022...

I am reminded that we are a part of God's family and families love, correct, and serve each other because we ARE family. God knows the plans He has for us. As we move forward, may we do so relying upon Him to point the way.

In Christ's Love and Compassion: Pastor David

2022 January 18 - January 1, 2024 Interim Pastor Tiffany Sundeen

On January 18, 2022, Tiffany Sundeen signed a Letter Of Agreement for a full-time Interim Pastoral Ministry at First Lutheran. She agreed to remain at First Lutheran until January 1, 2024. If a new pastor has declared acceptance of a call to this congregation before the 2024 date, Pastor Tiffany's contract would end after 30 days. Tiffany attended Concordia College from 1990 - 1994 and received a BA in Psychology. In 1998 she graduated from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. On May 28, 1998, Tiffany was ordained. She married Bruce Wayne and became a parent to Jacob Wayne. Tiffany and Bruce have 2 daughters, Rachel and Abigail. From December 12, 2001 to February 2021, Tiffany was a Pastor at Olivet Lutheran Church in Fargo, ND.

2022 January 1 - August 31: Between these dates, Visitation **Pastor David Strom** made 81 personal visits; 12 hospital visits; 35 phone visits; led 23 Bible Study sessions, pastored at 8 funerals; and preached at 11 Sunday Worship Services.

2022 January: A **different strain of Covid-19 appeared and was known as Omicron.** First Lutheran strongly recommended that masks be worn inside the church and especially during worship services.

2022 February: The **ELCA 2022 National Youth Gathering**, which had been postponed last February due to the continued spread of Covid-19, was now canceled. First Lutheran youth had not planned on attending this gathering. Minneapolis won't have a chance to host a national youth gathering for years to come.

2022 February 15: Members were invited to meet our new pastor- Tiffany Sundeen at a **"Sip and See"** event at 6 PM.

2022 February 9: **Confirmation Family Faith Night** was an event to get one or two parents to attend confirmation with their child and pretend to be a student.

2022 March 29: Twenty-one ladies of the church joined together in Fellowship Hall to make **Resurrection Gardens** for centerpieces at home.

2022 April 4: **Happy Birthday to Gert Larson.** Long time member of First Lutheran, Gert turned 106! She is the oldest living member of our congregation! Such a blessing to have her with us. Gert's birthplace is Kathryn, North Dakota. She was a nurse and taught nursing in several hospitals including our first hospital, Wright Memorial. She and her husband Ed lived in several locations because Ed was in the Navy. Gert and Ed have two children and 1 grandson. Gert was a Sunday School Teacher, a Release Time Teacher, a member of the ALCW and the quilters group. She sewed hundreds of masks to give away during Covid-19. She continues to love

the music at First Lutheran and watches Sunday Worship Services online every week. Her favorite hymns are "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" and "Children Of The Heavenly Father".

- 2022 April 10: **Palm Sunday Service at 9:30 with a Palm Sunday Festival** afterwards. The Confirmation classes served a breakfast of muffins and egg bake.
- 2022 April 10: 8th grade confirmands will have individual **Faith Conversations** with Pastor Tiffany.
- 2022 April 11 and 25: **Men's Bible Study with Pastor David** in the Kairos Room. at 7 AM.
- 2022 The Lenten "**Fill The Cup Campaign**" raised \$10,463 which all went to Ukraine through the Lutheran Disaster Response East European Effort.
- 2022 April 14: Maundy Thursday Service at 6:30 PM. **Thirteen 5th graders used their handcrafted chalices** for the First Holy Communion Ceremony.
- 2022 April 15: **Good Friday Service** at 6:30 PM.
- 2022 April 17: **Easter Services** at 9:30 and 11:00, Egg Hunt at 10:30.
- 2022 April 20: **Confirmation Banquet** for 8th Grade Confirmands and parents at 6:00 in Fellowship Hall. **Confirmation Pictures** were at 7:00. Confirmation Service practice as right after pictures in the Sanctuary.
- 2022 April 24: **Eleven 8th graders were confirmed** at the 11:00 Worship Service. Twelve 7th graders will be confirmed in April of 2023.
- 2022 April 26: Church **Ladies met at Union Pizza** at 6:00 PM for fellowship and food.
- 2022 April 27 **Hannah Circle** women met in Fellowship Hall at 1:00.
- 2022 April 30 The **NW MN Synod Conference 7 For All Women Of The ELCA** was at First Lutheran from 1:00 to 3:00. The theme was "We All Are One In Mission" .
- 2022 May 8: **Sunday School children had "Muffins with Mom"** in the Fellowship Hall. Happy Mothers' Day!
- 2022 May 13: **Youth Nerf War** in Fellowship Hall from 6:00 to 7:00.
- 2022 May 16: **Bingo Night** for everyone in Fellowship Hall from 7:00 to 8:30.

