

# First LUTHERAN



## FEBRUARY 2025

2025  
Newsletter

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*The next  
Property  
meeting will be  
February 5th  
6:30 Pm.*



 Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

From  
the  
Pastor's  
Heart

### God loves You, and so do the good People placed in your life!

You may have chosen 1st Corinthians 13 as a reading for your marriage. I am sure you have heard it read for the weddings service of friends and family. The Love is, and Love is not portion speaks of the honest love we can trust to provide a secure and enduring life together.

Paul began weaving the mutuality of lives lived together in chapter 12 comparing the individual members of the church to distinct parts of the human body. Insisting that the wonder and beauty of the body is all parts are empowered by the Spirit to work together for the common good.

The issue he was addressing was some members of the church body in Corinth were thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to, comparing and ranking themselves according to the importance they assigned to particular spiritual gifts. Paul's correction: "Stop admiring yourself and begin to appreciate God's purpose. 12:18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, <sup>24</sup> whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Also, neither think less of yourself because you are not the same as others: 12:15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body." This is the context for the love talk, two become one and are individually giving and receiving in the wonder and beauty of committed mutual relationship.

Therefore pray, asking our Lord to continually empower you to love in the most perfect way: 13: <sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Then your church, your friendships, and your marriage will witness to the world that God does make all things work together for the good of those who love others more than themselves. Because Christ first loved them.



## *Your 2025 First Lutheran Church Council*



Missing from the picture: council president Judy Monroe.

### Bible Quiz

The short Old Testament book of Lamentations is a set of communal laments (sorrowful songs) about the destruction in 587 B.C. of which city, by which people?

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. Babylon; the Assyrians | B. Jerusalem; the Babylonians    |
| C. Rome; the Greeks       | D. Caesarea Philippi; the Romans |

Answer on pg. 4



### Food Pantry Donations

The Food Pantry would like us to emphasize a specific item each month. Remember, you may bring any item you wish, but spreading this among the contributing congregations keeps a steady supply of their most basic needs coming each month.

**For the months February & March  
Cereal, Dried Pasta & Canned Meats  
are requested.**

There is a basket located in the Narthex for you to place your donations in.



## **Chihoni News!!**

This—again—is the year we hope to open the Outpatient Department at Chihoni Medical Center! It has indeed been a long wait, but groundbreaking is now scheduled for the last week of February. As noted in last month's newsletter, Dr. Charles Powell will be representing IHP-US at the ceremony.

Many of you were able to attend our Meet and Greet with Paula Lofstrom and David West on Friday, January 10. We were about 40 in attendance, including some from other congregations. After an opportunity to sample Tanzanian foods such as rice and curry, sambusas (aka samosas), mchemsho (chicken soup), ugali (white cornmeal porridge), chapati flatbread, and the coconut candy kashata, Paula shared plans for the future at Chihoni.

The first volunteers, a team of Des Moines dentists, are scheduled for September of this year, about the time of the official opening. By that time, the Outpatient Department and the first floor of the Hostel must be finished!

Selemani and his team are marking the outlines of the planned buildings and getting ready to start planting trees and flowers that will beautify the campus and provide shade. Fortunately, plants grow fast in Tanzania!

While waiting for the final permit and the groundbreaking, the team is busy installing fencing around the staff housing campus nearby. Even Selemani's wife and teenaged children pitched in over Christmas vacation.

We have great hope that by our next newsletter, construction will be underway. (Learn more at [ihptz.org](http://ihptz.org)) Thank you for keeping this important project in your prayers!



**Sele's wife Maria helping with the fencing for staff housing.**

## **Christian symbol**

**CENSER & INCENSE** — A censer (or thurible) is a vessel for burning incense during worship. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, as well as some Protestant ones, often do this on special occasions. Censers come in many sizes, shapes and designs. A worship leader may swing a chain censer to waft the fragrant smoke over the congregation during a procession or benediction. As incense burns in a censer and smoke wafts upward, it symbolizes prayers of the faithful, floating to God. "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2, NIV).



## Thrivent Choice Dollar annual designation period ends soon!

The March 31 deadline is coming soon for qualified Thrivent Members to designate last year's accumulated Choice Dollars to an enrolled nonprofit of their choice, including First Lutheran. If you have Thrivent products, the time is of the essence.

