



FOCUS AT FIRST

Spring 2021 - Quarter One Newsletter

First Lutheran Church — Barron, WI www.firstlutheran-barron.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

2021

May

16—Facilities & Future Congregational Meeting

16—High School Graduate Recognition

June

Watch for VBS news including August dates

July

25—Duluth Mission Trip



Don't forget to join us online each Sunday via the website or FB@FLCBarron or in-person

Also be sure to join Sunday School each Sunday at 10:15am via Zoom

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PRESIDENTS'S POST

Greetings to all First Lutheran Family and Friends

Good News!!

Back in 1983, a Canadian singer, songwriter named Anne Murray released a song called "A little good news". Some of you may remember it as it was very popular and won her a Grammy award. The refrain was as follows:

Nobody robbed a liquor store on the lower part of town,
Nobody OD'd, nobody burned a single building down
Nobody fired a shot not in anger, nobody had to die in vain
We sure could use a little good news today.

Sadly, the words still are somewhat appropriate today aren't they.

But, guess what, there is GOOD NEWS!!

He is Risen! He is risen indeed!!

Beautiful words we need to hear. Words we were able to share as a community of faith Easter Sunday. Some of you entered our church building for the first time in over a year. That's GOOD NEWS!! Many of you continue to view our worship service online. Our online platform continues to grow and we were so thankful for a very generous gift to upgrade our technology equipment .That's GOOD NEWS!!

Many of our members are now fully vaccinated against Covid 19. This will enable us to continue to open our church building more in the months to come, enabling our ministries to get up and running again. That's GOOD NEWS.

There is so much to be thankful for. We have a loving, caring congregation in which I'm honored to be leading for the next year. Thank you all for your continued support in our ministries. We all share in The GOOD NEWS of our risen savior. He is Risen, He is Risen indeed!!

Hang in there. Love one another. God's Peace to you all!!

Steve Haugen

Congregation Council President



FROM THE BISHOP

Crosses We Don't Choose

Then Jesus told them, "... take up their cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24b

Dear Members and Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

My friend Julie's mom had dementia. Julie picked up that cross and carried it as her beloved mother faded away. Paul was in second grade when he was diagnosed with diabetes. It was a cross he would carry for the rest of his life. Erica's drug addiction was a cross she and her family carried for years until she found sobriety. They were all crosses they didn't choose.

Jesus carried his cross on the road to his crucifixion. Along the way he falls, and a man named Simon of Cyrene is forced to pick up Jesus' cross and carry it the rest of the way to Calvary. Simon was most likely a reluctant cross bearer. Most of us are reluctant cross bearers. We don't choose the pain or suffering we've been dealt, and yet we carry the load. We don't choose to carry another person's cross when they are too weak to carry it themselves, but we are at times compelled by love to do so.

This month marks the one year anniversary of the pandemic. It is a cross that we've all carried to one degree or another. For some it has been an inconvenience and for others a heavy burden of suffering and profound grief. Theologically there is no way to put a positive spin on the coronavirus or 2020. It has been a cross we didn't choose. The strain of carrying this cross is evident in our country and congregations. We are all weary of it.

On Palm/Passion Sunday and Good Friday we are drawn into the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and death. We walk alongside him in the crowd as he carries his cross, our cross, compelled by love. We walk with a suffering Jesus straining under the weight of this cross, stumbling, falling, getting back up and finally letting go, letting another carry it. Jesus knew pain in his human body, and so Jesus knows our every weakness. Jesus himself was beaten, knew suffering and was unable to carry the weight this cross. He falls to the ground under the weight of his love for us.

As a church we invite others to walk in the way of Jesus knowing that they are carrying crosses they didn't choose for themselves. We invite others to walk in the way of Jesus because as a community of faith we shoulder the burden and carry it all together. We help another carry their cross out of love. We are Simon of Cyrene.

Maybe that is what this past year has taught us; that we need each other; we aren't alone. We've been isolated, quarantined, but not alone. We can't take our congregations for granted. We need our faith communities and the relationships with other believers because we can't carry our own crosses. We follow the way of Jesus together bearing our neighbor's crosses out of love.

