



FIRST HAND

First Lutheran Church
208 West Sandusky Avenue
Bellefontaine, Ohio 43311
937-592-7699 Website:
www.flcbellefontaine.org

Mission Statement:

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

Vision Statement:

Connecting people to Jesus and one another



Pastor Larry Novak - lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org
Office Mngr.— Stephanie Oaks - soaks@flcbellefontaine.org
Director of Music, Judy Vassar - jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org
Bell Choir Director, Stephanie Oaks - sloaks1737@gmail.com
Custodian — David Linebaugh

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

Inside this issue:

From the Pastor's Desk	2—4
Financial Secretary	5
Director of Music	6
Daily Bread/ Food Pantry	7
Quilt News/ Attendance	8
WELCA	9
Thank You	10
Ministry Teams; Council	11
Prayers	12
Birthdays & Anniversaries	13
VBS 2026 Poster	14
Serving in Worship	15
Calendar	16

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

As I write this, we are at war with Iran. Well...that's not quite true. The president launched a military offensive against Iran, as did Israel, but Congress has not officially declared war. But that is nothing new. The last time Congress officially declared war was in WWII, in both 1941 and 1942. In those years, Congress declared war against six countries: Japan, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. The United States never officially declared war in Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, and not now. Even though the constitution mandates that Congress must declare war, for over 80 years, they have been content to let the president take action without a formal declaration of war. This is a grave neglect of duty that has been going on under both Republican and Democrat administrations.

This is important, because in determining whether or not a war is just, one factor is if the declaration of war comes from a legitimate authority. For America, the Congress is that authority. Even though the president is the commander-in-chief, and can authorize military action, he cannot declare war. What is happening in Iran certainly seems like war to me.

But even if Congress does officially declare war in Iran, we still, as the church, need to address the question of whether or not this is a just war. There are some religious denominations: Quakers, Mennonites, Amish, and Jehovah Witnesses among them, that oppose war in every circumstance. But for many more, including Lutherans, their doctrines permit war if the war is just.

So then, what are the criteria for determining if a way is just? The ELCA Social Statement on Peace, from 1995, states the following:

The principles for deciding about wars include right intention, justifiable cause, legitimate authority, last resort, declaration of war aims, proportionality, and reasonable chance of success. The principles for conducting war include noncombatant immunity and proportionality. The principles for post-war conduct include showing mercy to the defeated and assisting them to rebuild.

Unlike 9/11 or World War II, America's action against Iran was not in response to us being attacked. It was a preemptive strike, so it most definitely was not proportional to anything Iran has done. Without congressional authorization, I am not convinced that the war began under a legitimate authority. Was the reason for going to war a just reason? There is no question that the Iranian government is brutal and oppressive.

The IRGC has killed thousands of protesters. But my understanding is that even though most Iranian citizens want regime change, they do not want foreign interference. And of course, they certainly don't want bombs raining down on their country. Although we clearly did not intend to do it, our own intelligence reports confirm that the United State did indeed accidentally destroy a girls' school, killing dozens of children. Without access to the intelligence reports that our government leaders have, we have no way of knowing if this truly was a last resort, or if we have a reasonable chance of success. By that, I do not mean a chance of success of turning Iran to rubble. We clearly can do that. I mean if we have a reasonable chance of accomplishing our goal. For that matter, the administration has never been clear about what exactly our goal is in the first place.

Reasonable people can disagree about whether or not our actions in Iran constitute a just war. But even if war is just, it is still a sin. It is a failure of the command to love one another.

We worship a Savior who is against the use of violence, and who practices and taught non-violent resistance. Jesus never said to kill our enemies. He told us to love them and pray for them. Jesus did not conquer death by killing. He conquered death by dying; and then after three days, rising again. Time and again, scripture tells us that God is love, and that evil is defeated by love. Two examples are :

Romans 12:21: *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"*. This verse directly instructs believers to combat evil through positive action (love), rather than retaliating, which allows evil to win.

Proverbs 10:12: *"Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers all wrongs"*. This highlights that love prevents disputes from escalating, essentially neutralizing the destructive power of hatred.

We as Christians have a duty to contact our leaders and demand that they bring an end to the violence and bloodshed, and work for a truly just peace. We must provide humanitarian aid to the suffering and helping Iran rebuild once this war is over.

I commend to you a video by Pastor Paul Drees, an ELCA pastor who does a series of wonderful and entertaining videos, one of which is titled: “5 non-violent ways to change regimes”. If you have Facebook, you can find it on my own Facebook page, posted on March 5. Or google “#pastorpauldrees 5 non-violent ways to change regimes.”

