

The Contact

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH — NORFOLK

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VOL. XXXVI

FEBRUARY 2022

NO. 2



Graceful Encounters

Last November, Betty Jean Meyer was filling the Grace Food Pantry when a stranger walking by asked her about it. She explained its purpose, but then he asked, “Why ‘Grace’ Food Pantry? What is grace?”

As Lutherans, we claim grace with confidence. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8-9) We can’t earn grace and we certainly don’t deserve it. Yet all that we have is given to us by our loving God.

Grace is a difficult concept. Human nature creeps in with questions about who is more deserving or who is really in need. We are blessed at FLC that we have several ministries which help us to understand how grace works. The Youth have a Grace Car Wash where they wash cars for free. Tuesday meals, Wednesday lunch ministry, and the Grace Food Pantry offer food to anyone who appears. At Laundry Love, patrons receive laundry cards and

detergent to help with the cost of doing laundry. Recipients don’t have to DO anything. Volunteers in these ministries don’t try to determine who is “truly” in need or deserving. First Lutheran offers these gifts of food and laundry aid to all who come to us. We see the difference grace can make in the lives of others when our blessings are shared with our neighbors.

Those blessings are time, food, and money. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, we are using a limited number of volunteers. Grace Food Pantry, however, always needs volunteers. Contact Gail Plauka, 757-619-9667 or gplauka@gmail.com for information or use Signup Genius to find a time slot. Food items for Grace Food Pantry are desperately needed. Please remember that your money can act when you are unable to and consider contributing to any of these ministries to ensure that First can continue to be a blessing to those in our neighborhood.

Thank you.

God's Dream

“God has a dream. God started to build that dream in creation, and God continues to work on that dream throughout all of human history.”

— Dave Daubert, Living Lutheran:
Renewing Your Congregation

What is God's dream for First Lutheran? I suspect each of us has some ideas about what we'd like to see happen at First, what kinds of ministries we should be doing, a picture of what we hope First Lutheran will look like in one, five, years from now.

What is God's dream for First Lutheran? What is God's dream for Ghent? And how do these dreams intersect? Part of what we have to figure out – through prayer, listening, and conversation – is how God is calling us into new ministries, new relationships, new opportunities. Some of the questions we will consider is what values are we called to as children of God? What values will guide our decision-making and what we give priority to? How will we tend to the work of the Spirit among us? In what directions is the Spirit moving us?

As Pastor Scott mentioned in his first sermon (January 16), he and I bring a set of values that will guide and direct our ministry and that we believe will help foster a healthy, vibrant, joy-filled community. These values include:

- A deep trust in the abiding presence of Jesus. The whole of our lives and our ministries are awash in the guiding presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. The issue is not whether we succeed or fail – we can learn a lot through failure. The issue is trusting that in all things, in all times, in all experiences, God does not abandon us or this world. Christ walks with us always, in times of rejoicing, in times of sorrow, in times of celebration, in times of frustration, in times of disappointment. We cling to Jesus as our steadfast rock and hope.
- An abundance mindset. When we trust that God will not abandon us, we are free to operate out of a mindset of abundance – that if God calls us to a ministry then God will provide the resources

we need for it. Yes, through the generosity of God's people. Yes, through unexpected gifts from surprising places. Yes, in the multiplication of loaves and fishes. Yes, through the good stewardship of time and talent and money. But God will provide. And therefore, we are free to try new things, to experiment, to fail spectacularly, to succeed to the glory of God, to risk new ways of doing ministry in order to meet the new world around us. We are not confined by the way it has always been done before, and we be bold in our serving and in our worship. We can step out in faith to live into God's dream for us and for our community.

