

First Lutheran Church

Office Hours: Monday—Thursday

7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Friday 7:30 a.m. to 12 noon

# THE MESSENGER

## JANUARY 2025

107 2nd Street Southeast Aitkin, MN 56431 Office: 218-927-2028

E-mail: office@flc-aitkin.com http://www.flc-aitkin.com





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#### We're Epiphany People

It's been said that we Christians are an Easter (raised to new life) people. We are also a Christmas (God born in us) people. But we mustn't forget that we are also an Epiphany people. What do Epiphany people look like? Well, there's a message I'd like to share with you by another pastor who was a kind of mentor to me, Pastor Mark Nygard.

I ran out of money this week. Not that I didn't have money in the bank, but I had used up the cash in my wallet and had forgotten to recharge it. I didn't discover it until I entered Burger King to buy a meal

for John (his son) and me.

"I'll have two Whopper combos, one medium and one small," I confidently ordered. "Two combos, one medium and one small," she called back to the kitchen. Entering it into the cash register, she told me the amount due. Opening my billfold, my heart sank as I saw it full of receipts and lean on bills. Pawing through the receipts, I came up with only some stray dollar bills and some change, "I'm not going to have money enough to cover this," I said with some embarrassment. "I'll have to cancel." "Void the combos," she called back without a moment's hesitation. This must happen to them often.

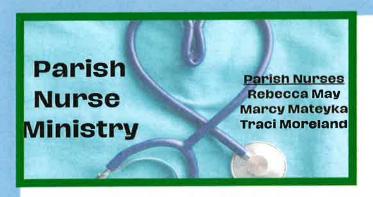
Then, turning to me, she said, "I have four dollars," offering to complete the money I needed. "I shouldn't take help on an order like this," I protested. "Well, I have four dollars," she offered again. I thought of John, hungry, out in the car waiting for me. I was only a little short on just one order. I offered, "Could you complete a single order?" And she did. But she took only some of my money, completed it with one of her dollars, and gave me back the change. "Who's doing this?" I protested. "I want to pay you back." "Oh, that's all right," she replied matter-of-factly. "It's part of my Christian moral values."

Here was a teenager who was standing up to be counted. In the most natural way possible, she let it be known where she stood and who she belonged to. She lifted my evening more by her witness than by her dollar. She was an Epiphany person, a light shining in the world and the darkness has not overcome

her because Christ is shining within her (John 1:5).

As Christians, we are all called to be Epiphany people. We have experienced the love of God in Jesus Christ. We live in a hard world, where lovelessness is the corollary of competition. We are surrounded by people who have been beaten down by the competition and by a host of other problems: poor health, discord at home, physical or emotional abuse, failing grades at school, the plain old bad day, or maybe even just forgetfulness to recharge their wallet. Our hearts go out to our neighbors in need (and who isn't in need in one way or another at some moment in their day). We have a chance to show we care: by a visit to the hospital, by a cup of coffee with them, by a kind word, by a moment of our time, by our gift of money. We're Epiphany people. We do what we can.

## **PASTOR'S NOTES CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**



Loneliness has become a public health crisis. The surgeon general stated in May 2023 that human connection is essential for survival. God created each of us to be in relationship with Him and one another. Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 says two are better than one; a three-fold cord is not quickly broken. Genesis 2:18 says it is not good that man should be alone. The Psalms express voices crying out in loneliness to God. What is loneliness- a painful, subjective feeling of not belonging and despair; feeling forgotten with loss of companionship; feeling that no one cares and the future holds no promise. Loneliness is different than solitude. Loneliness is starvation, but solitude is a positive feeling and choice that sustains us. There are people at higher risk than others to be lonely. Teens, young adults, aged, people with chronic disease; and people marginalized by society due to gender (females more than males), race, class, poverty, and religion can all be at higher risk for loneliness. Loneliness also occurs with life transitions, ie loss of a loved one, empty nest syndrome, changes in employment, health issues, caregiver role, new baby, moving, war, disability, and disasters. Social media can also separate people. A hospital can feel impersonal where one especially needs comfort during illness and the unknown. Long term loneliness affects physical and mental health leading to depression, suicide, and chemical abuse,

# LONELINESS

dementia, heart disease, and stroke. So what needs to be done to alleviate loneliness? Connect with other and be present for each other. Listen to each other. Healthiest communities have a well-resourced civic infrastructure. The most under resourced areas are the US-Mexican border, black belt region, Appalachia of poor whites, and Native Americans. Community planning is needed for people to gather. The social infrastructure is an ecosystem of opportunities for connection and participation. Older adults in rural areas report having larger social networks than urban areas; but rural areas have more structural barriers to connection. These barriers are transportation, economics, pedestrian challenges, access to internet and cell phones, and restricted access to health care. This infrastructure can include:

- a. programs for volunteering, sports groups, religious groups, and member associations.
- b. policies for transportation, housing, and education.
- c. physical elements such as libraries, parks, green spaces, and playgrounds that support development of social connection.
- d. private businesses such as cafes, barber shops, radio stations, and newspapers.

