

# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

First Lutheran Church  
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## MISSION STATEMENT

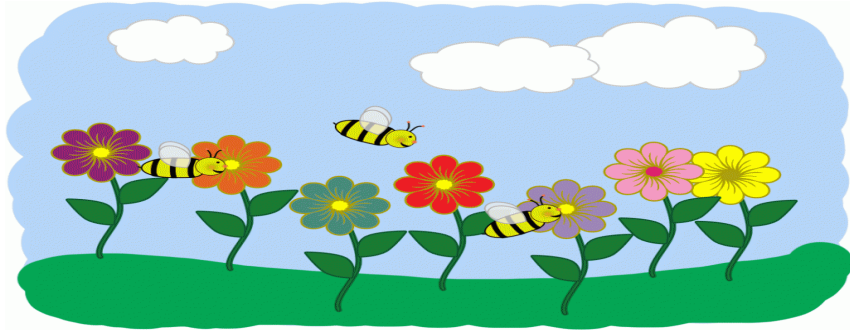
Sharing God's grace  
through prayer, witness,  
and service.

Pastor Larry Novak - [lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org)  
Office Manager..- Rachel Gillespie - [rgillespie@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:rgillespie@flcbellefontaine.org)  
Director of Music, Judy Vassar - [jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org)  
Bell Choir Director, Stephanie Oaks - [sloaks1737@gmail.com](mailto:sloaks1737@gmail.com)



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## 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**



## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Last February, during the Super Bowl game, two television commercials were run by an organization known as “Come Near”. This non-profit organization is funding a series of commercials about Jesus, titled “He Gets Us”. Perhaps the commercial that generated the most buzz was one titled “Foot Washing”, showing different people washing someone else’s feet. Particularly poignant was a woman washing the feet of another young woman outside of an abortion clinic, with demonstrators in the background.

It is a clear reference to John 13, when Jesus, in his farewell discourse to his disciples, washed their feet, including the feet of Peter, who Jesus knew would deny him, and Judas, who Jesus knew would betray him. Jesus’ point was in reiterating that disciples of Christ are those who serve one another, even people with whom we disagree on important topics. Jesus stressed the new Commandment, “to love one another as I have loved you. In this way, people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35)

I had seen these ads before the Super Bowl, and I saw nothing in them that I believed to be heretical or contrary to Christian theology or Lutheran beliefs. Yet, I have seen posts, a few from conservatives, but mostly from liberals, warning that this campaign is some sort of trap: that they are trying to lure us in to supporting some kind of church or fundamentalist group; that they have an agenda of some sort. On their website, they address the issue as follows:

*We have been accused of pushing our “agenda”. We thought this might be the right time to make that “agenda” perfectly clear.*

*How did the story of a man who taught and practiced unconditional love, peace, and kindness; who spent his life defending the poor and the marginalized; a man who even forgave his killers while they executed him unjustly — whose life inspired a radical movement that is still impacting the world thousands of years later — how did this man’s story become associated with hatred and oppression for so many people? And how might we all rediscover the promise of the love his story represents? Those are the questions at the heart of He Gets Us.*

*We’ve done a lot of homework on our culture. We researched how people feel about each other and what they think about Jesus and Christianity. We’ve connected with thousands of people of various faith traditions and those who claim no religion. We spoke to all kinds of people — different backgrounds, beliefs, and, yes, political affiliations. And this is what we’ve learned: From politics to sexuality and religion, so many of us feel like our values, beliefs, and identities are under attack by the ideological “others” around us. Many perceive those who differ with them on issues of justice, dignity, and humanity as not just wrong or misguided but also as evil, as enemies. We often see these “others” as close-minded, selfish, hypocritical — and if we’re honest, many of us respond in kind.*

*The more we are willing to sacrifice things like kindness, patience, and the respect and dignity of others for the sake of victory — the righteous ends justifying the dehumanizing means. And it's tearing us apart. We experience it in politics, in the workplace, in schools, and even in churches. And at the heart of the conflicts is a fundamental disagreement about what it means to be good.*

*Throughout our shared history, Jesus has represented the ultimate good that humankind is capable of aspiring to. And though some no longer believe in God, most are still compelled by the idea of a person capable of unconditional love for others despite their differences. But many of us simply cannot reconcile the idea of that person with the way our culture experiences religion today. Whether it's hypocrisy and discrimination in the church, or scandals both real and perceived among religious leaders, or the polarization of our politics, many have relegated Jesus from the world's greatest love story to just another tactic used to intensify our deep cultural divisions.*

