

GOD'S STEWARDSHIP PRIORITIES

Whether we've ever taken the time to actually list them or not, we all have – and practice – priorities. Hours spent on social media vs. a few minutes spent socializing with real people might show that we are more into guarded relationships than real friendships. Hours spent on hunting and fishing vs. a few hours spent watching television a week might show we much prefer being outdoors than indoors.

When it comes to priorities, the Lord is not shy in asking – even commanding – to be our first priority. This is true even in the midst of a pandemic. The First Commandment comes first for a reason. It's with this in mind that this encouragement comes.

You might recall that back in March when we were unable to meet in person for public worship, the encouragement was given for us to remember that the ministry at Faith was still continuing. For this reason, offerings were received by mail when we were unable to meet together. We come again with that same thought. If the current pandemic has hindered your ability to worship in person on a regular basis, we encourage you to remember that the ministry of Faith continues. Not only that, but we also remind you that our Lord asks to be our first priority.

He has the right to ask that of us. After all, Jesus' first priority was to perfectly please his heavenly Father. His perfect life was then offered upon the cross for the sake of our misplaced priorities. May the Holy Spirit richly bless our prayerful consideration of our priorities and our thank offerings.

YOUTH GROUP

The youth group will meet for Bible Study and games on Sunday, December 20 at 2 pm. This will be at our Black River Falls campus.

LADIES AID

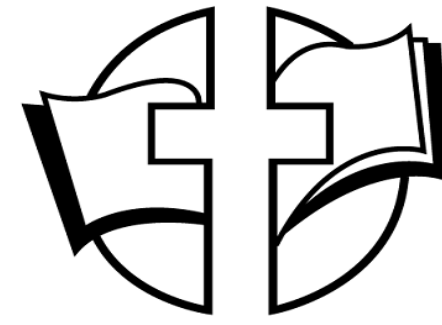
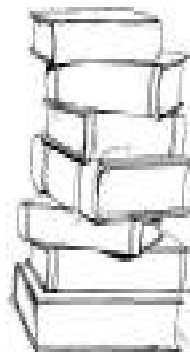
The Ladies Aid will have their annual Christmas potluck and gift exchange on Saturday, December 12 at 12 p.m. at Char Fisher's house. If you are able to participate, bring a dish to pass and a gift to exchange. We try to keep the gift between \$5-\$7.

Library Corner

Look in the Devotions section of our church library located in the fellowship hall at our BRF location to find a devotional book for Advent.

One of the books there is *Celebrate Jesus! At Christmas* by Kimberly Ingalls Reese. This is a family devotion book for the Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons. It uses scripture readings, familiar songs and hymns, devotions appropriate for ages 6-10, and lighting an Advent wreath to bring your family together to celebrate the real reason for the season - the birth of Jesus.

To check out, write the date, your name and the name of the book/DVD/CD in the notebook on the shelf.



The Messenger

DECEMBER 2020

Christmas—God's Gift to You

This year in our monthly articles we are considering favorite verses from the Bible.

This month's favorite Bible verse is: **Galatians 4:4,5**

"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

It's the moment for which children wait so excitedly: the time for tearing open Christmas presents. It's thrilling to see their excitement and joy to find out what lies beneath the bow and paper. But often, just as quickly as the excitement erupted, it begins to disappear. When the flying bows and paper settle, feelings of disappointment and ingratitude so often start to surface. The moment everyone so eagerly looked forward to becomes yet another disappointment.

For so many, the Christmas season and celebration ends up like the boxes strewn across the floor—empty. Because, eventually, the decorations are taken down, the parties end, and life goes back to normal.



But this won't be the case when we remember what Christmas is really about. Christmas is the celebration of the gift of God's one and only Son, a gift he gave to the world. It's the gift that I need, that you need, that this whole world needs. You see, this world—including you and me—is wrapped and covered in sin. It is this covering of sin that leaves us empty and disappointed and looking for more gifts and

other presents that we hope will fill the void. But they can't.

It is only through the gift of God's Son, and his life and death that removes from you the ugly covering and wrapping of your sins. Jesus did not come to be placed under a Christmas tree, but to hang upon a tree, not as an ornament, but as the one who would die upon it to pay for all of your sins. His perfect, innocent life and death are gifts he offers to you to make you his perfect and holy child and heir of heaven.

