



First Things ~ February, 2022

Spring Is Coming!

I can say spring is coming with confidence. Just look outside. On January 1, we had 8 hours, 59 minutes and ten seconds of light. On February 1, we were up to 9 hours, 54 minutes, and one second of daylight – nearly an hour more. And by the end of February we'll be over 11 hours. To be sure, there will be some more cold and snow, but spring is definitely on its way.

Just as we can confidently say that spring is coming, we can confidently say that Jesus is coming. And when he comes, all the misery that so often fills our lives will come to an end. We have his word on it. And that gives us confidence and hope as we go through what Shakespeare terms *the winter of our discontent*. But there's more. We have the confidence of knowing that the Lord will be with us – to guard and protect, to comfort and console – from now until he comes again. Thanks be to God!

This Is Important

There are many members of our congregation who have not received Holy Communion for a long time – for a wide variety of reasons. If you are among them, please remember that Holy Communion is one of the three great signs of God's love (together with Holy Baptism and the Holy Scriptures). It forgives our sins and strengthens our faith. So, if you're not able to come to our worship services for Holy Communion, please call me and arrange a time and place to receive private communion.

It's also become very difficult to keep track of the members who are not at our worship services. If you are sick and not able to come to worship – or if you are in the hospital – please don't assume that I am aware of your situation. Please email me (pastor@keepchristfirst.com) or call me (608-881-4041) and let me know. And, if you're aware of one of our members who's sick or in the hospital, please inform me or the church office (churchoffice@keepchristfirst.com, 507-895-4775).

And finally, if you aren't able to be at our worship services, please worship at with one of our recorded services <https://vimeo.com/showcase/3902389>.

You can also check out our **Facebook page**: <https://www.facebook.com/KeepChristFirst/>, our **website**: <https://www.keepchristfirst.com>, and **YouTube Channel**: search for [keepchristfirst](https://www.youtube.com/keepchristfirst).

This Month At First

Every Monday morning (9:00 AM) – **Bible Study** – we're reading the Old Testament books named Ruth and Esther

Every Wednesday evening – **7th and 8th Grade Confirmation Class** (6:30 PM) and **Church Choir** (7:00 PM)

Thursdays

- **First Thursday** – First Women (our Bible study, fellowship, and service group)
- **Second and Fourth Thursdays** – Women of the Word (WOW) – they're starting a new book *Out of Context: 8 Bible Passages Most Christians Get Wrong*
- **Third Thursday** – Men's Bible Study – we're getting off the ground in the first chapters of Romans

Annual Meeting

1. **Tim Nelson** was re-elected as the head of the ELC Business Team, **Marcus Erickson** as secretary, and **Matt Evenson** as Vice-Chairman
2. The 2021 budget report was reviewed and the 2022 budget was approved
 - a. Total offerings for 2021 were \$210,242 (in 2020 offerings were \$215,769)
 - b. Total expenditures for 2021 were \$234,428 (so a \$24,000+ shortfall for the year, offset by the forgiveness of the Payroll Protection Program [PPP] loan)
 - c. The approved 2022 budget projects expenditures at \$244,623 – anticipated income is \$228,066 (\$18,000 more than the past year), so there is an anticipated deficit of \$16,556. **Please keep this in mind as you plan your 2022 offerings.**
3. Because our cash-on-hand position is a positive one thanks to the forgiveness of the PPP loan, the voters approved giving two additional thank offerings for 2021: \$2,000 to WELS, and \$2,000 to Luther High School
4. We voted to rent out the presently unused teacherage at 406 Main Street
5. The meeting gratefully acknowledged the blessing of the new metal church roof that was completely paid for by special donations this year. At the time the roof was being redone last year, it was discovered that the flat roofs over the offices and the entryway are in need of repair. This will likely cost over \$30,000, and special gifts will again be sought for this project.
6. **Dave Wendt** will head up an *ad hoc* committee to look at the future of worship here at First

Calls

Approximately 10% of the 1,264 WELS congregations are calling a pastor, including 24 in the Minnesota District. St. John's in Nodine will issue their second call on Sunday, February 6. The WELS Administrative Committee for Africa (of which I'm now the chairman) called two new missionaries to Africa on Wednesday. ***"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"*** (Mark 9:38).

Lent & Holy Week

Midweek Lenten worship services will begin on Wednesday, March 2 and continue for the following five Wednesdays. Once again this year, I will be in a preaching rotation with other area pastors. The **Lutheran High School Sound Foundation** will be at First Lutheran for the last of the Lenten services on Wednesday, April 6. April 14, 15, and 17 are the dates of Maundy (or Holy) Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter.

Serving You In Christ,

Pastor Mark