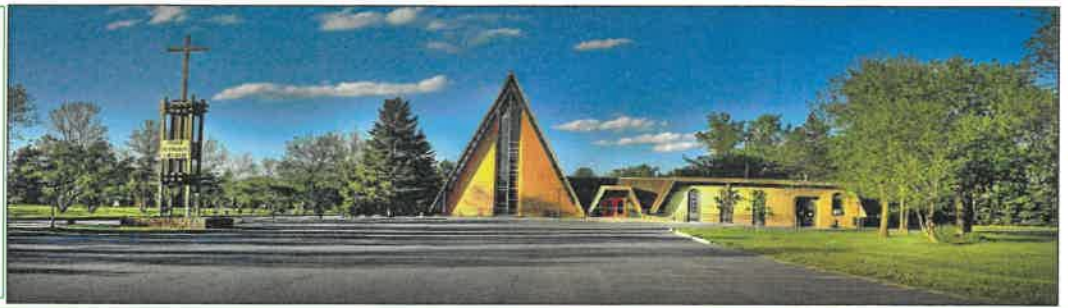


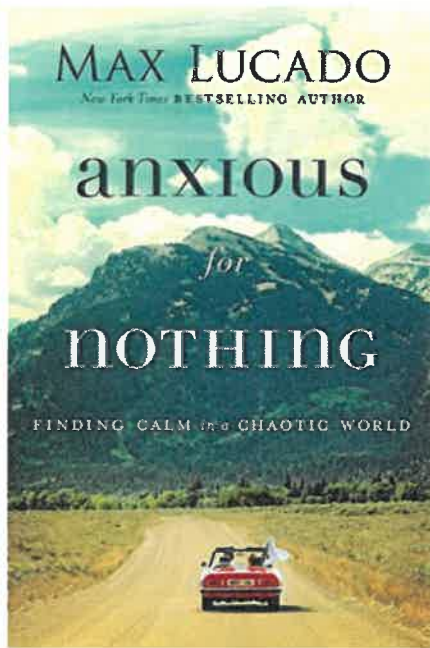
# The Voice

May 2023



A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the  
Northeastern  
Minnesota Synod, ELCA



Presenting the confirmation class of April 2023. Left to right: Nancy McBride (instructor), Emmitt Olson, Zach Youso, Andrew Eide, Pastor Erdal, Lachlan Reiners, Landon Basaraba, Pahtynn Glennie, Lauren Basaraba, Landon Zub.

Book recommendation.  
See page 9.



What's up, youth?  
See page 8.



Many thanks to the Voice folding crew. L-R: Sue Matthews, Carol Bass, Joann Wuollet, and Huntz Wagner.

## From the Pastor's Desk

### “Go Make Disciples ... ”

I recall this was a very popular ministry focus in the church, starting in the 1960 and continued well into the 2000. However we have lost “focus” or missional emphasis on this. But I don’t want to mislead you into thinking that we need to bring it back. Reality is that our Christian faith has changed in so many ways.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Resurrection of Jesus includes this verbal command from our Lord to His Inner Circle of Disciples in Galilee ... “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

I remember the excitement and energy of “Bring A Friend Sunday.” The first time I experienced this was when I served in Fremont, Nebraska (1998 – 2002). Everyone was given two identical notecards, to write down several names. But they had to have at least one name on the card for whom they would pray over the following week. These were potential people they would invite on the “Bring A Friends Sunday.” The one card everyone would walk up and place it into the “prayer box.” The other card they would keep for themselves, to remember and to pray over the names. It was fun and exciting to many people.

One of my pastoral duties was Evangelism. However, they needed to know that person. This was an Evangelism Technique I had picked up going to conferences and Continuing Education. People too often think they have to invite a “stranger,” rather than someone they know. This person may not have a “church family” or is an “inactive member.” It’s easier to invite someone whom you know and with whom you have a relationship, rather than a “stranger off the street.”

Each generation can remember various kinds of ministry programs that was fun and exciting to them over the years. However, today the Christian Culture in the United States has changed. After COVID so much of our country has changed, and much of it is out of our direct control. We are at a loss of what to do.