It is in the cross that Jesus carried and on which he was crucified that we can know the love of God and salvation. This is Luther's Theology of the Cross. It is in the crosses that we as a community of faith carry together as we follow in the way of Jesus that we too see and know the love God.

Dear friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, I am grateful for you, that during the pandemic, we were able to walk in the way of Jesus together. May you each know the joy of Easter! Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

WORSHIP

This has been quite the year! This time last year we were figuring out how to effectively create engaging worship services when we could not gather in-person. And now, we are at the opposite of that task – we are discerning how to have engaging worship when we are gathered in-person. Throughout our many discernment periods this past year your Church Council, Worship and Music Committee, and Pastor Ron were and continue to be led by our guiding principles: 1) what is possible 2) what is prudent 3) what is pastoral. These three guiding questions, along with the recommendations from the CDC and Barron County Health, continue to help us discern what the best decisions are for our community. Below is the new worship plan that we have put together based on the guidance of sources named above as well as the recent survey where we had approximately 90 responses, and our current volunteer capacities.

CHANGE IN WORSHIP SUMMARY

Our worship service times will change “back to normal” to one service, held at 9:00am. We will no longer have a 10:15am service. We will continue to livestream and radio broadcast our worship service as we have for many years prior to COVID. The CDC recommends that it is safer to consider in-person gatherings when the viral transmission has a positive test less than 10% and fewer than 10 cases per 100K. As of mid-March, Barron County’s numbers have fallen below this threshold. This does not mean there is no concern for transmission of the virus but that it is “safer” to gather. The risk of transmission continues to decrease as the number of those vaccinated continues to increase each week. With this guidance we will continue to encourage masks, distancing, and limited capacity of the sanctuary.

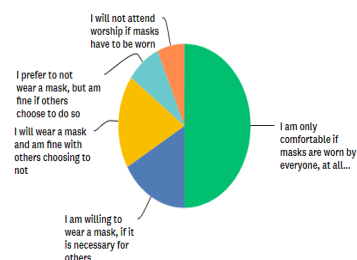
WORSHIP CAPACITY

Our sanctuary capacity is about 250. Before the pandemic, our average worship attendance at this time of year was about 120. The CDC guidelines state in-door gatherings at 25% capacity, which puts us at about 50-75 people. The survey respondents support a decision to have the sanctuary at half capacity or less. Because our pre-pandemic numbers were at this threshold and our current worship attendance is well below this threshold, we will no longer have folks sign-up to attend worship in

advance. Our ushers will be writing down everyone’s name as they arrive in the event contact tracing is needed. If we see our worship attendance beginning to climb near the threshold capacity, we will add additional services.

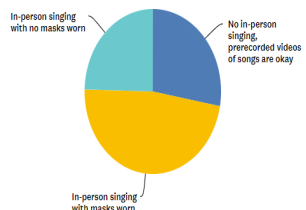
MASK WEARING IS ENCOURAGED

Mask wearing in public spaces is still strongly recommended by the CDC and Barron County Health. The survey supported a decision where the vast majority of those who responded said they will wear a mask and almost half responded everyone to wear a mask. In recognition that the mask mandate is ending on April 5th, we chose the word “encouraged” to replace “required.” We continue to recognize the value of wearing a mask to protect ourselves and our neighbors. Worshipers should wear a mask.



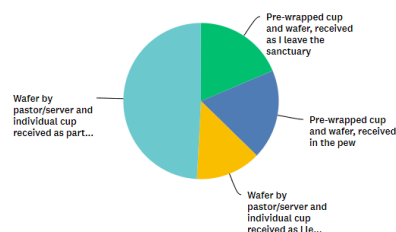
SINGING IN WORSHIP

Singing is considered to be a riskier activity as it increases the particulates in the air. Wearing facemasks will help to mitigate that risk, but the risk of transmission still increases. However, with cases as low as they are in our county it was determined that the risk was at an acceptable level. The survey supported a decision for singing to return to the congregation’s worship life.



