



# First Things – April, 2023

## Don't Be...

What are the first words that are actually SPOKEN in the New Testament? They are the words of the angel Gabriel, when he appeared in the temple to announce to Zacharias that he would have a son (John the Baptist). The words were: *DON'T BE AFRAID*. The same angel spoke the same greeting to the Virgin Mary six months later: *DON'T BE AFRAID*.

Those words that were spoken before Jesus was born are also the first words that are spoken in the Bible after Jesus rose from the dead:

***The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified” (Matthew 28:5).***

But then, none less than the Lord Jesus speaks those words after he has risen:

***Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matthew 28:10).***

DO NOT BE AFRAID – you can argue that those four words are a summary of the entire Bible. On page after page, the Lord is reminding us that in spite of all the calamities, catastrophes, and crises that darken our days, we can face them all without fear.

And Jesus' resurrection at Easter in particular shows why that is true:

1. Easter proves that Jesus is God. And if he is God, he certainly knows what's going on in our life and will take of us.
2. Easter proves that our sins have been forgiven. Jesus' resurrection shows that God accepted his death as the payment for our sins. So, we are his holy children and he loves us.
3. Jesus' resurrection proves that one day we will rise from the grave just as Jesus did and hear the blessed words ***Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world*** (Matthew 25:34).

## Holy Week Concert & Podcast Devotions

The Luther High School Holy Week concert is something I've attended for more than 50 years. It's being held on Wednesday, April 5 at 7:00 PM.

Faculty members from Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota have recorded 3-4-minute-long audio devotions for Holy Week. You can listen to these devotions which start on **Palm Sunday** and end on **Easter Sunday** [HERE](#).

## Looking At Worship

We're finishing our message series on the Beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5. The last of that series is *Blessed are the Peacemakers*.

The message theme for our Lenten services, *His Final Steps*, will carry over into our Holy Week Worship:

*His Final Steps Led to the Upper Room* on Maundy Thursday – worship with Holy Communion is at **6:30 PM**

*His Final Steps Led to the Place of the Skull* on Good Friday – worship is at **6:30 PM**

*His Final Steps Led Outside His Tomb* on Easter Sunday – worship is at 7:00 & 9:00 AM. **Easter breakfast** will be served BETWEEN services



His Final Steps  
Holy Week Worship Schedule

April 2 – **Palm Sunday** Worship with Holy Communion at 9:00 AM

April 6 – **Maundy Thursday** Worship with Holy Communion at 6:30 PM

April 7 – **Good Friday** Worship at 6:30 PM

April 9 – **Easter Sunday** Worship at 7:00 & 9:00 AM  
**Easter Breakfast**, between services

After Easter, the messages will be based on the Gospel Readings for each Sunday:

April 16 – [John 20:19-31](#)

April 23 – [Luke 24:13-35](#)

April 30 – [John 10:1-10](#)

## Mark Your Calendars

**April 15 – Lutheran Women's Mission Society Spring Rally** at Nodine

**April 22 – WELS Coulee Women's Retreat** will take place at Luther High School, 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM

**April 22 - Luther High School Big Knight** will take place that evening – check it out [HERE](#)

## Update From The Board For Lay Ministry

The Board will be hosting the **Easter Breakfast** which will take place between services on Easter Sunday, [April 9](#).

The teacherage has been rented out.

Our **Quarterly Meeting** will take place after worship on [Sunday, April 30](#).

Thanks in large measure to some large one-time gifts in January, our finances are in good shape through February. **Expenses** have been \$42,641 while **income** has been \$48,229.

## Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS)

A poster for the LWMS Spring Rally. The background features a field of pink and white flowers under a bright sun. The text is arranged in a clean, modern font. At the top, it says 'LWMS Spring Rally' in a large, stylized font. Below that, the date 'Saturday, April 15, 2023' is listed, followed by 'Registration/Refreshments: 8:00 A.M.'. The speaker is identified as 'Coral Metcalfe', WELS Kingdom Workers Field Coordinator. The topic is 'God's Incredible Grace in Indonesia', addressing physical and spiritual needs. It notes that lunch is provided by St. John's Ladies Aid. The location is St. John's Lutheran Church in Nodine, Minnesota, and it states that all women are invited to attend. Contact information for Joan Zenke is provided at the bottom.

