



The Contact

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH — NORFOLK

1301 Colley Ave., Norfolk, VA 23517

Parish Office: 757 625 1953

www.flcnorfolk.com

VOL. XXXIV

DECEMBER 2020

NO. 12



waiting for a baby to be born
waiting for the storm to pass
waiting in line at the grocery store
waiting for a loved one to come out of surgery
waiting for the traffic light to change
waiting for election results
waiting for COVID-19 to subside
waiting for a job offer
waiting for Spring Break
waiting for the car to be fixed
waiting for dinner to be ready
waiting for a loan approval
waiting to open birthday presents

Advent is a season of hoping, waiting, yearning, and preparing, but for what or whom and how? These are some of the themes explored in this Advent series. During these four weeks, the future and the past mingle together as we celebrate the Christ who came and is yet to come. Memories, inherited through scripture and tradition, are sparked in order to feed tomorrow's hope. Join Pastor Mims and Ryan-Michael via Zoom for this interactive devotional time.

Wednesdays in Advent at 7:00 p.m.

Watch the weekly Life Together weekly email for the Zoom link.



Christmas Eve

December 24, 2020

A recorded Festival of Worship celebrating the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ will be made available on December 24th via Life Together, Facebook, and on YouTube.

In-person services on Christmas Eve are yet to be determined, depending on number of COVID cases and positivity rates for our area.

Annual Meeting

Our 2020 Annual Meeting was held on November 15 via Zoom.

We elected by acclamation the following to council:



Joanne Hughes



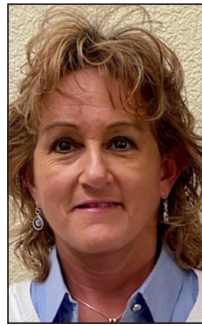
Christina O'Neill



Maynard Schaus



Julia Siik
(incumbent)



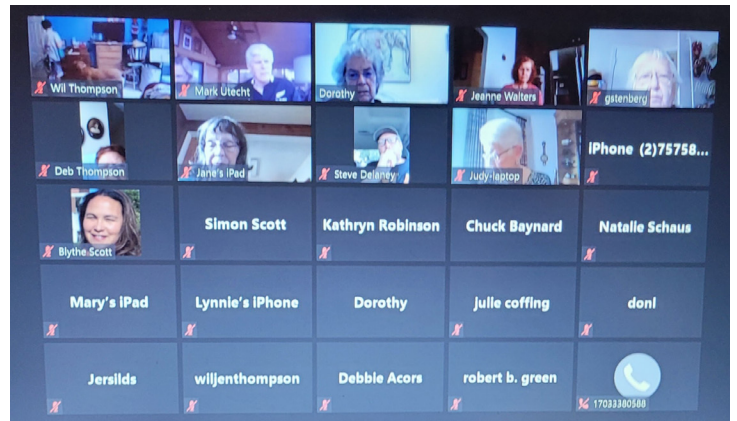
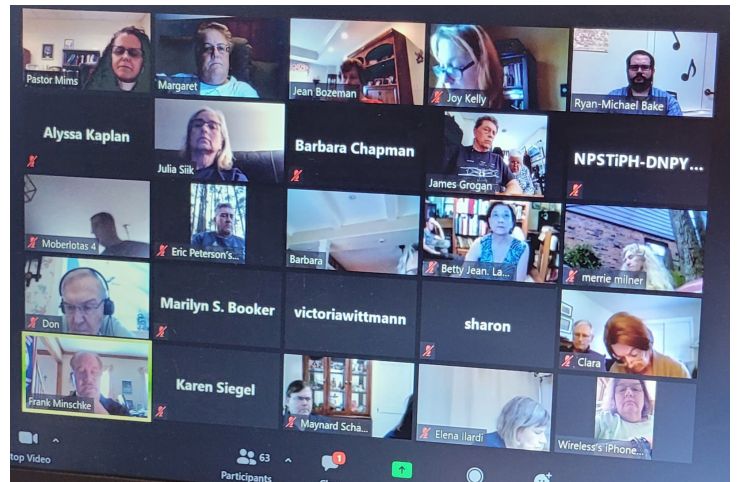
Nickie Stewart

John Wittman, President of Council, spoke to changes we have had to make because of COVID-19 and the forward movement on the Water Infiltration Project and the Organ Revitalization. A motion to take out a \$525,000 loan with Mission Investment Fund to fund the Water Infiltration Project and the Organ Revitalization passed.

