



First News

January 2024

The Monthly Publication of First Lutheran Church, Portland, ME

Baptism of our LORD Sunday, January 7th, 2024

Thanks to all who participated in our initial Cross Generational Event on December 3rd (Advent Wreath Making). Our second event will be on January 7th immediately following Worship. We will honor and celebrate the Baptism of our LORD and reflect on the meaning of our own baptisms. There will be an extended coffee hour, prayers and devotions. Please feel free to bring anything you might have related to your baptism. (This is not required, nor is being able to recall your own baptism or baptism date!)

Come and Celebrate!



Presentation — “What RIC means and Why it’s important” Sunday, January 21, 2024

All are invited to join us on Sunday, January 21, 2024, in the Hospitality Room following Worship, for a presentation by Knute Ogren, Director of Development at Camp Calumet, on what RIC (Reconciling In Christ) means and why it is important to consider adopting as a congregation. The FLC Team leading us in the process of exploring this possibility of becoming RIC believed it would be helpful if more information were provided about this, especially given recent questions and comments that have been shared. Knute is a dynamic speaker who has led discussions on the topic of congregations becoming more officially “open and affirming” across the New England Synod, and he spoke to our Church Council about it this past fall. There will be time for questions and discussion. For more information, please contact Pastor Perry or one of the RIC Team members: Steve Barmore, Emily Cole, Trena Durloo, Lisa Nelson, or Noelle Pesa.



SAVE THE DATE

Celebrating Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Songs and Wisdom for our Times

Sunday, January 14, 2 pm at First Congregational Church, UCC, 301 Cottage Rd, So Portland
Join us for an afternoon of music and reflection on the legacy of Dr. King, featuring congregational singing and music by the Sea Change Chorale, Deirdre McClure, Artistic Director. Sponsored by the Greater Portland Multifaith Group. Interested in singing with the chorale for this event? Contact Deirdre at dmclure@fccucc.org.

Council Notes

We wish you all good health and much happiness in 2024!

The MSP (Ministry Site Profile) is complete and was unanimously approved by the Council. Many, many thanks to the Transition Team, including Pastor Mark. They devoted countless hours of their time to complete this daunting task. We appreciate all their hard work!

The Advent wreath making event was a big success and we're looking forward to more cross-generational events throughout the year. Some are already being planned.

Our Semiannual Congregational meeting will be held on February 4th.

As always, if anyone has any questions, concerns or suggestions, please speak to any Council member and we will be happy to address them. If you would personally like to address the Council on any issues, please contact me and we will welcome you at our next scheduled meeting.

In Christian Fellowship,
Coleen Walther

Financial Update

FLC had a net operating deficit in November 2023 of \$5,267. We had expected a similar deficit so the result did not materially affect our budget. Our operating account maintains a healthy balance, but will be under increasing pressure as we continue the interim period. We will need to make difficult choices as we begin to consider our 2024 budget. The initial results were encouraging but much less than we need to clearly be able to call a full-time pastor. We will continue to receive pledges hoping to improve our situation.

If you have questions, please contact me by e-mail or on my cell phone, (207) 939-0820.

--Ed Daggett, Treasurer

ed.daggett@flcme.org

	Actual November 2023	Actual YTD
Operating Income	\$20,611	\$290,237
Operating Expenses	\$25,878	\$347,394
Net Operating Income (Loss)	(\$5,267)	(\$57,157)

From the Pastor

January is often thought of as a time of new beginnings. Baptism is a time of new beginnings, too, as we will be celebrating on the January 7th, *Baptism of Our Lord* Sunday in worship and at a cross-generational event following the service in the Fellowship Hall. This new beginning is not only true for the person being baptized, but for all of us. Luther calls us to be renewed in our baptism daily. The promises made by parents and sponsors at baptism, to “bring them to the services of God’s house” and “provide for their instruction in the Christian faith”, imply that Holy Baptism—and the journey it begins towards eternity—is not just a responsibility of the family of the baptized. They can’t do it alone. It’s also a responsibility and privilege for ALL in the community of faith to make sure that there is support, guidance, and encouragement for those who are baptized so that they learn what it means to be renewed in baptism not just once but throughout the years. As we enter this time of new beginnings, may we renew our mutual commitment to support the baptismal journeys of young and old alike and pray God’s help to develop stronger and better ways to provide that support.

