



First Things – March, 2023

If you're God's child – and you are, by faith in Jesus Christ - you can rest assured today that both **your standing as God's child** and **his protection** are sure and secure. These are two things in life you simply don't have to worry about anymore, two big concerns that you just don't have to carry.

Every day, you and I carry important life concerns. No, I'm not talking about being crushed with worry, but rather about taking important things seriously. It's right to be concerned about your finances. It's important to carry the concern that your marriage would be all that God wants it to be. It's good to focus much concern on the welfare and development of your children, and grandchildren. It's vital to take your church and your relationship to the body of Christ seriously. It would be silly not to see your physical health as an important concern. It is responsible to carry these concerns. It would be unwise not to consider all of these things as important and worthy of your attention.

But there is no reason to be concerned about **if you are still God's child** or **if he is watching over your life**. You do not have to burden yourself with worry about these things. You do not have to plague yourself with the thought that though these things are yours today, they may not be yours tomorrow. You can wake up morning after morning after morning with a smile on your face put there by the knowledge that these most important things in your life are simply never, ever at risk. It is one of the sweet gifts of God's grace that you can rest assured that these things that now define you and your life are yours forever. You can lose your house, your job, your family, your friendships, your health, and your church, but you will not lose these things. You can face disappointment and loss, but these things will remain. You can suffer the pain of defeat, but these things will still be yours. You can lose it all, but nothing can take this life from you, because what defines life is simply not for the taking.

Nothing in all of life is more important than being God's dearly loved and wonderfully protected child. You could never have earned these two unshakable realities. They are only ever yours by grace, because of Jesus Christ's life and death. It is because of that grace that you have a forever place in God's family. It is because of that grace that your life and all that is in it is under the careful administration of the King of kings himself. It is because of that grace that on your darkest day, you are still loved and accepted.

It is because of grace that when nothing in life makes sense, your life is still under his control. There is much for you to be concerned about, but not these two things. His love will never fail, and his rule on your behalf is eternal.

Looking At Worship

The message theme for our Lenten services is *His Final Steps*:

His final steps led to a tomb – Pastor Rieke
His final steps led to a dinner celebration – Pastor Rieke
His final steps led to his Father's house – Pastor Unnasch from South Ridge
His final steps led to a fig tree – Pastor Kreuger from Eitzen
His final steps led to some Greeks – Pastor Wolff from Caledonia
His final steps led to his enemies – Pastor Schultz



Check out the March calendar to see who's preaching here each Wednesday. Lenten suppers are being planned for each Wednesday evening service.

During March our Sunday messages will be based on the Beatitudes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, in [Matthew 5:1-12](#). On the **Sundays in Lent**, as well as on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, our messages will look at the Beatitudes which our Lord Jesus spoke on his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-13.

Looking ahead to Holy Week:

- **Holy Thursday** worship with Holy Communion – [Thursday, April 6](#) at 6:30 PM
- **Good Friday** worship – [Friday, April 7](#) at **6:30 PM**
The Board for Lay Ministry realizes that in the past First Lutheran has had Good Friday worship at different time in the afternoon. But at that time, most employers gave their employees time off work on that day. Since few employers do so today, the Board felt it was easiest for the greatest number of people to attend an evening service on that day.
- **Easter Sunday** worship – [Sunday, April 9](#) at **7:00 AM** & **9:00 AM**. There will be an EASTER BREAKFAST AFTER BOTH SERVICES.

Mark [April 22](#) on Your Calendars

WELS Coulee Women's Retreat will take place at Luther High School – check out more information [HERE](#)

Luther High School Big Knight will take place that evening at Celebrations on the River on French Island – check out more about that [HERE](#)

Board For Lay Ministry Update

We're happy that **Ryan Brown** and **Terry Beitlich** were elected as Secretary and Treasurer at the annual meeting on January 29. We also thank **Marcus Erickson** and **Dan Daily** for their faithful service to the congregation.

Our new renter is moving in to the teacherage this week.

