

**Mission Statement:**  
*Sharing God's grace  
through prayer,  
witness, and service.*

**First Hand  
May 2024**

First Lutheran Church  
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Director of Music, Judy Vassar- [jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org)

Bell Choir Director, Stephanie Oaks- [sloaks1737@gmail.com](mailto:sloaks1737@gmail.com)

### OUR WELCOME STATEMENT

At First Lutheran, all means all, and the gifts of God are free. We welcome, love, affirm, and include everyone in our faith community regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Here in this place, you will find a warm, loving Christian family which strives to faithfully proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. We renounce racism, discrimination, and persecution in any form, in faithfulness to the gospel, and to the best of our ability, we promise to provide ministries and pastoral care to all who seek God in this place.

### GOD WELCOMES ALL, AND SO DO WE



**AND**

**MAY 19th**



**Confirmation**

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## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

I love the song "God Bless the USA" by Lee Greenwood. I proudly stand and sing it when it is played at ball-games or 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations.

I love the Pledge of Allegiance. Written by Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister in 1892 to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus' journey to the new world, the pledge (amended in 1923 to change the words "my flag" to "the flag of the United State of America" and amended again in 1954 to add the words "under God") is a beautiful, patriotic pledge that honors our country.

The Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution are two of the most amazing and important documents ever written. The First Amendment guarantees; freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom to practice our religion free from government interference are truly some of the most intelligently crafted freedoms that any government has ever created.

And of course, I believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God. And while the King James version is not my translation of choice, I can appreciate the dedication that went into translating the Hebrew in the Old Testament and the Greek in the New Testament into an accurate word-for-word translation to English.

If I love each of these documents individually, why is it that I am bothered by a Bible that has all of these documents together in one volume? No doubt, many of you have heard about the "God Bless the USA Bible"; a leather-bound book (although one reviewer on You Tube who regularly reviews Bibles called it "faux-leather") with the American Flag on the front, that includes the King James Bible and all the documents I discussed above: the lyrics to "God Bless the USA, the Pledge of Allegiance, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution with the Bill of Rights. First published in 2001, the Bible has received attention in the news this year because of the person who is promoting it: former president and current candidate for president, Donald Trump.

The book currently sells for \$59.99 and comes close to \$70 when you add shipping and tax, even though the Bible should by all rights cost perhaps \$25 if it were sold at Walmart; (I checked prices on-line), so a part of my discomfort is that it appears to be a money grab.

The promotion by the former president appears to be a crass political move to win the vote of Christians, so admittedly, that bothers me as well. To be clear, I would be equally bothered by **anyone** running for office who was promoting this Bible, Democrat or Republican.

But the main reason that as a pastor this Bible bothers me is that it weds patriotism too closely with Christianity. There certainly is nothing wrong with being both a patriotic American and a devout Christian. But this Bible is a classic example of Christian Nationalism, a policy that is extremely dangerous and un-Christian. America is NOT "The New Israel". Criticizing a policy of Israel does not make someone antisemitic or un-Christian. Criticizing a policy of the state does not make one un-Christian or un-American. Jesus did not die for America. And America did not die for my sins.

One of the worst things that ever happened to Christianity was the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. where Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. While indeed this had its benefits in that the persecution of Christians ceased, it made the church impotent when it came to addressing monstrosities committed by the government, most notably the Crusades.

Christians must be free to criticize the government whenever the government engages in a policy that goes against the teachings of Christ. This country currently is debating providing more weapons to Ukraine to fight Russia, and weapons to Israel to fight Hamas. This country recently engaged in an immigration policy that separated children from parents if a family illegally crossed the border. We are debating many domestic policies as well: the shortage of safe, decent, affordable housing; the drug crises; hunger issues; health care issues, and more. Christians must be free to address these issues from a Christian perspective, as the Old Testament prophets addressed the kings of Israel and Judah.

In my opinion, the message that the God Bless the USA Bible sends is this: "If you are a good Christian, you will love America, no matter what the government does. Don't like it? Leave." Contrary to widespread belief, America is not a Christian nation. It is a nation where we are free to practice our Christianity.