Christmas is so much more than presents placed beneath a tree. It's the sure and certain fulfillment of God's most treasured gift to you—your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ.

<u>December Birthdays</u>		
Garrett Spaude	12/1	
Annette Markhardt	12/4	
Jerry Eggen	12/11	
Aron Bue	12/11	
Toni Anderson	12/14	
Bill Yahnke	12/18	
Noelle Kiesow	12/20	
Lisa Treptow	12/21	
Sharalyn Hartley	12/22	
Elaine Fatla	12/24	
Nicole Kiesow	12/28	
Justin Goetzka	12/29	
Avah Reetz	12/30	
Jeremiah Spaude	12/31	
Richard Sitarz	12/31	

<u>December Anniversaries</u>		
Jack + Sherry Bue	12/3	
Joe + Alisha Southwood	12/19	

A Letter from the Property Committee

As the Property Committee Chairman, I would like to thank all the members who helped with the cleaning of our church in BRF this last year. Your service is appreciated as we continue to have a clean and orderly church. I will soon be working on the schedule for 2021. If the availability of any of you has changed please let me know. If the months I had you scheduled for last year don't work for you this coming year, I can make changes to accommodate you. Also, if you were not on a crew this year, and would like to be included on the 2021 schedule please contact me.



Thank you for your service,

Scott Templeton
612-419-8992
dscotttempleton@gmail.com

MEETINGS AND GROUP GATHERINGS THIS MONTH

Elders Meeting

Tuesday—December 1 @ 6 p.m. in Cataract

Ladies of Faith

Tuesday—December 8 @ 6 p.m. in Black River Falls

Ladies Aid

Saturday—December 12 @ 12 p.m. at Char Fisher's house

Faith Teachers Meeting

Sunday - December 13 @ 6 pm in Black River Falls

Church Council Meeting

Tuesday—December 15 @ 6 p.m. in Cataract

Youth Group

Sunday—December 20 @ 2 p.m. in Black River Falls



N6598 County Highway A
Black River Falls, WI 54615
(mailing address)

N6774 Acorn Ave.
Sparta, WI 54656

Phone: 715-284-0772
Pastor: Joel Neumann

We're on the Web!
www.faithwels.com

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church is a part of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or WELS. The WELS is a church body with congregations in all fifty states and missionaries in 25 countries.

We are a Christ Preaching Church! We believe, teach and confess that Jesus is God's own Son, who came into the world to be the Savior of all people so that through his sufferings, death and resurrection, we might have forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

We Are A Bible Teaching Church! We believe and teach that the Bible is the true and divinely inspired Word of God, the sole authority for Christian faith and life.

The Messenger is published monthly for the congregation and friends of Faith Ev. Lutheran Church. Its purpose is to provide information regarding all areas of congregational news and to offer enlightening articles.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, please contact Pastor Neumann either in person or at the following email address: pastorjoelneumann@gmail.com. Newsletter deadline: The submission deadline is the next-to-the-last Sunday of each month.

Looking for Help

At the annual vision timeline meeting this past year, it was suggested that we seek to find a volunteer who would help Pastor in a secretarial role at church. If you or someone you know might be interested in such a position, please contact Pastor Neumann (pastorjoelneumann@gmail.com / 715-721-2011) or congregational president Dale Jessie (dtjessie@hotmail.com / 608-633-0422).

Hours: No more than 5 hours a week - could be less. Days are flexible.

Position: Volunteer Secretary

Job Responsibilities & Duties:

Weekly reporting of copyright information to OneLicense, and CCLI when needed

Formatting, putting together, and printing the weekly bulletin

Formatting and putting together the weekly PowerPoint presentation for worship

Proofreading, printing, and folding the monthly newsletter

Mailing bulletins, sermons, and newsletters to current shut-ins and those not currently worshipping because of Covid-19

Update and upload coming events to the church website

Ability to work independently and with confidentiality

Perform other necessary and related tasks as may be assigned

Beneficial Experience:

A familiarity and comfort level with computers would be a great asset, especially the ability to work with Microsoft Publisher, Word, and PowerPoint.