I hear many comments like, “I wish people would come back to church,” but the reality is that it won’t “automatically happen,” like the sunrise every morning. If you want to see people in our congregation; those who have not come back since COVID or any inactive member ... They Have to Be Invited! This is the most basic evangelism technique.

Partner in Ministry,  
Paul J. Erdal, Interim Pastor



**Pastor Paul Erdal**



## **FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

### **March 23, 2023**

**Present:** Pastor Paul Erdal, Vice-President Hoa Sobczynski, Treasurer Brad Ettestad, Secretary Carol Bass, Discipleship Betty Henrickson, Fellowship Cynthia Warren. President Brian Briggs  
**Absent:** Nancy McBride, Worship & Music, Building & Grounds Lloyd Skogstad

Meeting called to order by President Briggs at 5:04 PM.

**Devotion – Matthew 22: v. 37-38.** “You shall love the Lord with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself.” Given by Cynthia Warren. Cynthia also read a prayer from a past bulletin. Next month’s devotion by Brian Briggs.

**Agenda:** approved as written.

**Motion: To accept the minutes of the February 2023 meeting.**

**Made by: Cynthia Warren**

**Seconded by: Betty Henrickson**

**Carried**

**Financial Report from February meeting:**

Copies of report provided to all. A good month financially with a yearly gift coming in and still getting money from Bethany.

**Motion: to accept financial reports of February 2023**

**Made by: Hoa Sobczynski**

**Seconded by: Carol Bass**

**Carried**

**Pastor’s Report:** Midweek lunch & devotion services going okay. Hearing good reports from those attending. Pastor continues his regular routine of visiting and distributing worship bulletins.

Went to St. Mary’s Hospital in Duluth for the first time on March 20<sup>th</sup>. The Laurentian Conference was held on March 5<sup>th</sup> at Immanuel Lutheran in Tower. Our annual dues of \$50 are due. Pastor will tell Laurie and have her check for 2021 and

2022. Pastor looking forward to the Laurentian Conference meeting on April 20<sup>th</sup> at Buhl. The LSS meeting was held as a Zoom meeting due to weather. Also looking ahead to the Synod Assembly, the last weekend in April at Cragun’s Resort near Brainerd. As Pastor will be absent that Sunday a substitute will be needed, The Bishop has a sermon that may be used. The new ergonomic desk has arrived and been set up.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**President:** I appreciate you and your help as I am new at this.

**Vice-President:** The next meeting of the church consortium (Borderland ELCA churches) will be Monday at Loman.

The Passion Play will be April 5<sup>th</sup> at Backus with 36 participants. The free will offering will go to the Food Shelf. The All-Church Service at VNP is a go. Lee Grim will contact VNP to get permission. Bishop Amy will be here.

**Council, continued on page 4**

**Interim Pastor:**  
**Rev. Paul J. Erdal**

**Office Hours:**

**Monday—Thursday**

**10 a.m. –2 p.m.**

**Friday**

**9 a.m. to noon**

**218-283-2208**

**[www.firstlutheranifalls.org](http://www.firstlutheranifalls.org)**  
**[firstlutheranifalls@gmail.com](mailto:firstlutheranifalls@gmail.com)**

## Council minutes, continued from page 3

The consortium discussed a project which all could work toward might be senior day care. Also, will check out what services are needed in the community without duplicating what is already available.

**Service/Outreach:** Still needs chairperson. Brenda Bertilson sent an update on what the committee did in the past month. The committee met on Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. There were 6 volunteers for Community Cafe. 3 Get Well cards sent. The committee will serve coffee after church on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Discipleship:** 6 kids participated in the broom ball game and had a great time. The upcoming bowling event will be for kids and parents. Confirmation will be April 16<sup>th</sup> and a Bog Walk the following week. Camp flyers are out and beginning to plan Vacation Bible School. We are not sure if Camp Vermillion will be able to participate this year. We will possibly be working again with Zion Lutheran.