  Compassionate communities offer grace.

Remember, God is the ultimate giver of grace. Ps 139:1-12 says we are never alone. God is omnipresent. Matt 28:20 says He is with us always. Hebrews 13:5 says never will He leave us.

Be kind to one another.

Submitted by Rebecca May, RN

### PASTOR'S NOTES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

And while we are showing our caring, we look for ways to speak our faith like the young woman at Burger King. Think how that might happen for you. Maybe, "God bless you, now," as you send relatives off on a trip. Or, "Jesus loves you," to your kids as you kiss them goodnight. Or, "That was quite a sermon the pastor preached on Sunday," while you're visiting at the coffee -shop. Or, "I don't know how people who aren't Christians manage," in conversation with friends after laying your loved one to rest. Or, "Once upon a time, Jesus was walking down by the lake," as you start teaching a Sunday school lesson to your first or second grade class. Or, "It's just part of my Christian values," as you debate a point with your fellow workers at the office. Or, "Do you know what's been a big help to me: my faith in Jesus," to the passenger next to you on the plane who has just poured out his problems.

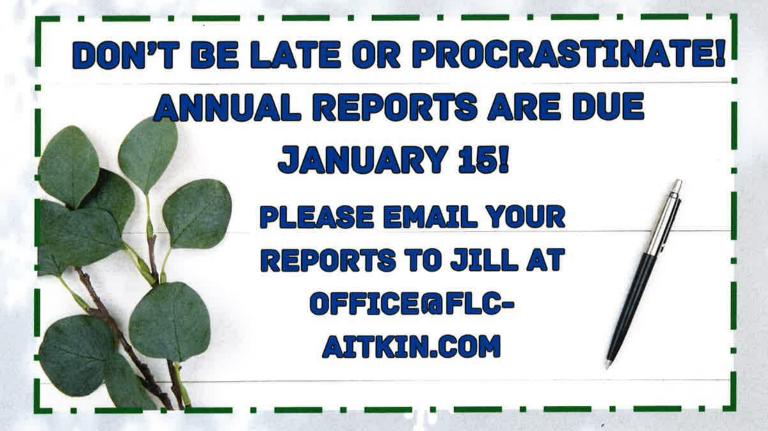
Our witness to Christ requires a demonstration of love. But it requires more than that, too. Sometimes, not all the time, it requires an identification of that love that we've demonstrated, so that people may know which light is shining and may come to that light. I say to you: Dare to name the Name. Do it in a way that is natural to you. Pray for grace to know when the moment has arrived and how to share it in a helpful way. Trust the Holy Spirit to help you. But be bold and cheerful in standing up for the One who loved you and died for you. For that's just part of

the life of the Epiphany person.

Good, huh? What's an Epiphany person? It's someone who let's God's light shine through them. Do you know what it's called when two or three of these people get together to let their light shine? A church. First Lutheran is an Epiphany people.

See you in church.

Pastor Reggie







## **Blood Drive**

**Aitkin Community** 

#### **First Lutheran Church**

Gym 107 2nd St. SE - Aitkin

Thursday, January 2, 2025 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, January 3, 2025 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