We approved the 2021 Ministry Investment Plan and Real Estate Budget as presented.

Elizabeth Janik and Merrie Jo Milner shared updates on the Tuesday evening Mercy Chefs meals and on NEST. The Tuesday evening meals began in response to needs identified because of the pandemic, and we serve about 40 people each week. For NEST, the City of Norfolk is housing people in hotels, and churches are providing overflow space for up to twenty people. FLC will likely participate near the end of January, depending on how many people we can accommodate. Volunteers will be needed to help other congregations who are hosting NEST.

Pastor Mims spoke about the call process, for which Betty Jean Meyer will head up the first step of that process, the Mission Site Profile, and her interim ministry, in which her emphases will include: the future of virtual worship at FLC, stewardship education/



financial communication, staffing requirements, and leadership development and empowerment. She expressed gratitude to be able to serve First in this time of transition and possibility.

The Nesting Dove awards were given to Gail Plauka for her commitment to outreach, service and justice, and to Steve Delaney for his constancy and technological fortitude to bring worship to us each week.

BLM Forum Summary

First Lutheran held two forums to bring people together to talk and listen regarding the Black Lives Matter sign in our courtyard. The conversations were fruitful in that people from all perspectives had a chance to be heard and learn from one another. There were a variety of concerns expressed at both forums:

One of the major concerns lifted up was the understanding that Black Lives Matter represents a particular group that advocates for anarchy and is negative. It is a political movement, and the church should not be endorsing any political movements. It is not right for one group to be lifted up over another because it is divisive and the opposite of “Come to me all” on the other side of the building.

Others suggested that the sign is not an endorsement of the political platform of Black Lives but a lifting up of a moral issue, recognizing that we understand that for 400 years black lives have *not* mattered as much as white lives. It is a sign of justice.

Another issue that was brought up was concern for the lives of police officers whose lives are in danger. It was shared in one group that we need to support police to be able to handle calls related to mental health problems, drugs, and domestic violence not with deadly force but with understanding and support. Can the church do something for the police, too?

It was also mentioned that we should not single out black lives because all lives matter. All people are important to God, and the church has always respected everyone else. Others felt that to say all lives matter was dismissive of the discrimination and injustice experienced by the black community.

There was general consensus that racism is an issue in our society, though some felt it was more external – not evident in the church or in one’s own life – while others felt that they themselves, and the church, needed to work internally on their/

our own implicit biases. There was also general agreement that actually doing something, helping others, is more meaningful, and the church is already doing good ministries in the community. Some added that there are two kinds of work needed, addressing immediate needs (like hunger and homelessness) and also structural issues. Others mentioned that racism and oppression was experienced by other groups of people, including Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, LGBTQ+, and Muslims, and Jews, and how can we be more inclusive of all people?

Many groups reported a need to continue to educate ourselves and have further conversation. The Troubling the Waters Study Group was lifted up as one way of continuing to have the conversation.

The forums did not solve any problems. They did not change people’s positions. They did broaden people’s perspectives. They expanded people’s understandings of other points of view. We did find places of agreement, and we identified areas where differences were not so different after all. Several people said, “These conversations are helpful.”

So where do we go from here? Our congregation reflects the divisions that cut through our nation. However, we can live with division as long as we remain connected with one another and remember that we are each beloved children of God. We remain bound to each other through the cross of Jesus, who is our hope and our salvation. Together we are called to take up our cross and follow Jesus, to bear life, light, and hope into the world.

