



The First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rush City  
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## FEBRUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



### Church Council

**Church Council Meeting Highlights:** The Church Council met for their regular meeting in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, January 20th, 2021. Highlights of the meeting include: General Fund balance of \$37,535 and a Building Fund balance of \$17,833 as of December 31st, 2020. The Worship and Music Committee gave an update on returning to in-person worship and the search committee for a new organist. In-person Sunday School (*dismissed during worship*) will resume on Sunday, January 24th, 2021. The Property Committee discussed long-term plans for lawn mowing and possibly converting some grass to wildflowers. The budget for 2021 was approved. With lower COVID-19 case counts the decision was made to hold the Annual Meeting in the sanctuary on Sunday, January 31st, 2021. Regular Church Council meetings will move to the first Monday of the month beginning in February with the next meeting on Monday, February 1st, 2021 at 7:00 PM. Complete minutes of the meeting are available in the church office.

The Church Council met for their regular meeting in the Fellowship Hall on Monday, February 1st, 2021. Elected Church Council officers for 2021 include: Dennis Pederson (*President*), Mike Papke (*Vice President*), Nancy Schroeder (*Treasurer*) and April Klar (*Secretary*). General Fund balance of \$39,488, Building Fund balance of \$13,483 and Memorial Fund balance of \$18,628 as of January 31st, 2021. The original projector in the sanctuary has failed and needs to be replaced. A presentation on Northwood Farmer's Market was given by TJ Malaskee. Jaime Holmstrom was appointed interim Praise Band Leader. The next regular meeting is Monday, March 1st, 2021 at 7:00 PM. Complete minutes of the meeting are available in the church office.

**January Snow Tubing:** 40 people (27 youth) went tubing from ages 4 to adult at Wild Mountain.



**January 31st, 2021 Annual Meeting Highlights:** The 145th Annual Meeting began following worship with 45 voting members present. Minutes of previous meeting, ballot prepared by nominating committee, audit reports and the annual budget were all approved by voice vote.

**Celebrate Our Ministries:** Each year, our annual Booklet of Reports gives an overview of all the important ministries our congregation carries out. More than just numbers and statistics, we hear of the wonderful work that so many carry out in our congregation. If you didn't pick one up at the Annual Meeting, there are still several available in the Narthex.



**Thank You Notes:** First Lutheran Church, Thank you for the pan of cookies and beautiful poinsettia. Happy new year to all. Stay healthy. - *Gladys Haugrud*

I want to thank all my friends for the beautiful birthday cards and wishes that I received for my birthday. Thank you to those who took the time to drive by my house. It was great to see you. God bless you all. Thank you again. - *Dorothy Siljendahl*

Thank you to all the Thrivent members who directed their Choice Dollars to First Lutheran. The members chose to add the \$1,590 to the Rush City Student Assistance. This is an account set up by the Church Council to assist the schools, this fall, with school supplies, unpaid lunches or whatever school personnel suggest.



**Thrivent Financial for Lutherans\***  
**Let's thrive!**



**Baptism & Membership:** God's grace is a gift that is freely given to us. We don't earn a thing when it comes to God's love, and we only try to live in response to that gift. Please speak to Pastor Nathan if you interested in baptism or becoming a member of the congregation.



**In the Family:** We're happy to share births, baptisms, marriages and deaths for members and others connected to our church family. Keep in touch and let us know who we may have missed.

## Lutheran Foundations: The Ten Commandments by Pastor Nathan

Our series for this year focuses on the Small Catechism. Since the beginning of the church, many Christians have developed a "catechism" (*a word that means "to resound in the ear"*) as a basic summary of the Christian faith. Our catechism, developed by Martin Luther, is famous for its brevity (*it fits easily in your pocket!*) Luther intended for his catechism to be learned by heart, a life-long habit of grounding our lives in God's commands and promises.

The catechism begins with the Ten Commandments. The purpose of the commandments is not to please or "buy off" God with our good deeds (*none of us has enough goodness to do that!*), but to align our lives with God's purposes in love for our world and neighbor. Just as important, the commandments reveal our sin and drive us to Jesus and his power to save us. Keeping the Ten Commandments cannot save us. Only Christ, out of his mercy on the cross, can save us.

Still, we need these commandments in order for our lives to bear fruit. The first three commandments nurture our relationship with God: "You shall have no other gods," "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord our God," and "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

As the early Christian saint and teacher, St. Augustine, says, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee." The first commandment is all about where our heart finds its ultimate rest. Our hearts are never neutral. Either they will rest in God or they will rest in something else. Those "other gods" the Bible calls "idols." What kinds of things get in the way of our relationship with God? Prime Biblical examples include the danger of money and accumulating wealth, jealousy of another person, and arrogant use of one's intelligence. What is the heart that God desires? "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" says Psalm 51:17. The heart that trusts in God is the heart that feels its brokenness and need for God's mercy.

Once the heart falls into the hands of the living God, we use our mouths to express the desires of our heart through prayer. The Second Commandment directs our mouths to express our heart's desire for God. God's name is not a curse or "throw-away word." Like the name of a beloved, God's name is treasured. With God's name we invoke God's presence. With God's name we are free to cry out in our need. With God's name, we sing our thanks to God.

From the heart to the head and now, with the Third Commandment, to the body. Specifically, the ears! It's not enough to feel God's presence or talk to God personally. We must also have our ears opened through weekly worship, where God's word comes to us from the outside. For one hour a week, we saturate our ears and bodies with the commands and promises of God as they come to us in scripture, dialogue, song, prayer, sermon, and blessing. These words also saturate the waters of baptism and the bread and cup of communion. Most important, these words are on the lips of our fellow believers with whom we share and strengthen our faith. As I often say at baptisms, faith is not an individualized project, but a team sport!

Questions for reflection:

1. What are some "other gods" and idols that you observe getting in the way of a relationship with God?
2. When has saying God's name out loud brought you comfort and joy?
3. When have you relied on others' faith to strengthen your own?