Come on January 7th to be renewed in your baptism, to learn and celebrate what baptism means with people of all ages after worship, and to receive ideas on how to keep on remembering and celebrating the grace of God promised in this Sacrament!

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Pastor Mark

mark.perry@flcme.org

Transition Team Update

Your FLC Transition Team has been continuing its important work of leading us in this transition towards the time when a new pastor can be called by meeting the significant milestone of completing the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). The Council gave its unanimous approval of this document, with a few edits, and it was presented to the congregation on December 17th. (If you want to read a copy, ask Joleen in the church office). Incorporating congregational suggestions, it will soon be submitted to the ELCA to start the Call Process. It serves like a resume of the congregation to be matched up with the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) of potential pastoral candidates. However, we will need to first ascertain what financial compensation FLC can offer. Your Finance Team and Church Council are working on that now and you’ll soon hear more.

The FLC Constitution is also being updated and will be presented to the Church Council for its approval at the January Council meeting. THANK YOU to Abbott Knowles, Coleen Walther and Pastor Perry for your diligent work on this project! Once the Council approves it with any potential edits, it will be sent to the Synod for its approval after which the congregation can review it, ask questions, and, hopefully, vote on it at the June semiannual meeting.

If you have any questions, comments or affirmations, please contact Pastor Perry, Council President Coleen Walther, or any other member of the Transition Team: Ann Brown, Susan Bollman, Barb Daggett, Phyllis Kilfoil, or Sarah Pesa.

There will be a Fair Committee meeting on Sunday, January 28th following the Worship service in the Centennial Room. Join us as we start planning for the 2024 Holiday Fair!

Our Community Involvement

Quilting Ministry

Members of the Quilting Group were busy creating quilts to provide some comfort and joy to folks in our community. Susan and Colleen delivered seven quilts designated to go to the Barbara Bush Pediatric ICU, where each child receives a welcome bag with a toy and a quilt. Joy delivered six quilts to the Barron Center. If you would like to make one of these smaller quilts at home, the preferred size for the Barron Center is 36"x48" while the hospital suggests 22"x26" for infants, 36"x44" for toddlers and 56"x44" for teens (most needed).

For the next three months, the Quilters are focusing on the Lutheran World Relief Mission Quilts. We will have some blocks cut and ready for anyone to take home and sew together. (Mission quilt tops need to be 60"x 80".) Blocks will be available to pick up on Sundays during January and February. Everyone is invited to join us on quilting Saturdays on the first and third Saturdays of the month from 9:30 to Noon. If you can tie a knot, we need you! Mark your calendars for National Quilting Day on March 16, 2024 when we gather to finish the quilts to send to LWR in the Spring. Details will be published in February.

Upcoming Quilting Dates: January 6, 20;
February 3, 17; March 2, 16.



Steve and I delivered some Christmas gifts to Elza and her 3 girls before Christmas. We also

delivered some diapers, wipes and laundry detergent. Thank you to those who contributed Christmas gifts, gift cards to Hannaford and gift cards to purchase presents, diapers and wipes. Below is a text that I received from Elza.

Thank you to you and your husband; may God bless your family and all the members of the church; may the good Lord return you a hundredfold, thank you for everything you do for me and my children.

Thank you for helping to make small but meaningful changes in the lives of Elza, Anuria, Vitoria, and Evelyn. Thank you for your continued prayers and support for the family.

Wendy

A note we received from our member Katie Lamb, who is also a member of the Portland Altrusans:

I had mentioned to Ken, but wanted to let you all know that Altrusa really appreciated the use of the Fellowship Hall for our Empty Bowl event. We had a great turn out and were able to donate almost \$2,000 to Project Feed.