- 2022 May 22: **This was the last day of Sunday School**, it was Teacher Appreciation Day, eleven 12th grade graduates were blessed and given blankets by the Love Day Quilters during worship, there was a Picnic with Parking Lot Games, and there was even enough cake for everyone!
- 2022 May 23: **Last Day of FLY 1-6** with a Bowling Party at Northern Aire Lanes.
- 2022 June - August The **church library** was open and available for the summer months for all ages and types of readers.
- 2022 June 1: **Mary Bjorgum Johnson** joined the staff as a part-time office assistant. Mary has three grown sons, three beautiful daughter-in-laws and nine grandchildren. Being a grandma is her greatest joy.
- 2022 **A Bjorgum Family Snapshot from 1837 to 2023:**
 Thorsten Bjorgum was born in 1837.
 He married Mali Liran in 1859, and they came to America in 1869, and settled in Otter Tail County in 1871.
 Thorsten Bjorgum and family were charter members of The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. (This was us.)
 They had three children: Mary in 1874, Thea in 1877, and Albert in 1879.
 Son Albert and wife Inga had five children: Francis in 1908, Kermit in 1910, Harold in 1912, Melvin in 1914 and Robert in 1918.
 Albert's son Harold and his wife Ida Mae had five children: Alyn in 1940, Gary in 1942, Bonnie in 1946, Wanda in 1955, and Dean in 1960.
 Albert's son Alyn and his wife Margaret had four children: Mary in 1961, Thomas in 1962, Anita in 1963 and Wendy in 1966.
 Alyn's daughter Mary married Thomas Harig in 1979 and they had three sons: Thomas in 1962, Michael in 1982, and Christopher in 1986. In 1992, Mary married Greg Johnson.
 Christopher is a member of FLC. He married Amanda Amundson in 2014. They had three daughters: Amelia in 2016, Hazel in 2019, and Ramsey in 2023.
 Other members of the Bjorgum family who are still members at FLC, are:
 *Brett and Wendy Duenow, and son Josh and his wife Amanda Duenow with daughters Maddie, Ella and Chloe.
 *Also Son Matt and Rachel Duenow with son Carter.
 *Jay Bjorgum.
 *Matt and Dina Freitag with children Danielle and Kaleb.
- 2022 June 1: **A Prayer Vigil For Uvalde, Texas** was held on First Lutheran Church's lower parking lot at 6:00 PM. A teenage gunman entered Robb Elementary on May 24, and fatally shot 19 children, two teachers and injured 17 others. San Antonio's 25,000 residents were plunged into incalculable grief, and into the epicenter of

American's debate on semi-automatic rifles. The vigil included: prayers, singing, scripture readings, the reading of the names of the victims, candle lighting, and more prayers.

- 2022 June 8 - August 31: **Mid-Week Summer Worship** was shared by all five ELCA Churches on Wednesday evenings at 6:15. Each church was responsible for hosting two evenings of worship during the summer.
- 2022 July: **The First Lutheran Foundation** was recognized as one of the "Top Ten Corporate United Way Donors for 2021". The Foundation has been able to make a difference inside and outside the church walls. Funds donated each year are made up of the income from invested dollars. The year 2021 was a particularly fine year for investment income so donation amounts were generous! Foundation members were: Tim Johnson, Linda Mellon, Vicki Hanneman, Greg Wagner, Jennifer Smestad and Leonard Hatzenbuhler.
- 2022 **Vacation Bible School** ran from July 25 - 28 at Hope Lutheran Church with children from Hope, First, Zion and Augusta churches.
- 2022 July: The First Lutheran Church's **Praying For A Cure For Cancer Team** thanked members for their generosity. "Whether you said a prayer, had a kind thought, donated baked goods or gave a donation, your actions helped raise \$5,000 to give to the Fergus Falls Cancer Center." (The donation was given in memory of Karen Lundstrom.)

