



April 2024 Newsletter

take up the shield of faith Ephesians 6:16

Take Note...

Online giving now available on our website: faithlutheranlittlefalls.org



Faith's Core Values:
Discipleship, Hospitality, Prayer, Service, Stewardship, Worship, and Unity

From Pastor Mark...

The Great Confession

“My Lord and my God!” John 20:28

Doubting the Easter Facts

On the second Sunday of Easter, the Gospel text is from John 20:19-31, and is commonly referred to as the “Doubting Thomas” text. When the others tell him, “We have seen the Lord!” Thomas is skeptical, *yeah, right!*

We tend to judge Thomas harshly for his doubt. But try to put yourself in his sandals: Thomas had witnessed the arrest of our Lord and he was likely in shock over how our Lord was treated and then executed on a cross. What happened to his faith? Common sense would conclude that the crucifixion was the end of the story; that death had the last word. So it would seem possible that he despaired, gave up hope, and fell into unbelief.

The World Today

Like Thomas, God says to us, “You shall have no other gods.” And in spite of God’s expectation that we fear, love, and trust Him above all else, regardless of what’s happening in the world or your personal life.

We worry and fret over this and that. News headlines cause us to worry and wonder about the future. We forget Jesus’ words about the “lilies of the field.” At the other extreme, when life is smooth sailing and we have surplus money in the bank, prosperity can distract us from God’s will and command.

In either situation, our heavenly Father still says, “You shall have no other gods.”

Confessing Thomas

One week later, Jesus appears to the disciples again and says to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it my side. Stop doubting and believe,” (v. 27).

Thomas blurts out, “My Lord and my God!” (v. 28). In doing so he reveals the state of his heart. He has gone from *Doubting Thomas* to *Confessing Thomas* because it is a great confession of faith.

As followers of the risen Savior, Christ calls each one of us to say these same words with confidence and conviction. My hope and prayer is that you will experience the presence of Christ through His Word to you in Scripture.

In Christ,
Pastor Mark

President's Message

Greetings Family of Faith,

Last month I said I would write about Spring. That's coming up, but first I'd like to add a comment about the changes we've seen at Faith during the last several months. While we, as a congregation, have certainly made some changes, Pastor Mark has had to make adjustments to accommodate us as well. Getting used to a new pastor is a two-way street. It WILL come out just fine. Let's all keep working on doing God's work together. And, as always, please contact me or any council member with any comments, concerns, suggestions, or questions.

Now on to Spring. Looking out the window today it doesn't seem much like Spring, but it's on its way. We too often want things our way and in the time we want it. I believe that God has a sense of humor and needs to remind us on occasion that He is in charge. God has promised us the seasons, and He always keeps His promises.

Here's a Bible verse that speaks to me of Spring. From Deuteronomy 32:2 we read, "Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants." This seems to be all about Spring, but it's also a reminder that God is constantly with us - teaching - guiding - showing us the way - encouraging us.

We look at what's going on in our country and the world around us and we can easily be discouraged. But Spring (something about that word itself just seems to bring hope and newness of life) comes and with it God's promise of everlasting life if we truly believe.

This Family of Faith is amazing in its belief in God, His risen Son, and the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. God has certainly blessed this congregation over the years. God loves each of you. Every one of you is precious in His eyes. What a beautiful reassurance that is.

Thank you, God, for Spring and all its promises in our lives.

Christ is risen. Hallelujah!
Howie

Congregational Life Team

I was just getting used to our spring like weather, putting the heavy jackets and boots away, and today as I am writing this we are getting more snow than we have had all winter!

As Howie and I are sitting inside our warm house, we heard a noise outside and our neighbor was "blowing" our driveway, without being asked to do so. God bless good people!

Looking ahead, we are planning our spring garage/bake sale! The date is Saturday, May 4th. There will be a sign up sheet soon, so please join in to make this event another success.

Celebration Sunday will be May 19th. We will be honoring our graduating seniors and it also will be the end of the Sunday School season. More info on this will be coming.

Our Wednesday evening Lenten soup suppers went well with good attendance and delicious soups and desserts. Thank you to all who donated time and cooking talents! The free-will offering will go to the youth who helped on the Wednesday evenings. Watch for information on more fund raisers for our youth's mission trip to Indianapolis this summer.

Easter breakfast is being planned! It takes a lot of people to put this "event" together. A big THANK YOU to all who signed up to donate and to work for this happy event!

Let us all concentrate on the real reason we celebrate Easter!!

HE IS RISEN, HE IS RISEN INDEED!!!

Wishing all a blessed Easter! Bev and the Cong. Life team

Mission Statement

Know, Grow, Go

- *Know* God and others
- *Grow* in Faith
- *Go* in Faith to Love and Serve the Lord



Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, **to stand**. **Stand** firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **Word of God**. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:16

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Ministry Volunteer Coordinator

In February, we had the opportunity to show a webinar sponsored by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) titled, "Church & Culture: Guiding the Nex-Gen to a Biblical Understanding of Sexuality". This was shown on a Thursday making it difficult to attend.