A few of the members noticed that there was a broken table, and we did find ourselves needing a few more seats (a nice problem to have, but we managed!) and at our meeting a proposal was brought forth to donate two new 8' folding tables to the church as a thank you for our use of the space.

I have ordered, and sent two 8' Folding tables which are scheduled to be delivered on January 10th. They should easily fit on the table cart, and I think they will come in handy for the Fair as well!

I hope to see you all soon!

Katie



While we haven't had much snow yet, we know the coldest part of winter is yet to come. If any FLC members or friends need some help or know of someone in need of financial assistance for buying fuel for the winter, please contact the church office or speak to Pastor Perry directly. We have funds specifically for this purpose, much of which was raised at recent and past Christmas Fairs!

Give a Child a Chance



As our Give a Child a Chance ministry enters its 10th year, here is our story.

A group of women met one Saturday afternoon at FLC to listen to a young mother from Rwanda share her experiences of coming to Maine to be with her husband. During that exchange, the mother said she had no “aunties” here in Maine, like those surrounding her in Rwanda and that made her adjustment difficult. A couple of us connected with her at the time and said we would be her “Aunties.” Their daughter was able to enroll in our preschool program, and within a few months, was speaking English fluently and was helping interpret for her parents who struggled with English. We were struck by the transformation in their daughter’s life and wondered if there was a way for us as a church to provide help with tuition so other immigrant children could also benefit from an early childhood education.

After discussing this idea with many people, an exploratory meeting was held in June of 2014, to see if there was enough interest in the congregation to establish a team to raise funds to provide for preschool tuition support for children in need who would otherwise not be able to pursue that education. A core group agreed to join in the effort to create a self-sustaining team to do this work. The group received a \$500 start-up budget grant from the Church Council. The criteria for granting tuition support to a child was that he or she be a preschooler, that the tuition expense would be shared among our Team, the Children's Program, and the parents of the preschooler. It did not matter what the family contributed to the tuition cost if they contributed something—even \$1.00 per week was okay.

Our first fundraising event was to apply for a grant from WheatRidge Ministries and we set a goal of raising \$5,000 through asking folks to contribute to our project that we called First Lutheran Early Childhood Education Fund. It was our first use of crowdfunding. We reached our goal and were awarded \$5,000. We were slow in giving out our first donations for tuition support, providing our first gift of \$500 to a new mother who was unable to work because she was on parental leave. The \$500 allowed her preschool daughter to continue going to preschool.

We floundered with the name of First Lutheran Early Childhood Fund (how do you pronounce the acronym FLECF?) and finally settled on Give a Child a Chance because it expresses our mission in the most succinct terms. Two logos were created, each containing a butterfly as a symbol of growth, development, and new becoming. Why a butterfly, you ask? Because it represents what we saw the Give a Child a Chance ministry offering the children we support.

We investigated applying for educational grants but found out that our project’s impact on the education of children was considered too small to make us qualify for these grants. We had to look to other sources of fundraising. We also decided that the team did not have to know the details of the family’s financial situation, nor did we need to select the actual child to receive the support, because the Children’s Program had that information, and they determined the children who were in most need of our support. We determine the amount we can contribute towards the child’s tuition support and make our total donation on September 1st, knowing the Children’s Program will use it to the greatest benefit for a child or children.

Besides the WheatRidge grant we received we set about holding a variety of fundraising events in those first few years. The fundraising included dine-outs at Ricetta’s in Falmouth and Panera Bread in Westbrook and South Portland, e-Waste recycling events, wooden sign painting events, Fair Trade coffee/tea sales, and entering the TCFCU Better Neighbor Awards, which required a month-long daily voting activity from our congregation and from their relatives and friends. Our voters won us four awards from TCFCU out of the five times we entered. If you win an award, you are ineligible to enter the contest the following year. The TCFCU awards have added \$14,000 to our budget that has been used for tuition support for our preschool attendees. We will be entering again in 2024, so watch for news about this daily voting challenge coming in October (we know that seems far away, but time flies!)

To be continued in the February Newsletter



Many thanks to Glenn Grant, Eric Berry and their families for once again providing the beautiful Christmas tree for the sanctuary. For many years they have found the perfect tree for us, and we are always grateful.