2022 October 9 150th Anniversary
***Events Began On August 14, 2022.**

- 2022 *August 14: **Child of the Congregation, Madeline Trosvig, was the 150th Anniversary worship speaker** during this church service. Madeline attends Augustana University in South Dakota and will be attending seminary school. (daughter of Tom and Jean Trosvig)
- 2022 *August 17: **The 150th Anniversary "Luncheon Of Joy"** was for guests 75+ years old. (This included their drivers.) Sharing of memories, looking at church archive photo albums, enjoying good food, and laughing at the Bell Choir entertainment, all made for a joyous and heartwarming event.
- 2022 August 17: This was the day of the 65th **Wedding Anniversary of Selmer and Pat Trosvig**. Selmer was born into our church in 1935, was baptized, confirmed, and married at First Lutheran. They both happily attend functions at church.

- 2022 August 21: **Custodian Steve Hosch, was given a retirement party** for his 35+ years of service to First Lutheran Church. It was really his second party. One had been set up a couple of weeks before this one, with the food ready, and guests arriving. Then Steve was unable to come. But thanks to Steve we all had 2 pieces of cake.
- 2022 August 28: **A Retirement Party was given for Visitation Pastor David Strom.** Pastor David had been serving at Augustana Lutheran during Covid-19 and worked with Pastor Gretchen Enoch to provide worship services virtually during the epidemic. He had been the lead pastor at First Lutheran, from Pastor Gretchen Enoch's resignation to the arrival of Interim Pastor Tiffany Sundeen in mid January. Pastor David then returned to having one role- visitation pastor, until August 28, 2022.
- 2022 September: **Jen Hubrig** began her role at First Lutheran with part-time work as the office manager and transitioned to full-time in February 2023. Jen came with ten years of office experience at an ELCA church in St. Peter, Minnesota.
- 2022 *September 4: **Son of the Congregation, Keith Anderson, was one of the 150th Anniversary's guest preachers.** He shared memories of his life at First Lutheran. Memories especially enjoyed by the members were ones that several people recognized themselves in his storytelling. And better yet, if their names were said out loud, then reactions from the congregation were delightful! (son of Russell and Alice Anderson)
- 2022 September 11: **Sunday School Rally Sunday** was titled "Scoop Up The Joy." Adults and children alike enjoyed ice cream from Uncle Eddie's Ice Cream downtown ice cream shop.
- 2022 September 11: The **Blended Worship Band** began a new season and were once again led by the talents of Anne Taylor. This band has assisted with worship every second Sunday of the month, for years. There are usually 5 to 7 vocalists, a drummer, a Guitarist with Anne at the piano. They practice the Sunday morning of their service. Anne and the Worship Team Committee pick the selections they will use preceding the service, and the ones used during the service.
- 2022 September 14, A new tradition was set when First Lutheran began having "**Dinner Church**" on Wednesdays from 5:30 to 6:30. First Lutheran members and community members were invited for a full course meal, a pocket sermon, singing, communion, and prayers- all around a table! Just like they used to do in Jesus' days!
- 2022 September 18: Long time member, **Lorraine Kantrud**, celebrated her 99th birthday during worship service surrounded by both her congregation and family.
- 2022 September 19: Several **Boy Scout leaders, assistants, and/or scouts** remain in First Lutheran's membership today. They include: Steve Leitte, Russ Anderson, Art Stortroen,

Dan and Kathy Rosendahl, Gary Eckley, Keary and Sue Toso, Steve Emerson and George Mathison.

- 2022 *September 25: **Daughter of the Congregation Pastor Liz Eide** was the **150th Anniversary guest preacher**. She currently serves at the Lutheran Church of Peace in Maplewood, Minnesota. (daughter of George and Ann Mathison)
- 2022 Mid year: **Brent Schmitz** was the short-term custodian.
- 2022 *September 25: **Child of the Congregation, Susan Smith Clambey** - vocalist, pianist, organist and composer, added her talents to the worship service **in honor of the 150th Anniversary**. With Susan at the organ, the Adult Choir and Hosanna Handbells performed the sacred anthem of celebration, "Come And Sing, Sing Unto The Lord." (daughter of Fred and Mary Smith)
- 2022 September 27: **Christabel Jacobs**, a lifelong member of First Lutheran Church, **died 94 years of age**. She worked tirelessly at First Lutheran Church. If one were to ask the question, "What didn't she do?", those who knew her best would quickly reply, "She did it all".
- 2022 September 29: **Pamela Schroden, lifelong musician, died at 75 years of age**. She was a devoted longtime member of First Lutheran Church. She played and taught piano. Pamela played organ and piano/organ duets with Keith Melberg. She sang in the Senior Choir, played in the Hosanna Handbells Choir, played for children's choirs, and also played at local churches. Pamela had looked forward to being a part of the musical productions for the 150th Anniversary weekend. And she was a part because Choir members and Hosanna Handbells members kept her memories extra close on October 9th.
- 2022 October 2: **First Lutheran's second graders received their Bibles**. The children and their families were recognized during the worship service.
- 2022 *October 2: Award winning, published musician, Underwood native, and **Child of the Congregation, Daniel Aune**, provided an organ concert for church members and the community **as part of First Lutheran's 150th Anniversary**. Concert guests found it difficult to find an adequate adjective to describe the talents he shared. He touched many souls. Cookies, coffee, and church archive displays were also available to enjoy. The concert was sponsored by the Jacobs Family in honor of Al and Christabel Jacobs.
- 2022 *October 8: **150th Anniversary Celebration** and Family Day at Thea's Pumpkin Patch.