Wisdom has been shared in these forums; the council is listening, learning, and discerning what it means for the life of our congregation. Keep your leaders in prayer, and keep our congregation in prayer, that we may be faithful to our call “to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth” (Affirmation of Baptism, Evangelical Lutheran Worship).

December Birthdays

1 Dec Skip Barry	9 Dec Sophia Bourcier	14 Dec Leanne Currie-McGhee	21 Dec Nicolle Stopa
1 Dec Morgan Brown	9 Dec Shirley Skees	16 Dec Blake Wittmann	22 Dec Mary Margaret Curran
2 Dec William Herman	10 Dec Jeffrey Charron	17 Dec Dana Humphreys	22 Dec Evans Poston
3 Dec Louisa Rowan	10 Dec Chris Coffing	17 Dec Jenna Humphreys	23 Dec Kyle Diduk-Gamache
5 Dec Jason Bishop	10 Dec Victoria Gonzalez	18 Dec Kirstin New	26 Dec Barbara Cordrey
5 Dec Whitney Faircloth	10 Dec Stephen Herman	19 Dec James Hood	27 Dec Patty Graham
5 Dec Eliza Stinson	10 Dec Penny Yarasavich	19 Dec Brian McElligott	27 Dec John Heller
6 Dec Ronald Ackley	11 Dec CJ Fenley	19 Dec Shea O'Donnel	28 Dec Bethany Johnson
6 Dec Becky Roode	11 Dec Levi Sutura	19 Dec Mary Vaughan	28 Dec Diane Laine
6 Dec Malcolm Van de Water	13 Dec Brendan Kelly	20 Dec Joseph Milner	29 Dec Roger Seese
7 Dec Keith Buckley	13 Dec Chris O'Neill	20 Dec Gail Stenberg	31 Dec Gwendolyn Carr
7 Dec Kathryn Cummings	13 Dec Bill Robinson	20 Dec Seth Utecht	31 Dec Ed Joella
7 Dec Abby Weisenbeck	14 Dec Brittany Acors	21 Dec Lucian Clare	31 Dec Nathaniel Schaus

Sweet Support of Fair Trade Farmers and First Lutheran Youth Underway

Chocolates and coffees for the holidays are especially tasty when they support two causes so dear to our hearts. Online sales of organic fair trade coffees and chocolates from Equal Exchange will benefit the farmers that produce the coffee and cacao beans and chocolate, and a portion of the sales will go toward travel costs for our youth to attend the next National Youth Gathering. The products, available for local orders only, will be distributed by December 16th, just in time for Yuletide goodies by the fireside! **Deadline for orders is Sunday, December 6th.**

For more information, contact Julie Moberly at 285-9779.

To place an order or to make a donation, go to <https://farmraiser.com/campaigns/flc-holidays-fundraiser-for-2022-national-youth-gathering/market>



Photo by Gary Goodman, courtesy of Equal Exchange

For more information on how Equal Exchange helps farmers in developing countries receive fair prices, go to: <https://equalexchange.coop/sites/default/files/communitysales/WhyEE.pdf>

For more information about the 2022 ELCA National Youth Gathering, go to: <https://www.elca.org/youthgathering>

Troubling The Waters

During the season of Advent, 2019, eleven members of First Lutheran Church embarked on a program of our ELCA called “Troubling the Waters.” We agreed to meet throughout the church year to dialogue the material provided for this study. Its purpose was to bring insight to the nature of racism in American society and our own participation in it.

Beginning with the sharing of waters of our baptism we studied Scripture, examined the history of the United States and its churches, and our own personal history as people living in a racist society. The nature of systemic racism and white privilege were among the topics we studied.

We discussed the ELCA social statement on Race, Ethnicity and Culture, which states “Racism, both blatant and subtle, continues to deny the reconciling work of the cross. God’s forgiveness frees us from the enslavement of racism. For some, this may mean giving up power or privilege; for others, it may mean giving up anger or prejudice. Let us know this reconciliation in our lives!”

