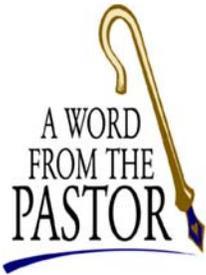


The Messenger

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 2017
781-893-6563
tmaehl@rcn.com



Now we are in Advent, a season of preparation. Ultimately what we prepare for is receiving the gift of Christ himself; not simply the benefits of Christ such as forgiveness, but Christ himself.

Recently I came across again an old writing from Julian of Norwich (1342-1416). Julian was a Christian mystic and her writings have endured the test of time.

When she was 30 years old she was struck by a grave illness and nearly died. As she was preparing for death she had a series of visions, or *showings*, that she understood to have come from God. She did recover and spent the next two decades reflecting on those visions. Perhaps the most well known is the following:

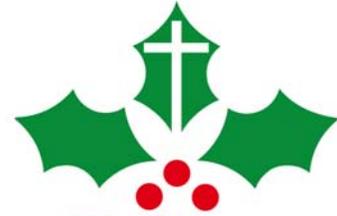
It was at this time that our Lord showed me spiritually how intimately he loves us. I saw that he is everything that we know to be good and helpful. In his love he clothes us, enfolds and embraces us; that tender love completely surrounds us, never to leave us. As I saw it he is everything that is good.

And he showed me more, a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, round like a ball. I looked at this thoughtfully and wondered, 'What is this?' And the answer came, 'It is all that is made.' I marveled that it continued to exist and did not disintegrate, it was so small. And again I was answered in my understanding: It exists both now and forever, for God loves it. In short, everything owes its existence to God.

Julian goes on to say that if we look to things in the created order in order to attain rest for our souls, we will end up disappointed; for ultimately they are all small, as small as a hazelnut in the hand. True rest can only be found in God. Julian writes, "God wishes to be known, and it pleases him that we should rest in him; for everything which is beneath him is not sufficient for us."

What we prepare for in Advent is the coming of Christ into the world, into our lives, into our hearts. May it be so; come Lord Jesus!

Blessed Christmas, Pastor Maehl



Christmas Worship Opportunities

4th Sunday of Advent, Dec 24th

9:30 am One Worship Service

During worship we will focus on Mary's witness of ceding control in her response to God of "Let it Be." Following worship we will decorate the sanctuary for Christmas.

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, December 31

9:30 am

Vicar John Barton will lead a service of the Word (no communion). **Note: There will be no Sunday school on this day.**

Nurturing Faith



Advent Wednesdays

December 6, 13, 20

7:00 pm

"For God alone I wait in silence; from God comes my salvation." (Psalm 62)

Join us on the **Wednesdays in Advent (December 6, 13, and 20)** we will have a contemplative evening prayer service beginning at 7:00 pm, followed by refreshments. Each week we will reflect on darkness and silence, and how God does not necessarily remove the darkness, but comes to us in the darkness none-the-less.

Amidst the increased pace and demands of the season, considering carving out this time to attend to the waiting, prayer, repentance, and hopefulness to which the season calls us ... and at the same time mysteriously offers.

Adult Forum

Sundays, 9:15 am

We continue a series focused on the life of Martin Luther, led by Vicar John. Using portions of a recent PBS documentary on Luther, the discussion will continue with varied ways the Protestant Reformation expanded beyond Luther and his German home land.



CAROLING

Christmas Caroling

Sunday, December 17
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.

Danish Christmas Service

Saturday, December 23, 4:30 pm

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

Deutscher Weihnachtsgottesdienst *German Language Christmas Eve Service*

December 24
3:00 PM

Faith Lutheran Church
311 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139

For more information or if you would like to help out, call (617) 945-4395 or email pastor@faithcambridge.org.

Doing Justice, Serving All



Thanks to everyone who brought in bags of personal care items as part of our **Thanks For-Giving Challenge**. We've had a wonderful response collecting roughly 30 bags with personal care items. The collection ends Sunday, December 10. If you have not yet participated and wish to, we are collecting: socks and underwear, diapers and wipes, feminine products, and toiletries.

All of the items collected will be donated to Ascendria Care Alliance (formerly Lutheran Social Services) and will be distributed to resettled refugees in Worcester, Springfield, and/or other communities in Massachusetts. **Thanks for Giving!**

Service Trip to El Salvador

We are going back to El Salvador next summer to help build homes. All, aged 18 and up (or 16 with a parent), are welcome. There are tasks for all ability levels. If you are interested, mark the week of August 11 - 19 on your calendar and reserve your spot on the team by contacting Jennifer Lambert at: jenelamb@hotmail.com.