**Fellowship:** On Palm Sunday Betty and Cynthia will host coffee. Cynthia made soup for each of the Lenten lunches with the extras going to SOS. A couple of ideas for future projects are in the works. At Easter there will be hot cross buns and fruit after services.

**Buildings and Grounds:** Lloyd not at meeting but submitted report. He and Dwayne Dougherty met on 3/14/2023 and discussed needs for summer and need to solicit snow plow volunteers for next winter. The handrails throughout church were all tightened, and clocks set. Minor projects around the church this summer can be done with volunteers. Watch for opportunities. Please keep our committee informed of anything needing attention.

**Finance:** Still waiting on the giving envelopes. Pastor will be sending out letter next month with financial report to update congregation on what

is occurring.

**Worship and Music:** Nancy not at meeting but gave info to Pastor to share. Holy Week Services- Maundy Thursday will be at 7:00 PM. Easter will be at regular time. No Good Friday service.

### Old Business:

**Auction: (Elevator Fund-Raiser)** Betty reported that the online auction is shaping up. Lots of items which are currently being photographed and put on the website. Would like to separate items into alike categories.

**Borderland ELCA:** see vice-president report.

**Unfilled council position.** Brenda will be asked for suggestions of names for chair.

**Conflict of interest and confidentiality forms -** no action currently.

**Other items:** The call committee process is on pause.

An acknowledgement of Bethany's request to end pastoral services needs to be done. Thinking ahead to after April – (Pastor no longer going to Bethany) Any changes in church service times? And his covenant will need to be done as required anytime there is change in his duties. This needs to be on next month's agenda.

Next month's meetings will be rescheduled due to the absence of members.

Meeting closed with The Lord's Prayer.

Adjourned at 6:20 PM

**Executive Committee Meeting: April 25th, 2023, at 5 PM**

**Next Council Meeting: April 27, 2023, at 5 PM**

Respectfully Submitted by: Carol Bass, Secretary



## New ideas sought for this summer's Christmas in July

### FELW Meeting Minutes from April 11, 2023

The meeting opened with Brenda reading devotions based on 2 Chronicles 7:16.

The mission and purpose statements were read.

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with the correction that Maureen Jackson has volunteered to chair December's Tour of Trees.

The treasurer's report was reviewed.

Correspondence was read.

Old business: Final plans were made for the

county FELW brunch to be Saturday, April 22.

New business: The summer convention is June 12 and 13 in Grand Rapids. Two of our members will attend; a motion was made to cover their expenses. Carried. Ten school kits were put together to be taken to the convention.

Christmas in July: Volunteers are needed to chair the bazaar; we would like to start up the luncheon, if we can get someone to chair it. Ideas? Thoughts? Call Brenda Bertilson at 218-283-2144, Sandy Harju at 218-283-5733, or Kitty Sandstrom at 218-283-4038.

Respectfully submitted, Sandy Harju, Secretary

## Summer convention scheduled for June

The Summer Convention/Gathering to celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women of the ELCA is June 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> at Zion Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MN. The gathering is entitled "*Reflecting God's Light in the World!*"

If you are interested in joining us for an educational and uplifting experience along with meeting other ELCA women, please contact Kitty Sandstrom by May 10th at 218-283-4038 or pick up registration information at the church office.

## Helping Hand Hotdish!

Make a little extra and stick it in the church's freezer. Label the container with main ingredients and the date. It can help out someone experiencing a tough time. Chili and stews freeze really well! Thanks in advance.

**Bethany Lutheran Church  
Quilt Sale and Luncheon  
May 7th – 12-3 p.m.  
Hot dishes, salads, desserts  
Free will offering**



## An excerpt from Bishop Amy Odgren's sermon Synod Assembly

**A reading from the gospel of John, the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter 8:31-36** —<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup> They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup> So if **the Son makes you free**, you will be free indeed.

Dear friends in Christ, grace, peace, and mercy are yours through our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We just heard a passage from the gospel of John that notes Jesus' words that "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." And again, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

What is this truth that makes us free?

