

The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham
The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
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For the past month, all the Gospel lessons appointed for Sunday worship (from Luke chapters 9 and 10) have touched on hospitality. In one Jesus is denied hospitality in a Samaritan village and the disciples are furious, in another the “Good Samaritan” stops to aid the stranger struggling for life; in yet another the disciples are sent out in pairs and are instructed to put themselves in the vulnerable position of relying on the hospitality of others; and in the story of Mary and Martha we learn that hospitality not only includes serving the guest, but also listening to what the guest has to say.

Right now issues of hospitality are swirling around our nation. There is a crisis at the southern border (*whom shall be welcomed?*); anti-Semitism is on the rise (*are Jewish citizens forever to be deemed as guests to be tolerated in a so-called Christian nation?*); and our president has urged certain congresswomen to, “Go back where you came from” (*whose nation is this really – white persons?*)

Our country is deeply divided over these issues and we must choose which new sources and social media posts, whose voices and viewpoints will influence our own actions as citizens, neighbors, and followers of Jesus. For that I call your attention to two particular sources.

First, our congregation is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and this puts us in community with others whose primary vocation is addressing issues such as these. I invite you to look at the web pages for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (www.lirs.org) and Ascentria Care Alliance (www.ascentria.org) for thoughtful, faith-based reflections.

For instance, LIRS notes that “Recent reports on the upcoming Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions reveals that for FY2020 the ceiling may be set at zero. Doing so would be devastating to those who need our compassion the most.” Both LIRS and Ascentria are urging for us to add our voices to advocating for us to return to a figure of 95,000. This is a well

thought through, concrete figure; not based upon fear or naïveté.

Second, I call your attention to passages of scripture that lift up hospitality as a core value. Here are just a few such passages:

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:19).

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am your God (Leviticus 19:34).

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it (Heb. 13:1).

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25:35)

Finally, if we listen, I believe we can hear Jesus urging and inviting us, “Do not fear the stranger, the guest, the immigrant, the asylum seeker; but trust in God to surprise and provide through instances of hospitality given and received.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl

September Calendar

**Sept. 1: Welcome New Intern
Worship at 9:30 am**

**Sept. 8: God’s Work our Hands
Worship at 9:30 am**

**Sept. 15: Return to Fall Schedule
Worship at 8:15 & 10:30 am
Sunday School begins**

**Sept. 29: Church Picnic (after worship)
Worship at 9:30 am**

Nurturing Faith

Puerto Rico Trip Update

A group of 23 from our congregation participated in a service/learning trip to Puerto Rico, June 21-27. The logistics were coordinated by Jennifer Lambert, and Pastor Ángel Marrero was our tour guide while on the island. Here are some of the highlights of our trip:

Friday: We flew to Puerto Rico, rented four cars, and checked into three Airbnb's in Dorado where we would be lodging throughout the week. That night we were hosted by Pastor Marrero's parents who served us dinner in their home. We learned how the room in which we ate (a first floor garage) had been under 12 feet of water following Hurricane Maria; and how the whole neighborhood was without power for 8 months.

Saturday: We went to Iglesia Luterana de la Reconciliación (Reconciliation Lutheran Church) where we spent several hours painting (some interior, mostly exterior) and securing roof panels. Members of their congregation served us a delicious lunch, and we were able to accomplish a great deal.

Sunday: We returned to Reconciliation Lutheran and were warmly welcomed in worship. It was Inpakala Pandian's birthday and a highlight was when at the end of worship, the pastor invited her forward for a "remembrance of baptism" ritual that gave thanks to God for her life. That afternoon Pastor Marrero led us on a tour of Old San Juan.

Monday: The highlight of the day was a night-time visit to a bio-bay in Fajardo on the north-east corner of the Island. In two-person kayaks we travelled a narrow and long Mangrove tunnel to a lagoon where, when disturbed, the water glows with bioluminescence.

Tuesday: We had a tour of Rio Piedras, the area near the University of Puerto Rico and witnessed parts of the city abandoned in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. We also travelled to the El Yunque Rainforest and many of us enjoyed a dip in cool waters under a waterfall.

