

# ALERT!

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
615 Grant Street + Pittsburgh, PA 15219

2025  
LENT  
VOLUME 79, ISSUE 1

## A CALL TO LENT: MEMBERSHIP VS. DISCIPLESHIP

As we enter into the season of Lent, it is again time to turn our focus toward intensifying our discipleship as followers of Jesus Christ. Much has been written and spoken over the years on the idea of membership vs. discipleship. The word *membership* conjures up many images of secular organizations: dues, privileges, rules, bureaucracy. Discipleship, on the other hand, emphasizes following, learning, and worshipping our Lord — all much more faithful-sounding ideas of what the Church should be.

Yet, let us not let the idea of membership be left only to the secular world. St. Paul talks about disciples of Jesus being indispensable members of Christ's body, just as our feet, hands, ears, and eyes, and nose are all necessary parts of our human bodies. All are needed. All these parts serve a purpose in the human body just as each of us serve a purpose in the Church, Christ's body. You are needed, you are valued, and you are cherished—both by your church family and by God.



The Rev. Brian A. Evans

We might think about Lent as a time to exercise our body parts—to get our members working together for the common purpose of the Gospel. It is our joy and privilege as members of Christ's body to join together in worship and Holy Communion as often as possible, and to contribute to the wellbeing of the whole Body with our time, talent and treasure. These are the practices, or exercises if you will, that allow us to recognize one another as members of the same Body, working in harmony toward the goal of the Gospel.

This newsletter is filled with ways we can exercise our whole selves—body, mind, and spirit—so that the Spirit may strengthen us and prepare us this Lent for the coming year of discipleship. Rooted in our baptismal calling, I encourage all of us to recommit ourselves to these practices. Let us seek to intensify our discipleship — the basics of our faith — and our faithfulness to Jesus. As they say on the radio, “Make a pledge to renew your membership” this Lent. That is: come and worship, turn to God in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, that we may be true disciples and members of the Body of Christ in the world.

With you in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian A. Evans +".

The Rev. Brian A. Evans  
Senior Pastor

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Connect with us on social media!



## TAKE NOTE!

### Honoring an Artist

First Lutheran Church's Organ Artist in Residence, Dr. Ann Labounsky, will be honored at the American Guild of Organists Endowment Fund distinguished Artist Award Recital and Gala Benefit Reception on Friday, April 25.



Sr. Cynthia A. Pock, OLF, AAGO

Dr. Labounsky, longtime Professor of Organ and Sacred Music at Duquesne University will open the festive evening with a performance on the magnificent new Jaekel pipe organ in the University Chapel of the Holy Spirit. A formal gala reception will follow. Proceeds from the event will benefit the AGO Endowment Fund. Dr. Labounsky has had, and continues to enjoy a remarkable career in the world of organ sacred music. Following organ study at Eastman School of Music and the University of Michigan, she traveled to France for study with renowned organist, Jean Langlais. She wrote an authoritative biography about him (*Jean Langlais: the Man and His Music*) and over a period of many years, recorded every organ work he composed. She won first place in the AGO's first National Competition in Organ Improvisation. She has toured internationally as a recitalist and lecturer.

Upon arriving in Pittsburgh in the late 1960's, Ann established the degree in Sacred Music at Duquesne, something unique to this area. The program excelled and grew, acquiring national attention and respect from musical colleagues.

Each year, the American Guild of Organists highlights and honors an outstanding colleague. This year, it is most-deservedly Ann. First Lutheran Church gives thanks for her musical contributions to our own parish. Frequently, we are blessed to hear a magnificent improvisation at the Postlude on Sunday morning. She has served as substitute organist and accompanist and teacher. She is a faithful worshipper at liturgies, and her support and encouragement of fellow musicians is a true treasure. We give thanks for Ann's gifts and delight in the honor she will receive on April 25. Please speak to Sr. Cynthia for further information about the recital and reception.

### Vespers in Lent

The clergy and choirs of the Church of the Redeemer, Squirrel Hill, and First Lutheran Church will join together for Vespers during Lent on Wednesday March. The liturgy will take place at First Lutheran Church at 7:00 PM. A soup supper will take place at 6:00 PM in Holy Cross Hall.

The combined choirs recently sang together on All Saints Day at Church of the Redeemer. We are pleased to welcome Redeemer's choir, under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Cornelius-Bates and to present musical offerings during this holy season. Please plan to join friends from Redeemer and First Lutheran Church in worship on Wednesday, March 26.