It is the vision of the crucified and risen Christ, focused on God's future rather than on the hiding and denying of bondage to sin that frees us. It is a vision that allows us to face with courage and truth the reality of our sin and know that we are loved and redeemed beyond its power. It is that vision that helps us to sing clearly of God's love and the freedom from bondage that comes only from God's gracious gift of the Son.

Jesus speaks to us today of truth. And of slavery to sin. And of his being our freedom as he both models and grants this unfathomable acceptance. And we know in our gut, don't you think, as well as in our experience that truth sets us free? But first it must be spoken, received, and embraced. Or so it seems to me. First, we have to acknowledge our utter slavery to that which binds us up. And our need to be set free. And that we have nowhere to turn but to the only one who can bring this marvelous gift of freedom to us.

This is the wonder of Jesus' words for us today and every day. It's not up to me or you. You and I are to simply stand still in the unparalleled gift that as broken and hurting and yes, hurtful, too, as we are -- - Jesus came to set us free. We can't do it. All we can do --- all we have to do --- is know our need and be grateful in the gift. All we have to do is cast aside the biggest lie of all: that we can do it all ourselves and that our value rests in that. It does not. And sometimes coming to that larger truth begins in simply speaking what truths we know here and now as best we can. Even or especially about ourselves. It all starts with truth, of course. This is the truth of our humanness and the greater truth of God's great love for all of us.

People of God – friends in Christ – Northeastern Minnesota Synod - "*So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*" *The Son Makes You Free!*  
*Thanks be to God! Amen.*



# Announcements

## Community Café Volunteers

The Community Café can use more volunteers. If you are able to volunteer one evening a month, please call the church office at 283-2208.

If you are in need of Community Cafe meals, call 285-7225 by 4 p.m. on Cafe day. Meals can be picked up between 5 and 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays from the kitchen window.

## Bible Study

You are invited to a Bible study with Bette Simon at 11 a.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at her house. The Bible study is from the *Gather* magazine. If anyone wants to participate but doesn't have a subscription to *Gather*, there are a few extra copies at the church that people can pick up and use. For more information, please call the office at 283-2208.

## Quilters

- + Bethany's Quilters meet from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. every Tuesday (Bring your own lunch)
- + Zion's Quilters meet from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays but not each week. March 13th, 14th, 20th, and 21st. (Bring your own lunch).
- + Littlefork Quilters meet from Noon - 3 p.m. each Thursday.
- + Northern Lights Quilters meet at 2 p.m. the 3rd Monday of the month at First Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Anyone interested in joining a group can show up or call the church group they would like to join.

## Bible Study

You are invited to Bible Study, Sunday mornings at 9:30 in Memorial Hall. Bring your favorite Bible and an open heart. Good things are happening!

## Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds committee is looking for people willing and able to help with building and grounds issues. These volunteers need not join the committee, but we are always in need of someone to do a few small carpentry jobs from time to time.

## Special summer service

A special summer service is being planned for Sunday, June 18th at Voyageurs National Park. Please mark your calendars, and plan to attend.

## Pie and Perennial Sale

When you are cleaning out your gardens, remember to set aside a few things for the pie and perennial sale, coming soon!

## First Lutheran Youth: What's Up?



### Congratulations Confirmands!

Watch for information on  
Upcoming activities:  
Bogwalk  
Canoe adventure  
Softball  
VNP activities

Please continue to be watching for opportunities to spend time with your church family.