Ability to learn the ins and outs of Faith Lutheran's website domain

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes SUMMARY November 17, 2020

ATTENDANCE & CALL TO ORDER

- ⇒ The meeting opened at 6:30 pm with Pastor Neumann leading us in a devotion on the shepherds who visited Jesus on the night of his birth.
- ⇒ Attendance: Pastor Neumann, Garrett Jessie, Dale Jessie, Dave Spaude, Kirk Geotzka, Rick Treptow, Brad Markhardt, Scott Templeton, Brad Rahmlow

ELDER'S REPORT

- ⇒ Baptism of Izzibelle Schwartzenberger—11-12-20
- ⇒ Ralph Jandt was taken to his heavenly home November 16, 2020.

PASTOR'S REPORT

- ⇒ Pastor presented a statistical report for the month of October
- ⇒ There will be a door offering Sunday, November 29th to support WELS Christian Aid and Relief
- ⇒ Council approved setting up a \$600 fund that will be used towards the Member Assistant Program (MAP). MAP is a counseling service that is established by the WELS that is a next counseling step after talking to your pastor. Pastor will do more research into the logistics of the MAP program. Moved, Seconded, Confirmed (MSC)
- ⇒ Council will look into modifying the Bylaws to allow for virtual voting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

- ⇒ Brad presented a financial report showing a net gain of \$11,889.77 through the end of October. MSC to accept financial report through October 2020
- ⇒ Council supported the idea of putting a note in the December Newsletter encouraging members who have been absent from worship to continue to send their thank offerings.

SPECIAL REPORTS

- ⇒ Council reviewed the Outreach Committee Report supplied verbally by Brad Markhardt.

NEW BUSINESS

- ⇒ The January council meeting will only have two points, review of the vision timeline and setting the 2021 budget.
- ⇒ Pastor will work with the member of a fellow church to come up with a quote on how much it would cost to properly live stream our worship services. He will be reimbursed \$50 plus mileage.
- ⇒ We will be changing pastor's health insurance from plan 4 back to plan 2. MSC
- ⇒ On Christmas Eve there will be 3 services 4pm in BRF, 6pm in CAT, and 8pm in BRF

The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm with Pastor leading us in the Lord's Prayer

The next Council Meeting will be held in CAT December 15th at 6pm.

Recorded by Garrett Jessie

Lotsa Helping Hands

God's Word comes to us in Acts 20:35, and tells us,

In every way I gave you an example that, by working hard like this, we need to help the weak and to remember the words that the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Faith's Outreach Committee has a goal to have every soul in our community hear that Jesus Christ is their One and only Savior and Lord. Recognizing that the majority of people hear this Good News in a one-on-one conversation, for many years Outreach has put an emphasis on Inreach to all our church members. The committee has explored, offered and encouraged numerous opportunities for all church members to hear God's Word, grow in their Spiritual life and have more confidence in sharing the Word with others.

Outreach now brings another Inreach opportunity to all our members; this one deals with the physical well-being of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Out of Christian love, Faith Lutheran Church is starting a care calendar to help support our members and friends who may be recuperating from an illness, surgery, hospitalization, loss of a loved one, the process of aging, or other situation in which they could use a helping hand.

Some examples of how Faith Lutheran Church may help our members are with making and delivering meals, rides, visits, household tasks, yardwork, or any other need they may have.

Our motivation is to help those in need because of what Jesus has done for us. Volunteers will be able to access our secure calendar from their home and sign up for the listed tasks as often or as infrequently as you wish according to your schedule and time constraints. Proverbs 11:25 shares,

A person who spreads blessings will be enriched. One who gives a refreshing drink will be refreshed.

This is a very flexible opportunity to serve and this invitation is open to all church members. If you would be willing to help, the following instructions will guide you in joining our community at *Lotsa Helping Hands*.

If you have any questions, please contact Kari Kellen at dbkellen@hotmail.com or call 715-284-4436 and leave a message. Kari is the administrator of the site and of the ministry program.

If you, or a church member, has a need that a fellow Christian brother or sister may help you with, please contact Kari as noted above. Alternatively, you may let Pastor Neumann know of your need, and he will communicate with Kari. While we cannot guarantee that every need can be met, the more church members that are involved, the more likely we can meet your specific need. If for some reason we are unable to find a volunteer, we would contact you in a timely fashion.

