



The First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rush City
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JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



Church Council

Church Council Meeting Highlights: Church Council met for their regular meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, December 16th, 2020. Highlights of the meeting include: General Fund balance of \$32,699.18 and a Building Fund Balance of \$17,455.29 as of November 30th, 2020. Worship and Music Committee is working on developing a complete organist job description, while Dianne Kirchberg, Carolyn Holmstrom, Jennifer Baker-Trinity and Deb Aulich will help with the service playing in the interim. Budget planning and annual staff review are on schedule - the first budget draft includes a 1.3% salary increase for non-pastoral staff and an increase in the organist's fee to \$75 per service. Plans are underway to include Communion in the online service. Vision for preschool/daycare is being led by the Mutual Ministry Committee which will report to the Church Council next month. 2021 Special Offering designations were approved. The next regular Church Council meeting via Zoom is Wednesday, January 20th, 2021 at 7:00 PM.

2021 Contribution Envelopes: Are available on the counter in the Narthex. If you do not see your name, please contact the church office.



Christmas Caring Tree: Thank you to everyone who selected a tag from the Christmas Caring Tree. 111 children had a merrier Christmas. Now we need to replenish our wrapping paper, so if you have any leftover paper or care to purchase a couple of rolls after Christmas, it would be greatly appreciated. A box is located in the entry of the church.

Food Shelf Collection: Pam Hagan, coordinator of the Rush City Food Shelf, recently provided an update of the Food Drive we held on December 12th, 2020. With help from the Lions Club, Leos and First Lutheran, youth and adult volunteers delivered 639 pounds of food to the Food Shelf. Plus, \$2,606 in monetary donations were directly attributable to this Food Drive. She was very impressed with the amount of food and funds received! There has been a big increase in the number of new families seeking help recently and the number of large families getting food at the Rush City Food Shelf. Our food drive filled a critical need in our community! Food donations can be dropped off at the church anytime, and donations to the Rush City Food Shelf can be mailed to: P.O. Box 178, Rush City, MN 55069.



Thank You Notes: I was surprised and delighted to receive the beautiful poinsettia plant and cookies. It made me happy to be remembered by my church family. I miss you. Jesus taught us Christmas is sharing, loving and caring. You proved that. Thank you. - Jan Goebel

Thank you so much church family. You made my day. - Gwen Olson

Thank You Acolytes! - Through the gift of video, our Confirmation youth continue to enrich our worship life. Just as the sun gives light and warmth to the earth, so do the candles give light and warmth to our worship. And just as water is essential to life on earth, so the baptismal water keeps us alive with Christ.



Fun Bus: The next delivery is scheduled for Wednesday, January 20th, 2021.

Sandwich Fundraiser: Friday, January 22nd, 2021. Orders are due to JoAnn by Monday, January 18th, 2021.



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.

Communing While Separate

I suppose it's already happened during this pandemic, but is it possible to get married from a distance by phone or video call? Consider all the actions involved in a normal marriage: The couple, before a judge or altar, stand close together. They take each other's hands. They look into each other's eyes. They place a ring on each other's finger. And finally they kiss, walking out together hand-in-hand.

Are these actions essential to getting married? Some, of course, would say yes. This is surely a reason why many couples are postponing their weddings right now. Even if the couple can be together in-person and share in these gestures, it is just as important to many that they be surrounded by family and friends.

Living through this unprecedented time, however, one could say that none of these things is essential. One could say that the only essential thing to getting married are the words: the vows, the words of promise spoken into each other's ears. Whether those words are made audible by sound waves in the same room or through electronic means, the source of those words remains the same: the voice of the beloved. It is entirely possible for the vows, those sweet words of promise, to enter into the ears of the beloved from a distance through electronic means.

We are in a similar situation when it comes to sharing in Holy Communion. Right now, it is not safe or practical for us to eat and drink from the common vessels our acolytes carry forward each week. We aren't able to kneel shoulder to shoulder around the altar, for me to look into your eyes and say the words of promise, to receive in your hand from another a bit of bread and sip of wine, to hear the voices of your kindred in Christ as you pray together, "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

Living through this unprecedented time, however, we do have the gift of electronic communication. If hearing the words of promise from a familiar voice and eating together (but from a distance) in Christ's name are the essential thing, one could say that it is possible for us to share in the meal of our Lord. As Martin Luther teaches in the Small Catechism, "These words 'given for you' and 'shed for you for the forgiveness of sin', when accompanied by the physical eating and drinking, are the essential thing in the sacrament, and whoever believes these very words has what they declare and state, namely, 'forgiveness of sin.'"

Since we still have some challenging weeks ahead of us, and because so many of us are hungry for the sacrament, we are making provision to share in the sacrament beginning January 3rd, 2021. For those planning to connect by video, I will send out a separate message by Saturday morning that will guide you in preparing your own communion table with elements. We are also making provision to distribute communion at the church entrance which you can receive from your vehicle on Sunday mornings - watch for the same message for further details.

This is hard journey we are taking, friends in Christ. But we are doing our best to walk together and affirm the Creator's presence with us through the Word made flesh and sustained by the Breath of life. Since we were marked with the name of God in our baptism - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - we can trust that, whether we share in Holy Communion or not, we never are alone!