Thanks also to Ken, Matt, Paul, Sue, Mike, Ann and Bill for spending a Saturday morning decorating.



Over 40 people attended the Advent Wreath Making cross-generational event on December 3rd. Pastor Mark led a thoughtful Advent devotional, lunch was enjoyed and everyone got to create their own Advent wreath with candles to take home.

Thanks to everyone that helped plan the event, set up and clean up, provided materials, food and cookies. Look for more cross-generational events in the new year.



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.

2 Corinthians 1: 3-4



Wayne & Sally Heath
 Ethan Olson & family
 Abbott Knowles
 Ned Long
 Wendy Carey
 Ken Carr
 Judy Horn
 Bob Mitchell
 Dave Deuben
 Jeff, Trena & Andy
 Durloo
 Lynne Fishburn
 Dorrine Loveland

Margarite Arienti
 Jen & Brian
 Hazelwood
 Paul & Sharon Aube
 Peter Rovnak
 Victims of racism and hate, especially those in the LGTBQIA+ community
 All victims of violence
 The people of Israel and the innocent civilians of Palestine

Prayer is such an important part of our daily Christian lives, and sometimes extra prayers are needed. If you have any special prayer requests and you would like to have our "Prayer Warriors" praying as well, please send an email.

prayer-request@flcme.org

Have news to share??

Send it to [News@flcme.org!](mailto:News@flcme.org)

Articles/photos sent to this email address are delivered to Bill Mills [newsletter, website, calendar], and Joleen [weekly bulletin].

JANUARY Birthdays

- January 4 Bill Lamb
- January 6 Barb Daggett
- January 7 Natalie Santiago
- January 8 Iris LaFlamme
- January 10 Abbott Knowles
- January 12 Kari Emery
- January 14 Bob Ahlquist
- January 15 Delvyn Case
- January 20 Ben Conant
- January 27 Daisy Lamb



Dear FLC Family,

Thank you so much for the very generous and unexpected Christmas gift! Linda and I are overwhelmed. We feel that much more blessed to be here. It is a joy to serve Christ with you!

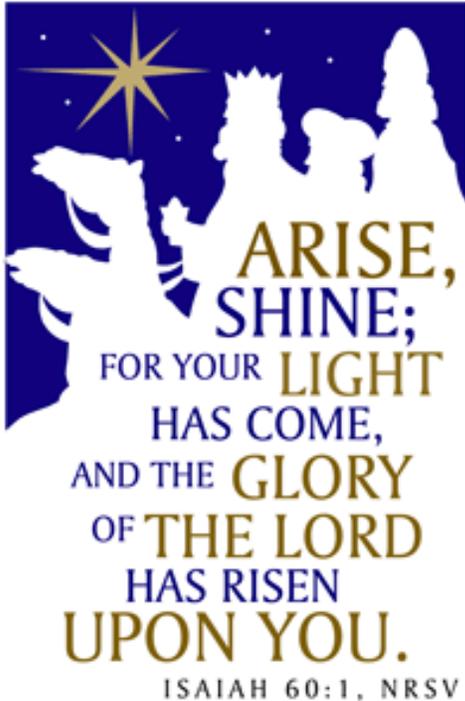
Pastor Mark

Many thanks to everyone that made the Christmas Eve service a beautiful one. Thanks to Brenda, Mark, the Senior Choir and the Bell Choir for their dedication. Special thanks to our instrumentalists, Kris Conant, Sarah Morneau and Karl Nordli, for sharing their talents and providing extra meaning to the music.



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PORTLAND, MAINE 04103-2145**

January 2024



First News is a monthly publication of First Lutheran Church. Articles can be submitted to the church office, or by email to news@flcme.org.

Worship Service is at 10:00 am

Church Office Hours are Monday thru Friday 9:00 am - 3:00 pm (797-2525)

www.FLCME.org

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Director—FLC Children’s Community Ministry..... Sherryl Eastman (flcpinfo@flcme.org)

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