American Red Cross

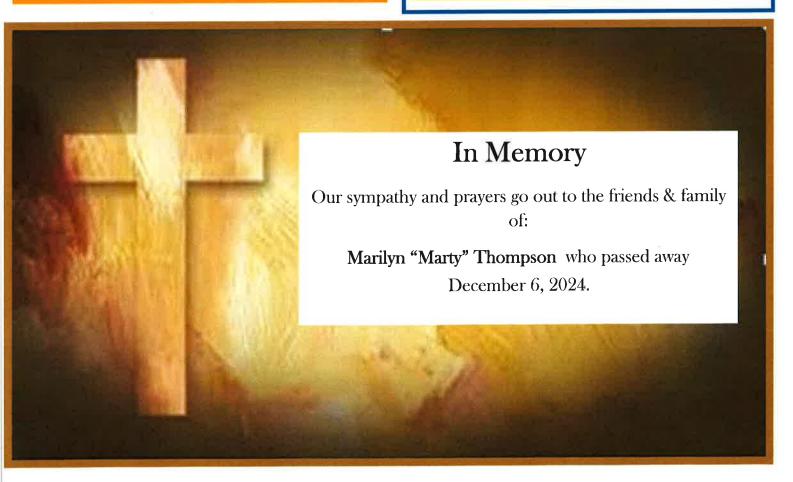


### **80-Plus Birthdays for January**

Shirley Busse January 3
Herm Newton January 5
Lewis Moore January 7
Sonja Johnson January 9
William Hakes January 24
Alan Gray January 31

#### 90-Plus Birthdays for January

Marion Gilmer January 5
Lael Carlstrom January 7
Phyllis Kirkhorn January 23





## Stewardship Ministry Report – January 2025

It began with an idea, a hope, then conversations and discussions and then a meeting and many meetings that followed. And the fruit of all that resulted in the Aitkin Youth Center opening its doors on Thursday and Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> at First Lutheran Church.

Your Mission Endowment Fund Committee was at the heart of this youth center happening. At a meeting two years ago the hope was shared that grant money from the Endowment could be used to build something that would have lasting impact in the community. The Endowment Committee, on the basis of conversations with community people, decided that providing grant money to help establish a youth center would have long-range ramifications to the Aitkin area youth community.

Six people gathered in the church library in May of 2023 and from that a board of directors was formed, a 501c3 organization was formed and registered with the State, local organizations donated money and the process of forming a youth center moved forward. All through the process, First Lutheran supported being the site.

Essential to this process was the Mission Endowment Fund Committee committing eventually \$4,200 for startup costs and First Lutheran Church being willing to allow the center to meet in its building. Money and place were two basic needs. Community involvement was the third component.

As a result, on the two coldest nights of the fall, 25 youth ranging from 6<sup>th</sup> Grade to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade came to the Aitkin Youth Center and had very good experiences. A hope turned into reality by the bold decision of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee and the equally bold actions of a number of people from First Lutheran Church and the community.

When people are asked whether they know about the Endowment Fund they often don't know. When asked it they would contribute to it either with a donation here, now and again or with larger amounts from an estate or will, they wonder, "What is this about?"

It's only a start, but twenty-five youth from our community have tasted a place of fun, of acceptance, of warmth, of caring, of it being "Ok" to be who you are, to being presented with opportunities for growth---because people in First Lutheran Church believed in investing in the Mission Endowment Fund, that has made the Aitkin Youth Center a reality!

Pastor Doug Larson, Stewardship Ministry Chair



# Phil Bramley Appointed as Executive Director of Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry

Duluth, MN – November 21, 2024 – Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry (VLM) is pleased to announce the hiring of Phil Bramley as its new Executive Director, effective

January 1, 2025. In his new role, Phil will lead the organization in advancing its mission of providing transformative camp and retreat experiences to individuals, families, and communities across northern Minnesota.

Phil brings nearly 20 years of experience in outdoor education and program management, including significant leadership roles at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. As Director of Adventure and Environmental Education Programs, Phil oversaw strategic planning, staB development, and community partnerships, fostering a culture of growth, collaboration, and environmental stewardship.

"We are thrilled to welcome Phil to the VLM team," said Mike Olson, President of the VLM Board of Directors. "His wealth of experience in outdoor education, coupled with his strong leadership and passion for faith-based programming, make him an ideal fit to guide VLM into its next chapter. We are confident that Phil's vision and commitment will help us continue to provide life-changing experiences for campers and retreat guests, while expanding VLM's impact."

Phil's extensive background also includes directing Bethel Horizons' Adventure Program and Year-Round Programs, where he led successful program growth, developed educational curricula, and implemented safety and compliance standards. He is recognized for his ability to cultivate partnerships with schools, local organizations, and community groups to increase participation and engagement.

"I am honored to join Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry, where faith and God's creation come together so beautifully," said Phil Bramley. "VLM's mission reflects my values, and I'm excited to work with the staff, board, and community to build on its legacy. Together, we will ensure this ministry continues to thrive, inspiring and transforming lives for generations to come."

Phil holds a deep commitment to experiential learning and environmental stewardship, values that align closely with the work at VLM. He has built a strong track record of leading programs that inspire personal growth, teamwork, and leadership development, all within a context of faith and outdoor adventure.