In response to my opposition to Christian Nationalism, people may ask "But what about Romans 13:1-2, which says:

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.*

But the greater context of that passage is that the Government owes allegiance to God and is to function as God's servant. And the whole point of this section of Romans (chapters 12 through 15) is about how to live as Christians: love your enemies, feed them when they are hungry, live peaceably with one another, avoid vengeance.

If the government enacts policies that go contrary to God and contrary to the words of Christ, our allegiance is to Christ, not to the state.

As we approach another contentious election, we would do well to read the letter to the Romans, especially chapters 12 through 15, so that we may debate these vital issues in a spirit of love: not so that everyone winds up thinking the same way, but so that we can come together across political ideologies to address and repair a broken and hurting world.

In the abiding hope of the empty tomb,

Pastor Larry

## Director of Music

May 2024

IT IS TIME TO THINK ABOUT SPECIAL MUSIC FOR THE SUMMER.

Does any have any special music they would like to volunteer to share? Any suggestions for things you'd like to hear.

Summer favorite hymns will be from those not used last year.

I'm ready to start planning summer special music.

If you are willing to participate, please let me know if you have a piece you would prefer to use and what Sundays you are NOT available out of these choices.

June 2, 2024

June 16, 2024

June 23, 2024

June 30, 2024

July 7, 2024

July 21, 2024

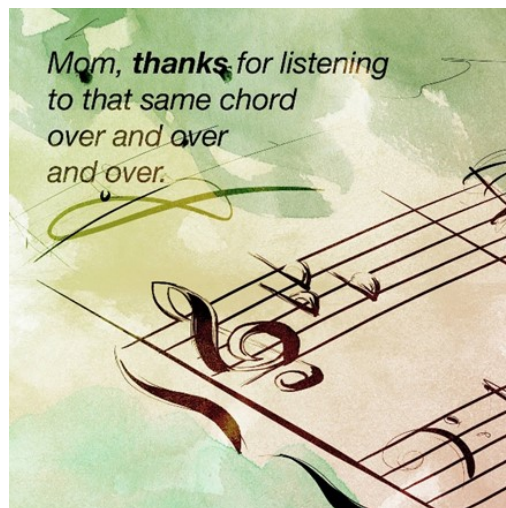
July 28, 2024

Aug. 4, 2024

Aug. 25, 2024

Sep. 1, 2024

Anyone interested in singing at Green Hills special music on Sunday July 28 at 2:30 PM also.





The primary goal of our church's financial stewardship should not be to fund the church, but rather to break the chains that money may have on our hearts and souls. But giving generously we can help the church, our neighbor and ourselves. We can learn what it is to be free to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

**FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH  
AND THEIR FAMILIES:**

**CELEBRATE CINCO DE MAYO WITH A TACO LUNCHEON  
AND A FUN TRIP TO DECODE ZONE!**

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, after the church service, gather in Rice Hall for a taco luncheon, followed by a trip to Decode Zone where you can choose from one of three escape rooms!

Decode Zone: 130 S Main St., Suite B 105, Bellefontaine-12:30 p.m.

Cost: \$25 per person-the church is paying for anyone age 17 and under.

Sign up in the lower narthex or call the church office (937-592-7699) to register!

More information on Decode Zone can be found on their website:



[This Photo](#) by



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**A Mother...**

When you're a child she walks before you,  
To set an example.

When you're a teenager she walks behind you  
To be there should you need her.

When you're an adult she walks beside you  
So that as two friends you can enjoy life together..

**Author Unknown**

## TUESDAY LUNCH

Bring your lunch and meet at noon in the courtyard on Tuesday,  
**May 7th and May 21st** for fun and fellowship.

Everyone is welcome!

Faith Circle will meet on *May 21st* in conjunction with the Tuesday Lunch.

Typically, Faith Circle enjoys their May lunch at Cranberry Resort on beautiful Indian Lake; however, with the LaComedia outing being just the week prior to this meeting, we will postpone the trip to Cranberry until later in June.

Stay Tuned!

## LaComedia Dinner Theater—Church Basement Ladies

**May 16**

If you have purchased a seat for the LaComedia Outing, be at the church at 9:00 am on May 16th. Bring some cash for gratuity . (\$5 or \$6 pp)

As of this print there were 2 tickets still available.

Contact Susan Wyckoff (937-441-2960) or the church office.



## Property Work Day—May 11th

Working outside—all help would be greatly appreciated.