Wednesday: We travelled to the southern city of Ponce and returned via a mountainous route that gave us views of lush vegetation.

Thursday: We returned home to Boston; grateful!

Our thanks to all who supported us and prayed for us. In the midst of current turmoil, we continue to keep the people of Puerto Rico in our prayers.



*From the
Vicar*

Recently, I was asked to give an interreligious blessing at our friends' wedding. This type of blessing was something that I had never done before. In considering how to approach it, I started thinking about different types of blessings and what it means to be blessed.

We often think of blessing things when they are whole or complete like a book bag fully packed and ready for the school year, or a new home, or a couple who have completed their wedding vows. However, I find that blessings come to us most in moments of incompleteness when we take the time to pay attention to them. We are all sinner and saint and our lives are constantly in flux. If we wait for moments of wholeness for blessings, the blessings will rarely come.

Sam and I have been incredibly blessed to be a part of this congregation for the past 11 months and we have been blessed in our incompleteness by you all. We have been blessed by your prayers in times of transition, both when coming here and now leaving. I have been blessed by the many ways you have taught me how to teach, knit, proclaim the Gospel, tell stories, confront discomfort, embrace sacred moments, and live into incompleteness as a community. We have been blessed by the encouragement and support you have given us. We have been blessed to witness you relate to and care for one another in good times and in tough times. We have been blessed by the many coffee hours, luncheons, children's sermons, retreats, home visits, and knitting circles. Most of all, we have been blessed by your authenticity and care as a congregation.

In all of my incompleteness and gratitude, I would like to extend a blessing to you, the people of First Lutheran Waltham, for this moment of transition and incompleteness. Blessings to you from God our creator, Jesus our redeemer, and the Holy Spirit who sustains us. May you be blessed in all that you are and all that you do as a congregation. May you feel surrounded with the love and care of one another as an outpouring of God's unending love. May you continue to extend that love to your neighbors outside of the walls of this church in new and creative ways. May you embrace your incompleteness as a way to let people in to feel at home here in their incompleteness. May you continue to be a people shaped by and looking for reform where our traditions and privileges fail us. May you be blessed as you are, in this ordinary moment, as beloved no matter what. Amen.

Blessings,
Vicar Athena

Nurturing Faith



Vacation Bible School

We had a great week at VBS (July 8-12) with 36 kids, 27 youth, and many, many adults.

Thank you to all who helped make this week a success. We have listed those involved with many of the roles, but there are many more little jobs that others helped with as well. So thank you all.

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| Morning Director: | Holly Diaz |
| Registrar: | Anne Dugan |
| Afternoon Director: | Pastor Maehl |
| Youth Director: | Kat Flinger |
| Opening/Closing: | Pastor Maehl |
| Crafts: | Cat Niemann Lynne Parker |
| Science: | Erik Diaz Jane Sieving Maggie Niemann Julia Niemann |
| Games: | Anthony Harrison |
| Music: | Cynthia Niiler |
| Storytelling: | Vicar Athena Bless |
| Pre-K Class Leaders: | Hannah Kimker Sarah Rauhut |
| K-1 Leader: | Lauren Harrison |
| 2nd-3rd Grade: | Penny Alexander Emily Sjodin |
| 4th-5th Grade: | Christophor Gilbert |
| Snack: | Susan Pintus Helen Yarbrough |
| Lunch: | Anna Maria Santiago Rosa Santiago |

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|---------------------------|--|
| Monday Greeter: | Padre Ángel |
| Early Arrival Activities: | LuAnn Kimker |
| Morning Office Help: | Penny Alexander Emily Sjodin |
| Snack Shopping: | Susan Pintus |
| BBQ Shopping: | Jennifer Lambert |
| BBQ Set up and Grill | Heather and Eric Fahey Diane Lawlor |
| Fencing: | Steve Hoff |
| Scenery: | Holly Diaz |
| Cori Checks: | Angela Neal |
| Lunch Donation: | Peter's Greek Kitchen |
| Tent Wranglers: | Paul Pintus (pick up) Prakash Pandian Erik Diaz Lori Hrdlicka Augusto D'Arevalo Christians Villalta Richard Pinch Pastor Maehl |
| Set Up/Decorating: | Helen Yarbrough Lea Dugan Erika Jerram Steve Hoff Anne Dugan Laila Dugan Maddie Jerram Cynthia Niiler |
| Afternoon Leaders: | Penny Alexander Pastor Maehl Carol Hansen Ardeith Froberg Christophor Gilbert Inpakala Pandian Kat Flinger Vicar Athena Bless Mary Ellen Adams Inpakala Pandian Helen Yarbrough Eegan Pandian |