Soli deo gloria!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Pock". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sr. Cynthia Pock, OLF, AAGO



Dr. Ann Labounsky



## CHRISTIAN ED. CORNER

### THIS WEEKEND: PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Support our Youth Group and Sunday School teachers on **Sunday, March 2 at 9:45 AM** in Holy Cross Hall at our annual pancake breakfast and teacher appreciation. First Church's youth will cook and serve made-to-order pancakes and raise money for activities. Teachers will be recognized for their service and dedication.

### FAMILY CIRCUS EVENT

Please drop in and play alongside other families from First Lutheran on **Friday, March 14, 2025** at the Toy Lending Library. We will serve food around 5:30 PM. If you would like to attend, please fill out the form that can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/FamilyCircusFLC>. If you have questions, please contact Emily Weimer at [eharmon130@gmail.com](mailto:eharmon130@gmail.com). Friends are welcome!

## UPCOMING ADULT EDUCATION

**March 9:** Social Ministry welcomes the Chaplain, Anais Huffian from Abiding Mission, the recipient of our designated offerings for Easter. **March 16:** Evangelism welcomes a guest speaker from the Dragon Boat Race which supports Breast Cancer Awareness (FLC sponsored event, September 27). **March 23:** Social Ministry welcomes guest speaker, The Rev. Edward DeBruce II, from Bridge to the Mountains, recipient of our designated offerings in Lent.



*Icefest campers work diligently on their sections of the mosaic cross.*

## 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.**



*Two young Icefest campers wait eagerly for their turn on the ice.*



*Ben Pasternak (left) looks on as Icefest campers decorate each segment of the cross.*

## INTRODUCING AMY BILLS, YOUR NEW CYM

I hope you won't judge me, but Kung Fu Panda is one of my favorite movies. This month as I jumped into my new job as the Coordinator of Youth Ministry, Christian Education, and Fellowship (CYM) at First Lutheran Church, I thought about what one wise kung fu turtle said, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift." I feel very blessed today starting my second career working alongside amazing colleagues and our congregational family at FLC. In my new role as CYM, I will be helping to build relationships and excitement for Youth Group, Confirmation, Camp Downtown, fellowship events, and much more, by managing the many organizational, scheduling, and practical tasks required. So, when you see me around, please stop and say, "Hi!" and tell me a little about yourself and why you love First Lutheran Church.



Amy Bills

Some fun facts about me: I'm married to Thad Bobula and we have one daughter, Katie (21), who is a full-time student at Edinboro University and a combat medic in the Army National Guard. We live in Mt. Washington and have two rowdy German short-hair pointers, Auggie (13) and Daisy (2). I love to read, walk, visit state parks, travel with family, and play with my dogs.

### 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.



## LENTEN VESPERS & SOUP SUPPER

Enrich your Lenten journey by gathering with the parish family of First Lutheran Church for a soup supper and mid-Lent Vespers service.

Sign up to bring bread or soup in the Parish House or by e-mailing Amy Bills at [cym@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:cym@flcpittsburgh.org)

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26**

**Vespers begins at 7:00 PM**

**Supper begins at 6:00 PM**

## DINNER & COMPLINE



On **Sunday, March 30**, we will meet for dinner at **6:00 PM** at The Porch at Schenley then walk to Heinz Chapel to enjoy The Pittsburgh Compline Choir at 8:00 PM. We hope you can join us. Please sign up in the Parish House or contact Amy Bills at [cym@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:cym@flcpittsburgh.org).



## ADULT FELLOWSHIP FISH FRY

On **Friday, April 4**, we will meet for dinner at **6:00 PM** at Saint Jude Parish, Sacred Heart school cafeteria (325 Emerson St., Shadyside) then bring a dessert to share at The Halls' in Edgewood. We hope you can join us. Please sign up in the Parish House or contact Amy Bills at [cym@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:cym@flcpittsburgh.org).





# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Submitted by the Finance Committee

## FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH Statement of General Fund Activities

As shown in the attached chart, during 2024 FLC was blessed by your continued faithful support of our many ministries. Offerings & other gifts totaled \$628,571, which was the second highest in our history, behind only the exceptional level of giving during the 2020 pandemic year. While offerings were \$15,089 behind the full year budget, envelope giving, which is the largest component of offerings, was \$608,191, again the second highest in our history.

