

# ALERT!

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
615 Grant Street + Pittsburgh, PA 15219

2025  
EASTER  
VOLUME 79, ISSUE 2

## ALLELUIA, CHRIST IS RISEN!

*The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.*

PSALM 118:22

In March I led a retreat for our Confirmation class to Gettysburg and Washington, D.C., where we considered our baptismal calling—the vocations to which God calls us to faithful service in life. We looked at a number of historical figures, some pillars of faith who struggled to put their convictions to work in the building of our American society.



The Rev. Brian A. Evans

We concluded our retreat with a tour and worship at the Washington National Cathedral—one of the world's largest churches, a massive Gothic structure, which took some 90 years to construct by traditional methods, and, (like our own church), still always seems to be under construction! Ninety years is, in fact, quite a short amount of time for such a project. Many of the great cathedrals of Europe took centuries to complete. Who today, seeing a need for the construction of a church building, would set out to build in such a way? What if the demand (and the funding for a church) is here today but gone tomorrow? What if opinions about it change? What if the unforeseen happens? What if our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren don't support it?

In 1837, the German poet Heinrich Heine made such an observation:

"Almost no one builds churches this way anymore. When I lately stood with a friend before [the Cathedral of] Amiens, and he beheld with awe and pity that monument of giant strength in towering stone, and of dwarfish patience in minute sculpture, he asked me how it happens that we can no longer build such piles. I replied, "Dear Alphonse, men in those days had convictions; we moderns have opinions, and it requires something more than an opinion to build such a Gothic cathedral."

There is much about our faith that remains a mystery. We are people who walk by faith, not by sight. Yet, the message of Easter handed down to us persists: that a man—the Son of God—was betrayed, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead on the third day. There is no proof of this and there is no guarantee that future generations will believe.

But here we are 2000 years later. Are we, with our forebears in faith, so convicted by the truth of the Gospel and the importance of this message that, no matter the past, the present, or the future, we, in our day and generation, commit our whole selves to this Good News and believe that it is Truth for all time?

*Continued on p. 4...*

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## TAKE NOTE!

*"Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle,  
tell the triumph far and wide;  
Tell aloud the wondrous story  
of the cross, the Crucified  
Tell how Christ, the world's redeemer,  
vanquished death the day he died."*

—Pange Lingua, trans. J. M. Neale

And sing we shall, recalling Christ's sacrifice for our salvation in Holy Week. We shall sing of his promises during the Great Vigil of Easter, and transition to songs of victory as the liturgy progresses. We shall shout glorious "Alleluias" on the day of his resurrection. With voices, organ, bells, brass, timpani, and joyful hearts we shall sing of the glorious battle won for us by the only Son of God.

We extend thanks in advance to all singers, instrumentalists, organists, and lectors for their diligent work during this holy season. We are blessed to have so many gifted persons who offer their time and talents to God's service. Thank you, one and all!

### ORGAN GALA!

Our Organ Artist in Residence, Dr. Ann Labounsky will be honored at the American Guild of Organists Endowment Fund Distinguished Artist Recital and Gala Benefit Reception on **Friday, April 25**, at Duquesne University. The recital begins at 7:30 PM in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, 600 McAnulty Drive. Pittsburgh PA 15282. For ticket information, please speak to Cantor Sr. Cynthia Pock, or visit the AGO website, [agohq.org](http://agohq.org), and proceed to 2025 AGO Distinguished Artist Recital and Gala.

Soli deo gloria!



Sr. Cynthia Pock, OLF, AAGO  
Cantor



Sr. Cynthia A. Pock, OLF, AAGO



## ORGANIZATIONAL CONGREGATION MEETING

This is our annual program meeting. The congregation will receive reports from all standing and special committees of the parish. Members will be elected to our Congregation Council.

All Voting Members are urged to be present. Voting Members are defined as those members of the congregation who have communed and made a contribution of record in the past year.

**9:45 AM on Sunday, May 18,  
in Holy Cross Hall.**



## BISHOP KUSSEROW TO PREACH ON EASTER

This Easter Sunday, April 20, we will be blessed by the presence and preaching of our bishop, The Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow, on the occasion of his final Easter as bishop of our synod. Please join us on this joyous day as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord as well as our bishop's 18 years of faithful ministry to our synod.