Our thanks to all who donated materials and funds for art kits. We were able to assemble 30 art kits for the Waltham Family School

Walking Together in God's Love

Property Committee Update

New Stove: We are in need of a new stove. Here's the back story. In May an outside group was using our church basement and smelled gas. It was a simple problem, the pilot light was out on our rather ancient stove (vintage 1950ish). However, none of the staff were in the building at the time so (appropriately) the fire department was called, who then called the gas company,, who shut off and locked off the gas. They will not turn the gas back on unless we get the stove re-certified or replaced. Given the age of the stove and recurring issues with pilot lights, we will be moving forward with replacing the stove. The "Interior Care Team" (formerly "Beautification Committee") are exploring options. With the cost of a new stove, the removal of the old, and upgrades for either electrical or ventilation we are estimating the cost to be in excess of \$5,000.

Potential Tower Repairs: We have an appointment in the next month for a firm that specializes in church repair to examine our tower. It appears there is some damage to the precast concrete. We will be requesting an estimate for repairs.

Sound System: It is still our hope to replace the sound system in the sanctuary. We have an estimated cost of \$16,000 and have half the amount, \$8,000 reserved for this purpose.

Capital Improvement Fund: Given the above items we ask all who are able to consider a donation to the Capital Improvement Fund.

Sanctuary Lighting: A few years ago we replaced the bulbs in the sanctuary with LEDs. However, due to dimming switches, the lights have been flickering, causing difficulties for some. The property committee has replaced the LEDs in the central fixtures with incandescent bulbs.

Lawn and Gardens: Our thanks to Norm Adams and Jason Felsch for their diligent work in caring for our lawns; and to Cynthia Niiler for her incredible care of our beautiful gardens.

Intern Update

On Sunday, July 28 we bid farewell to Vicar Athena Thomasson-Bless who has served as our full-time intern for the past 11 months. We are grateful for Athena's ministry among us; particularly for her preaching and teaching, her pastoral care, her work in the formation of a young adult group, and her steady witness to the inclusive love of God. We also give thanks for Athena's wife Sam who also as blessed us with her presence, her voice, and particularly with her care and support of youth in our congregation.

Athena has completed her seminary studies and will be awaiting assignment to a synod and a call to a congregation. Please keep her and Sam, and the assignment process in your prayers.

Our new intern will be Courtney Smith. Courtney is from King of Prussia, PA and is currently a student at the United Lutheran Seminary (Philadelphia campus). Before seminary, she served one year in South Africa as part of the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission Program. We will welcome Vicar Courtney during worship on September 1.

Our thanks to the members of the Intern Committee: Jennifer Lambert, Erik Diaz, Britta McNemar, Prakash Pandian, and Susan Pintus for their diligent and faithful work in supporting Vicar Athena and tending to the seminary's evaluation process for her.

Summer Camp

On Sunday, July 28, twelve children and youth will leave for a week of summer camp at Camp Calumet on Lake Ossipee in New Hampshire. Our thanks to those who have contributed to the Calumet Scholarship Fund over the past year. With so many children participating, your gifts are much needed and appreciated. Thank you!

Doing Justice, Serving All

New Congregation Sharing Space

New Visions Community Church will begin sharing space with us in August. They are a small, predominantly Haitian-American Baptist congregation. They will come on Sundays at 12:30 pm and use the space between 12:30 and 4:00 pm. Their contributions will help offset our building and utility costs. Their pastor's name is Pastor Reuben Xantus; please greet him (and members of the New Visions Church) warmly should you meet.

