

FIRST CHURCH ALERT

615 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

2023
LENT
VOLUME 77, ISSUE 1

CREATED FOR COMMUNITY

The witness of scripture is clear: Humans were created to be in relationship with one another. In *Genesis 2:18*, God recognizes that “it is not good that the human should be alone”. The first person needed real companionship, which animals and other creatures simply could not offer. God saw this need and created anew, that we would have one another in relationships and community.

God’s story of salvation is intertwined with the stories of human community, including: Abraham and Sarah, and their family that would become twelve tribes; and the people covenanted with the God of Israel, who would get their own king; For us Christians, Jesus’ teachings, life, death, and resurrection transformed how we understand God’s vision of what community is, and what it means for us. Baptism into Christ has made us to be a different kind of community with God and one another.

We are now members of the body of Christ, receiving life through him while being deeply connected to one another. In different ways, the epistles unpack what it meant for early Christian congregations to live the faith of Jesus in community, exploring the implications and edges in challenging times.

Our series of Lenten Vesper liturgies will dive into the gospel of Saint Mark to consider this grace and calling in our own day. We will explore how God has created us for community, with creation, the saints, our neighbors, people on the margins, and Christ himself. A soup supper will be offered each Wednesday evening at 6:00 PM, followed by Vespers with preaching at 7:00 PM. Our preachers will include First Church’s pastors and vicar, along with two of our Pastors-in-Residence, the Rev. Leonard Larsen and the Rev. Caroline Mendis.

We invite you to join us to enrich your Lenten pilgrimage through this series. All are welcome!

With you in Christ,



The Rev. Jennifer Peters McCurry
Associate Pastor



The Rev. Jennifer Peters McCurry

Ph: 412-471-8125

Fax: 412-471-9521

www.flcpittsburgh.org

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TAKE NOTE!

*“Jesus, I will ponder now
on your holy Passion;
Let your Spirit now endow
me for meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
may the image cherish
Of your suffering, pain, & death,
that I may not perish”*

LBW 115



Sr. Cynthia A. Pock, n/OLF, AAGO

The season of Holy Lent affords us the opportunity to ponder Christ's passion and cherish the image of his suffering for the life of the world, for each of us. Here at First Church the Office of **Vespers** is prayed **every Wednesday night at 7:00 PM** during Lent.

Another special worship opportunity will take place on **Sunday 12 March at 4:00 PM**. Seton Hill University's Chamber Choir (Una Voce) will join with the Pittsburgh Compline Choir to sing Choral Vespers here at First Church. Under the direction of Dr. Mark Boyle, the combined choirs, numbering nearly 50 voices, will sing anthems and psalm settings by John W. Becker, who served as our Composer-in-Residence for many years. Organ voluntaries will enhance the liturgy. A reception will follow the service in the Parish House. Please consider inviting a friend and attending this beautiful choral liturgy as we ponder and give thanks for Christ's sacrifice and victory.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Sr. Cynthia A. Pock, n/OLF, AAGO
Cantor



AFG FISH FRY!

Friday, March 3

The Adult Fellowship Group will meet for fish fry at 6:00 PM at Sacred Heart in Shadyside. Dessert to follow at home of Theresa and Ted Schroeder

[Sign up HERE.](#)



SOCIAL MINISTRY BABY SUPPLY DRIVE

Love shopping for baby items? Here is your opportunity! During Lent (Feb 22- April 2) we will collect baby items to support the Genesis Center of Pittsburgh. The Genesis Center supports women through pregnancy and childbirth by providing housing, a learning center, access to testing and clothing, counseling, as well as an adoption center. The Genesis Center would greatly benefit from the donation of the following items: **baby bottles, receiving blankets, baby/childrens books, new sippy cups, pacifiers, Similac Advance, onsies/ sleepers (sizes 0-3 & 3-6 months)**. Many of these items are used as incentive for expectant parents to engage in classes at the center. There will be a collection in the Parish House. If you would like to make a monetary contribution, please consider donating as part of your Birthday Designated offering. Contact Cindy DeMartino adamcr8@gmail.com or visit genesispg.org for more information.



The Pittsburgh Compline Choir



Attendees of 'Icefest: Molded by the Potter' pose with potter Billy Cramer.

CHRISTIAN ED. CORNER

PALM SUNDAY ACTIVITY FOR ALL AGES

Save the date for our annual Palm Sunday intergenerational activity! Join us on **April 2** during the Sunday Church School hour as we celebrate Palm Sunday with a fun activity for all ages. All are welcome!