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

I am grateful for gifts to this fund that enable me to help people with food, medicine, rent and in a variety of other ways. Gifts to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund are welcome at any time and especially during the holidays.

- Pastor Maehl

Pledge Update

We've had a strong 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 47 pledges totaling \$218,303
- Thus far, this year we have received 37 pledges totaling \$196,620

There is good news to share that the pledges received thus far represent an increase of \$7,612 (taking into account new pledges along with those who have increased, decreased, moved away, or died). Nevertheless, we are still hoping for another \$20,000 in pledged offering. If you have not yet submitted a written pledge and are willing to do so, please contact Peter Pinch (our financial secretary) or Pastor Maehl.

The finance committee is now at work preparing a draft budget for 2018 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 28. Members of the finance committee include: Scott Niemann, Susan Pintus, and Brad Nederhoff.

Words of Thanks

We are tremendously blessed by the resources that are offered for the mission and ministry of this congregation. We give thanks to God for every gift, small and large, and the leaders of this congregation seek to craft a budget that makes faithful and effective use of what has been entrusted to us. Thank you; and thanks be to God for continuing to provide.

- Pastor Maehl

Doing Justice, Serving Others

Winter Clothing Drive Update

Thanks to all who donated winter coats, hats, scarves, mittens, sweaters, and boots for Brandeis international students and Waltham Family school students. We had two car loads of adult items that were delivered in Brandeis and several bags of children's items that were brought to the Waltham Family School. We hope to do it again next year.

December "Mitten" Collection

This year instead of a "mitten tree" we are collecting mittens, scarves, and hats and hanging them on ribbon strung across part of the Pearson Room. Hand made or purchased - all sizes welcome. They will be collected and distributed to those in need in our community through Chaplains on the Way.

Silent Auction Thanks

On Sunday, November 26 we had a luncheon and silent auction that raised more than \$850 toward the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston occurring in June 2018. Our thanks to Martin Sieving, Alan Sieving, Maggie Neimann, Julia Neimann, John Barton, Sarah Brown, Justin Sjodin, Emily Sjodin, Ted Sjodin, and Ann Sjodin for their efforts in setting up for the event on Saturday, Nov 25th and to Cat Neimann who provided goodies for the workers.

Also, thanks to Jennifer Lambert for coordinating the luncheon. We received a \$250 Action Grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans that paid for the food, which was then prepared by Jennifer. The free will offering for lunch was part of the \$850- collection.

Also, thanks to all who contributed items for the auction and supported the event!

Greening the Church Thanks

Thanks for all who helped decorate the church for Advent. In particular our thanks to Mary Ellen Adams for her wonderful gift of organizing all the materials.



SENIOR CLASSICS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Christmas Party

December 21st

11:45 am

We give thanks for the generous support of the Nelson Board who have contributed funds in order that our party might include a catered meal. Anyone who has the time (and inclination) is welcome to join us.

Fall Retreat Update

A group of 17 participated in our annual Fall Retreat in Londonderry, Vermont. Pastor Elaine Hewes, our guest leader, helped us reconnect with stories of past times when hope broke through, or our understanding of who was welcome at God's table expanded, or when we sensed the mystery of God. We also enjoyed great food, games, conversation, and one another's company. Our next Fall retreat is scheduled for November 9-11, 2018.

Calumet Winter Retreat

March 9-11

Our annual winter retreat to Camp Calumet is scheduled for March 9-11. Everyone is welcome to this retreat, children and adults. Mark your calendars and watch for more details about signing up coming in January.

Chaplains on the Way Gift Cards

Once again we are collecting \$5 or \$10 gift cards to Dunkin Donuts or McDonalds, as well as \$8-\$12 Charlie Cards (for transportation). These will be given to persons in need in our community through the ministry of Chaplains on the Way. Gift cards may be mailed or dropped off in the church office.

Walking Together in God's Love



*From the
Vicar*

Isaiah 1: 16b-17 "Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

As we enter the church season of Advent, we often hear the words of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah's messages range from making preparations for a coming savior to imploring the people to listen more. In the above selection from Isaiah, we hear the call to "seek justice." There are a multitude of ways in which we can seek justice and act justly in each day, but one which I hold in my heart is in seeking to aid the people of Puerto Rico after the devastating Hurricane Maria. This need for relief and assistance hits especially close to home because of First Lutheran Church's connection and cooperation with our sister church Santuario Luterano, with many of its members being from or having family in Puerto Rico. Here is an update of conditions on the island.