Starting this Sunday, we will begin to *pass the plate* for offerings again. The decision to return to this was triggered by the news that there have been

no coins in the offering plate in nearly three years. The board took this as a sign that while our offerings have – by God’s grace – remained stable, children have likely not been taking part with their parents in the giving of offerings. We pray that by passing the offering plate, children will once again experience the joy of giving, just all of us did when we were that age.

In January, along with its regular offerings, the congregation received two one-time gifts (Qualified Charitable Distributions or QCDs). Largely because of these gifts, the congregation’s income in January was \$35,624 while its expenses were \$19,979. This gives us a comfortable cushion as we enter the new year.

If you are interested in learning more about QCDs or other estate planning that can benefit you, your family, or the congregations and school you wish to support; WELS does have individuals who can provide information. If there is enough interest, we could ask one to come and give a presentation here one evening.

March at First Lutheran

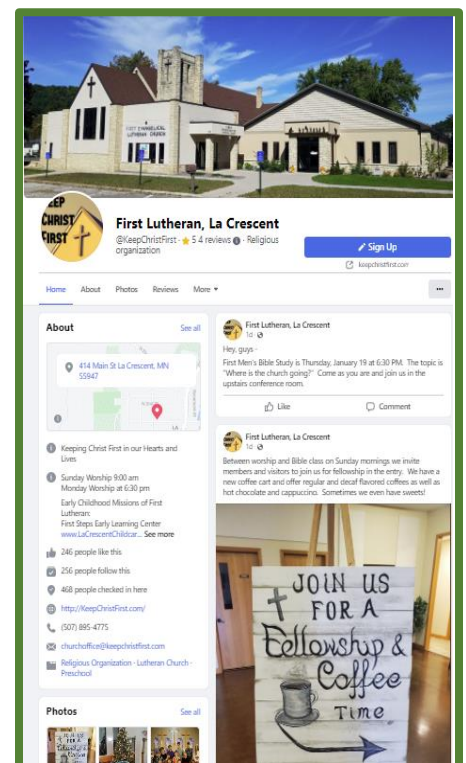
1. **Sunday Worship** – There will be a special celebration of Christian Ministry on Sunday, March 12. It will be followed by a presentation about our recent trip to Africa and a potluck luncheon. Look for more information in the entryway.
2. **Sunday Bible Study** is studying **10 Lies About God**
3. **CrossTalk**, our children’s ministry, meets on Sundays after worship
4. **Monday Bible Study** begins at 9:00 AM – we’re studying the **Great Chapters of the New Testament**
5. **Confirmation Class** for 8th graders is meeting at **4:30 PM** on Wednesday evenings during Lent
6. **Choir** rehearses on Wednesdays after worship during Lent
7. **First Women** will be meeting again on Saturday, March 11 at 10:00 AM



Become A First Lutheran Facebook Follower

We’ll be supplementing what is on our church website (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 the Take A Missionary Out for a Meal Gifts

With the generous gifts that were given, Sue and I were able to take all of the mission families out for meals. It meant a lot to them that they were not being treated by “the synod,” but by a family of believers that cared enough to make it possible.

The pictures don't do justice to the good times we had – all of them OUTSIDE!!!

We'll show you more pictures and some videos on Sunday, March 12 after worship. Hope to see you then.



We took the Lilongwe crew (left) out first: **Dan and Karen Kroll** (sitting across from me in the dark tops) out with **Mark Panning** on the left (he's single) and **John Roebke** (his wife **Nancy** was sick that day).

We did get out with **John and Nancy** another night (right).



The Lusaka gang is below. **Ben and Becky Foxen** are in left foreground. **Deb Witte** is sitting next to **Sue** (her husband **Dan** got in the next day from Nairobi – we went out with the two of them another time). In the background are **John and Sharon Hartmann**, **Leslie Mohlke** (her husband **Howie** had just gotten out of the hospital), and **Keegan and Kate Dowling**, along with **Phil Birner** (his wife **Susan** was in the USA).



The **Dowling's** and the **Foxen's** each have four children. Below six of them are wolfing down pizza at the kids' table.