UPCOMING FAMILY CIRCUS EVENT

Please save the date for our next First Church Family Circus Party! The First Church Family Circus includes families with children age 0 - 2nd grade and their older siblings. We will have a potluck dinner at the Pittsburgh Toy Lending Library in Shadyside from 4:00 - 8:00 PM on March 18th. The space will be ours alone and has plenty of toys to keep babies, toddlers, and older children entertained. Please RSVP to Emily Weimer (eharmon130@gmail.com) with the total number of adults and children in your party and dietary restrictions.

CAMP DOWNTOWN 2023

REGISTRATION OPENS EARLY

As you start to make summer plans for vacations and camps, don't forget about Camp Downtown, our Downtown Ministerium's summer VBS program for rising Kindergartners - 6th graders (with 7th-12th graders serving as youth counselors). This year it will be **June 19-23 from 9:00 AM-4:00 PM**. Cost is \$50 for the first child, \$40 for the second child, and so on. We will start and end the day at FLC with lessons and activities surrounding our week long theme with an afternoon excursion in the downtown or surrounding areas. Online registration is at: <https://flcpittsburgh.org/education/camp-downtown/>

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ABOVE: Billy Cramer demonstrates wheel-thrown pottery techniques.
BELOW: Campers prepare to "pop up" during an interactive song with Sr. Cynthia at the Celebration Station.



DESIGNATED OFFERINGS 2023

First Lutheran Church since 2009 has supported local, national and international non-profit and church-related organizations through the FLC *Designated Offerings* program. Each year, the Social Ministry Committee thoughtfully considers various organizations for FLC partnership and support. The Committee then recommends selected organizations to Council. Our congregation has been very generous, granting \$15,000 in 2022 to nine organizations.

The following nine organizations have been approved by Council for *Designated Offerings* support in 2023. Please consider supporting those organizations whose missions resonate with your personal mission focus and your hopes of how you and FLC might best support our neighbors.

LENT: *Bridge to the Mountains*

The mission of *Bridge to the Mountains* is “to come alongside and accompany individuals navigating life on the streets.” This dedicated street outreach organization, and its full-time staff, helps individuals living on the streets of Allegheny County to access and to navigate available resources. Your donation helps fund street outreach, resource coordination, harm reduction and other services, as well as summer outdoors retreats.

EASTER: *Abiding Missions*

Abiding Missions, a mission outreach of the ELCA, is engaged in serving, advocating for, and accompanying our neighbors who are experiencing chronic trauma and poverty. Your donation helps to expand food security, strengthen neighborhoods, and support free after-school programs that offer a formal collaboration with 4-H.

PENTECOST: *Lutheran University Center*

The *Lutheran University Center*, also known as *PSALM (Pittsburgh Students Active in Lutheran Ministry)* is a campus ministry that offers opportunities for fellowship, learning, service, and worship, stemming from a distinctive Lutheran identity, with outreach to these universities: Pitt, Carnegie Mellon, Carlow, and Chatham. Your donation enables ongoing ministry to and with our university communities and their students.

REFORMATION: *Sister Synod in Madagascar*

For many years, our Southwestern Pennsylvania ELCA Synod has been in relationship with the *Tulear Synod in Madagascar*. This has included trips for both lay and clergy members of our Synod to engage in mutual witness and consolation with our siblings in Christ in that part of our world and in the form of financial gifts. Your donation will help the church in Madagascar to thrive, to know the support and friendship of our Synod, to empower ministry in impoverished communities, and to bless us through their relationship, witness, and encouragement.

THANKSGIVING: *Community Kitchen Pittsburgh*

Community Kitchen Pittsburgh uses food as the foundation to change lives and strengthen communities by providing culinary training and opening career pathways to individuals who experience barriers to employment. *Community Kitchen* offers training, apprenticeships and connections with stable, higher-than-entry-level positions in culinary or adjacent industries that lead to wage progression and professional growth. Your donation strengthens the capacity of *Community Kitchen* to serve and to partner with other organizations, as well as assuring that there are no costs or financial barriers to students' participation.

ADVENT: *Foundation of HOPE*

Foundation of HOPE works to empower persons who are directly affected by the criminal justice system, helping them to renew their faith, rebuild their lives, and restore positive relationships. Offering chaplaincy and pre-release programs in the Allegheny County Jail for incarcerated persons, as well as post-release care, *HOPE* also provides support and direction in important life skills and decision-making. Your donation helps to fund vital counseling, religious services, discipleship, practical resources and referrals, trainings, and one-on-one mentoring.