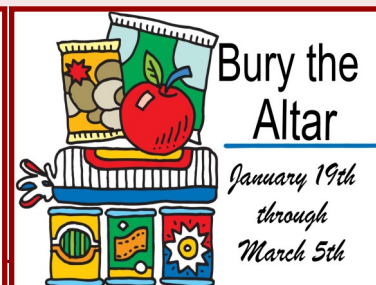
Here is the history of how First Lutheran has benefited since the Choice Program began back in 2010. Some First Lutheran Thrivent members have allocated their Thrivent Choice Dollar funds to our church. Since the Choice Program began, \$27,399 has been directed to First Lutheran; \$1,481 in 2024; and \$206.00 YTD (2025). That's darn good (and it doesn't include the cash Thrivent has provided through the Action Team program). This all is available because part of the Thrivent corporation is a not for profit organization and retains nonprofit status by providing money to churches and other nonprofit organizations around the world. When you direct Choice Dollars, it helps Thrivent distribute some \$30 million in charitable grant funds to deserving organizations. Basically these programs, Choice and Action Teams, were developed to put us, the Thrivent members, in the driver's seat of Thrivent's charitable giving. Here is a link to the Thrivent Website that describes the Choice Program: <https://www.thrivent.com/making-a-difference/files/28339A.pdf>. If you don't know if you have available Choice Dollars or you want to designate Choice Dollars, you can log into your account to check and then allocate them. You can also call 800-847-4836 and when prompted say "Thrivent Choice" and a representative will assist you.

Action Teams are another way that Thrivent members can use funds from Thrivent to help with financial support for the many activities that we do throughout the year to help our church and community. There are so many things that Action Teams can do; it is astounding. Action Team projects can be used for a variety of causes including bury the alter food drive, clothing drives, hygiene supplies for students, educational materials etc. Needs are great locally, nationally, and internationally, and Thrivent Action Teams are designed to help meet needs. Here is a link to the Action Team Hub so you can see how others across the country use Action Teams to meet their church and community needs: <https://thrivent.cotribute.co/community/thrivent-action-teams/detail>. As you scroll through these examples, you can see many diverse examples of needs that can be addressed with an Action Team; it's amazing. If you identify a need you want to work on, there are Thrivent members and others willing to help here at First Lutheran and in the local community that you can recruit to create a Thrivent Action Team. Each Action Team leader can very easily apply for this Thrivent support which includes up to \$250 on a provided credit card for your project. If you are wondering how to get involved using an Action Team, just ask either Craig or Betty Peterson or Duane Quanbeck and we will see if we can help you find a way to use Action Team support.



### Special Dates

- **Monthly Mission is:**  
**Lutheran Disaster Relief**
- **African American History Month**
- **Valentine's Day, February 14, 2025**
- **Presidents Day, February 17, 2025**
- **Council Meeting, February 20, 2025**



## Lord Have Mercy.

I have spent many weeks pondering the phrase from the document Project 2025. One of its four major goals is the “secure God-given individual rights to live freely”. I have been curious to see how that last part plays out. My doctor growing up was (as is) a conservative Muslim. I remember the moment I learned that God that Christian worship is that same God that Muslims and Jews worship. We share the same origins. And yet I grew up having to learn what is religious propaganda against these other world religions and what is not. I am curious to know how a nation that proclaims religious freedom will honor this God we all share.

One of these pivotal aspects that we all share in our understandings of this shared God is God’s plan for mercy.

Judaism uses key texts to teach about God’s mercy. For example :**Genesis 3:21**: God shows mercy to Adam and Eve for their disobedience - **Exodus 32:11-14**: God relents from consuming Israel after Moses intercedes - **Psalms 145:9**: Praises God for having mercy on the world and His creatures - **Hosea 11:9**: God's mercy triumphs over justice.

Muslims use the word Ar-Rahman most often to describe Allah, which means “The Most Merciful”, and lifts up God’s vast mercies. The Quran says in Surah Al-Anbiya 21:107 "And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds,". Another key verse is Surah Al-A'raf (7:156) which says "And my mercy encompasses all things," emphasizing Allah's all-encompassing mercy. They believe Allah’s mercy extends to all creation, not just Muslims. And compassion is the most powerful way to mirror God’s mercy.

Christians uphold Jesus was the purest form of God’s mercy. Jesus' mercy is shown in **Matthew 5:7**: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" - **Matthew 9:13**: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'" - **Matthew 12:7**: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'". And we go even further to lift up how Jesus teaches us to be merciful, **Luke 6:36**: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" - **James 2:13**: "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy" - **Romans 12:6-8**: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness"

This is our job as ministers in Christ. Pastors preach this from their pulpits, and you preach this in your relationships every day. That God is a merciful God. A God is a God who is merciful to those of us who do not deserve it, but whom God delights in granting mercy to. Jesus taught by example how we are to live once we have been set free from the bondages of sin. Who did Jesus show mercy to and tell us to be merciful to them as well?

1. Sinners. Jesus reached out and formed relationships with sinners, tax collectors, and outcasts and those the religious elite looked down upon.
2. The marginalized. Christ extended mercy to those who were poor, blind lame, lepers, the ill and depressed.
3. Those who doubt. Jesus showed mercy and welcomed people who doubted what he said, who he was, and God’s love.



4. Mobs. Jesus brought mercy to those from his hometown of Nazareth who tried to throw him off a cliff when he began his ministry and Christ forgave those who beat and killed him, asking God to forgive them.