**LWMS Spring Rally**

Saturday, April 15, 2023

Registration/Refreshments: 8:00 A.M.

**Speaker: Coral Metcalfe**  
WELS Kingdom Workers Field Coordinator

**Topic: God's Incredible Grace in Indonesia**  
Addressing Physical and Spiritual Needs

Lunch provided by St. John's Ladies Aid

St. John's Lutheran Church  
Nodine, Minnesota

All women invited to attend

For more information contact  
Joan Zenke 507-643-6889

**Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS)** originated in the Coulee Region more than 60 years ago. At that time Pastor Arnold Mennicke (who served St. Matthew's in Winona for more than 50 years!) was the chairman of the Administrative Committee for Africa for the WELS Board for World Missions. Women in the area wanted to know what they could do to support WELS world missions, and he helped them found an organization to do that.

Today women from more than 800 WELS congregations make up the LWMS. They comprise more than 60 "circuits" which hold spring and fall rallies which highlight both the home and world mission work which WELS carries out. Each year the LWMS raises upwards of \$100,000 to support different missions.

First Lutheran recently *rejoined* the Winona circuit which also has 21 other WELS congregations. The Winona Circuit's spring rally will be Saturday, April 15 at St. John's in Nodine. See the announcement on the **left** for more details.

The LWMS hosts annual conventions where WELS women (and the men who love them) worship and learn about missions together. Starting this year, the annual convention will be held in La Crosse every third year.

Sue and I have been to half a dozen conventions over the years and have always left feeling uplifted and inspired. Particularly memorable are the opening and closing worship services.

This year, featured convention speakers will include **Pastor Dan Witte** from the One Africa Team (we saw a video by him on March 12), **Missionary Elise Gross** from the Latin America Team, and **Pastor Dan Lewig** who recently began a new congregation in Richland Center, Wisconsin. You can check out the full schedule of activities and presentations [HERE](#).

The convention will take place at the **La Crosse Center**, Thursday, June 22 – Sunday, June 25. You can register to attend the convention [HERE](#). Registration is not cheap (but does include meals), but the experience will be priceless, I promise. And if you're reading this on **March 31**, you can still get the "early bird" registration discount.

Even if you don't register, do plan to come to **OPENING SERVICE** on Thursday, June 22 at 7:00 PM. There'll likely be 3,000 in attendance singing their hearts out. You can't miss it!



## April at First Lutheran

1. **Worship** – Monday evening worship will resume on Monday, April 17
2. **Sunday Bible Study** is studying 10 Lies About God
3. **CrossTalk**, our children's ministry, meets on Sundays after worship
4. **Monday Bible Study** is studying the great chapters of the New Testament at will 9:00 AM
5. **Confirmation Class** for 8<sup>th</sup> graders meets on Wednesday, April 12, 19, and 26 at 6:30 PM.
6. **Choir** rehearses on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM
7. **First Women** will be carpooling to Nodine for the LWMS spring rally on Saturday, April 15 and to Luther High School for the Coulee Women's Retreat on Saturday, April 22



## Luther Knights State Champions

The Luther Knights won the Division 4 WIAA state basketball championship recently. You can relive their championship run by watching this [One Shining Moment Video](#) – it's pretty special!

## Become A First Lutheran Facebook Follower

We'll be supplementing what is on our church website ([KeepChristFirst.com](http://www.KeepChristFirst.com)) and what we send out in emails with more announcements and pictures on **our First Lutheran Facebook page**. Check out the First Lutheran La Crescent Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/KeepChristFirst/>) and become a follower so you will keep up with what's happening.

*Thanks so much for everything in connection with my ministry anniversary celebration.*

*A most blessed Holy Week to you all.*

*Pastor Mark*