2022 *October 7, 8: In the past 9 months, the Archives Committee of 4- **Leonard** Hatzenbuhler, **Jody** Hanson, **Joanne** Peterson and **Vicki** Hanneman, worked diligently to sort and organize a room full of archival materials from the past 150 years. The committee deemed it an honor to delve into the life of our church and the lives of its members, to be able to share them for the **150th Anniversary**. On October 7 and 8, the committee put the finishing touches on the enlarged and improved Heritage Hall.

They also set up numerous tables around the church to display newly created history scrapbooks, archival items, decorative stoles, old lesson books, photos, and personal member memories, all for viewing and reminiscing. The committee will periodically bring out scrapbooks and new treasures for the members to enjoy during coffee hour or any other time that they so choose.

2022 October 9th 150th Anniversary

2022 October 9: **150th Anniversary Celebration Sunday of Joy** was spent with a former First Lutheran intern, a former First Lutheran Associate Pastor, and a very faithful member of our congregation, our own **Reverend Curtis Rotto**. He was our guest preacher. Other pastors that participated on this day were: Pastor Tiffany Sundeen, Pastor Stan Satre, Pastor Saul Stensvaag, Pastor Matthew Philaya, and Pastor David Strom. The Senior Choir, the Hosanna Handbells with Gloria Ronning at the piano, Sunday School children with Kristy Wicklund, the organ music, and trumpeter Wally Warhol, all made for beautiful sounds of joy on this blessed morning.

The service was followed by a Celebration Luncheon and Program in Fellowship Hall. David and Lorri Holt, presidents of the Church Council, welcomed everyone, and Mayor Ben Schierer read the Proclamation signifying the importance of this date. David Strom on piano with Laurie Strom on violin, played "The Lovers Waltz". Vicki Hanneman gave a "light" presentation on the humorous things the Archives Committee experienced in preparation for the 150th. The celebration ended with the Lord's Prayer, the Benediction given by Pastor Tiffany Sundeen, and the Closing Hymn, "Joy To The World".

The Archives Committee offered a tour throughout the church the afternoon of the celebration. All of the new scrapbooks and photo albums were matched to areas of the church that related to the subject. Such as, the Choir and Music books were on placed on tables by the Choir Room, etc.. The committee members spread out around the church and talked about changes in the rooms plus shared and listened to memories with the guests whenever they discovered a treasure that connected their minds to their hearts.

**October 9, 2022: This date signifies the official end of First Lutheran Church's First One Hundred Fifty Years of serving God's people.
To God Be The Glory!**