Our turn to help with Our Daily Bread

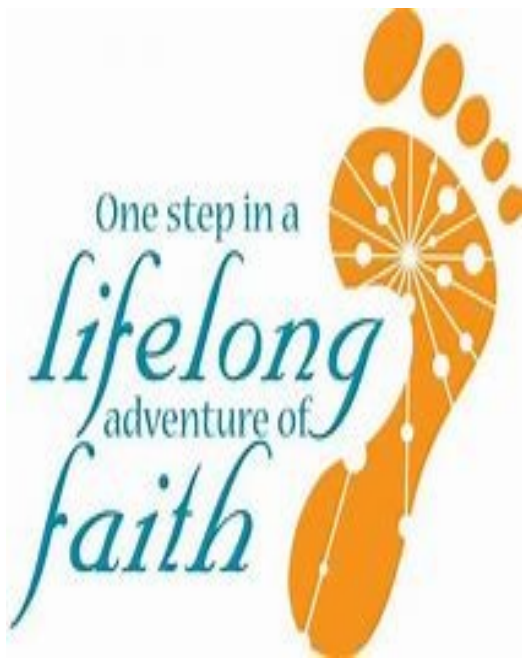
for May is Monday, May 20th at

4:15 pm. Desserts of cookies,

cupcakes and brownies are needed.







**CONFIRMATION SUNDAY  
MAY 19, 2023**

*Charlotte Louise Bodin*

**WILL BE  
CONFIRMED**

*Reception following the service in the  
courtyard.*

**PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**MAY 19, 2023**

**ON THIS DAY, THE CHURCH WILL  
GATHER TO CELEBRATE THE  
ONGOING LIFE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
WHO IS ITS BREATH, VITALITY, AND  
INSPIRATION.**

**WE ARE ASKING EVERYONE TO WEAR  
SOMETHING **RED** TO CHURCH.**



**GRADUATE  
RECOGNITION DAY  
May 26th**



**COLLEGE**

Sarah Starkey will graduate from Findlay College on May 5th with a Bachelor Degree in Animal Science. She will then be attending graduate school.

**HIGH SCHOOL**

Alexza Clifton will graduate from Bellefontaine High School on May 24th. She will be attending Ohio University to earn her Bachelor's Degree in Science of Nursing.

Josalyn Porter will graduate from Benjamin Logan High School on May 24th. She will be attending Wright State (Lake Campus) to earn her Nursing Degree with a long term goal of becoming a Nurse Practitioner.

*Reception following the service in the courtyard.*

I will praise the Lord with all my heart and all my soul and all my mind,  
and all my strength!



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If you love contemporary Christian music, and play an instrument or sing, we would like to invite you to join our contemporary worship ministry team! We are looking especially for keyboard or piano, drummers, guitar players, and of course singers.

Currently, the contemporary worship team leads worship once a quarter. If you are interested in a different kind of worship, you can reach out to any of the following people:

- Pastor Larry: [lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org)  
Carolyn Novak: [cnovak@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:cnovak@flcbellefontaine.org)  
Jeff Newland: [ffej.newland@gmail.com](mailto:ffej.newland@gmail.com)  
Chris Hildreth-Blair: [childret@yahoo.com](mailto:childret@yahoo.com)  
Or call the church office at 937-592-7699

**May Ministry Team Meeting Date:**

- 05/11—Property Committee
- 05/21—7:00pm FLIRT Meeting
- 05/27 —7:00pm Worship Team

**2024 Church Council**

**President-** Chris Hildreth Blair

**Vice-President-** John Bodin

**Secretary-** Carolyn Novak

**Treasurer** — John Belser

**Financial Secretary** — Judy Vassar

**Members-** Kathy Fultz, Brian Hogan, Gary Kauffman, Judy Lunz, Sue Neer, Brittany Porter, Liz Rose



.....  
Copies of reports from the meetings of each ministry team is available for you to view in the Partners In Ministry Book located in the lower narthex.

**Sunday Attendance for March**

|                | <b>On site</b> | <b>Online</b> |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| March 3        | 70             | 63            |
| March 10       | 64             | 60            |
| March 17       | 69             | 50            |
| March 24       | 75             | 47            |
| March 31       | 91             | 64            |
| <b>AVERAGE</b> | 74             | 57            |



The Church Office will be closed on May 27th in observance of Memorial Day.