## CHRISTIAN ED. CORNER

### SAVE THE DATE: ALL AGES EVENT

In lieu of regular Sunday Church School classes, on **Palm Sunday, April 13**, Christian Education will host an all-ages event where we will bake communion bread for Holy Week. Join us in Holy Cross Hall at 9:45 AM for fun and fellowship!

### CAMP DOWNTOWN REGISTRATION OPEN

Join us as we sow Seeds of Faith at this year's Camp Downtown hosted by First Lutheran Church and sponsored by the Downtown Ministerium, this summer, **June 16 – 20 from 9AM - 4PM**. We will visit Biblical stories of sowing seeds and how this relates to our life of faith which needs only be as big as a mustard seed to bear much fruit. We will also learn about Johnny Appleseed and his Pittsburgh roots. The cost is \$75 per camper. Sibling discounts are \$65 for second sibling, \$55 for third sibling and so on. Camper registration is for students entering Kindergarten through 6th grade. Students 7th Grade and older may register to serve as youth counselors at no cost. We also need additional adult chaperones! **Registration closes May 18 and will only be open to the first 40 campers.** Visit [flcpittsburgh.org/campdowntown](http://flcpittsburgh.org/campdowntown) to register campers, youth counselors, and adult chaperones!

## UPCOMING ADULT EDUCATION

**April 6:** Pastor Evans and Pastor Murdy will lead a discussion of Holy Week Traditions & Liturgical Customs. **April 13:** is Palm Sunday and the All-Ages Activity. Join us in making homemade communion bread to be used during holy week and making cards for homebound members.

### BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

We are reviving our Social Justice Book Discussion group. The group will study *How We Learn To Be Brave: Decisive Moments In Life and Faith* by Mariann Edgar Budde. Participants should purchase the book. Those interested in joining this group please email Vickie Briercheck ([brierchv@gmail.com](mailto:brierchv@gmail.com)). The group will meet mostly via Zoom on the following **Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM for an hour: April 22 and 29, May 6 and 13, June 10 and 24, July 8**. The goal will be to cover one chapter at each meeting.



## YOUTH GROUP EVENT:

## TOMB EXPLORER ESCAPE ROOM

On **Sunday, April 27**, join Pastor Evans at **5:00 PM** at Escape Room Pittsburgh (Homestead) for a fun Tomb Explorer adventure. Dinner following the event will be at Eat'n Park at the Waterfront.



## MARATHON SUNDAY

The annual Pittsburgh Marathon will take place this year on May 3 - 4. Due to the resulting street closures, we will have **only one liturgy at 11:00 AM on Sunday, May 4.**

## ATTENTION 2025 GRADUATES!

If you are graduating from high school, college, graduate school, etc. please notify Nicholas at [flc@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:flc@flcpittsburgh.org) of the date of your graduation and the name of the school by **May 16** for inclusion in the June issue of The Alert.

**Thank you!**

*Continued from cover...*

Can we say that, because Christ is risen, all else must fall behind in importance? Do we believe with conviction—no mere opinion—that because Christ is risen, there is a new creation and that in him death itself is destroyed? May we so proclaim and so believe that Christ our Lord is risen indeed!

With you in Christ,



The Rev. Brian A. Evans  
Senior Pastor



*Pr. Evans and the confirmation students pose before the towering edifice of Washington National Cathedral.*

## WALK-IN MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

First Lutheran Church along with four churches downtown serves walk-ins every 4 weeks. On our assigned week each month, in the morning from 9:30 AM - 12:00 PM. Walk-in Ministry volunteers welcome neighbors who come to First Church for emergency food supplies, local bus tickets, crisis support, and referrals to local nonprofit organizations. We are looking for more volunteers to help with this important ministry of the Downtown Ministerium. Please contact Christine [cgh@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:cgh@flcpittsburgh.org) for more information, if you are interested or just curious. Training is provided.

## IN SEARCH OF A KIDNEY DONOR

A member of our parish, Daniel Walker, is now on the kidney transplant list at UPMC because of polycystic kidney disease. A living donor is his best chance at continuing an active and productive life. Anyone can support him by sharing this message. If someone wishes to be a donor they can register at [livingdonorreg.upmc.com/](https://livingdonorreg.upmc.com/) and specify Daniel Walker as the recipient. Blood type does not matter.