*How did we get here? And what might we learn from the example of Jesus to help move beyond the animosity we feel for one another? How can we rediscover the life and teachings of Jesus, the world's most radical love activist? That is our agenda at He Gets Us: to move beyond the mess of our current cultural moment to a place where all of us are invited to rediscover the love story of Jesus. Christians, non-Christians, and everybody in between. All of us.*

I don't mean to sound like a politician, but I very much approve of this message. Some have criticized the money spent on the commercials as a waste of money that could better have been spent on helping those who are homeless or hungry. But doesn't that sound very much like Judas, accusing Lazarus' sister Mary of wasting money on costly perfume that she put on Jesus' feet?

Spreading the love of Jesus Christ, bringing people together instead of trying to drive us apart, bearing one another's burdens, and sharing Christ's love for all people, especially those who have been outcast and marginalized. This is the mission of the church, and it also appears to be the mission of the "He Gets Us" campaign.

Of course, there is more to the story. Jesus doesn't just "get" us. Jesus **redeems** us. Jesus buys us back from the forces of Sin, Death, and the Devil. Jesus **loves** us unconditionally. Jesus **saves** us, so that we might be in a reconciled relationship with God. Let's join with the people behind the "He Gets Us" commercials and spread that message to everyone we know.

In the abiding hope of the empty tomb,

Pastor Larry



## Director of Music

April 2024

As the director of music, I am so proud of those that made Holy Week and the Easter Season so special. I thoroughly enjoyed the week and appreciate your hard work. Judy



Spring is the natural time of rebirth, renewal and hope – physically and spiritually. It is a time to let go and deal with any regrets.

It is also seen more generally as the start of better times.

It is also believed that a spiritual springtime is a time of rapid and exciting growth. That is a time when there is a freshness in our souls that is invigorating.

Our spiritual senses are alive; there is a spiritual fragrance that awakens us to the glory of God, the wonder of his love and grace, and his willingness to love and forgive.



Judy Vassar

## **Tax Refunds & Tithing**

Are you receiving a tax refund this year? Have you considered giving a percentage of it back to your church? Even if you are not yet able to give a full 5% or 10% tithe to your church on a regular basis many find that tithing on unexpected income – a tax refund, winnings from the lottery, or an inheritance – is a great first step to experiencing the joy and contentment that come when we really do give as God has asked us to give. Try it yourself and feel the joy.



## **SAVE THE DATE**

**LaComedia Dinner Theatre      Springboro, Ohio**

**The Church Basement Ladies in “Plowin’ Thru”**

**Thursday May 16<sup>th</sup>**

Tickets \$46   Includes Buffet Dinner and Show   This is a noon matinee. We would be leaving from the church parking lot at 9:00 AM.

See Susan Wyckoff for more information and to reserve a seat.



The year is 1975 and all your favorite characters are back in the 9th installment of the wildly popular series. Whether this is your first visit to the basement or you’ve seen ‘em all, you won’t want to miss this brand new show!

It’s been five years since Pastor left and the church is struggling. As Pastor comes back to fill in as interim, Karin has taken a leadership role in the church and Beverly, now a mother of three, is ready for a larger role in the kitchen.

Come along as the ladies don their polyester pantsuits and sing, dance and laugh their way thru this hilarious and touching new musical, ***Plowin Thru***.

*There is a sign-up sheet in the lower narthex.*

*Please note if you are able to drive.*

**TUESDAY**      **"Lunch In the Courtyard!"**

**Tuesday April 2nd and Tuesday April 16th at noon. Bring your lunch and enjoy good fellowship. Everyone is welcome!**



**FAITH CIRCLE will hold their April meeting in conjunction with the Tuesday Lunch on April 16th. The Mission Project for April is to collect a LOVE Offering for the Home of Peace Orphanage in Tanzania. At our meeting we will also collect offerings for our general fund & Pennies for Habitat. Bring your lunch and join in the mission with the women of First Lutheran.**

**Enjoy the fellowship and good conversation.**

*The Christian Action Mission Ministry Team will meet on Monday, April 8th at 7:00 pm in the lounge.*



## **WELCA Spring Gathering!**

**Southern Ohio Synod Northwest Conference**

All are invited to our Spring Gathering, Sunday, April 14th, hosted by Zion Lutheran, Tipp City. The gathering will begin at 5:00 pm and will be followed by a very special "chalk talk" at 6:00 pm presented by Elva Hurst of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Chalk is the medium she uses to express her ministry through art. Her program entitled "Patchwork Memories" includes educational, historical and inspirational narration regarding quilting.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**FAITH FORMATION** is sponsoring a **YOUTH BOWLING EVENT** on Friday, April 12th at the Bowling Alley. It will be from 7:30 pm-9:30 pm and we will pay for the Middle & High School children attending. The cost will include lane rental, shoes, pizza and drinks. Parents can drop off and pick up at the bowling alley. If other family members want to attend they will pay their own expenses.