The deadline for the June newsletter articles is May 22nd



**Highlights**

**Christian Service**

- LaComedia

**Faith Formation**

- Youth Outing
- Taco Lunch & Escape Room

**Finance Ministry Team**

- Monitor church finances

**FLIRT**

- Continue safety practices

**Outreach Ministry Team**

- Movie Sundays
- Contact with shutins

**Property**

- Continue outside & inside maintenance

**Worship**

- Spring & Summer Services



*During the past month we have remembered many in prayer. We remember in prayer all who are in need of God's presence and care ... especially:*

**Health Issues:**

Jordan Banks  
Gretchen Banks  
Martina Himmeger  
Jan Lowery

**Surgery & Recovering**

Joann Karn  
Don Voorhies  
Lowell Huber

**Entered the Church Triumphant**

Mary Lou Mayes  
Dorothy VanBuskirk  
Ruth Meredith  
Judy Hadley  
Becca Vickory  
Pastor Joh Kinusvatter

***Altar flower vases available for the following dates thru July:***

*May 5 - 1 vase*

*June 2 & 9 - 2 vases each date; June 30 -1 vase*

*July 7-1 vase; July 14 - 2 vases; July 21 - 1 vase*





- 5/01 Mason Swisher
- 5/04 Megan Bingaman
- 5/04 Marley Shields
- 5/06 Cheri Comstock
- 5/13 Margaret Barger
- 5/13 Dick Griffith
- 5/15 Lowell Huber
- 5/15 Krista Belser
- 5/15 Cody Allen
- 5/21 Judy Lunz
- 5/22 Betty Fultz
- 5/24 Stacie Jones
- 5/25 Garrett Comstock
- 5/26 Walter Smola
- 5/31 Tom Jameson



- 05/10/1990 Chuck & Rhonda Bingaman
- 05/03/1986 Dave & Peggy Dishop
- 05/20/2000 Perry & Sherri Hodies
- 05/26/1986 Walter & Carol Smola
- 05/20/2000 Mike & Nancee Starkey



The family of Robert Taylor acknowledges with deep gratitude your kind expression of sympathy. Thank you all for your thoughts and prayers over the last several years during Bob's stay at Lakeside Manor in Dayton. He really appreciated all the cards during the years and especially the Sunshine Baskets that Dave Comstock delivered.

Peace,  
Pat & family

I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all who sent cards, made visits and phone calls and sent up prayers during my recent surgery. A big thank you to Rachel for delivering the altar flowers. Also a thank you to Pastor Larry for his visit and prayer on the day of surgery. I am fortunate to belong to such a caring congregation. God Bless you all.

Joann Karn

**Worship Assistant:**

May 5                Kris Shannon  
May 12              Dick Griffith  
May 19              Kris Swisher  
May 26              Luke McKenrick

**Communion Assistant:**

May 5                Tina Keckler  
May 12              Misty Kipker  
May 19              Jan VanHoose  
May 26              Jim Donnelly

**Usher for May:**

May 5                Kevin Miller  
May 12              Ray Kramer  
May 19              Chris McKenrick  
May 26              Kevin Miller

**Altar Guild for May:**

Cindy Weikart

**Communion Bread for May:**

Cheri Comstock

**Reader:**

May 5                Jean Wright  
May 12              Susan Wyckoff  
May 19              Winnie Bodin  
May 26              Cindy Weikart

**Greeter (s):**

May 5                Susan Wyckoff  
May 12              Judy Lunz  
May 19              Kevin Miller  
May 26              Chris Hildreth Blair &  
                                 Marshall Blair Hildreth

**Acolyte:**

May 5                Alexis Hogan  
May 12              Brooks Bodin  
May 19              Dane Reffner  
May 26              Lottie Bodin