How to join our care team:

Go to www.lotsahelpinghands.com

Click on Join a Care Team in the upper right corner

Find a Community will ask for:

Community Name: Faithwels

Zip Code: 54615

Within 5 Miles

Click Search

Faithwels will appear in the upper right; click on this

Share a little information about yourself will ask for:

First Name; Last Name

Information About You (this is optional)



A LOOK AT LUTHER

LUTHER BECOMES A MONK

Martin Luther kept his promise to St. Anna. He left the university and entered the monastery, or cloister, at Erfurt to become a monk. When his father heard of it, he was very angry. He did not believe that monks could serve God better than other people. For a long time he would not forgive his son.

Martin hoped that he would find peace with God by withdrawing from the world and living the holy life of a monk. In those days the monks, nuns, and priests were regarded as holy people who could earn their way to heaven by living as they did. This was, of course, not true, as Luther soon found out. But at this time he believed that as a monk he would surely be saved. He faithfully did everything he was told to do and lived according to the strict rules of the cloister. In the beginning he had to do the hardest and meanest tasks. When he was through with his work indoors, he had to walk the streets with a sack on his back and beg for gifts for the cloister. He did all this because he believed that God would accept this work as payment for his sins.

But still his sins kept on troubling him as much as ever. Thinking that God might have pity on him and forgive his sins if he tortured his body, he often went without food, slept on the hard floor, and beat his body with whips until it was sore and bleeding. But none of these things could make him feel that God was pleased with him.



All Roman Catholics look upon the priesthood as the holiest office in the church. Luther was made a priest in 1507.

It was a great day for him when he was made a priest. Even his father came to attend the service. But when Martin asked his father whether he was glad that his son had become a priest rather than a lawyer, the father answered, "Have you not learned that you should obey father and mother?"

Though a priest now, Luther was as miserable as before. Often he would cry out in his lonely room, "Oh, my sins, my sins, my sins!" The other monks could often hear him praying and moaning and beating his body. One day they found him lying on the floor, and they thought he was dead. He had fainted from sorrow and weakness.

God however, did not let Luther die in despair. He caused the light of the Gospel to shine into his troubled heart. An old monk comforted him with the words of the Creed: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Dr. Staupitz, the head of the cloister, urged him to read the Bible and to put all his trust in Jesus. Luther did this. The more he studied the Scriptures, the clearer he saw the truth that man is saved by faith and not by works. By means of the Gospel the Holy Spirit worked faith in Luther's heart, and this finally brought him comfort and peace. But it still took some time before he came to understand all the teachings of the Bible.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Do you exchange Christmas cards? Many of us do. What do you do after you have read them and the season of Christmas is over? Do you throw them out? If you do, this year we would love to take them off of your hands. Lisa Treptow is thinking ahead and would like to make use of old Christmas cards for a craft idea next year. So, if you would be willing to bring old ones to church (if you don't want us to read the message just bring the front of the card) there will be a box at both of our locations for you to drop them into. Thank you.



HERITAGE TREE

This December, you will notice a Christmas tree adorned with decorations standing in the gathering area in Black River Falls. This is a Heritage Tree. The idea behind the Heritage Tree is that each family in the congregation is invited and encouraged to provide an ornament for the tree. This ornament should have the names of the family members displayed on it and will be stored at church so that it can be set up year after year. What a wonderful way for us to express our unity and see how God blesses our congregation through the many changes that happen over the year. Please consider participating by simply placing your ornament on the tree.



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS EVE PRACTICE

Starting Sunday, November 29 and going through Sunday, December 20, the children in Black River Falls will be practicing for the Christmas Eve service during the regular Sunday School/Bible Class hour. **There will be no Bible Study during this time.**



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS EVE PRACTICE SCHEDULE

Here are the dates and times for the Children's Christmas Eve Practices in December:

Sunday, December 6 – 9:15-10:15 am

Sunday, December 13 – 9:15-10:15 am

Sunday, Dec. 20 – 9:15-10:15 am

Wednesday, Dec. 23 – 5:30-6:30 pm