Nursery Refreshment

Our thanks to **Carol Hansen** and **Julie Weeden** for their recent work in the nursery: cleaning, purging damaged and ignored toys, providing new storage, and soliciting input from parents with young children. Thanks also to **Carol** for the gifts of new blocks, table and chairs; and to **Norman Adams** for repairs and repainting of the chalkboard wall.

Afternoon VBS Help Thanks

As the coordinator of the afternoon portion of VBS I want to offer my particular thanks to: **Carol Hansen** for coordinating the Monday afternoon art project (*check out the student-designed planets on display in the Pearson Room*), to **Inpakala Pandian** for coordinating the Tuesday afternoon art project, to **Christephor Gilbert** for coordinating the Wednesday afternoon dance activity, and to **Jane Sieving** for teaching a group of youth leaders how to lead Thursday's duct tape craft activities. Also my thanks to God for leading me to a Craigslist Ad that turned into an \$85 purchase of 125 rolls of multi-colored duct tape used to create a plethora of wallets and purses. - Pastor Maehl

Vacation Schedule

Pastor Maehl will be on Vacation August 5-19, returning to the office on Tuesday, August 20. Pastor Ángel Marrero will be filling in for worship on August 11 and Pastor Angelika Zollfrank (chaplain at McLean Hospital) will be filling in for worship on August 18.

Cynthia will be on vacation August 12-22. Thank you to Catherine Pinch, who will be leading our music in worship on August 18. The church office will be closed the week of August 12.

New Confirmation Class

A new confirmation class will begin in September. We welcome students who have entered 7th grade and older to participate. This is a two-year program with the following format:

Fall 2019 - *Who is this Jesus?* An examination of Jesus through a close reading of portions of the Gospel of Mark.

Spring 2020 - *The basics of Christianity*. Focusing on the principal parts of the catechism: Ten Commandments, Apostles Creed, Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Communion, Confession and Forgiveness.

Fall 2020 - *Red Threads of Scripture*. Exploring major stories of creation, deliverance, prophetic voices, exile and return, the life of Jesus, and the early Church.

Spring 2021 - *Lutheran Emphases*. Focusing on Justification by Grace Through Faith, Saint and Sinner (100% each); also Law and Gospel and Theology of the Cross (as lenses for interpreting God's communication); and Vocation in the world. This quarter we also discuss human sexuality, war, and the continual need for reform.

Please contact Pastor Maehl if interested and feel free to invite others in your community.

Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



Members of our First Lutheran Community: Marquette Alexander; Penny Alexander; Christina Danielson; Connie Danielson; Rosy Hebert; Steve Latter; Lorne MacArthur; Kathryn McCowan; Cynthia Niiler; Joan Niiler; Pam Sperry.

Friends and Family: Adekemi (*friend of Sarah Rauhut*); Christiansen family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Donna (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Magnus Forsman (*great-nephew of Rut Johnson*); Susan Goslin (*friend of Joan Clemens*); Henrique (*friend of the Rauhuts*); Norma Huisman (*aunt of Brad Nederhoff*); Nancy Jewell (*cousin of Joan Clemens*); Terri Koopman (*aunt of Matt Jerram*); Eudeen MacSweeney (*friend of Rut Johnson*); Myles Martins and parents (*newborn nephew of Cat Niemann*); Jason Mihalko (*friend of Matt Jerram*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander*); Doug Sewich (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*); Maria Silva (*aunt of Olga Jimenez*); Judy Vichniac (*friend of Susan Pintus*), Charles & Janice Wilson (*sister and brother-in-law of Joan Clemens*); Jim Wroe (*cousin of Carol Hansen*).

For those who grieve: the family and friends of Betty Schroeder (*aunt of Curt Schroeder*); for the family and friends of John Russell (*husband of Nancy Russell*).

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.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham

Ministers: The people of the congregation

Staff: The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
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Vicar Athena Bless, Intern
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Council: Brad Nederhoff, President
Ann Sjodin, Vice President
Eben Rauhut, Secretary
Scott Niemann, Treasurer
Holly Diaz
Erika Jerram
LuAnn Kimker
Angela Neal
Janice Ostrander
Susan Pintus

Sunday Worship:

9:30 am for the summer

Sunday Learning Hour:

Will return in September

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.