**Crucifer:**

**May 19**              Delaney Reffner

## MAY 2024

| Sunday   | Monday  | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday   | Friday  | Saturday  |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| <p>28</p> <p>9:00am Confirmation Class<br/>9:00am Fellowship Time<br/>10:00am Communion Worship Service<br/>1:00pm ETB</p>   | <p>29</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting<br/>12:00pm AA (RH)<br/>1:30pm Bible Study</p>   | <p>30</p> <p>9:00am Quilters<br/>3:00pm Pastor's Meeting</p>  | <p>1</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH)</p>                                      | <p>2</p> <p>9:00am Homeless Shelter Bd. Meeting<br/>9:30am Cluster Meeting, Galilee<br/>12:00pm National Day of Prayer<br/>3:00pm NA (RH)<br/>7:00pm Choir Practice<br/>8:00pm Bell Practice</p> | <p>3</p> <p>Office Closed</p>                           | <p>4</p> <p>Office Closed</p>   |
| <p>5</p> <p>Receiving New Members<br/>9:00am Confirmation Class<br/>9:00am Fellowship Time<br/>10:00am Communion Worship Service<br/>11:00am Youth Event</p>             | <p>6</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting<br/>11:00am Chaplain MRH<br/>12:00pm AA (RH)<br/>1:30pm Bible Study</p>                         | <p>7</p> <p>9:00am Quilters<br/>11:00am Chaplain MRH<br/>12:00pm "Tuesday Lunch in the Courtyard"<br/>3:00pm Pastor's Meeting</p>           | <p>8</p> <p>11:00am Chaplain MRH<br/>3:00pm NA (RH)</p>             | <p>9</p> <p>9:00am Housing &amp; Homeless Coalition Meeting<br/>11:00am Chaplain MRH<br/>3:00pm NA (RH)<br/>7:00pm Choir Practice<br/>8:00pm Bell Practice</p>                                   | <p>10</p> <p>Office Closed<br/>11:00am Chaplain MRH</p> | <p>11</p> <p>Office Closed<br/>9:00am Property Work Day<br/>10:00am ETB<br/>11:30am ETB</p> |
| <p>12</p> <p>Mother's Day<br/>9:00am Confirmation Class<br/>9:00am Fellowship Time<br/>10:00am Communion Worship Service<br/>12:00pm ETB Board Meeting</p>               | <p>13</p> <p>Festival of Homiletics (Pastor)<br/>12:00pm AA (RH)</p>  | <p>14</p> <p>Festival of Homiletics (Pastor)<br/>9:00am Quilters</p>  | <p>15</p> <p>Festival of Homiletics (Pastor)<br/>3:00pm NA (RH)</p> | <p>16</p> <p>Festival of Homiletics (Pastor)<br/>9:00am LaComedia<br/>3:00pm NA (RH)<br/>7:00pm Choir Practice<br/>8:00pm Bell Practice</p>  | <p>17</p> <p>Office Closed</p>                          | <p>18</p> <p>Office Closed</p>  |
| <p>19</p> <p>Pentecost &amp; Confirmation<br/>9:00am Confirmation Class<br/>9:00am Fellowship Time<br/>10:00am Communion Worship Service<br/>1:00 pm Faith Formation</p> | <p>20</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting<br/>12:00pm AA (RH)<br/>4:15pm Our Daily Bread<br/>6:00pm Community Services Board Meeting</p> | <p>21</p> <p>9:00am Quilters<br/>12:00pm "Tuesday Lunch in the Courtyard"<br/>3:00pm Pastor's Meeting<br/>7:00pm FLIRT Meeting [Lounge]</p> | <p>22</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH)</p>                                     | <p>23</p> <p>7:00am NA (RH)<br/>7:00pm Choir Practice</p>  | <p>24</p> <p>Office Closed</p>                          | <p>25</p> <p>Office Closed</p>  |
| <p>26</p> <p>Graduate Recognition<br/>9:00am Confirmation Class<br/>9:00am Fellowship Time<br/>10:00am Communion Worship Service<br/>1:00pm ETB</p>                      | <p>27</p> <p>Memorial Day - Office Closed<br/>12:00pm AA (RH)</p>   | <p>28</p> <p>9:00am Quilters<br/>10:00am Staff Meeting<br/>3:00pm Pastor's Meeting<br/>7:00pm Worship Committee</p>                         | <p>29</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH)</p>                                     | <p>30</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH)<br/>6:00pm Harwood Meeting</p>   | <p>31</p> <p>Office Closed<br/>Synod Assembly</p>       | <p>1</p> <p>Office Closed<br/>Synod Assembly</p>  |