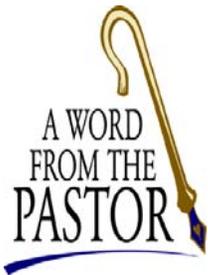


The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham
The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
www.firstlutheranwaltham.org

December 2016
781-893-6563
tmaehl@rcn.com



In his book, We Make the Road by Walking, Brian McLaren writes, “To be alive is to desire, to hope, and to dream. Desires, hopes, and dreams inspire action, and that’s what makes them so different from a wish. Wishing is a substitute for action. Wishing creates a kind of passive optimism that can paralyze people in a happy fog of complacency: ‘Everything will turn out fine. Why work, struggle, sacrifice or plan?’ Guess what happens to people who never work, struggle, sacrifice, or plan? Things don’t normally turn out the way they wish.! In contrast, our desires, hopes, and dreams for the future guide us in how to act now.”

Prophets in the Bible have a fascinating role as custodians of the best hopes, desires, and dreams of their society. They challenge people to act in ways consistent with those hopes, desires, and dreams. And when they see people behaving in harmful ways, they warn them by picturing the future to which that harmful behavior will lead.”

On the four Sundays of Advent, the first lesson in our worship services come from the prophets who paint vivid, beautiful pictures of the future that are intended to give shape to our lives in the present moment. For instance, Isaiah speaks of a time when human beings will convert instruments of war into instruments of nurture and growth.

He shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4: appointed for the 1st Sunday in Advent)

Consider how we may be tempted to use our own resources as weapons – our words for example – words we speak in person, words we whisper behind some ones back, words we write in Facebook posts. Words matter. Carefully chosen words that are intended for nurture and growth serve as actions in the present shaped by the Biblical prophets vision of the future.

This can be difficult of course, as it may be construed as weakness. We are, after all, living in a time when the words of our national leaders have at times been intentionally chosen as weapons, precisely for the sake of demonizing others (for example Latinos, women, Muslims, immigrants, prisoners of war,

those with disabilities, and refugees). It might be tempting to respond in kind. However, if we turn our ear to the scriptures, we hear Jesus calling us, persistently calling us in whatever the political climate, to stand on the side of the oppressed, even if that looks weak; and we hear in the desires, dreams, and hopes of the prophets, the call to turn potential implements of destruction, including our tongues, into agents of nurture and growth. Blessed be our speaking!

- Faithfully, Pastor Maehl



Christmas Eve, December 24

6:40 pm Pre-service music

7:00 pm Worship

Join us on Christmas Eve for our traditional worship with special music, candle lighting, carols, Holy Communion, and the proclamation of the Christmas Gospel. Pre-service music will begin at 6:40 and there will be light refreshments following. Consider inviting friends and neighbors who may not have a worship home, and consider bringing a refreshment to share.

Christmas Morning, December 25

10:00 am

Join us for a service of lessons and carols with Holy Communion. Feel free to dress informally, kids can even come in their pajamas.

Sunday, January 1

10:30 am

Worship will be at 10:30 am only. **Note: There will be no Sunday school or early service on this day.**

Nurturing Faith



Advent Wednesdays

November 30
December 7, 14, 21
7:15 pm

On the Wednesdays of Advent we have a contemplative evening prayer service beginning at 7:15 pm, followed by refreshments. Each service will have readings from one of the prophets, and we will reflect together on how we might live into the future vision depicted in:

Week 1: Isaiah 2:1-5

Week 2: Isaiah 11:1-9

Week 3: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Week 4: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Amidst the increased pace and demands of the season, consider participating in this opportunity to attend to the waiting, prayer, and hopefulness to which the season of Advent calls us ... and at the same time mysteriously offers.

Sunday Schedule

Worship 8:15 am and 10:30 am
Adult Forum 9:15 am

December 4 Advent II: The Power of Promise

No Adult Forum, set up for Silent Auction

Luncheon and Silent Auction at 11:30

December 11 Advent III: The Power of Patience

Adult Forum: Micah part II

December 18 Advent IV: The Power of God w/ Us

Christmas Pageant during learning hour

December 24th Christmas Eve worship at 7:00 pm

December 25th Christmas Day worship at 10:00 am

January 1 New Year's Day

Worship at 10:30 am

No early service or Sunday school



Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Sunday, December 11
5:00 pm

Santuario Luterano invites the community of First Lutheran to the **Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe!** It will be on Sunday, December 11 at 5pm. We will have Mariachis and the visit of our New England Synod Bishop James Hazelwood. There will be food afterwards. All are welcome!