COMMUNION

We will return to weekly communion via “in the continuous.” This means worshipers will come forward where Pastor or a server will distribute the bread and the wine/juice will be offered in individual cups on trays.



MEMBER CARE

Greetings! It has now been over one year since the onset of the pandemic, we endured a sustained period of self-quarantine. Some members worked remotely, some in a hybrid form while others, because of their vocation, were laid off for a period of time or indefinitely.

Still others classified as essential workers, continued to work while placing themselves at risk for contracting the virus and transmitting the virus to their families.

We are SLOWLY moving out of the shadows of the virus thanks to the wonders of scientists and infectious disease experts. As members are offered the vaccine(s) based on their age groups, we are seeing some 'light at the end of the tunnel'. As of Easter Sunday, we are gathering together again-hallelujah!

While we celebrate being together as a congregation, we must continue to be vigilant. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS), advises fully vaccinated adults may follow different guidelines from those who are unvaccinated.

These guidelines are as follows:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing.
- Visit with unvaccinated people from a single household who are all at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease, indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing.
- Refraining from quarantine and testing following a known exposure, if asymptomatic.
- Additionally, the guidelines continue to recommend fully vaccinated people follow public health best practices in public spaces. This includes wearing a mask and physically distancing.
- Finally, the guidelines recommend fully vaccinated people should also continue these practices when visiting unvaccinated people who are at an increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease.

Remember, the vaccines are just a tool, albeit an important one, in stopping the spread of the disease. Wearing a mask in public places such as businesses as well as washing hands or using hand sanitizer will help stop the spread of the disease as well.

Stay healthy, stay safe,

Blessings,

Carol A Matthys



FAITH FORMATION



VBS – planning is under way for this summer's program, if you are interested in helping to plan VBS contact Amity at

Amity@firstlutheran-barron.org

Continue to join us each week for **Sunday School** via zoom at 10:15am.

Check out the weekly email for the link or contact Amity at
Amity@firstlutheran-barron.org



Faith Formation Celebrations:



Congratulations to Helene Benner on her baptism

Welcome to First Lutheran Aaron Mickelson



Join Us for a Weekly Bible Study

Wednesdays at 1:00pm in the Dining Hall

Join in Faith Discussions, Fellowship, and Holy Communion

FAITH FORMATION

Confirmation: Our confirmation youth as well as several high school youth came together to record skits for our worship services during the season of Lent.

Thanks to all who participated!



Confirmands:

Small groups will continue to meet weekly through April

Join us at Luther Park April 28th 4:30 to 7:00pm - meeting at Church after school and go to Luther Park or meet us there.

Drivers needed.



Summer 2021 Mission Trip Planned: Our middle school and high school youth are planning to travel to Duluth July 25-30th where we will serve local Boys and Girls Clubs, nursing homes, and local food pantries.

High School Graduates: We are in the process of planning to honor our High School Class of 2021 graduates on Sunday, May 16th.



First Communion: Congratulations to our youth on celebrating their First Communion during Maundy Thursday worship! Pictured from the left are: Christopher Baumgard, Braiden Eraquam, Grace Marvin, Avery Mathews, Isobel Felber, Not pictured: Aalayah McDonald

OUTREACH

The Malawi Lenten Project

Gal. 6:2 "Bare one another's burdens and thus fulfill the love of Christ."

It is so heartening when we receive gifts from all the generous supporters here at First Lutheran Church. It allows us to say "yes" to one more woman who has been working to grow her business skills.

The true gift comes from lifting a woman out of poverty and a life of dependency. She is offered the opportunity through a micro finance loan program. Most chose to plant a garden, start a business or work for higher education. Centre for Girls and Women Empowerment provides education for them to succeed. As time goes on and her business profits, she will pay back the loan with a small amount of interest. That money is then made available to the next woman. One more woman has learned to "fish" and feed her family for a lifetime.