I also urge you to download and read the ELCA Social Statement on Peace. We must continue to pray for peace, and we must continue to have the discussions with those religious groups who believe that war is never justified. We must keep working for the day when war is eliminated from the earth.

For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, so that all who believe in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world. (John 3:16-17)

In the abiding hope of the empty tomb,

Pastor Larry



FINANCIAL SECRETARY

April – Let's celebrate God's creation

Our environment faces many challenges. Climate change is melting glaciers, raising sea levels, shifting the seasons, threatening extinction of many species and altering rainfall and growing patterns. Pollution sickens people and introduces chemicals into our environment that are harmful to people, animals and plants. What environmental problems worry you? What can Christians do?



Director of Music

March included Wednesday evening vespers for Lent.

The choir had two beautiful Lenten anthems and a Palm Sunday anthem. The Bell Choir added music to season.

FAMOUS QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence.” — Leopold Stokowski

**On May 16th at 4pm
there will be a bell
choir concert here at
First Lutheran, put on
by Queen City Bronze.**



Queen City Bronze is a professional, community handbell ensemble based in Cincinnati, Ohio. The ensemble includes 14-17 advanced ringers dedicated to the challenges of performing music at the highest level. Under the direction of Joe Galyon, Queen City Bronze concerts offer an eclectic mix of musical styles featuring jazz, folk, classical, spiritual, and original compositions. The ensemble has commissioned three works for advanced handbell choirs including arrangements of *For Good* from *Wicked*, *Thriller*, *Fly Me to the Moon*, and an original work called *Queen City Portrait*.



Suggested Food Items for April

- peanut butter
- jelly
- crackers
- canned veggies

There are several donation bins in the lower narthex always collecting something. However, there is one bin in particular that I've noticed has somewhat faded into the background. And that is the bin for LCS Food Pantry. In these difficult times, our donations are needed more than ever.

Christian Action Ministry Team is stepping up to bring more awareness to Food Pantry donations. There will be a monthly suggestion for donated food items.

As you are doing your weekly or monthly grocery shopping, consider throwing some additional food items into your cart. It doesn't take much and will provide much-needed food to our neighbors. **THANK YOU!**



The next evening, we will be serving Our Daily Bread is **Monday, April 20th**. If you can't help us serve, but would still like to help you could provide the dessert. Desserts needed are cupcakes, cookies or brownies. Volunteers are asked to arrive at Our Daily Bread about 4:15 pm prior to the serving time of 4:30 pm. If you are planning to help, please let the office know.



Quilt News

We are very thankful for the support of this congregation as well as the community. We plan to continue for another year. We welcome donations of fabric and sheets. We meet on Tuesday mornings and would welcome anyone who would like to join us. God's work.... our hands.

SUNDAY ATTENDANCE FOR February

	On Site	Online
Feb. 1	63	162
Feb. 8	60	90
Feb. 15	60	119
Feb. 22	61	133
 TOTAL	 244	 504
Average	61	126



TUESDAY

LUNCH IN THE COURTYARD!

Lunch in the Courtyard will meet on Tuesday April 7th & 21st at noon.

Bring your lunch.

This is a time for good fellowship. Come, Join Us! Women and Men, All are invited!

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

Our Mission Project for April is to collect an offering to supplement items for 1st grade classrooms at Bellefontaine Elementary School.

Bring your offering to our meeting or give to Cheri.



Dear Pastor Larry and Members of First Lutheran.

We are grateful for all the prayers, text messages, cards and telephone calls that you showered on us during Dave's recent health scare.

We felt the love and concerns. Thank you, and God bless you all!

Dave and Peggy Dishop

Ministry Team Meetings

4/6	7:00 pm	Council
4/13	6:00 pm	Christian Action
4/13	7:00 pm	Faith Formation
4/16	6:00 pm	Outreach

Church Council– 2026

President – Sue Neer

Vice-President– Brian Hogan

Secretary– Stephanie Oaks

Financial Secretary - Judy Vassar

Treasurer—John Belser

Members—Amy Adkins, John Bodin, Marshall Blair Hildreth, Gary Kauffman, Judy Lunz, Jessica Morris, Kathy Fultz



Articles for the May 2026
Newsletter will be due by
Monday, **April 20th.**



Highlights

- ***Christian Action***

Projects

- ***FLIRT***

Continued safety plan

- ***NLCF***

Continued grant requests

- ***Outreach***

Developing new ways to reach neighborhood families.