Note: please refer to the two articles on page 3 referencing the place of Mary in the Lutheran Church.



Christmas Pageant December 18

We will be having a Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 18, during the learning hour (9:15 to 10:15 am). This will be held in Founder's Hall with the children from the preschool, lower elementary, and upper elementary classes taking part. Adults and other family members are invited to come and support our children and youth.

Danish Christmas Service Saturday, December 17, 4:00 pm

The Danish Society of Massachusetts is offering their annual Christmas service in Danish here at First Lutheran Church.

German Christmas Eve Saturday, December 24 4:00 pm

Faith Lutheran Church in Cambridge (311 Broadway, Cambridge, MA) is offering a German Christmas Eve Service at 4:00 pm.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in either service, please invite them.

Walking Together in God's Love

Why the Lady of Guadalupe in a Lutheran Church? A Cultural Response

The following comes from an article entitled "Our Lady: Not Just for Catholics," first printed in the Los Angeles Times on December 12, 2003; by William Lobdell and Jennifer Mena

In some Catholic parishes it's a bigger day than Christmas or Easter: the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe [*She is a Latin American image of Mary*]. Beginning well before dawn, worshipers today will gather to celebrate the brown-skinned mother of Jesus who, legend says, appeared before a poor Mexican peasant in 1531.

But the celebration isn't just for Catholics anymore. Increasingly, the Virgen de Guadalupe is turning up in other Latino-dominated churches as a way to make worshipers feel at home while honoring the mother of Christ and champion of the downtrodden.

Any church wanting to attract Latinos "that doesn't take into account how deeply that message [of Our Lady of Guadalupe] is rooted in the Latino identity ... is pretty well doomed," said Father Francisco Schulte, a scholar at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn.

The trend is particularly noticeable at Episcopal and Lutheran churches, whose liturgical traditions are closest to Catholicism. Parishioners at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in National City, south of San Diego, will gather this evening to sing and bring roses for Our Lady of Guadalupe. During the service, eight children will have their first communion. "Mexicans identify with her because she looks like them," said the Rev. Patricia Andrews-Callori, rector of the parish. "She's been a consolidating force for Mexicans."

In San Clemente on Sunday, St. Clement's by the Sea Episcopal Church will have mariachis as part of its morning service devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Afterward, parishioners will parade through a nearby park for a picnic of tamales, enchiladas and home-made regional specialties of Mexico.

(Continued on Page 5)

Why the Lady of Guadalupe in a Lutheran Church? A Theological Response

This is a return to our roots. Martin Luther called for great reverence for Mary, the mother of our Lord. Luther writes,

She became the Mother of God, in which work so many and such great good things are bestowed on her as pass man's understanding. For on this there follows all honor, all blessedness, and her unique place in the whole of mankind, among which she has no equal, namely, that she had a child by the Father in heaven, and such a Child.... Hence men have crowded all her glory into a single word, calling her the Mother of God.... None can say of her nor announce to her greater things, even though he had as many tongues as the earth possesses flowers and blades of grass: the sky, stars; and the sea, grains of sand. It needs to be pondered in the heart what it means to be the Mother of God." Luther's Works, 21:326

Luther called for reverence of Mary. However, the Reformers opposed regarding Mary (in place of Christ) as a mediator of salvation between sinful human beings and God. Christ is our great high priest, our mediator (Hebrews 7:26-28, 12:24). For Luther, this was part of a greater and more extensive opposition to the belief that the merits of the saints could be added to those of Jesus Christ to save humanity. Christ alone saves us! Because the line between "revering Mary," and "worshiping her as a God," was experienced as too hard to maintain in the Reformation context, Mary was downplayed.

Now 499 years later, the times and the culture are different. Perhaps now, as we prepare to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation we can turn and begin to think about Mary with greater openness. We've had 500 years to absorb the central tenet of our faith that Christ alone as the bringer of salvation; might we now be strong enough to give Mary, the Mother of our Lord, a greater place of respect and reverence?