Centre for Girls and Women Empowerment gifts household within the small village with a bed net for malaria prevention. And we must not forget the hardships of Covid 19. But here comes the blessings learned from the deadly virus. Homes are taught to wash hands with soap at the entrance before entering the house. A practice that was in dire need before covid but is now being practiced out of fear. First Lutheran Church Lenten outreach will supply many homes with \$12.00 Covid Kits that includes a water bucket, soap, bleach, and hand sanitizer which makes for a healthier living situation. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who donated to improve the lives of these women who live in the poorest country in the world.

**"We love first because God first loved us!"
Your Outreach Committee**



Thank you for the donation of

\$1,272.44 towards Malawi.

**Your Generosity is greatly
appreciated!**

Generosity
changes everything

GIFTS AND MEMORIALS

For Gift from the Heart

\$10.00 In memory of Mildred Sevals by David & Debra Olsen

For Missions

\$50.00 In memory of Charles & Gladys Alexander by Marjorie Anderson

For Texas Relief

\$25.00 by Roger & Donna Jones

For Undesignated

\$20.00 In memory of Sylvia Sjolrie by Dan Alexander

\$1000.00 In memory of Sylvia Sjolrie by William Koser

\$15.00 In memory of Sylvia Sjolrie by David & Debra Olsen

\$50.00 In memory of Curtis Lundequum by Wendell & Mary McDonough

\$25.00 In memory of Pam Oman by Dean & Linda Simpson

\$20.00 In memory of Charles & Gladys Alexander by Dan Alexander

\$250.00 In memory of Steve Lambert by Betty Lambert



For Live streaming and Radio Ministry

\$85.00 In memory of Carol Juve by Harold & Rita Thorson

For Quilters

\$25.00 In memory of Carol Juve by Kenneth & Carol Grenier

\$25.00 In memory of Carol Juve by Edith Olson

For Education

\$25.00 In memory of Harlan Kolpack by Roger & Donna Jones

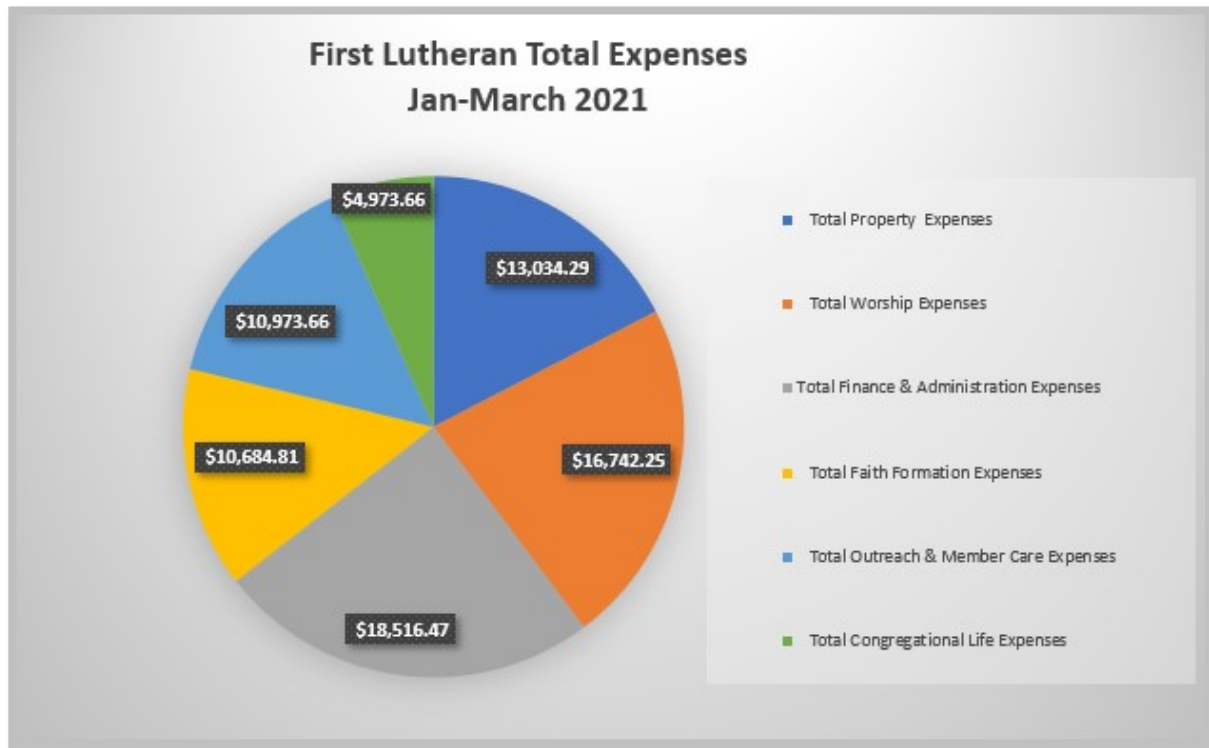
Additional Gifts Received

\$2,813.00 Thrivent Choice Dollars

\$595.45 For Altar Guild

Thank you to all who have donated to these designated (and undesignated) funds, we appreciate your love and support of the ministries of First Lutheran Church!

FINANCIALS



We are able to provide the ministries we have at FLC in large part thanks to the efforts of our amazing staff team. Because staff enable programing to happen by equipping volunteers, here is a pie chart of our total ministry expenses to help us understand the true cost of what it takes for our ministries to happen. For simplicity in calculations, Pastor Ron's salary is distributed evenly over all the ministry areas. Some expenses are paid in lump sums but allocated quarterly for reporting purposes.