Phil's appointment marks an exciting new chapter for Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry, as the organization continues its vital work of connecting people to nature, faith, and one another through its camps and retreat programs.

About Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry (VLM) provides opportunities for Christ-centered spiritual growth, leadership development, and outreach in God's great northwoods. Affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), VLM operates two sites in Minnesota, Camp Hiawatha (Deer River) and Camp Vermillion (Cook) providing traditional summer camp experiences, programmed day or weekend events, and comfortable spaces for retreat gatherings. VLM also offers guided trips into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. With a rich history of providing summer camps, year-round retreats, and environmental education, VLM serves individuals and groups of all ages in northern Minnesota.

# JANUARY SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

SUNDAY'S 10:15 - 11:00 AM

January 5: Christmas Break

**January 12: Sunday School** 

**January 19: Sunday School** 

**January 26: Sunday School** 

2025





COFFEE HOUSE: 3:30-5:30 pm

WNf CLASS: 4:30-5:30 pm

January 1: Christmas Break

January 8: Class

January 15: Class

January 22: Class

January 29: Class





JANUARY & CHRISTIVAS BRGAK

JANUARY & AFFRWATION

JANUARY IS: AVERNATION

JANUARY 22: AFFIRMATION

JANUARY 29: AFFIRMATION

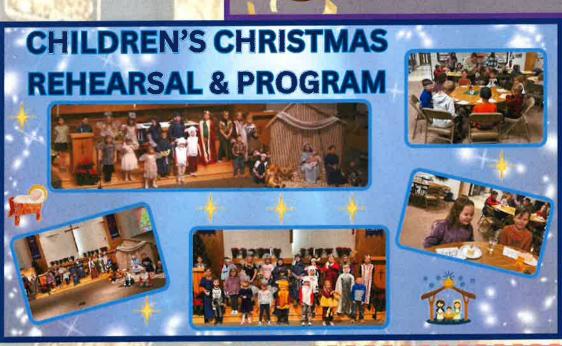








January 29: Peer Ministry







# THANK TINY TOTS ON HOLD THANK

TINY TOTS WILL BE ON HOLD FOR THE REST OF THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR HEARTFELT
APPRECIATION TO OUR VOLUNTEERS AND LEADERS THIS
YEAR, AS WELL AS TO ALL THE PAST VOLUNTEERS AND
LEADERS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING TINY TOTS
THE EXCEPTIONAL PROGRAM IT HAS BEEN FOR
OVER 30 YEARS.

THANK YOU! YOU HAVE TRULY BEEN A BLESSING!



# BEHOLD

I MAKE ALL THINGS

# NEW

Rev. 21:5

MAY YOU
SHINE WITH THE
LIGHT OF GODS BLESSINGS
IN THIS NEW YEAR!

HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM THE STAFF AT
FIRST LUTHERAN!

# SOLAR TASK FORCE MEETING

THE SOLAR TASK FORCE WILL BE MEETING IN THE LIBRARY ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 7 AT 7 PM. ANYONE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE IS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
DAVE DICKEY AT 218-232-4690.





## Dear Pastor Reggie, Staff & Congregation,

Thank you for your support these past several weeks! When we find ourselves in medical crisis, we know that our friends, family and church family rally to support us in so many ways, including the power of prayer. We are truly blessed!

I am incredibly grateful to you for your overall support and prayers.

'Shank You

**Darlene Munneke** 



#### Finance Committee

#### Financial Summary through November 30, 2024

2023

2024

| General Operating Income - YTD                        | 366,094 | 328,134  |
|---|---------|----------|
| November Budget Expectations-YTD (Historical Average) | 365,419 | 388,307  |
| Variance to Budget Expectations - YTD                 | 675     | (60,173) |
| Actual Expenditures - YTD                             | 378,948 | 358,148  |
| Percentage of dollars received for period             |         |          |
| to dollars pledged                                    | NA      | 100%     |
| Unpledged Dollars Rec'd – YTD (Regular Offering)      | 103,918 | 87,096   |
| Building Fund Income – YTD                            | 39,713  | 36,131   |
| Building Fund Expenditure - YTD                       | 43,197  | 37,197   |
| Campership Balance                                    | 9,644   | 10,312   |
| •   |         |          |

In comparing General Fund income with *actual* expenses, you will see a shortfall of \$30,014. This compares to last month when the shortfall was \$34,832.

In using the straight-line method of calculating the budget, general fund income was about \$79,829 under budget.

Using the historical average method of calculating the budget as shown above, you will see that the variance was a negative \$60,173.