An unforeseen event happened during the middle months of our study when our country confronted the death of George Floyd, creating a whole new dimension to the subject of racism in our country. This included our addressing the resurgent movement of Black Lives Matter, asking what the church can do to bring healing to a divided society.

Our journey continues as we struggle to move out of our safe and secure sanctuaries of homes and church and into our local and global neighborhoods, to meet, listen and learn from our neighbors of color, and to understand the pervasive impact of systemic racism.

We continue to meet weekly as a group to share, listen, read and grow together. We’ve shared books such as: *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, by Jemar Tisby and *I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, by Austin Channing Brown, which we suggest for your own reading.

We are hoping a new group will be formed soon, and we hope you will consider joining it.



December 2020

Office Hours: 9 AM—4 PM Monday-Thursday; 9 AM -1 PM Friday
 Men's Bible Study: 7 AM, Wednesdays, IHOP, 114 E. 21st, Norfolk, VA 23517
 Women's Bible Study: 2 PM Tuesdays online, please contact Pastor Mims for more information.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 2 PM Women's Bible Study 6 PM Dinner Ministry 7 PM Martha Circle	2 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	3 7 PM Fellowship Time online	4	5 <i>Sanctuary Unavailable</i>
6 8:30 AM Children's Sunday School 10 AM Worship Online 11 AM In-person Worship 11 AM Confirmation Class 12 PM FLY Lunch via Zoom	7 7 PM Congregation Council	8 2 PM Women's Bible Study 6 PM Dinner Ministry	9 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	10 7 PM Fellowship Time online	11 <div>Contact Deadline</div>	12
13 8:30 AM Children's Sunday School 10 AM Worship Online 11 AM In-person Worship 11 AM Confirmation Class 3 PM High School Sunday School Class	14	15 2 PM Women's Bible Study 6 PM Dinner Ministry	16 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	17 7 PM Fellowship Time online 5:30 PM Laundry Love	18	19
20 8:30 AM Children's Sunday School 10 AM Worship Online 11 AM In-person Worship 11 AM Confirmation Class	21	22 2 PM Women's Bible Study 6 PM Dinner Ministry	23 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i>	25 <i>Christmas Day</i>	26
				<div>Church Office Closed</div>		
27 10 AM Worship Online 11 AM Confirmation Class 3 PM High School Sunday School Class	28	29 6 PM Dinner Ministry	30 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>		
			<div>Church Office Closed</div>			

Connect with Others

Thank You Notes

Dear First Lutheran Church Friends:

Thank you for your continuing support of Faraja school! Now twenty years old, the school has graduated over 250 classes of students who have gone on to secondary or vocational levels in their education. Faraja continues to rank extremely high in the “exit exams” in the region.

Many of you have been to Faraja and remain committed to the ongoing success of the school. A few of you have even returned a second time.

The Covid-19 virus caused Faraja to be shut down for seven weeks. The Tanzanian government has reopened all of the schools, and so the students have returned. So far there's no virus; all precautionary measures have been taken; masks, “social distancing,” extra handwash sites.

Your kindness and concern for these vulnerable children have given them an opportunity to excel!!

Your friend (and 30 year member of FLC),

Joann Tolmie

Dear First Lutheran,

I hope this card finds you well amidst these challenging times. I certainly have missed being able to come back and connect with you all after my first year of seminary. Hopefully we can soon, maybe after my second year! I cannot thank you all enough not only for your spiritual support, but also your generous financial support. Your generosity makes my theological formation for the church and world possible. As I continue on my journey after completing my CPE unit this summer, I continue to be amazed by God's call!

Holding you all in my constant prayers.