**ADDITIONALLY:** On Sunday, May 5th, after church service and lunch we will meet at the Decode Zone in the Market place downtown for an Escape Room adventure. Pastor Larry will look into the cost and availability. More details to come.

Faith Formation would like to do Vacation Bible School as a joint venture with the other downtown churches again this year. We will need to assign someone as a contact person for that event. Anyone interested please contact Sue Neer or Pastor Larry.



Thanks to all who help out at Our Daily Bread. We will be serving on April 17th at 4:15 pm. Helpers are always needed. Also desserts, such as cookies, brownies or cupcakes. Please let the church office know if you plan to help.

For students enrolling in college or current college students, Christian Higher Education Fund (CHEF) grant applications are available in the church office.

The deadline to turn them in is April 15th.







## **First Lutheran Severe Weather**

**Designated tornado areas include—stairwells, bathrooms, basement, first floor hallway.**

**If severe weather develops:**

- 1. Proceed to designated area in the building—anyone who can navigate stairs go to basement; otherwise, go to one of the other designated areas.**
- 2. Assist persons with disabilities.**
- 3. Stay away from windows, mirrors, glass, and unsecured objects.**
- 4. Stay inside.**
- 5. A *severe weather/tornado warning watch* is issued when conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes or severe weather in and close to the watch area.**
- 6. A *severe weather/tornado warning* is issued when a tornado or severe weather is sighted in the affected area and people should seek safe shelter immediately.**
- 7. At the FLIRT Meeting it was agreed that the FLIRT team will purchase a weather radio for the sound room.**



**April Ministry Team Meeting Dates:**

04/03—7:00pm Council Meeting

04/10—7:00pm Christian Fellowship

04/14—1:00 pm Faith Formation

04/24—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

**Sunday Attendance for February**

	On site	Online
Feb. 5	67	17
Feb. 12	63	37
Feb. 19	57	21
Feb. 26	55	18
Average	61	84



**Ministry Team Highlights**

**Faith Formation Ministry Team**

- April Bowling
- Discussing VBS

**Christian Service and Mission Ministry Team**

- La Comedia Outing
- April Mission Project

**Finance Ministry Team**

- Monitor church finances

**FLIRT**

- Severe weather guidelines

**Outreach Ministry Team**

- Movie Sunday

**Property Ministry Team**

- Continued renovations

**Worship Ministry Team**

- Spring/Summer Services

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



*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  
Low ell Huber  
Gretchen Banks

Tina Rose  
Anna May Coldren

Gloria Kipker  
Angie Wallace

Surgery

Gary Pitts

Don Voorhies

Joann Karn

Entered the Church Triumphant

Darla Williams  
Bob Taylor

Altar flower vases available for the following dates thru July 2024:

May 5—2 vases

June 2 & 9—2 vases each date; June 30—1 vase

July 7—1 vase; July 14— 2 vases; July 21—1 vase

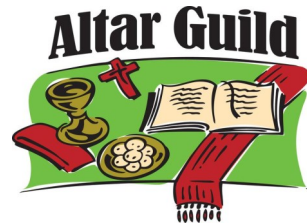




- 04/01 Marshall Blair-Hildreth
- 04/03 Misty Kipker
- 04/04 Brianna Jameson
- 04/04 Josalyn Porter
- 04/05 Max Bixler
- 04/05 Gary Kauffman
- 04/12 Elaine Latimer
- 04/14 Dave Vassar
- 04/16 Carolyn Ellis
- 04/19 Mary Contner
- 04/22 Amy Adkins
- 04/22 Cathie Hubbard
- 04/25 Dave Dishop
- 04/25 Dave Anderson
- 04/25 Susan Allen
- 04/25 Mariana Swartz
- 04/29 Carolyn Hoy
- 04/29 Janet Donnelly
- 04/29 Ben Zoldak

The deadline for newsletter articles for **May** is April 20th

04/25/1981 Gene & Margaret Barger



**Volunteers needed for the following months:**

**Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.**

This does not have to be a month commitment.  
 If you would like to help and can only do a week or two during a month that would be very helpful.  
 Contact Cindy Weikart through the church office.



