



First Lutheran Church, Newton IA



December 2015 First Epistle

From the Pastor...

What Do You Most Certainly, Absolutely, Without a Doubt Believe About God?

One of my favorite jobs as a pastor is teaching confirmation. At First Lutheran Church we have a two-year confirmation program during 7th and 8th grades. In confirmation our young people learn more about the stories found in the Bible and some of the foundation blocks of the faith we all share. Watching them grow over their time in confirmation is a great joy of mine.

I break up the two years of confirmation into two sections—one section each year. In Section One we focus on the Biblical narrative from Genesis to the Gospels to Revelation. In Section Two we focus on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. We also learn more about communion and baptism during this section. During the 2014-15 school year, we worked through Section One: the Bible. This year—2015-16—we are working through Section Two. By going back and forth between these two sections, every student will experience both in the two years of confirmation. Obviously it is not possible in two years to teach a person all they need to be a follower of Christ; instead, I focus on teaching some of the foundation pieces upon which they can continue to build and explore their faith as they grow.

I use, as a guide, Luther's Small Catechism during Section Two of the curriculum. I do not require the students to memorize it, but we do use it as a jumping off point in our discussions. This year, to kick off our exploration of the Small Catechism, we began by learning a little about Martin Luther, the 16th century monk whose reforming work became the foundation of our Lutheran faith.

During this first class, we discussed Luther's famous stand against the hierarchy of the Church where they tried to force him to recant his teachings. Famously Luther proclaims, "Here I Stand. I can do no other." In an effort to connect Luther to us in the 21st century, I tried something. I didn't know how it would turn out, but I hoped that it would be a positive experience and something we could share with the rest of the congregation.

I asked each student to think about and answer a simple question: What do you most certainly, absolutely, without a doubt believe about God? They were to record their answer in a short video and send it to me. In addition to answering the question themselves, the students were to find at least 2 others to also answer the question. I didn't know what to expect. I was both excited and nervous to see the roughly 8 second videos they sent me. After watching them, I smiled. They were simple statements of faith, simple ways of sharing a little of their own faith with the whole community, and yet they were remarkably powerful. I could not leave the videos as they were. I needed to share them with our whole congregation.

After receiving and watching the videos I set to work. I looked for some open source background music. I looked for the right order in which to show the videos. I created our own First Lutheran Church Confirmation class 2015 video "Here I Stand." You will be able to see it when we gather for worship on Sunday, Dec. 6 and it will be posted on our Facebook page later that day. I cannot express enough how pleased I was with the statements of faith and belief and trust in the God we worship and the Lord we follow.

What do you most certainly, absolutely, without a doubt believe about God?

This was the question I asked my confirmation students. And this is what I ask you now. How would you respond? How will you share with others?

I invite you to consider recording your own short videos answering this question. And if you're bold, share them with the whole community.

Peace, Pastor Zach

Sunday Worship
9:30 a.m.

Sunday Fellowship
10:30 a.m.

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Pastor's Office Hours

Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday

9:00-Noon

or by appointment



12/2	Blake Baumgartner	12/19	Mary Jo Greve
	Connor Hayden		Al Orsund
12/3	Cailyn Grabe	12/22	Kathie Johnson
12/6	Darcy VanDam		Kendra Odland
12/7	Suzanne Von Seggern	12/26	Charles Elliott
12/12	Vicki Porter		Tom Hayden
	Pat Putz		Bob Sandquist
12/14	Morgan Allen	12/27	Craig Peterson
	Jim McVey	12/28	Ashley Swartz
12/16	James Greve	12/29	Zach Bey
	Lynette Marvelli	12/30	Garnet Beenen
			Mae VanDam



Food Pantry
Donations Needed

The Food Pantry would like us to emphasize a specific item each month. Remember, you may bring any item you wish, but spreading this among the contributing congregations keeps a steady supply of their most basic needs coming each month. **For the month of December, paper products (towels, napkins, toilet paper), sanitary care items, and diapers are being requested.** There is a basket in the narthex for all food pantry items.

Thank you for being so generous.

Chancel Flowers

Dec. 6—

Dec. 13— Trees

Dec. 20— Trees

Dec. 27— Poinsettias

Fellowship

Dec. 6— Amundsens

Dec. 13—

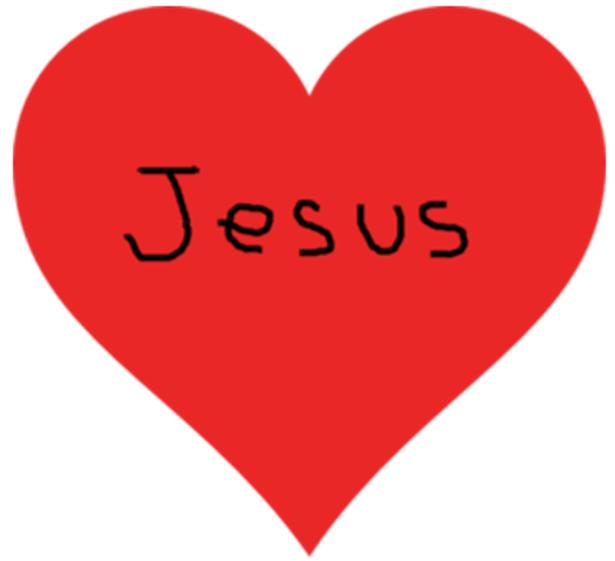
Dec. 20—

Dec. 27—

Please sign up to provide flowers and fellowship.