**FLC PITTSBURGH  
DRAGON BOAT TEAM**

Join First Lutheran Church at this year's Pittsburgh Dragon Boat Festival on **Saturday, September 27, 2025**. The Dragon Boat Festival is organized by Pittsburgh Hearts of Steel, an organization dedicated to supporting breast cancer survivors.

Sign up to be a racer, a cheerleader, to bring food, staff the vendor table, or to pledge support in the Parish House, by scanning the QR code, or by visiting [tinyurl.com/FLC-dragonboat](https://tinyurl.com/FLC-dragonboat)! **Commitment deadline is May 1.**

*We will be fundraising to meet the registration fee of \$1400 once at least 20 people have committed to row.*

Contact Sarah ([SAM406@pitt.edu](mailto:SAM406@pitt.edu)) or Deb ([dlange312@gmail.com](mailto:dlange312@gmail.com)) if you would like more information.



SCAN ME



## 'PREPARING' FOR DEPLOYMENT

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

It was a little over two years ago when I first heard the news that my unit was up for deployment. Although I had discerned ministry as a chaplain for many years and knew that someday I would be deployed, I never thought it would come so quickly. Am I ready? Being a pastor and chaplain, I daily accept that I may not be as prepared as I think I need to or wish to be. Yet, despite my shortfalls and feelings of unpreparedness, God sends me to serve.



*The Rev. Joseph G. Murdy, OLF*

Isn't that how it usually works as people of faith? Your family asks you to pray, "What do I say?" A friend is dying, "How do I comfort them?" A coworker asks you a challenging question about scripture, "Wish my pastor was here." We all have those challenging moments when we wish we would have paid more attention in confirmation. Or, we wonder if we have what it takes, despite a lifetime of faith. In our daily life God sends us to serve, ready or not. Consider key figures in scripture who may not have been ready. Moses, his lack of confidence. Jonah, unprepared and unwilling. David, a shepherd, turned king. There is a theme throughout the Bible where God uses those who are unprepared, uncertain and sometimes unfit to do great things.

Imagine being an apostle after the crucifixion... Each of the apostles were called to serve from where they were and likely had little conception as to what their lives would look like after meeting Jesus. After the death of their teacher, they were afraid. They hid, not sure what to do. They weren't prepared to lose him. After his resurrection they were confident in who Jesus was, perhaps less afraid now. They felt assured that Jesus would be with them. Were they ready? Would they know what to say when challenged? Would they know where to go?

From moments of confusion, pain, and loss God sends us to serve. From hard places lined with obstacles, God sends us to serve. From our own death and rebirth through the sacrament of baptism, with the vulnerability of life ahead of us, God sends us forth to serve.

When I find myself doing something incredibly difficult, I remind myself that I am capable of doing hard things, because I am never alone. God is with me. God is with us as we live out our vocations in daily living. God is with us when our faith is challenged or we find ourselves feeling unprepared to share the Gospel. Remember that God is the potter, we are the clay vessels through which God is at work.

Am I ready to be deployed? No. Am I prepared? No.

Yet, God has called me to serve. "Here I am Lord, send me."

I am grateful for you, our church family. Be assured that I take each of you with me in my heart as I go from Grant street to share the Gospel.

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

With you in Christ,

*Pastor Joe*

The Rev. Joseph G. Murdy  
Associate Pastor



*Visiting clergy and our pastors-in-residence gather in the chancel following Pr. Murdy's installation liturgy.*

# HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

April 13 - 20, 2025

## PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

Holy Communion with 8:30 & 11:00 AM  
Procession of Palms

## HOLY TUESDAY

Chrism Mass at First Lutheran Church 10:00 AM

## HOLY WEDNESDAY

Noonday Holy Communion 12:10 PM

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

Holy Communion with Footwashing & 7:00 PM  
Stripping of the Altar

## GOOD FRIDAY

German Good Friday Service 10:00 AM

Service of Prayer & Preaching 12:00 PM

Stations of the Cross 2:30 PM

Liturgy of Our Lord's Passion & Death 7:00 PM

## HOLY SATURDAY

The Great Vigil of Easter 7:00 PM

## THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Holy Communion 8:30 & 11:00 AM

Easter Breakfast 9:45 AM

*All are welcome!*