- Collaborative ministry. The ministry of the congregation belongs to the whole people of God, not just to the pastors. Each of us is gifted in particular ways to benefit the work of the Church. Martin Luther called this the priesthood of all believers; in baptism, all of us have been called to service in God's Kingdom, all of us have a role to play in living out God's dream for the congregation and for the world. This takes place in two arenas: discipleship and mission. Discipleship is about the formation of disciples, of followers of Jesus. Each of us is invited into a deeper walk with Christ through prayer, meditation upon and study of Scripture, and fellowship with other followers of Jesus. Mission is about how we live out our faith in the world, how we shine the light of Christ into people's lives, how we share out of our abundance, how we build up those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, or oppressed. The engagement of our lives as children of God requires both discipleship and mission. And we do this work together, collaboratively, using the gifts given to each of us through the Holy Spirit.
- Hospitality. A radical invitation to and welcome of all people. This is harder than it sounds. All churches believe they are friendly – but most are only friendly to those we already know or to those who look and sound like us. The Gospel of Jesus calls us to something much more radical – an inclusion of those who might not “measure up,” or of those whose lives look nothing like ours. It calls upon each of us to meet the stranger among us, to go out of our way to truly accept

others as they come to us, knowing that all of us are works in progress and none of us is without sin, blemish, fault, or annoying traits. And yet... all of us are deeply loved and valued by God. Our welcome of others is merely a manifestation of God's love, and therefore hospitality is a value which we must necessarily nurture and clearly, consistently live out if we hope to grow and live into God's dream for us.

- Fun. As followers of Jesus, we spend a lot of energy on some very serious issues – life, death, sin, forgiveness, repentance, confession. Our ministries necessarily confront us with serious problems – hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, isolation, racism and homophobia, lack of access to healthcare and affordable housing...and we hold these problems in sacred trust, believing that God will help us respond in life-giving ways to the best of our abilities. But the other side of our faith is JOY! The Creator of the Universe – of you and me and all that is – deems us worthy of love and attention. Though in the scheme of the cosmos we are small and insignificant, yet we are of great and immeasurable value to our God, whose lot was cast with us in Jesus to know the fullness of our human life, and who does not

despise us but instead delights in us and treasures us. Every breath we take is a gift, and we have also been given this beautiful, amazing, complex and magnificent world to live in and care for and enjoy. We are not left alone, but have a community which will share our joys and our sorrows, a gathering of people who share our faith but express it in different ways. God's glory and gifts surround us, and we are privileged to be able to participate in God's dream – what an honor to be so entrusted! And so it is good and right that ministry should also be fun, as we enjoy the presence of one another, as we break bread together (soon, I hope!), as we work hard for the sake of God's Dream, God's Kingdom, as we celebrate what God is doing in and through and among us, as we laugh and give thanks for the life we've been given. Let us have fun together in ministry!

These are perhaps the top values Pastor Scott and I share and bring to First Lutheran, and over the next several months we will be listening to what you value and cherish. We will be listening to the Spirit together, as we discover the paths down which God is leading us, the relationships and ministries that God is calling us into, and the dream that God is bringing to fruition among us!

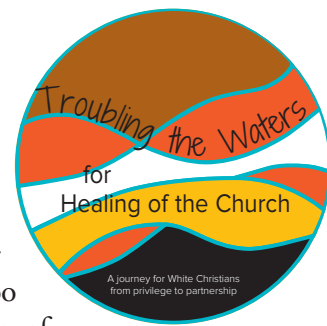
“For the Bible tells me so...”

Organized by the Social Justice Committee, Ryan-Michael Blake will host the viewing of a documentary which reflects the contemporary face of an old conflict between Christian fundamentalists and LGBT people. This presentation will include an examination of scriptures, as well as an exploration of arguments on both sides of this controversial topic. Unquestionably, the most compelling part of the film is its focus on five very Christian, very American families, including that of former U.S. presidential candidate Dick Gephardt; The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, a gay man who was elected bishop of Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire in 2004, and his parents; as well as a Lutheran teenager whose parents joined him on the front lines in protest of their church's negative response to homosexuals. These are but a few examples; not every story is affirmative. The viewing will conclude with an opportunity for reflection and conversation.

If you are struggling with your own response to this issue, this presentation is for you! Hear from families that totally get it, families that definitely do not accept it, and families somewhere in between. This is part of a larger series of convocations exploring an openness to radical inclusion. Your participation in these discussions is important as we seek to direct the mission and ministries of First Lutheran toward the needs of our surrounding community.

Make plans to join us at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, February 20 in the third-floor Fellowship Hall. Please register your participation by contacting the office, indicating how many will attend. If you need the benefit of childcare, please provide the ages of the children as well as any food allergies or restrictions. While this presentation is family oriented, it is not suitable for young children.