There was a lot of great information packed into this event. They discussed how to handle situations with understanding, kindness and truth. They also navigated sexuality and identity by exploring biblically grounded strategies to approach this with the younger generation. Another topic talked about was legal insights on gender ideology and the legal implications of addressing these issues and there was a highlight on the public-school policies that parents need to know about.

We are offering this again at a more convenient time! Following the webinar there will also be a discussion led by Pastor Mark. We will be showing this webinar following service on Sunday, April 14th and the evening of Monday, April 15. Here is how each day will look:

On the 14th, we will watch the webinar, have a discussion, and then serve lunch.

On the 15th, we will begin with supper at 6pm, watch the webinar and end with a discussion.

Missions & Outreach will be providing meals at each showing. You do not have to be a parent to attend. This can be helpful knowledge for all of us. Please find which of these will work best for your schedule.

Confirmation and Youth Group will resume on Wednesday, April 10.

We will be having "Name-Tag Sunday" on April 14.

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." God wants us to gather outside of Sunday service. Psalm 133:1 says, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" Get some friends together, maybe have some snacks or a meal, pray together, share exciting things, struggles and all the in between. A small group is a great way to get to know others and to grow in a relationship with Jesus!

I encourage you to either check out one of these groups or start your own!

Gathering a group doesn't have to be scary, if you are thinking about this, I would love to assist you if you would like me too! Call/text me or feel free to swing into the office!

Here are small groups that are currently happening or will be coming up:

- Sarah Johnson is hosting a Women's group. This group meets on Friday mornings at 8:30. They go over the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday.
- Wednesday mornings Men's Bible Study. This group typically goes over the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday.
- Tod Tonsager currently has a sign-up for his group. He will be hosting a group as they go through a study titled "The Family Project" by Focus on the Family. This will take place on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 in the sanctuary. They will watch a video, then go into discussion. Cost for the study guide is \$13/family.
- Pat & Cheryl Rioux will be hosting *The Art of Marriage* by FamilyLife. It will be a two-day event. Times will be Friday, April 26 from 6:30pm-9pm and Saturday, April 27 from 9am-3pm. Sign-up for this event is available. This will be held at Faith Lutheran. There will be refreshments on Friday and lunch on Saturday. Cost for the study guide is \$20/couple.
- Faith Comforters meet on Thursdays at 9am in the Narthex. A women's quilting group that meets at Faith.
- Joe Hyatt is hosting a Men's Bible Study on the book of Romans. They meet on Sunday's at 5pm in the Narthex.

Mission & Outreach Team

The Mission & Outreach Team approved a \$750 donation to the family of Erik Olsen, which was then increased to \$3,000 by the Faith Lutheran Church Council at its March meeting. Funds will be charged to the Faith Family Emergency Account. The Olsen family has been struggling with Erik's cancer diagnosis. A benefit for the Olsen family was held Sunday, March 24 at the Little Falls Schools.

The ministry also approved transferring \$3,000 from the Sunbeam Boys Home in Jamaica to the Spring Village Technical School and Medical Clinic to help fund the mission trip March 23 - 31. Eight people are going to Spring Village. The Sunbeam Boys Home was closed in March at a special board meeting of the Sunbeam Association for Mission. The team officially approved suspending all funding to Sunbeam Boys Home.

In other business, the Mission & Outreach Team approved paying expenses for both of Faith's quilting groups that has been budgeted for 2024. The team is also drafting a policy outlining the criteria for Faith to sponsor mission trips and also a general policy for any organization requesting Faith funding. The team hopes to review an initial draft at the next team meeting on April 9. Finally, the team approved April expenditures for March including \$750 to the Morrison County Chaplaincy, \$400 to Hope Harbor, \$500 to Pregnancy Resource Center. The cost to sponsor a child through Compassion International has increased from \$456 to \$516 per year.

Faith members are invited to provide input into mission sponsorships. Share your ideas by contacting any member of the Mission & Outreach Ministry Team—Linda Collins, Kennard Fellbaum, Laura Fellbaum, Pastor Mark Johnson*, Tom Lippert*, Gail Meyer, Jim Nelson*, Pat Rioux, and George Sandy. *Denotes ex-officio members/council representatives. The team meets the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m.

March Council Minutes

Faith Lutheran Church Council Meeting, March 21st, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

Present: Steve Fellbaum, Joe Hyatt, Michael Johnson, Howie Larsen, Zach Leibold, Tom Lippert, Jim Nelson, Faye Sandy, Chris Scholl, Renae Stueber, Pam Trang, and Pastor Mark
Absent: Steve Tschida

The meeting was called to order by Howie Larsen. Opening prayer was led by Faye Sandy.