Regular offering was \$43,143 under budget expectations through November, and less than 2023 by \$10,826.

General Fund offering for November was \$37,457. Historically, November results in 9.29% of general fund giving. This amount would be \$41,345.



# AITKIN YOUTH CENTER SEEKING PT JANITOR

The Aitkin Youth Center, which will be renting space here at First Lutheran Church, is looking for a cleaner-janitor for two nights a week, Thursday and Fridays. The time required would be an hour or maybe an hour and a half each night, after activities are ended.

Work will begin on December 12th.

Contact Pastor Doug Larson at 612-607-3701 for more information.





## **ATTENDANCE**

| Week of       | 12/1        | 12/8      | 12/15 |  |  |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|-------|--|--|
| Sunday        | 73          | 108       | 148   |  |  |
| 9:00 a.m.     | (In-person) |           |       |  |  |
|               | 7           | 10        | NA    |  |  |
| 10:30 a.m.    | (In-pers    | son)      |       |  |  |
| Wednesday     | NA          | 30        | 40    |  |  |
| 9:00 a.m.     | (YouTu      | (YouTube) |       |  |  |
|               | 41          | 54        | 80    |  |  |
| Choir Cantata |             |           | 137   |  |  |



ALL YOUTUBE ATTENDANCE IS BASED ON YOU TUBE VIEWS AS OF December 18 A VIEW MAY BE MORE THAN ONE PERSON PER VIEW. WEDNESDAY NIGHT IS ALL IN PERSON ATTENDANCE.

send a check to

the church

# January's Extra Mile Mission Hope Advocates against Domestic Abuse If you would like to donate, Or you may





please go to our

website www.flc-aitkin.com



## **BAPTISM ANNIVERSARIES**

First Lutheran is going to remember and celebrate your Baptism with a special event in worship. You and others will be invited to gather around the Baptismal font and hear what God did and continues to do for you through your Holy Baptism. You can affirm your desire to continue living as God's new creation.

Please remember and celebrate your Baptism on Sunday the 12th of January at 9 am.

Even if you don't know when you were baptized, a good rough estimate is to pick a date 6 weeks after your birthday. You can join the Baptism Anniversary that month!

First Lutheran Church Worship and Music Committee

# January Baptism Anniversaries

Hakes, Shirley Moreland, Traci Anderson, Jake Nelson, Bob Hendricks, Lori Anderson, Linda Newman, Dan Jacobson, Emma Bare, Tyler Jameson, Jill Omberg, Sophie Benson, Dave Peterson, Mary Jones, Benjamin Bobenmoyer, Alex Price. Nathan Kirkhorn, Phyllis Bowman, Karen Raushel, Cal Kliewer, Mikhaela Carlstrom, Ardys Roscoe, Bea Kullhem, Abbi Collins, Doug Schultz, Carl Collins, Jeanie Lehmann, Norma Scott, David Collins, Mitchel Martin, Tom Spigarelli, Betty May, Breck Courier, Taylor Unzeitig, Kaylee May, Stephen Drewelow, Kurt McCartan, Aubree Unzeitig, Kyle Drewelow, Patti Webster, Mary McMillan, Dave Espeseth, Larry

Miller, Carma

Moreland, Steve

Fritz, Robert

Hakes, LeeVae

Woodrow, Dale



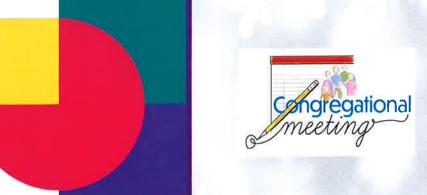
# CREATION CARE

Green Tips (factual information about environmental problems and causes) can now be viewed at the Synod's EcoFaith Network website, under the "Green Blades Rising Newsletters" or "Green Tips" links.

(www.nemnsynod.org/ecofaith.html).

PLEASE AVOID USING STYROFOAM WHEN WORKING IN THE CHURCH KITCHEN. THANKS!







JANUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE
ALL SUNDAY'S IN JANUARY
SERVICE TIMES:
9:00 & 10:30 am
Coffee Fellowship
immediately following
9:00 am worship

Ministry opportunities at First Lutheran:

If you would like to participate in worship services, <u>call</u> any of the following people <u>and volunteer</u>.

Training provided.