These days we aren't gathering in the building like we use to. GivePlus is an easy way to consistently give financially to support FLC's mission using their autopay feature. You can enroll using either a credit card or bank account. Once you sign-up, you can check your giving records as well. You just need to simply go to our website, click on "Donate" in the menu options to sign-up. If you need assistance or have questions, please don't hesitate to call the church office!



Ways to Give Electronically

Your financial gifts make all that we do here at FLC possible.

Give+ Text: Set up a one time or recurring donation by texting the amount you wish to give to 715-496-6473

Give+ Mobile App: Download the 'GivePlus Church' app to set one-time or recurring donations. You can also manage and view your giving from the convenience of your smartphone.

Give+ Online: Visit firstlutheran-barron.org/give to set up and manage your one-time and recurring gifts.

FINANCIALS

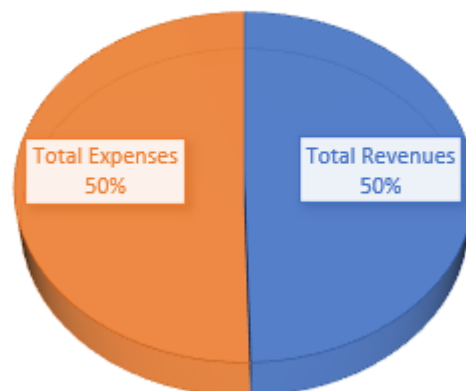
Accounts	Actual - Quarter 1	Budget - Quarter 1	YTD Actual	Budget 2021
Revenues				
Total General Fund Offerings	\$ 67,081.03	\$ 75,262.50	\$ 67,081.03	\$ 301,050.00
Total Designated Fund Offerings	\$ 8,505.04	\$ 1,075.00	\$ 8,505.04	\$ 4,300.00
Total Revenues	\$ 75,586.07	\$ 76,337.50	\$ 75,586.07	\$ 305,350.00
Expenses				
Total Pastoral Expense	\$ 33,317.39	\$ 31,320.79	\$ 33,317.39	\$ 122,283.24
Total All Other Staff Expense	\$ 15,615.79	\$ 24,017.82	\$ 15,615.79	\$ 96,071.00
Total Staff Expense	\$ 48,933.18	\$ 55,338.61	\$ 48,933.18	\$ 218,354.24
Total Property Committee Expense	\$ 6,980.60	\$ 9,225.00	\$ 6,980.60	\$ 36,900.00
Total Worship Expense	\$ 9,414.56	\$ 2,325.00	\$ 9,414.56	\$ 9,300.00
Total Personnel Expense	\$ -	\$ 125.01	\$ -	\$ 500.00
Total Council Expense	\$ 30.00	\$ 375.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 1,500.00
Total Finance Expense	\$ 5,142.20	\$ 3,325.02	\$ 5,142.20	\$ 13,300.00
Total Faith Formation Expense	\$ 408.09	\$ 2,425.05	\$ 408.09	\$ 9,700.00
Total Member Care Expense	\$ -	\$ 75.00	\$ -	\$ 300.00
Total Outreach Expense	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,575.01	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 14,300.00
Total Congregational Life Expense	\$ 56.97	\$ 125.01	\$ 56.97	\$ 500.00
Total Administration Expense	\$ 1,920.04	\$ 2,837.49	\$ 1,920.04	\$ 11,350.00
Total Designated Fund Expenses	\$ 982.48	\$ -	\$ 982.48	
Total Expenses	\$ 76,868.12	\$ 79,751.20	\$ 76,868.12	\$ 316,004.24
Net Total	\$ (1,282.05)	\$ (3,413.70)	\$ (1,282.05)	\$ (10,654.24)