Secretary's Report: Jim Nelson moved and Joe Hyatt seconded to purchase a standing desk converter for Pastor Mark costing up to \$250. Motion carried. Funds will come from the Men's Bible Study Fund. Steve Fellbaum moved and Renae Stueber seconded to accept the February Council Minutes. Motion carried. Sarah also shared a few other small items that had come up.

Treasurer's Report: Joe Hyatt presented the February financial reports. Income is a little over \$5k below budget, which is a little better than where we were last January. Expenses are nearly \$4k below budget. Overall, we are about \$1,390 behind where we should be for the budget, this is half of last month's deficit so we are improving. Faye Sandy moved and Chris Scholl seconded to approve the February Treasurer's Reports. Motion carried.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Mark passed around a card for Randy Wolbeck for the council to sign. There will be two baptisms this coming Sunday, March 24. The staff will have a conference call Monday, March 25th with an Aflac representative to discuss disability and other insurance. Plans for Holy Week and Easter are coming along well.

Ministry Volunteer Coordinator Report: Amanda's report shared the recap of the movie Irreplaceable shown on Sunday, March 17th. She also shared information about current and upcoming small groups. The updated website is up and running. The webinar replay will be shown on April 14th and 15th.

Old Business:

Ministry Team Reports:

- **Children's Team:** Reviewed and changed their duties and responsibilities list. The Easter Egg Hunt is being planned. There will be no Sunday School on Palm Sunday or Easter. The last day of Sunday School and picnic will be May 19th. The last 5 weeks of Sunday School curriculum is to be determined.
- **Congregational Life Team:** Soup suppers are finished, the money from the freewill offering will be going to the Youth. New Member Sunday was discussed. The brat sale dates have been set for May 31 and June 1. The Easter breakfast is being planned. Howie Larsen moved and Michael Johnson seconded to allow the freewill offering funds from the Easter breakfast to go to the Youth. Motion carried. The Garage Sale date is set for May 4. Chris Scholl moved and Jim Nelson seconded to allot the funds raised from the Garage Sale to replenish the Family Emergency Fund. Motion carried.
- **Finance & Management Team:** Did not meet. The Pastor's Continuing Education will become a Fund which can roll over from year to year. The CD is now set up at Pine Country Bank, it's set for 9 months so it will mature on December 18th.
- **Mission & Outreach Team:** The Sunbeam Boys Home is officially closed. The Mission trip is still continuing but they will be hosted by Spring Village. Jim Nelson moved and Tom Lippert seconded to reallocate the \$3000 given to the mission trip team toward a Sunbeam visit to go to Spring Village instead. Motion carried. Funds to Sunbeam have been stopped, we will keep the boys from the Sunbeam Boys home on our prayer lists. The team is working on a policy about mission trips to avoid questions or lack of communication in the future. They hope to bring it to the council by the May meeting.
- **Worship & Prayer Team:** Did not meet. Everything is set for Palm Sunday and Easter.
- **Youth & Family Team:** Nine students will be on the Mission trip to Indianapolis. There will be two adult chaperones. One confirmed so far. They are planning or researching several fundraisers coming up. Including: The Soup suppers, Brat Sale, Car Washes, Business donations, a French fry sale and a possible Meat Raffle. The council recommends a budget from the Youth team in the future regarding their fundraising and costs for the mission trip.

Youth Director Search Update: At this time no new candidates have applied. The team will be looking at ways to expand the search. They will even consider partnering with another local church to share a Youth leader.

Road Paving: Further quotes were gathered by Joe Hyatt. They are in the range of \$26,000 so the idea of this is on hold for now as further fundraisers would need to be planned to consider this.

New Business:

Associate Member Idea: Some interested parties who are not yet ready to commit to full membership, recommended the council consider an Associate Member status. This would not allow voting rights within the church but would allow them to maintain contact and still be a part of the church. We currently have several non-members who are active on our contact lists and in the directory. After discussion the council decided a formal title of Associate Member was not necessary as they are still able to be in the directory and maintain contact.

American Flag: Faye Sandy suggested we look into placing an American Flag somewhere on the church property, possibly near the sign. It would need to be lit if left up at night. Zach Leibold will look into some information or quotes.

Family Emergency Fund: The council designated a large amount of this fund toward the Olsen family benefit. Howie Larsen recommends the council consider ways to begin replenishing this fund. The council has agreed to begin with the garage sale funds.

Chris Scholl moved and Howie Larsen seconded to adjourn the March council meeting. Motion carried.

The next meeting will take place April 18th, 2024.

Submitted by Sarah Kalkbrenner, Faith Lutheran Church Secretary

Attendance & Offering

March	3:	163	\$ 8,591
March	10:	157	\$ 4,430
March	17:	154	\$ 4,366
March	24:	151	\$ 2,266
Church Mortgage			
Balance: \$178,885			