(Continued on Page 5)

Doing Justice, Serving All

Pledge Update

We had a wonderful response to our stewardship appeal! Thank you to so many of you for taking so seriously our responsibility to provide for the mission of the church and for your faithful financial giving. The following are statistics from our Fall appeal:

- Last year we received 45 pledges totaling \$206,164
- This year we have received 47 pledges totaling \$218,048
- This figure reflects: +19,224 from those who have increased their pledge, +\$11,780 in new pledges; and -\$19,120 from those who have died, moved, reduced or concluded their pledge.

This level of response is a great blessing and will enable us to not only address increased costs in certain areas, but to also expand our ministry in others. Thanks be to God!

Budgeting Process

The finance committee is now at work preparing a draft budget for 2016 that will be reviewed by the church council and presented at the congregational meeting. Please plan on attending the annual meeting following worship on January 29. Members of the finance committee include: Scott Niemann, Susan Pintus, and Brad Nederhoff. We give thanks for their faithful oversight.

Words of Thanks

I am filled with gratitude for the strong and faithful financial support of the church. If you look at the pledge update above you can see that without increases in giving and new pledges we would be facing a great deficit. I know that many are making sacrifices out of faithfulness to God for Christ's mission entrusted to this Church and I am deeply grateful. May God continue to inspire us, lead us, and strengthen us for whatever lies ahead.



Thanks to everyone who brought in bags of personal care items as part of our

Thanks For Giving Challenge. We had a wonderful response collecting roughly 55 bags. All of the items collected at First Lutheran will be donated to Ascentria Care Alliance (formerly Lutheran Social Services) and will be distributed in Worcester, Springfield, and/or other communities in Massachusetts. **Thanks for Giving!**

Contribute Gift Cards for Your Neighbors

Chaplains on the Way (COTW) offers a ministry of spiritual care and companionship to our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, or dealing with mental illness and/or addiction. For a variety of reasons, the people under COTW's umbrella may feel alienated from other church and social communities.

This December we are collecting gifts cards These might include:

- \$10 gift cards to McDonalds
- \$10 gift cards to Dunkin Donuts
- \$25 gift cards to Target to help COTW purchase thermal underwear and boots when the snow comes.

Many of COTW's flock live (and sleep) outdoors. Target \$25 gift cards help COTW procure boots and thermal underwear for them. On Christmas and New Year's Day, when many doors are closed (eg. Waltham library), Dunkin Donuts and McDonalds are reliably open. A \$10 gift card is a welcome "ticket" to warmth and a meal in those circumstances.

You may donate such gift cards, or cash, with your regular offering. Please consider including a card expressing your prayers and encouragement. For more information about COTW, read about it on-line (www.chaplainsontheway.us) or talk to Paul Pintus.

Walking Together in God's Love

(A Cultural Response, continued from page 3)

"Some people don't understand it because these things are Catholic," said Margarita Farias, a 33-year-old parishioner and mother of two who lives in San Clemente. "But I felt that [the Virgin of Guadalupe] is the mother of us all. I feel we can have her, celebrate her and be a part of this church too."

Our Lady of Guadalupe's appearance in non-Catholic services has scholars and others wondering whether the beloved apparition that has united Mexicans for nearly five centuries can bring together Christian denominations. "If we can come together through her, then thanks be to God," said Jaime Soto, auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange. "It makes a lot of sense that the mother in a dysfunctional family keeps everyone together."

Full article at: www.articles.latimes.com/2003/dec/12/local/me-guadalupe12

Senior Classics



Minuteman Vocational school in Lexington, is a lovely place for lunch and to purchase delicious bakery items. In November, eleven Senior Classic member enjoyed a delicious

full course meal for a very low price. Also it's so nice to be waited upon by charming young high-schoolers. If you should ever desire to go on your own, make reservations in advance and don't miss the bakery!

Our *Christmas celebration is December 15, 11:45*. The main dish and punch will be provided. Please bring goodies to share such as side dishes, appetizers, deserts etc; and bring your favorite goodie. Please sign up on info board in the Pearson room. All are welcome to join the party.

(A Theological Response, cont. from page 3)

Theologically speaking, we are free to have images of Mary in our church or not, free to offer a service of reverence for Our Lady of Guadalupe (an image of Mary of vast importance in many Latino cultures) or not. At the same time, Christ calls us to love our neighbor and to offer hospitality to the stranger and the foreign born. Santuario is our sister congregation, and as a sign of hospitality and love, and also with a spirit of openness that I just might experience God by new means, I am eagerly preparing to attend the service on Sunday, December 11 at 5 pm. You're invited too.