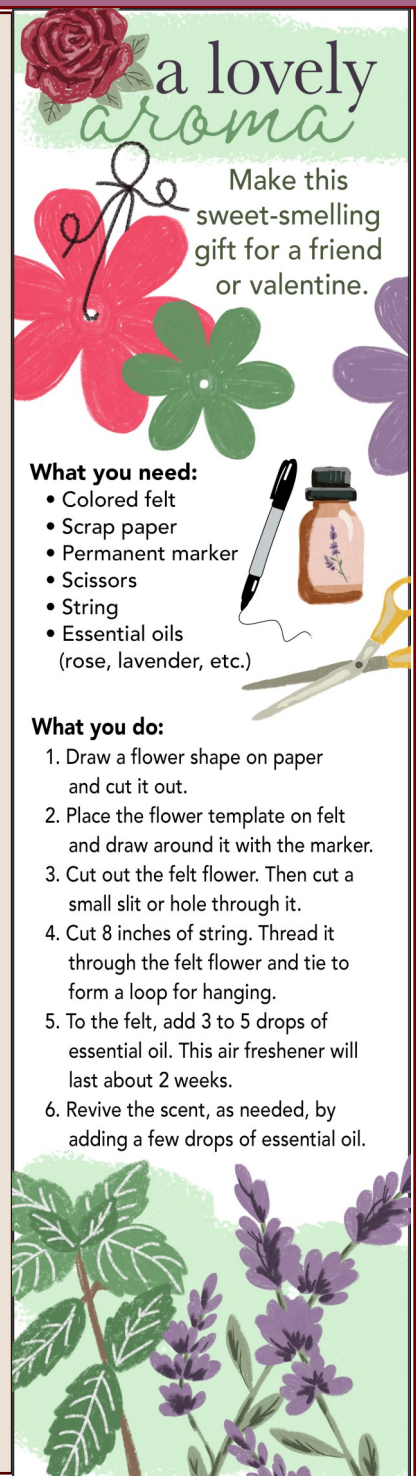
Mercy is not religious propaganda. Mercy is who Christ was. So, I ask you, brothers and sisters; How robust is your hope in the message of salvation that Christ gives? Can we be merciful to those who sin against us? Can we be merciful to those who are misunderstood, hurting, and have less than you? Can we be merciful to those who see the hypocrisy of how the church does not always shine as the light of Christ, and as a result cannot trust God freely? Will you be merciful to the mobs of people who kill that which is your greatest hope because they fear for their own comfort or false idols?

These are not easy things. Mercy is explained as kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. But these are not for the faint of heart. Being kind to those who offend you takes such great inner strength and humility. Being compassionate to those who are different from you in thought, word and deeds is heavy spiritual lifting. Forgiving those who have sinned and trespassed against you is a death blow to the sheltered version of yourself that you wanted to protect but now must release into God's tender care.

Whatever imaginary lines you have drawn in the sand that puts people on the other side of where you find yourself... that is who you should be merciful to. And if it offends you to hear that, you stand amongst all those faithful who have gone before you whom God spoke life into their brokenness! God has not given up on you. Your salvation is secured in Christ's defeat of death. But make no mistake God holds you to the standard of living as a people of mercy. Not because anyone has earned it, but because God first gave mercy to you first.

May we all live and grow in the hope of the mercy we have received from God, and may the Holy Spirit grant us the strength to be merciful to others.

Pastor Kari Lee



**Our monthly mission emphasis for February will be for Lutheran Disaster Relief for the California wildfires.**

Lutheran Disaster Response is coordinating with the Southwest California Synod, Pacifica Synod and other partners to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires. They will work with them to provide for immediate needs and recovery amid the widespread destruction. Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to accompanying recovering communities for months and years to come.

Donations given to this cause will be matched. If you'd like to contribute to this mission, please note "Monthly Mission" on your check or offering envelope.






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**Food Donations- Bury the Altar 1/19-3/5**  
**Monetary donations given for monthly mission—Lutheran Disaster Relief**

| Sun  | Mon | Tue | Wed  | Thu                                 | Fri   | Sat |
|--|-----|-----|--|-------------------------------------|---|-----|
|  |     |     |  |                                     |   | 1   |
| 2<br>Worship Service<br>9:30 am<br>Evening Confirmation  | 3   | 4   | 5<br>Property Meeting<br>6:30PM                                    | 6<br>Dorcas<br>9:00 am              | 7   | 8   |
| 9<br>Worship Service<br>9:30 am<br>Evening Confirmation  | 10  | 11  | 12   | 13                                  | 14<br> | 15  |
| 16<br>Worship Service<br>9:30 am<br>Evening Confirmation | 17  | 18  | 19<br>Lois Cr.<br>9:30 Am<br>Stephen<br>Ministry Meeting<br>6:30pm | 20<br>Council<br>Meeting<br>7:00 pm | 21  | 22  |
| 23<br>Worship Service<br>9:30 am<br>Evening Confirmation | 24  | 25  | 26   | 27                                  | 28  |     |

Office Hours  
Monday—Friday  
8:30 am—12:30 pm

Pastor Hoovers Hours:  
Monday & Tuesday  
9:00Am- - 12:00 pm

Meetings with Pastor Hoover by Appointment.

**FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
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**Watch Past and Live  
services !**

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