“Troubling the Waters”



Some of our older members may be familiar with the groundbreaking book of the Swedish Nobel Prize economist, Gunnar Myrdal. Appearing in 1944, *THE AMERICAN DILEMMA* was a masterful analysis of racial oppression in the United States, with helpful insight into the ways our dominant (white) culture engages in a self-serving logic in justifying its treatment of colored people. He cites a comment of George Bernard Shaw to illustrate his point: Our nation “makes the negro clean its boots and then proves the inferiority of the negro by the fact that he is a shoeblack.”

Myrdal wrote his book some eighty years ago, and we can be thankful for the positive changes occurring since that time. The Civil Rights Movement led to the passing of laws that repudiated legal support of many Jim Crow practices that were grossly oppressive. Greater access to jobs has improved the living conditions of many citizens of color, making us a

stronger, more just nation. But it would be naïve to conclude that “the race problem” is simply a piece of history. The circular logic deplored by Shaw is all too common today in the thinking of white people. It justifies an often-subtle attempt to “keep the Blacks in their place.”

It would be helpful if we could summon deeper awareness of how our thinking is shaped by our culture when it comes to issues of race. When we are part of a dominant culture it becomes a matter of honesty, a willingness to put ourselves in the shoes of those who too often experience prejudice as part of a normal day. As Christians, to live with that kind of honesty is part of our vocation, bringing its own reward both for ourselves and our nation.

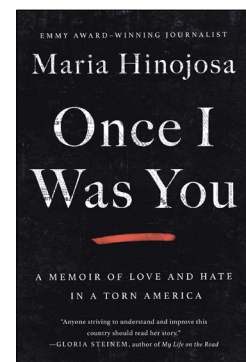
Connect with Others

FLC Book Discussion Group

Book Discussion Group will meet Sunday March 6, 2022 at 6:30 to *Once I Was You: A Memoir of Love and Hate in a Torn America* by María Hinojosa.

In *Once I Was You*, Maria shares her intimate experience growing up Mexican American on the South Side of Chicago. She offers a personal and illuminating account of how the rhetoric around immigration has not only long informed American attitudes toward outsiders, but also sanctioned willful negligence and profiteering at the expense of our country’s most vulnerable populations—

charging us with the broken system we have today. An urgent call to fellow Americans to open their eyes to the immigration crisis and understand that it affects us all, this honest and heartrending memoir paints a vivid portrait of how we got here and what it means.



Pick up a copy and join us the explore this timely topic.

February Birthdays

1 Feb John Porter	7 Feb Marley Fenley	15 Feb Gabe Dulong	21 Feb Lauren Kuehl
1 Feb David Weisenbeck	7 Feb Donna Kennard	16 Feb Blake Boykin	23 Feb Kathy Schaus
2 Feb Evelyn Robinson	7 Feb Sean Rowan	16 Feb Marcus Janik	24 Feb Mark Utecht
4 Feb Tim Hund	8 Feb Christian Haugen	16 Feb Debbie Mansfield	25 Feb Randi Dandrea
4 Feb Julie Silsdorf	8 Feb Ardie Ilardi	16 Feb Yolanda Shea	25 Feb Kathy Prendergast
5 Feb Joe Leafe	11 Feb Caroline Echea	18 Feb Julie Moberly	27 Feb Tony DiBioso
5 Feb Michael Robinson	11 Feb Wyatt Logan	20 Feb Chris Fenley	27 Feb Bobby Masters
6 Feb Stephen Azar	12 Feb Tina Dulong	20 Feb Ed Grogan	27 Feb Holly Milner
6 Feb Jeff Ross	12 Feb Sydney Holbach	20 Feb David Loope	27 Feb Kylie Williams
7 Feb Waverly Douglas	14 Feb Elena Ilardi	20 Feb Chase Williams	28 Feb Ivy Peterson

February 2022

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
6 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship 6:30 PM FLC Book Club	7	8 10 AM Quilting Group 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	9 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	10 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	11 12 PM Pastors' Day Off	12
13 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	14	15 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	16 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	17 5:30 PM Laundry Love	18	19
20 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship 11:30 AM NYG Planning Session 11:30 AM "For the Bible tells me so..." presentation	21 Presidents' Day Church Office Closed	22 10 AM Quilting Group 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	23 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	24 9:30 AM Christian Service	25	26
27 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	28	<p>General Deadlines: 12 PM Tuesdays—Life Together Weekly Edition 3 PM Tuesdays—Altar Flowers 4 PM—January 15th—The Contact Email kminnick@fncnorfolk.com with your articles & information.</p>				