Accounts	2023 Actual	2024 Preliminary	2024 Budget	Budget Variance
<b>Revenues</b>				
Offerings & other gifts	\$ 600,198	\$ 628,571	\$643,660	\$ (15,089)
Distributions & interest	192,667	286,000	207,360	78,640
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>792,865</b>	<b>914,571</b>	<b>851,020</b>	<b>63,551</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Personnel	\$ 527,996	\$ 507,218	\$583,384	\$ (76,166)
Benevolence	62,764	109,520	63,850	45,670
Christian Education and Youth Ministry	18,995	25,088	22,400	2,688
Evangelism and Social Ministry	17,185	13,887	12,350	1,537
Parish Operations	40,585	44,042	47,080	(3,038)
Property Maintenance	96,013	92,653	102,720	(10,067)
Worship	36,216	26,339	22,650	3,689
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>799,755</b>	<b>818,746</b>	<b>854,434</b>	<b>(35,688)</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>\$ (6,890)</b>	<b>\$ 95,825</b>	<b>\$ (3,414)</b>	<b>\$ 99,239</b>

We were also blessed by an extraordinary gift from the Johnson Family Trust, which was created by Glen and Lavonne Johnson, who for many years were faithful members and supporters of our ministries and capital projects. We received a distribution (included in Distributions and Interest in the above chart) of \$137,500 during 2024 and will receive annual distributions in perpetuity approximating \$125,000. During 2024 we used this gift for the following:

### **\$45,000 - Replenished the Good Shepherd Fund**

This fund is used at the Senior Pastor's discretion to provide financial support to congregation and community members. The fund had been almost fully depleted during 2024.

### **\$10,000 – Set aside into a separate fund for our youth**

The intention of that fund is to support our youths' attendance at the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis.

### **\$15,000 – Did not take this planned 4<sup>th</sup> quarter distribution from the Passavant Fund**

As you may recall, for several years we have needed distributions of \$60,000 each year from the Passavant Fund in order to support our budget. Going forward, we don't anticipate needing distributions from the Passavant Fund to support operations. The extraordinary gift from the Johnson Family Trust will enable us to fully support and grow our ministries, while we replenish the Passavant Fund and allow it to continue growing for the support of future generations of the faithful at First Lutheran Church.

One of my favorite references to our church came from our beloved member Lewis Steele, who appropriately called us the "Miracle on Grant Street". That reference could not be more true. Peace be with you.

Jim Nealon (*Finance Committee Chair*)

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

On January 19, Meghan Haverlack and Eric Pica, and Richard and Carol Greb were received as new members of First Lutheran Church. We welcome them to our parish family!



Meghan Haverlack & Eric Pica



Richard & Carol Greb

## TIME TO ORDER EASTER FLOWERS & SPECIAL MUSIC GIFTS!

Forms for ordering flowers for Easter 2025 and for Special Music are on last page of this newsletter. This is a wonderful opportunity to remember or honor your loved ones. Completed forms should be returned to Christine Hoffman in the Parish Office by **Friday, April 3**.



## COMMUNION ASSISTANTS & ASSISTING MINISTERS NEEDED

Please consider serving as worship assistants on Sundays. Assisting Ministers serve as assistant to the presiding minister, leading prayers, preparing the altar for communion and administering the Cup. Communion Assistants administer the wine at communion and perform other small tasks at the altar. Time commitment is about one Sunday a month. Training is provided. Please contact Christine Hoffman, who coordinates the assistants by calling 412-471-8125 or email [cgh@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:cgh@flcpittsburgh.org). Thank you!

## ASH WEDNESDAY

MARCH 5, 2025

Imposition of Ashes  
**8:30 AM**

Holy Communion  
with Imposition of Ashes  
**12:00 PM & 7:00 PM**



*Join us as we begin our annual Lenten pilgrimage toward the cross of Christ.*



## INSTALLATION OF ASSOCIATE PASTOR

The Rev. Joseph G. Murdy will be officially installed to the office of Associate Pastor on **Sunday, March 9, at 4:00 PM** by our Conference Dean, The Rev. Dr. Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes, with our pastor-in-residence, The Rev. Caroline Mendis preaching. A light reception will follow in Holy Cross Hall. All are welcome. Clergy are invited to vest and process. The color of the day is purple.





# Easter Flowers Order Form

Orders must be placed by Friday, April 3.

\_\_\_\_ 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.*