Christmas Caroling

Sunday December 18 at 3:00 pm

All are welcome to join us for our annual afternoon of Christmas caroling. We will gather at the church, leaving at 3:00 pm to carpool to a variety of residences. Note that children are most welcome. Caroling is a great way to bring Christmas cheer to others, and a way to enter into the season more deeply ourselves. Please join us.

Mitten Tree



A mitten tree is in the Pearson Room for donations of hats, mittens, scarves, gloves, etc for the homeless in our community. Please help to warm hands and hearts.

Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



Members of our First Lutheran Community: Fran Albrecht; Christina Danielson; Mimi Ham, Rosy Hebert, Ray Jahrling; Bill Kalke; Kathryn McCowan; Geri Nederhoff; Cynthia Niiler; Pamela Sperry.

Friends and Family: the Barazi family (*friends of the Biter's*); Brown family (*friends of the Flinner/Hoff family*); Christiansen family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Steve Connearney (*friend of First Lutheran*); Patricia Eversole (*aunt of Peter Pinch*); Irma Fox and family (*Gloria Atherton's sister*); Gail Hoftender (*sister of Geri Nederhoff*); Norma Huisman (*aunt of Brad Nederhoff*); Duke Katterheinrich (*LuAnn Kimker's father*); Ellen Katterheinrich (*LuAnn Kimker's mom*); Kurt Kresge (*step-father of Peter Pinch*); Tom Lividoti (*friend of Susan and Paul Pintus*); Eudeen MacSweeney (*friend of Rut Johnson*); Ann Manz (*niece of Susan and Paul Pintus*); Helen Marquedant (*friend of Paul and Susan Pintus*); Vicki Ostoff (*sister-in-law of Geri Nederhoff*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Bob and Martha Rediehs (*uncle and aunt of Ann Sjodin*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander*); Doug Sewich (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*); Brian and Debbie Stoops (*parents of Eben Rauhut's sister-in-law*); Carol Sukow (*Cathy Sukow's mom*); Michael Veit (*friend of Paul and Susan Pintus*).

For our partners: For the Rev. Ángel Marrero and Santuario Luterano, the Spanish speaking Lutheran congregation in Waltham. For other organizations we actively support: the Waltham Family School, The Waltham Community Day Center, Chaplains on the Way, the Waltham Alliance to Create Housing, and ELCA World Hunger.

If you would like to add (or remove) a name from the prayer list, please inform the church office

Alternative Gifting Options

For those wanting to weave a measure of justice and service into holiday gifting, here are a few web sites you might consider:

ELCA Good Gifts: (www.elca.org/goodgifts) is a good site for purchasing animals for families living in poverty. Heifer International also provides a similar service (www.heifer.org)

Camp Calumet: for a variety of gift giving opportunities see See www.calumet.org/christmas

Ten Thousand Villages and SERRV are great sites for interesting fair-trade gifts from a variety of developing countries (www.tenthousandvillages.com) and (www.serrv.org).

Celebrations



We rejoice in the baptisms of

Zander Paul Diaz,

son of Erik and Holly Diaz, and little brother to Ezra.
Zander's sponsors are Alain Diaz and Jennifer Lambert.

AnaBella Furnari Faria,

daughter of Carol Furnari and Rafael Faria.
AnaBella's sponsors are Bruno and Kassandra Luz

on November 20, 2016.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham

Ministers: The people of the congregation

Staff: The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
tmaehl@rcn.com

Ms. Cynthia Niiler,
Director of Music and Parish Secretary
cniilerchurch@rcn.com

Council: Angela Neal, President
Kevin Dickert, Vice President
Eben Rauhut, Secretary
Scott Niemann, Treasurer
Erika Jerram
Jennifer Lambert
Brad Nederhoff
Janice Ostrander
Susan Pintus
Ann Sjodin

Worship:

8:15 and 10:30 am

Learning Hour:

9:15 am

Visit us on the Web at: www.firstlutheranwaltham.org



and on Facebook at First Lutheran Church - Waltham, MA

Our Mission: We discern that Jesus Christ is calling us to:

Walk together in God's love: nurturing faith, doing justice, serving all.