Community Groups (Strickler Hall): Mixed Groups—Sun. 7:00-9:30 PM; Happy Hour AA Home Group—Mon. 4:30—6:30 PM; Happy Hour AA—Mon. 5-7 PM; SAA—Mon. 7-8:30 PM; Thur. 7:30—9:30 PM; Just For Today—Tue. 10-11:30 AM; Continuing Quest—Fri. 12-1 PM; Candlelight—Fri. 8-9 PM; SNL AA—Sat. 7-9:30 PM

Connect with Word and Body

Prayer Concerns for February

Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Give joyful thanksgiving

...For the installation of our new pastors, Pastor Cathy & Pastor Scott Mims and for the work of the search committee
...For the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., and all who have modeled the way of courageous faith
...For farmers, migrant farmworkers, orchard-keepers, ranchers, and all who tend the abundance of the land

Help us

...Protect food and water sources from destruction so that all may eat and drink and be satisfied
...To give generously to those in need, to those who hunger or thirst, or those who are in need of shelter
...Embrace those struggling with self-worth, wrestling with self-identity, or facing significant life transition

Pray for

...Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas & all those who suffer violence because of their faith
...All those affected by the tsunami
...Peace and comfort to the family & friends of Jason Washington on his passing
...Peace and comfort to the **Hogan family**
...Blessing and protection of children, the elderly, and the sick who cannot be vaccinated
...Justice for the victims of racial oppression & violence
...Those who are dying, that they are secure in knowing that God loves them & will welcome them into everlasting life.
...People fleeing dire humanitarian situations for a better life.
...The sick, that they are comforted and the despairing, that they receive hope.
...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.

Margaret & Ronald Ackley, Gail Anthony, Alvene Buckley, Don Buckley, Barbara Cordrey, Jennette Franklin, Roger Fuller, Joelle Griffith (mother of Paula Barwick), Valerie & Jim Harvey, Marion Ingersoll, Joann Klotz, Kelley Minschke, Lorna Moss, Bill Newlon, David Perron, Betty Phillips, Fay Rogner, Gail Simos, Shirley Skees, Nancy & Jack Smith, Bill Wattai, Melissa & Ken Zaletski, Betty Lou, Bill & family (nephew of Mary Bissey), Charlotte & Lee Peglow, Cynthia Moll, Cynthia Olson, Dave, Gert, Harriette & Dave Wheatley, Jimmy, Katrina, Kevin, Heather, & their family, Mark, Megan (niece of Melissa & Ken Zaletski), Rema, Rob, Sue & Jim Webb, Vickie Zelasko

Those dealing with cancer

Alissa (friend of **Dorothy Shaffer**), Bob, James Collier, Iris Corbin, Dave Guelcher (father of Beth Zaletski), Harriette Wheatley (friend of the **Grogans**), Jenn, David Kelly, Chris Jones (nephew of **Karen Siegel**), Vickie Mack, Mark, **Melvin (Jack) Smith**, Phil, Ralph Munsey, **Randall R. Wiele**, Rob, Sandy, Andie Seagraves, Gerald Stover, **Dallas Williams**, Jess WineKing

Military and their families:

All military personnel around the world.

Fox family, Tom Douglas, Kyle Hefner, Bobby Masters, Nano Masters, Nick Masters, Ted Peterson, Brian Becker, Amy Hardbower, Nicolette Huntley, Tim Kelly, Eli Jones, Ian Logan, Kelly Mackenzie, John Marfield, Nikki Parkman

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

— **Amen.**

Readings for February

February 6th

Isaiah 6:1-13

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

February 13th

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Luke 6:17-26

February 20th

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

February 27th

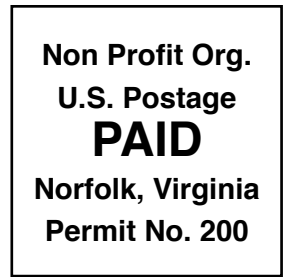
Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12--4:2

Luke 9:28-43a

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