CHRISTMAS *Catapult Greater Pittsburgh*

Catapult Greater Pittsburgh serves individuals and families at or below poverty level, helping to provide economic justice opportunities for individuals seeking generational stability. *Catapult* strives to ensure that systematically disenfranchised communities can meaningfully achieve economic justice and that community members can lead dignified and equitable lives. Your donation helps



families improve their economic and social well-being and helps to move our local community toward economic stability.

BIRTHDAY: *Genesis of Pittsburgh*

Genesis of Pittsburgh provides life-affirming programs and services to pregnant women and to children and adoptive families. Services include nutrition, childbirth and parenting classes, counseling, shelter, clothing and baby equipment, plus adoption and foster services. Your donation helps to bring healthy babies into the world in an environment that supports both babies and parents.

LOVE: *Global Links*

Each year *Global Links* recovers an average of 300 tons of still-valuable surplus medical materials from our region's healthcare systems. Volunteers, including members of First Lutheran, ensure that materials are prepared for shipping to resource-poor communities in the Western Hemisphere, including the Pittsburgh area. *Global Links* was founded in Pittsburgh and for 30 years has been dedicated to improving health in communities with need: Sharing Surplus, Saving Lives. Your donation and your time help to support and expand this ministry.

Seven of the nine *Designated Offerings* for 2023 are linked to the Church calendar; two others are designated in recognition of Birthday and Love. Offerings to any program or all programs may also be made at any time. Your gifts help First Lutheran Church to meet and expand our mission and to support vitally important organizations. Your generosity touches many lives.

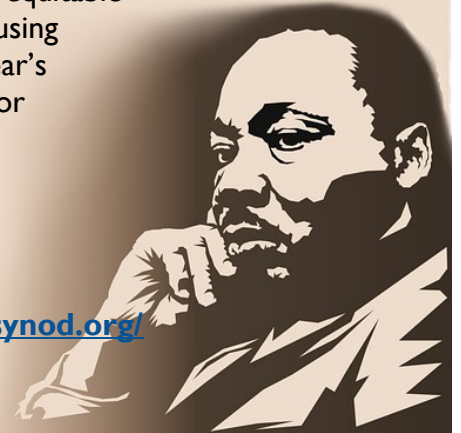
Please reach out to Cindy DeMartino, chair of the Social Ministry Committee, at adamcr8@gmail.com, if you have any questions about our *Designated Offerings* program or about the organizations that will receive our support in 2023. More information about each organization may be found on the web. Thank you!

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. LEGACY CELEBRATION

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA will celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with an ecumenical service of Holy Communion on **Sunday, March 26th at 4 PM** at Berkeley Hills Lutheran Church (517 Sangree Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15237). Bishops Abraham Allende and Kurt Kusserow will preside, and Rev. Dr. Asa Lee (President, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary) will preach. Following the service will be a program on equitable development and housing to accompany this year's theme of "A Home for ALL in the Beloved Community."

You can read more about it at:

<https://www.swpasynod.org/calendar/mlk23>



CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

Vicar Elizabeth would like to interview you for a project. If you enjoy making art in any discipline (visual, textile, literary, or the performing arts), whether professionally or as a hobby, please reach out to her at esr@flcpittsburg.org or 412-471-8125.





YOUTHWORKS MISSION TRIP TO NIAGARA FALLS, NY

Who: Students who have completed sixth grade in 2023 through high school seniors.

Dates: June 25-30, 2023. We will plan to arrive at our site in Niagara Falls by 6:00 PM on June 25, so families should plan for an early afternoon departure from Pittsburgh on the 25. The group will leave Niagara Falls on Friday around 9:00 AM, for its return back to Pittsburgh. Niagara Falls is roughly a four hour drive from Pittsburgh.

Cost: Each family is asked to contribute \$250 toward the cost of the trip. This covers the registration fee (food and lodging) and transportation which will be by car and/or van. If the cost of the trip is an impediment for your family, please reach out to Pastor Evans for assistance. The youth may also participate in fundraisers.

Meals and Lodging: Typically, participants stay at churches, schools or community centers and sleep on classroom floors. We will have more information about our accommodations closer to the date of the trip. Meals will be provided.

Chaperones: There will be 2 adult chaperones on this trip from FLC. Pastor Evans will be one chaperone, along with another adult TBD.

Mission: The youth will work along local organizations to meet needs in the Niagara Falls community through

food and clothing distribution, home repair projects, community beautification projects, and youth programming.