- 2022 October 10: **Art Stortroen, age 95**, died at the Fergus Falls Minnesota Veterans Home. Art was First Lutheran's oldest Veteran and oldest Boy Scout. He was a Scout Master for over 60 years. He earned the prestigious Lifetime Scouts Award, plus the Eagle Scout and Silver Beaver Awards. Boy Scout Leaders and Scouts, dressed in uniforms complete with neckerchiefs, sashes, and badges, attended his service.
- 2022 October 27: **FLC readers** had a light lunch and lively discussion on the book, "**A Village Of Scoundrels**" by Margi Preus, daughter of our long time pastor- Christian Preu
- 2022 October 30: **Son of the Congregation Jeff Fitzkappes**, was the guest preacher **as part of First Lutheran's 150th Anniversary**. He currently serves the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church in Montevideo, Minnesota. Jeff and Kate have 4 children ages 12 to 19 years old. (Jeff is the son of Steven and Gayle Fitz.)
- 2022 **The Cemetery Committee** is and always has been a strong crew of dedicated people. The members were: Steve Leitte, Jerry Toso, Leonard Hatzenbuhler, Mary Johnson, Terry Gervais, Lowell Wendel, Mark Hermes and Keary Toso.
- 2022 November: For the first time, **First Lutheran Church did not have a custodian**. Members were asked to volunteer to clean. They were to sign up in the office, check off what they accomplished, and then made a note stating they would help out again. Although there were about a dozen members who faithfully cleaned bathrooms, washed floors, vacuumed, disinfected, and wiped down counters tables over and over again, there were members who hesitated to help due to Covid-19 issues, those who were physically unable to help, and those who were overwhelmed with family life. But somehow the available volunteers carried on.
- 2022 November 6: **All Saints Sunday**. Members' names who passed from 11-1-2021 to 11-1-2022, were written in the bulletin, and read out loud by Pastor Tiffany as individual candles were lit. Members names: Beverly Aune, Darlene Berge, John Burton, Dennis Emmen, Wayne Estenson, Kurt Gustin, James Iverson, Christabel Jacobs, Bradley Lillemon, Karen Lundstrom, Shania Moen, Clarice Ohman, Karen Shafer, Pamela Schroden, Art Stortroen and Helen Watkins.
- 2022 October 19 - November 9: **Winter Clothing Drive**. Members brought gently used or new coats, hats, gloves, mittens, snow boots, and snow pants to church. All sizes and styles were welcomed.
- 2022 November 10: **Annual Harvest Dinner** helpers served 203 plates in Fellowship Hall and prepared 114 meals to go for a total of 317 meals. Remaining food was packaged up and donated to the Salvation Army, who reported they served an additional 200 meals. People were free to take anything they needed from the winter clothing tables. Leftover clothing was brought to the Blessing Closet. The church again was able to Celebrate the Joy of Giving even in the middle of an ice storm.

- 2022 December 12: **First Lutheran Ladies' Night** was in the Fellowship Hall. The women were to bring gifts that needed wrapping, and then used supplies and ideas provided by four of our own talented women. Good conversations, delicious dessert and beverages were also enjoyed from 6:30 to 8:00.
- 2022 November 21: Pastor Gretchen led a **book study on "Just Mercy"** by Bryan Stevenson. Ten women brought lunches and joined the discussions.
- 2022 November 23: A joint **ELCA Thanksgiving Eve Service** was held at Hope Lutheran.
- 2022 November and December: **Advent's Theme was "Making Room for the Coming of Jesus"**. Advent dates were:
November 27 and 30- Making Room for HOPE.
November 4 and 7- Making Room for PEACE.
December 11 and 14- Making Room for JOY.
December 18 and 21- Making Room for LOVE.
- 2022 December 11: A **Wrap It Up Appeal** began with the purpose of making our income meet or exceed our expenses for 2022. In order to do this we needed \$75,000 in regular and extra offerings by December 31. It was attainable.
- 2022 December 12: **"The Gifts of Christmas" Sunday School Program** was at 9:30 AM. The Trowbridge Petting Zoo made an appearance again this year, and Christmas Cookies were the morning treat.
- 2022 December 14: At 2:00, women of the church were welcomed to a **"Hannah Circle Christmas Gathering"**. Pastor Tiffany led with a Christmas reading, Judy Mouritsen read the Christmas Story, Jen Enstad-Petersen provided dessert, and the Celebration of Joy ended with a sing-a-long of Christmas favorites.
- 2022 December 18: This was the last day of Sunday School before Christmas and The New Year and it was **Pajama Day!**
- 2022 December: The **Love Day Quilters made a joint decision to take time off in January.** Because the quilters are such a dedicated bunch, they sometimes traveled in inclement weather to get to church on Monday mornings. But not this coming January!
- 2022 December 24: **The Christmas Eve Worship Services** were at 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM. The 3:00 PM service has been a favorite for many members because it gives families time to travel a short distance to a Christmas dinner, or get home to prepare the Christmas Dinner. Pastor Gretchen Enoch was the preacher for the 3 PM service and Vicar Lynn Melchior was the preacher at the 5 PM service. Both services were filled with "Jesus Is The Reason For The Season" blessings.

2022 December 25: **The Christmas Day Service** was at 9:30 AM with Christmas readings, Christmas hymns, and Christmas prayers.

2022 Stats:

Budget for 2022 was \$551,414.00.

Income for the year was \$554,130.52.

Baptisms- 8

Confirmands- 11

Marriages- 1

Funerals- 17

Burials in the North Cemetery- 9

Burials in the South Cemetery- 0

December 31 Membership- 1394 Baptized and 1160 Confirmed

January 1, 2023

**From this point on, First Lutheran's
archival records and materials
will be organized and stored according to the
ELCA Archival Standards and
First Lutheran Church's Archives Committee Recommendations.**