76 days. That is how long it has been from the morning of September 20, 2017 until December 5, 2017. That is how long it has been since Puerto Rico was struck by Hurricane Maria. And, according to one resident of the US Territory, "It looks like the storm hit yesterday." To put this in context, there has been some clean-up efforts to clear some of the debris, however, it is safe to say that the island does not look like the home that Puerto Ricans knew before the hurricane. Puerto Rico has set a record for experiencing the longest blackout of electrical power in US history, as well as FEMA distributing the most food and water in the organization's history to any one disaster.

Puerto Rico is only one place among many in the United States that have been struck by hurricanes in the last couple of months, such as Houston, Texas or the rest of the Gulf coast. However, Puerto Rico has some unique challenges that make it both harder and all the more necessary to give assistance. One of the difficulties is the fact that it, like the US Virgin Islands, is an island and thus cannot receive resources or personnel via land transports. Another difficulty for Puerto Rico assistance is that, once the resources have made landfall from air or sea, they

have to be distributed over diverse and problematic terrain. The island has mountains and forest to traverse with many roads and bridges which are still washed out or damaged from the storm. All of these factors and more come together for a compounding set of obstacles. These obstacles need to be overcome in order to improve conditions and put aid resources into the hands of the Puerto Rican people. The present poor living conditions on the island have also led to an exodus from the island. Because of the damage to infrastructure systems on the island, much of the island is still without electricity, running water and plumbing, or safe bridges to travel over. Many Puerto Ricans have uprooted themselves and have come to the mainland states to try and find better conditions, education, and employment which in some areas in Puerto Rico are still majorly disrupted. An example of the migration is in the first 50 days since the hurricane hit, Orlando's airport alone has received 100,000 one-way plane tickets from Puerto Rico.

One of the biggest things that we, on the mainland, can do for our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico is to not forget about them. I encourage actions such as remaining actively up to date on what the island's people need to continue working back up to normal life. It has been 76 days and so the hurricane and Puerto Rico has begun to cycle out of the news, but the need is still there. Ways of doing this may look like searching out news stories, aid agencies, or people connected with the island to find the most up to date ways to assist. Additionally, Puerto Rico will need American tourism which will help to boost the economy there. Much of the island's pre-storm economy was based on tourism so visits to the island will help enliven that part of the island's income.

So, as the nation's attention are pulled towards other things, which have their own importance and place in our minds, remember that part of the nation still needs help. As federal aid and personnel are reduced or extracted from the island, remember Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans, our sisters and brothers who are working to rebuild their home and their way of living.

Vicar John Barton

Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



Members of our First Lutheran Community: Marquette Alexander; Ernie Gaiser; Christina Danielson; Connie Danielson; Mimi Ham; Rosy Hebert; Lorne MacArthur; Kathryn McCowan; Cynthia Niiler, Joan Niiler.

Friends and Family: Robin Bordenca (*friend of Carol Hansen*); Christiansen family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Steve Connearney (*friend of First Lutheran*); Donna (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Magnus Forsman (*great-nephew of Rut Johnson*); Pelle Geholm (*twin brother of Rut Johnson*); Joann Green (*mother of a colleague of Sarah Rauhut*); Norma Huisman (*aunt of Brad Nederhoff*); Emily Lewis and her parents (*friends of Paul and Susan Pintus*); Eudeen MacSweeney (*friend of Rut Johnson*); Stephen Manz (*nephew of Paul and Susan Pintus*); Helen Marquedant (*friend of Paul and Susan Pintus*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander*); Doug Sewich (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*)

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/remove a name to/from the prayer list, please inform the church office.

Thanks to Brasco Funeral Home

On November 5, All Saints Sunday, ten confirmation students were welcomed by Paul Brasco and other staff of the Brasco funeral home. We talked together about what happens when someone dies, and the staff were very gracious in offering a tour of their funeral home and answering questions from the students.



Annual Meeting

Save the Date

Annual Meeting
after worship

Sunday, January 28, 2018

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

Vicar John Barton, Intern
jbarton@ses.plts.edu

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

Sunday Worship:

8:15 and 10:30 am
(9:30 am on December 24 and 31)

Sunday Learning Hour:

9:15 am

Visit us on the Web at:



Find us on
Facebook

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.