Blessings,

Samantha DiBiaso

Congregation Council Summary

During the November meeting held November 02, 2020 via Zoom, the Congregation Council

- Received Thank You letters from Faraja School, Southern Seminary, Lutheran World Relief and Samantha DiBiaso for our support/gift(s).
- Approved the Ministry Investment Plan for 2021
- Approved the Real Estate Budget for 2021.
- Approved \$1,000.00 be added into MIP for Mercy Chef's Meals for 2021.
- Approved BB&T Corporate Resolution to have Pastor Goeres removed and Pastor Mims added.
- Water Infiltration – WIP (work in progress)

- Organ Restoration – Contract signed
- Implementing Drive-Thru communion on November 08, 2020, and November 22, 2020
- BLM small group/forums are scheduled for November 08, 2020, @ 4:00 p.m. and November 12, 2020, @ 7:00 p.m., giving congregants a place to listen, learn, heal, and grow
- Congregational Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 15, 2020 @ 12:30 p.m. via Zoom
- Shared blessings, prayer concerns and prayer partners

The Congregation Council normally meets at 7 PM on the first Monday of each month. The meeting is open to the congregation.

Connect with Word and Body

Prayer Concerns for December

Righteous God, our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Give joyful thanksgiving

...For Nancy & Jack Smith on their 68th wedding anniversary.

...For the gift of each new day.

...For all the saints at rest from their labors.

Help us

...To live as children of the light, using our talents to encourage one another and to build up each other for your sake.

...Give strength, comfort, and peace to those who grieve and struggle with loss as we navigate life under Covid.

...Pray for our elected leaders to stand for truth, justice, compassion for those in need, and freedom.

Pray for

...Peace and comfort to the family and friends of Rev. Paul Huddle

...Peace and comfort to the family and friends of Debbie Wynn (mother-in-law of Patrick Garrison)

...Peace and comfort to the family and friends of Walter Wallace, Jr.

...Peace and comfort to the family and friends of Gary Skrien

...Peace and comfort for Melinda Raymond and her family on the death of her parents

...Peace and comfort for Kim McMillan and her family on the death of her brother, Kevin

...All of the children who have been separated from their parents. May they be kept safe and protected until that day when they can be reunited with their family.

...Justice for the victims of racial oppression & violence

...All who have COVID, for the development of a vaccine, and for careful management of the pandemic

...those who are dying, that they are secure in knowing that God loves them and will welcome them into everlasting life.

...people fleeing dire humanitarian situations for a better life.

...the sick, that they are comforted.

...the despairing, that they receive hope.

...persons who are homeless and/or in need of shelter and food.

...those struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

...those mourning the death of loved ones.

...for all who cry out to God in any need.

Alvene Buckley, David Basco, Don Buckley, Roger Fuller, Joelle Griffith (mother of Paula Barwick), Marion Ingersoll, Joann Klotz, Alice McCoy, Kelley Minschke, Lorna Moss, Bill Newlon, Betty Phillips, Grace Ridenhour, Fay Rogner, Deb Thompson, John Wittmann, Jane Van Wolkenten, Betty Lou, Cindy, Dave, Gert, Jimmy, Katrina, Margaret, Mark, Rema, Rob, Sarah

Those dealing with cancer

Larry Atkinson, Jo Brouwer, James Collier, Iris Corbin, Dave Guelcher (father of Beth Zaletski), Jenn, David Kelly, Vickie Mack, Mark, Phil, Rob, Sandy, Andie Seagraves, Gerald Stover, Dallas Williams, Jess WineKing

Military and their families:

All military personnel around the world.

Fox family and all those reunited following deployment, **Austin Davidson, Kyle Hefner, Dan Kelly, Bobby Masters, Nick Masters, Ted Peterson**, Brian Becker, Alex Diaz, and shipmates in the Horn of Africa for a year-long deployment. (Dec. 2019), Amy Hardbower, Nicolette Huntley, Tim Kelly, Ian Logan, Kelly Mackenzie, John Marfield, Nikki Parkman

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

Readings for December

December 6th

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

December 13th

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalms 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 20th

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Luke 1:46b-55

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

December 27th

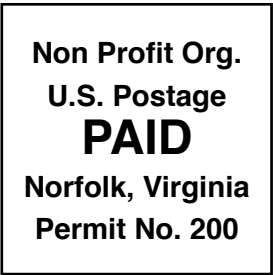
Isaiah 61:10--62:3

Psalms 148

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:22-40

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