Explanation for the above chart:

- Column 1 is the actual quarter donations and expenses. This averages out the annual contributions over four quarters.
- Column 2 is the quarterly budget.
- Column 3 is the year to date donations and expenses.
- Column 4 is the annual budget.

For questions or clarification of the above expense report or to receive a detailed financial report of expenses please contact the church office.

TOTAL REVENUE VS. TOTAL EXPENSE



FIRST LUTHERAN—FACILITIES & FUTURE

The Facilities and Future committee has now completed a building study after a significant delay from the Covid-19 pandemic. Below is a short review to remind us all of what has been completed and what the future holds.

- In 2019, listening group meetings were held with members of the congregation.
- The committee tabulated the input that you as members shared with us.
- Five areas of concerns needing to be addressed were chosen as a result of the informational meetings. These five areas remained the same focus areas previously discussed.

Improve main entrance

Improvement to existing bathrooms/addition of new bathrooms

Creation of a youth space

Creation of greater fellowship space

Improved energy efficiency

- The committee completed 4 in person church visits in surrounding communities to see what other congregations have done in terms of both remodels and new construction.
- Last year, the council and congregation agreed to contract with Miron construction to assist with a facilities study of the current building.
- Miron Construction, along with an architect and an engineering firm, completed an in-depth study and analysis of our current facility. A cost breakdown and recommendation of their findings was created as a result of this analysis.
- Miron presented the final results to the church council. Then in March and April Miron presented the results of their analysis to the congregation via informational meetings both in person and via Zoom. This presentation is available on the church website.

We know your time is precious! Have questions or feedback? We want to hear it! Please let us know that you want to be contacted and a member of the committee with schedule time to meet with you!

The next step includes you as members!

A congregational meeting to vote will be held Sunday, May 16th following the 9am worship (approximately 10:15am)

Watch for more information regarding the voting options soon.



4 W LaSalle Ave., Barron, WI 54812
715-537-3575

www.firstlutheran-barron.org

Sunday Worship @ 9am on Facebook @FLCBarron

Church Office Hours: Please call—Building closed due to COVID-19

Pastor - Ron Mathews - PastorRon@firstlutheran-barron.org

Bookkeeper - Andrea Cox - Andrea@firstlutheran-barron.org

Executive Assistant - Sheila Erb - Sheila@firstlutheran-barron.org

Financial Secretary - Shirley Hakari

Parish Nurse - Carol Matthys - Carol@firstlutheran-barron.org

Children's Ministry - Amity Mathews - Amity@firstlutheran-barron.org

Office Manager/Youth Ministry - Patrice Akenson - Patrice@firstlutheran-barron.org

Maintenance—Brett Gevens