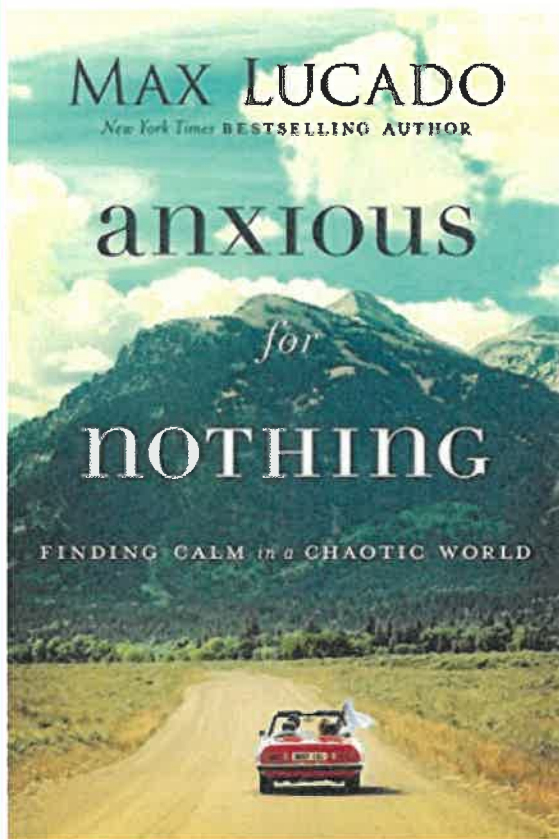
This year's eighth grade confirmation students are next fall's confirmands. Classes will start again in September.



Confirmands sit behind their beautiful quilts, made by Darlene Fittje, during a bit of practice before the big day. From left: Landon Zub, Lachlan Reiners, Lauren Basaraba, Landon Basaraba, Andrew Eide, Emmitt Olson, and Zach Youso.



## Book recommendations



Does the uncertainty and chaos of life keep you up at night? Is anxiety your constant companion? We've all been there, but we don't have to let those racing thoughts control us. It's time to let God help you win the war on worry and start living a life full of calm.

*Anxious for Nothing*, from pastor and New York Times bestselling author Max Lucado, provides a practical and powerful roadmap for battling with and healing from anxiety. Combining hopeful scripture with timeless stories, Max will equip you with the tools you need to overcome your anxieties, no matter what you're facing.

—Amazon review

This book was recommended by Kris Jackson as one she has shared with her children and others as a great book in uncertain times.

If you have a book you would like to recommend, send a note to the church office, and we will share it with the readers of the Voice.



## Coming soon! Pie and Perennial Sale

Set aside your extra pots and plants!

Bake a pie or two!

Then watch for the sale date at First Evangelical Lutheran!





Thank you to our readers, ushers and acolytes, including: Carol Bass, Nancy and Duayne Johnson, Linda Martin, Pat Ettestad, Barb Bergh, Steve Schultz, Lachlan Reiners, Nick Schultz, Hoa Sobczynski, Don Nuthak, Becca and Deacon Schultz, Max Youso, Zach Youso, Aubrey Eide, and Makenna Whelchel.

Thank you to those who helped with fellowship, including: eanne Henrickson, Cynthia Warren, Ardel and Kathi Henrickson, Sherri Mannausau, Tony and Kris Jackson, Service and Outreach

Thank you to the musicians who shared their talents: Sue Hewitt, Summer Froemke, Kathy Thureen, Joe Belanger.

## Prayer Chain

**Please consider serving as a member of the Prayer Chain.**

First Lutheran Church has four active prayer chains. If you have prayer requests for someone, or yourself, call either the church office at 283-2208, or Brenda Bertilson 283-2144; 240-4939. You must have permission to put someone on the chain, either from the person, or from a close relative. To put someone on the list for Sunday prayers, call the office at 283-2208. Please call back when they can be removed.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Remember in your prayers, those in need and those in care facilities.**

**Good Samaritan:** Dutch Olson and Margi Roeder

**Littlefork Nursing Home:** Betty Steinbach

<b>General Fund Financial Information</b>						
<b>Thank you for supporting First Lutheran Church!</b>						
<b>As of March 31, 2023</b>						

	Current Month Actual	Current Month Budget	Variance		Year To Date Actual	Year To Date Budget	Variance
Operating Income	13,393	14,829	(1,436)		52,702	44,487	8,215
Operating Expense	14,673	17,091	2,418		47,217	51,273	4,056
Operating Income Less Expense	(1,208)	(2,262)	982		5,485	(6,786)	12,271