*"Thanks so much" to our church family for reaching out with prayers, well-wishes, and concerns during my recent hip surgery and re-hab; driving help to OSU facilities for many pre-op appointments was instrumental in accommodating our needs. All is going well. It means a lot for your expressions of concern and support in prayer. Our family is so grateful.*

*Don Voorhies*

**Worship Assistant:**

April 7 Winnie Bodin  
April 14 Dave Vassar  
April 21 Cindy Weikart  
April 28 Chris Hildreth Blair

**Communion Assistant:**

April 7 Carl Gillespie  
April 14 Jinny Fergus  
April 21 Colleen Bodin  
April 28 Cheri Comstock

**Usher for April:**

April 7 Kevin Miller  
April 14 Susan Wyckoff  
April 21 Max Bixler  
April 28 Kevin Miller

**Reader:**

April 7 Chris Tillman  
April 14 Beth Harman  
April 21 Margie Bixler  
April 28 Carolyn Novak

**Greeter(s):**

April 7 Betty Vondenhuevel  
April 14 Beth Harman  
April 21 Gloria & Misty Kipker

**Acolyte:**

April 7 Dane Reffner  
April 14 Brooks Bodin  
April 21 Lottie Bodin  
April 28 Alexis Hogan

**Crucifer:**

Delaney Reffner

**Altar Guild for April:**

Cheri Comstock

**Communion Bread for April:**

Confirmation Class



April Showers  
Bring May Flowers

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>31</p> <p>9:00am Easter Breakfast 10:00am Easter Sunday Communion Worship Service 10:00am Noisy Money &amp; CHEF Sunday</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Church Office Closed 12:00pm AA (RH) 6:30pm Dulcimers 7:00pm Book Study 7:00pm Council</p>	<p>2</p> <p>9:00am Quilters 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm Lunch in the Courtyard 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9:30am Cluster Meeting, St. Paul's 12:00pm Support Counseling 3:00pm NA (RH)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:00am Homeless Shelter Board Meeting 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Office Closed</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Office Closed</p>
<p>7</p> <p>9:00am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service</p>	<p>8</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting 11:00am Chaplain MRH 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:00pm Office Closed 7:00pm Christian Action Meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:00am Quilters 11:00am Chaplain MRH 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting</p>	<p>10</p> <p>11:00am Chaplain MRH 3:00pm NA (RH)</p>	<p>11</p> <p>11:00am Chaplain MRH 5:30pm Harwood Institute 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Office Closed 11:00am Chaplain MRH 7:30pm Rock n' Bowl</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Office Closed 10:00am ETB 11:30am ETB</p>
<p>14</p> <p>9:00am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 1:00pm Faith Formation 2:00pm Movie</p>	<p>15</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study 4:15pm Our Daily Bread</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9:00am Quilters 11:00am Hunger Network 12:00pm Lunch in the Courtyard 7:00pm FLIRT Meeting [Lounge]</p>	<p>17</p> <p>8:00am Pastor's Breakfast 3:00pm NA (RH)</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Newsletter Deadline 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Office Closed</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Office Closed</p>
<p>21</p> <p>9:00am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 2:30pm Green Hills Service</p>	<p>22</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study 7:00pm Worship Ministry Team Meeting</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9:00am Quilters 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting</p>	<p>24</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH)</p>	<p>25</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Office Closed</p>	<p>27</p>
<p>28</p> <p>9:00am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 1:00pm ETB</p>	<p>29</p> <p>10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9:00am Quilters 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting</p>	<p>1</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>

# I Like April

by Lenore Hetrick

Do you like the month of April? I do!  
I like her skies of ocean blue!

I like her breezes, so full of play,  
I like each sunny April day.

Her rainbows, too, I like a lot,  
And her weather for it isn't too hot.

But one thing perhaps I shouldn't say –  
I do not like April Fool's Day!

Once some pepper candy I ate!  
Once I tripped beside our gate!

On a rope I did not know was there,  
And of other tricks I've had my share!

I pulled a string and I got a shower!  
Found a mousetrap when I picked a flower!

You see I have two dreadful brothers,  
And then there are a number of others.

They love to tease me quite a bit,  
Until I nearly have a fit!

Do you like the month of April? I do!  
I like her skies of ocean blue!

But one thing perhaps I shouldn't say –  
I do not like April Fools Day!



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