- ***Property***

Repairs

- ***Worship***

Special services

Contemporary Services

- ***WELCA***

Tuesdays in the Courtyard

Projects

- ***Quilters***

275+ quilts in 2024

- ***CHEF***

6 grants given in 2024

- ***FAITH FORMATION***

Sunday School

Youth Events

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 or Surgery

Kaylene Ford

Pastor Mick Althausen

Debora Shannon

Jan VanHoose

Pastor Karen Torrez

Residents of Indian Lake Villa

Entered the Church Triumphant

Ronald Gist

John Aler



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

04/06 Mandi Morris

04/22 Amy Adkins

04/22 Cathie Hubbard

04/22 Lori Horn

04/25 Dave Dishop

04/25 Susan Allen

04/25 Mariana Swartz

04/29 Carolyn Hoy

04/29 Janet Donnelly

04/29 Ben Zoldak



**VACTION BIBLE SCHOOL IS COMING SOON-
TAKE A TRIP TO RAINFOREST FALLS!-**

Rainforest Falls-Exploring the nature of God

JUNE 22 THROUGH June 26, 2026

5:30 to 7:45 each night

**Outdoor worship celebration of VBS at Brown Park on Sunday,
June 28 (time to be determined)**

For kids ages 3 through Middle School

A joint collaboration of the four downtown churches:

First Christian Church

First Lutheran Church

First United Methodist Church

First United Presbyterian Church

Registration for both kids and adult volunteers is coming soon!

Worship Assistant

4/5 (Easter)	Beth Harman
4/12	Lottie Bodin
4/19	Stephanie Oaks
4/26	Kris Shannon

Communion Assistant

4/5 (Easter)	Sue Neer
4/12	Barb Triplett
4/19	Chris Hildreth Blair
4/26	Ray Swisher

Reader

4/5 (Easter)	Carolyn Novak
4/12	Bodin
4/19	Mike Adkins
4/26	Bodin

Altar Guild

Amy Adkins & Delaney Reffner

Greeters

4/2 (Maundy Thurs.)	Mike & Amy Adkins
4/5 (Easter)	Max & Margie Bixler
4/12	Sue Neer
4/19	Kathy & Betty Fultz
4/26	Dave & Cheri Comstock

Acolyte

4/2 (Maundy Thurs.)	Dane Reffner
4/5 (Easter)	Alexis Hogan
4/12	Brooks Bodin
4/19	
4/26	Delaney Reffner

Crucifer

4/5 (Easter)	Devyn Hogan
--------------	-------------

Ushers

4/2 (Maundy Thurs.)	Mike Adkins
4/5 (Easter)	Walt Stephan
4/12	Chris Hildreth Blair
4/19	Jean Wright
4/26	Ray Kramer

Communion Bread

Confirmation Class

April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 8:45am Adult Bible Class 8:45am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service	30 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA	31 9:00am Quilters	1 3:00pm NA (RH) 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice	2 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Maundy Thursday Service	3 Office Closed 12:00pm Good Friday Service @ Presbyterian Church 7:00pm Good Friday Service @ Presbyterian Church	4 Easter Breakfast Prep Office Closed
5 9:00am Easter Breakfast 10:00am Communion Worship Service	6 Office Closed 12:00pm AA 6:30pm Dulgimers (RH) 7:00pm Council Meeting	7 9:00am Quilters 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm Lunch in the Courtyard	8 8:00am OVIS Inspection 9:30am Cluster Meeting 3:00pm NA (RH) 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting	9 12:00pm Homeless Shelter Meeting 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice	10 Office Closed	11 Office Closed
12 8:45am Adult Bible Class 8:45am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 2:30pm Green Hills Service	13 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA 6:00pm Christian Action Meeting 7:00pm Faith Formation	14 9:00am Quilters	15 8:00am Pastor's Breakfast 11:30am CORE sub-committee @ Health Dept. 3:00pm NA (RH) 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting	16 10:00am CORE Meeting @ Health Dept. 12:00pm Housing Coalition 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Outreach Meeting 7:00pm Choir Practice	17 Office Closed	18 Office Closed
19 8:45am Adult Bible Class 8:45am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service	20 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA 4:15pm Our Daily Bread	21 9:00am Quilters 12:00pm Lunch in the Courtyard	22 3:00pm NA (RH) 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting	23 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir Practice	24 Office Closed	25 Office Closed
26 8:45am Adult Bible Class 8:45am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service	27 Chaplain MRH 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA	28 Chaplain MRH 9:00am Quilters	29 Chaplain MRH 3:00pm NA (RH) 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting	30 Chaplain MRH 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir Practice	1 Chaplain MRH Office Closed	2 Office Closed