**Christmas Eve Worship Service
will be held
December 24th at 7:00 pm**

Choir Practice for the Christmas Eve service will be held Wednesday, December 9th at 8:15, and on the Sundays December 13th and 20th after worship service.



Your Year-End Gift can Open Doors for Others



Are you looking for ideas for a year-end gift or memorial? The Property Committee has a bid for an Automatically Operated Door to be installed at the West entry by the carport and the elevator. Everything to install the door, including wireless buttons, buzzer system, camera and labor will total \$3500.

If you are interested in donating to help be a part of this project please contact the office for more details.

Thank you!

Stan Kirchhoff, Property Chairman



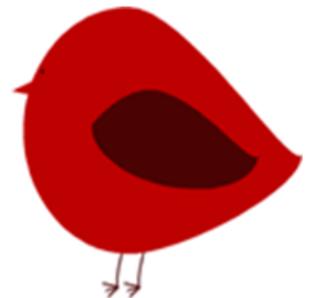
Thank you for your donation of \$400 for the Jasper County CROP Hunger Walk. Your continued support for hunger in our area and around the world is appreciated.

Carol Macksey

Jasper County CROP Hunger Walk Treasurer

Wednesday Night Community Dinners:

THANK YOU to the people that helped with our Wednesday Night Community Dinners all through the year! Due to the holiday schedule we will not be hosting any more community dinners this year. Please join us again in January to continue this very important community service.



Congregational Budget meeting Dec. 6

All confirmed members are encouraged to attend to elect three new council members and a treasurer.



Children's Christmas Program December 13th, during service

Practices for the children's program will be held on Sunday, 12/6 after service, on Wednesday, 12/9 at 6:30pm and maybe one more. The children's program will be performed during regular service at 9:30a.m. on December 13th. For more information contact Robyn Friedman at 641-840-2215 or robynpt@iowatelecom.net.

Chili & Caroling Dec. 13th, 5pm

We will gather at church, then set out to carol for 60-90 minutes. Then meet back at the church for chili. A sign up sheet will be in the narthex. Please come join us!



WOW Worship on Wednesdays!

WOW continues the first three Wednesdays of December, then we will start back up in the new year. Come join us for snacks, an adult education class and a children's education class beginning at 6:30.

2016 Offering Envelopes

Your 2016 offering envelopes will be available for pick up in the narthex later this month. Please take them home for use starting in January 2016.

Prayer Corner

We pray for all of our families, friends and church family. Please spend the month preparing our hearts for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray that in the busyness that is our modern lives we will make time to prepare a place for him. Instead of finding no room at the inn, may Jesus find a room in each of our hearts. May we look around at the blessings God has given us and then look for ways to bless others. Let us reach out with love. May we celebrate with joy the birth of our Savior at Christmas. We continue to pray for our congregation, our leaders, our community and our world.



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Christmas at Careage

First Lutheran will once again be giving Christmas gifts to residents at Careage nursing home. Gifts are to be \$5—\$10 and suggestions for gifts will be on the chart in the narthex. Wrap the gift and be sure the resident's name is on it and that the gift is from First Lutheran. The gifts are to be brought to church by December 13th. A box will be in the narthex near the sign up sheet for wrapped gifts.

Thank you on behalf of the Careage residents.

Prayer Warriors

Do you need a prayer warrior on your side? Everyone has times in their life where they are in need of extra prayer. The First Lutheran Prayer Chain has been changed to a Prayer Warrior group. If you have a need you would like held in prayer, please call 792-3934 or email the church office and your request will be emailed to our Prayer Warrior group. For emergency requests, please call Pastor Zach.

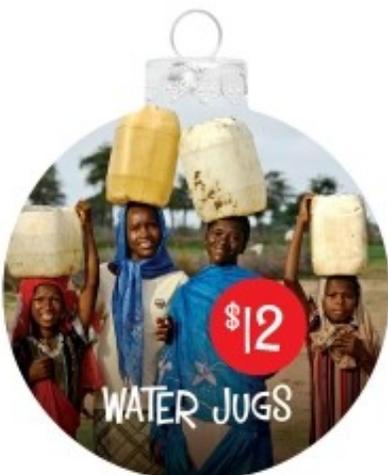


Electronic Giving

If you would like to enroll or make any changes to your electronic giving for the new year please contact the office by phone or email.

Charitable Shopping with Good Gifts

If you plan to do some Christmas shopping from the Good Gifts catalog this season, check in with the church office. There may be a gift ornament that matches with your purchase. Kellie will be happy to check for you, or walk by the office, available ornaments are hanging in the window.



Call 641-792-3934

Or email office@newtonfirstlutheran.org

Poinsettias for Christmas

We plan to decorate the Sanctuary with Poinsettias for the Christmas season and invite your help in providing the plants.

If you would like to order a poinsettia, please complete the form below, attach your check, fold together, and place it in the offering plate. You may also mail or bring your check and order form to the church office.

You may pay with cash or a check payable to Hy-Vee Floral in the amount \$8.50 for each poinsettia ordered. The deadline for turning in order and payment is Sunday, December 20th.

Poinsettias may be taken home after the Christmas Eve Service.

Name _____

Phone _____

Poinsettia(s) _____ \$8.50/each (Check payable to Hy-Vee Floral)

Given in honor of _____

Given in memory of _____



Coming Up Next Month:

January 24—Annual Congregational Meeting



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.