# May Birthdays

5/3	Dorothy Johnson	5/12	Wendy Hanson	5/27	Sharla Eide
5/4	Kallie Briggs		Anna Jensen		Marlene Wagner
	Douglas Dault		Cammi Jensen	5/28	Mary Perala
5/5	Colin Hebner		Soren Lindquist		Miranda Templeton
5/6	Andrew Bergstrom		Craig McKenzie	5/29	Callen Short
	Neil Fittje	5/13	Gary Coran	5/30	Irene Johnson
	BettyJeanne Henrickson		Courtney Youso		James Miggins
	Payten Rousseau	5/15	Tim Bright	5/31	Roger Luettjohann
	Darcie Schulz		Thomas Sether		
	Piper Tomczak		BethAnne Slatinski		
5/7	Skylar Kucera-Schneider	5/16	JoAnn Wuollet		
5/8	Darlene Fittje	5/17	Loni Bright		
5/9	Dawn Kruger		Alexander Rousseau		
	Lilly Skoglund	5/18	Dena Bergstrom		
	Iris Steinbach	5/19	Melissa Voigt		
5/10	Anthony Osse	5/20	Allen Rasmussen		
	Lloyd Skogstad	5/22	Bailey Herberg		
	Emily Treat	5/23	Patrick Rein		
5/11	Elizabeth Blight	5/24	Walter Buller		
	Gracie Froemke	5/25	Lisa McKenzie		
	Grace Weisz	5/26	Wilson Johnson		



## COMMUNITY CAFE SERVES FREE, HOT MEALS TO EVERYONE.

- Serving a free, hot, nutritious dinner from 5 to 6 pm.
- Meals are pick-up only; there is no in-house dining at this time. Come to the front doors of Backus (the door that face the street. We'll have dinner ready to go!
- EVERYONE is welcome.
- There is no charge for meals, but donations are gratefully accepted.

**The April volunteers at the Cafe were:  
Barb Bergh, Sandy Harju, Kris Jackson, and Sue Mathews.  
Small crew, but they got the job done!**





FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA  
123 Wayside Lane  
International Falls, MN 56649

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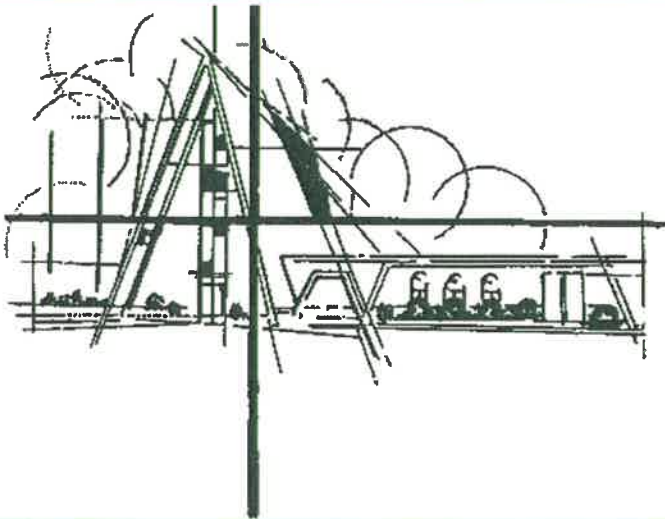
(CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED)

May 2023  
NEWSLETTER



## First Lutheran Church, ELCA

WHEREVER YOU ARE ON YOUR JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!



### First Lutheran's Mission Statement *Sharing God's Grace*

### First Lutheran's Vision Statement *First Lutheran Church will be a congregation that shares God's grace by:*

- + Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ with integrity.
- + Welcoming all to active involvement in ministry.
- + Offering a non-judgmental encounter with God through the celebration of liturgical worship with word and sacrament.
- + Responding faithfully to the Great Commission of Matthew 28 -- to grow.
- + Committing ourselves to serving the needs of our congregation and the community at large.

### WORSHIP SERVICE

Available in person and on our website  
Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

### OFFICE HOURS

Mon. through Fri., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Office: 218-283-2208

Check out our Website!

[www.firstlutheranifalls.org](http://www.firstlutheranifalls.org)

Look for us on Instagram and Facebook.