**Lector: Reading scriptures & the prayers of the Church):** 

Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Communion assistant: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Usher: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Children's sermon: Pastor Reggie (218-927-2028)
Sound Technician: Contact the office (218-927-2028)
Power Point Technician: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Video Technician: Dave Sadlowsky (952-221-3861) Worship Committee: Rebecca May (927-3481)

Contemporary worship song leaders/musicians: Pat Perrine (218-428-1884) Pete Lowe (218-831-4210)

(218-428-1884) Pete Lowe (218-831-4210) Hymn selections: Linda Delaney (927-6237) Altar Guild: Mary Peterson (927-6820) WELCA: Mary Peterson (927-6820)

Dinner at your Door: Carla Hakes (320-333-1876)

Choir: Aaron Perrine ((651)428-9005

Please call me back I'm one of those people who regularly calls for lectors, communion assistants, kitchen help, worship assistants, Sunday coffee hour help, etc. If you're not home, I leave a message on your answering machine. It would be most helpful if you would return my phone call with a yes or no—then I'll know you received my message and it will save me more phone calls. Thank you for making my volunteer job much easier!

**New Option:** We have a new scheduling program – Ministry Scheduling Pro. Very easy to use and to volunteer for many positions. Contact the office to get signed up.

#### Support Groups

- 1. Rides for Health (Aitkin Co CARE) 927-4077
- 2. **Memory Loss/Caregivers** (Aitkin Co CARE)- 1<sup>st</sup> Wed 1230 pm 927-1383
- 3. **Doughnuts with Dawn** (previously memory lane cafe) Maryhill Manor every Wed 1000-1200 pm
- 4. **HOPE** (healing, opportunity, provided equally) (previously AADA)- domestic violence- Wed 800-900 am for women, Thurs 400-500 pm for teens
- 5. Sexual Violence Resource Center/Support Within Reach-927-6226- Mon and Wed 800 am-500 pm
- 6. Aitkin Co Child Abuse Prevention Council 927-6226
- 7. **Diabetes Resources-** Riverwood Health Care Center 927-5152
- 8. Suicide Prevention- Aitkin Co Public Health 927-7272
- 9. Crisis Line 1-800-462-5525

#### **STAFF**

#### **Pastor Reggie Denton**

(Senior Pastor)
reggie@flc-aitkin.com

Jill Jameson

(Office Manager)

office@flc-aitkin.com

#### **Colleen Kent Chute**

(Ministry & Media Coordinator) colleen@flc-aitkin.com

Barb Bendson (Accountant)

barb@flc-aitkin.com

#### **Justine Nordick**

(Sunday School Coordinator) justinenordick@gmail.com

Mike Purdy (Custodian)

Rebecca May (Organist)

Michele Plagman (web site)

mplagman@usa.net

Sarah Grovogel

(Nursery Facilitator)

**Aaron Perrine** (Choir Director)

#### **Mission Statement**

With God's love we embrace one another, our neighbors, and all creation.

#### **Vision Statement**

Doing God's Work with Our Hands by Providing:

Spiritual Growth for All
Opportunities for Living Out Our Christian
Faith

Support of our Mission and Ministries

#### **Church Values**

TRUST and LOVE in Jesus Christ
COMMIT to living God's Word
PRACTICE hospitality with welcoming and
kindness

RESPECT and CARE for all people SERVE our community

#### Live Stream/Recording of every 9:00 a.m. Sunday Service

Can't make it to church? Watch it live.

Missed last week? Catch up by watching the recording.

Want to see it again? Or pass it on....

Go to YouTube - enter First Lutheran Church in Aitkin

Scroll thru and search for the date you are looking for.

Click on play. It's that simple.

## How do I turn on subtitles/closed captioning on YouTube? Steps

1. Open a YouTube video.

2. Click the gear icon in the bottom-right corner of the video player to display the video player settings.

3. Expand the combo box next to Subtitles/CC.

4. Click the desired subtitle language to begin displaying subtitles.

You will have to do this each time with any video.

WORSHIP TIMES
9 & 10:30 am
All Sundays
In January

Wednesdays at 6:00 pm (NO Wednesday service on January 1)

> NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

DUE ON THE 15TH OF EVERY MONTH

9:00 a.m. Worship Service is livestreamed on YouTube at First Lutheran Church of Aitkin and broadcast at 10:00 a.m. on KKIN 94.3 FM Aitkin

PLEASE NOTE: The church is charged 75 cents for undeliverable mailings. If you do not want to continue receiving this mailing, please request that your name be removed from our list by returning the attached label to First Lutheran Church, 107 2nd St., SE, Aitkin MN 56431, or by emailing the church at office start latheran lanuary 2025



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH 107 2<sup>ND</sup> ST SE AITKIN MN 56431