Additional information about the trip can be found here: <https://youthworks.com/trips/niagara-falls/>

Deadline to Sign-Up: We are asking kids to sign up with their commitment as soon as possible, but no later than May 1. We have 8 slots reserved for this trip; slots will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so please get your registration in as soon as you are able. You may sign up here:

<https://flcpittsburgh.org/2023/02/youth-missions-trip-sign-up/>

After you sign up, we will ask you to make a \$100 deposit towards your registration.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Pastor Evans (bae@flcpittsburgh.org) or Theresa Schroeder (schroet532@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Pastor Evans & Theresa Schroeder
Senior Pastor Chair of Youth Ministry



LENTEN VESPERS & SOUP SUPPERS

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Enrich your Lenten journey by joining us at First Church for midweek Lenten Vespers on **Wednesday evenings at 7:00 PM, beginning March 1.**

We will gather at **6:00 PM for a light supper** of soup and bread on Wednesdays prior to Lenten Vespers. If you would be willing to provide soup for any of these dates, please sign-up in the Parish House or contact Christine at cgh@flcpittsburgh.org



Continued from p. 3:

ADULT EDUCATION

Rediscovering Jonah:

February 26 & March 5

In the introduction to his book, *Rediscovering Jonah*, the Reverend Timothy Keller notes that the book of Jonah is often thought of as a simple fable, building to a dramatic, yet implausible account of Jonah's being swallowed by a large fish. In contrast, he argues that the book of Jonah is much more than a fable and is an ingenious, carefully crafted work with implications for our understanding of how God can be simultaneously just and merciful. Using Pastor Keller's book as a guide, we will discuss many themes presented in the book of Jonah such as dealing with others different from ourselves, God's call to mission, the struggle to trust and obey God, and the tendency to make God fit our own image of him. Anne Harmon will lead the remainder of this engaging discussion.

Metamorphosis of Evil:

Shifting Images of Satan in the Bible

March 12, 19, & 26

Satan appears frequently as a character in literature and popular culture, but how accurately do these depictions reflect what we know about Satan in the Bible? Join Vicar Elizabeth in a three-week exploration of the shifting images of Satan in the Bible, tracing how and why the figure of Satan developed from being a member of God's heavenly court to God's enemy and what these shifts reveal about the biblical writers' views of evil and human suffering. Join us in Holy Cross Hall during the Sunday Church School hour.



YOUNG ADULT SPRING BRUNCH

On **Saturday, March 25, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**, First's young adults (ages 18-35ish) are invited to brunch at a Sarah Warner and Zach Weinberg's home on the Northside of Pittsburgh. Street parking is available. [RSVP here](#) if you and your loved ones plan to join us. There's no need to bring food, but if you would like to, there is space on there to let us know what.

If you would like to attend but need a ride, please let Pastor Jennifer know!

GLOBAL LINKS LUNCH & LEARN

Kimberlee Love, director of development, send thanks and gratitude for our support of Global Links, through our designated offering. Global Links is holding a Virtual Lunch + Learn presentation, *A Look Back; A Look Ahead*, on **Thursday, March 2 at 12:00 PM**. She invites members of the congregation to settle in with a cup of tea and spend your lunch hour with them. Global Links likes to share their good work with those, like First Lutheran, who support them. They will share the impact of their work in 2022, and also what they be doing to impact lives for the better in 2023.

Use this link to sign up:

<https://globallinks.org/events/lunchlearn/>





Easter Flowers Order Form

*(Orders must be placed by **Friday, March 31**)*

___ Lilies at \$10.00

___ Tulips at \$10.00

___ Mums at \$10.00 \$ _____ Enclosed

Easter flowers are given to the glory of God, a gift to the whole parish to enhance our worship of our Risen Lord. Please allow the flowers you are giving to remain in the chancel through the 11:00 liturgy on Easter Day. They may be picked up then or the following Sunday.

Name: _____

Phone/E-mail: _____

Please indicate exact wording for bulletin insert:

In Memory of _____
OR

In Honor of _____

Given by _____

Please make check payable to "First Lutheran Church" and write Easter Flowers on the memo line. Orders may be placed in the offering plate or sent to the attention of Christine Hoffman in the church office.



MUSIC MINISTRY GIFTS

If you wish to make a special gift in support of the music ministry of First Church, complete the form below and submit with your check.

\$ _____ in support of the *Easter Special Music* enclosed.

Name: _____

Phone/E-mail: _____

Please indicate exact wording for bulletin insert:

In Memory of _____
OR

In Honor of _____

Given by _____

Please make check payable to "First Lutheran Church" and write Easter Special Music on the memo line. Orders may be placed in the offering plate or sent to the attention of Christine Hoffman in the church office.