

THE MESSENGER



From the Pastor's desk...

Congratulations Fisher Bygland Family! Last month at the Annual Meeting we heard the amazing news that we were only \$1,600 away from meeting the congregations 2023 expenses. You truly are a loyal community. THANK YOU. There are countless reasons why individuals and families are motivated to give freely, but why is it that donors stay loyal? The following are the top seven reasons drawn from a DonorVoice survey of 250 nonprofits and 1,200 regular donors:

1. Donor perceives your organization to be effective in trying to achieve its mission.
2. Donor knows what to expect from your organization with each interaction.
3. Donor receives a timely thank you.
4. Donor receives opportunities to make his or her views known.
5. Donor is given the feeling that he or she is part of an important cause.
6. Donor feels his or her involvement is appreciated.
7. Donor receives information showing who is being helped.



I invite you to take time to reflect personally on the above statements and determine if you have such an experience of Fisher Church. I am interested to hear your insights and feedback in an effort to ensure that expectations are being met. Please reach out to me to make time for me to hear your experience. We, as a faith community, are a work in progress while it is my hope that we are always on the path of increasing communication, transparency and growing in faith.

All we have is God's, while we are entrusted with the great responsibility to care for his blessings.

When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required. Luke 12:48b

It is my sincere hope that you will prayerfully consider how it is that you may participate in the life and ministry of Fisher/Bygland Lutheran Church for 2024 beyond your wildest imagination.

Sharing Christ's Service,
Pastor Gretchen

Attention ALL 5th graders of the Fisher/Bygland Parish 1st Communion Classes/Events

- ~ **Feb. 11th: 12:30-3:00pm.** Meet at the home of Potter Joyce Brune, JFB Creations, 211 N 4th Street Fisher, MN. The students will be making a wine goblet out of clay, that they can use on their 1st communion Maundy Thursday at Bygland Church. Parents are welcome but not required to attend this event.
- ~ **Feb. 25th: 12:30-3:00pm.** Class at Bygland Lutheran Church. Students will learn about the Sacrament of Holy Communion and how partaking in the Sacrament may deepen ones relationship with God. The students will also practice for Maundy Thursday Worship. Parents are encouraged to attend.
- ~ **Feb. 27th: 6:00-8:00pm.** Bread baking at Fisher Lutheran Church. Students need to bring a parent or an adult, to assist with the baking activity.
- ~ **Maundy Thursday MARCH 28th,** the 5th graders are to arrive at Bygland Church by **6:30pm** for a group picture. Please be sure to dress in your Sunday BEST for the group picture. You are encouraged to invite extended family and friends to this noteworthy accomplishment in your 5th graders faith development.

OUR MISSION

Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

OUR PURPOSE

“As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.”

FISHER LUTHERAN WELCA WINTER/SPRING 2024 BIBLE STUDY

Scripture and Nature: Teachers of Faith

By Rev. Sara Olson-Smith

Session Two: Creatures – Our Siblings in Praise & Trust

February 21, 2024 @ 9:00 AM

Jesus invites us to consider the birds, but we'll get to know biblical critters beyond the sparrows. We'll look at biblical animals (some adorable, some terrifying) from ravens and lions to a big fish, paired creatures on the ark, and that sneaky serpent in Eden. Stories of human and animal interactions in Scripture help to reorient our relationships with the non-human world, while pulling us into deeper trust in God.

GATHERERS GIVE WITH GLAD HEARTS

Fisher Lutheran's WELCA organization has created a way to help others while you're completing your weekly shopping trip! Simply grab a Gathering Bag located in the FLC narthex and purchase any of the items listed on the Gatherers Give with Glad Hearts sheet found in the bag and return the items in the bag to the church. Members of WELCA will deliver these items to the designated organization for you! A different organization will be sponsored quarterly...so be sure to pick up a bag several times throughout the year. Donations for January-March 2024 will be given to the Care & Share in Crookston, MN. Join us in making a difference in the lives of others.



Gather
Zoom Bible
Study



WOMEN WHO STITCH FISHER LUTHERAN QUILTING

February 12 & 13 / 26 & 27

March 11 & 12 / 25 & 26

April 8 & 9 / 22 & 23

9:00 am₂

You can also join the Gather Zoom Bible Study session each

4th Monday of the Month

7:00-8:00 PM

Zoom Meeting ID 830 8115 5921

Exciting New Chapter for a Familiar Face

Dear Fisher Lutheran Family,

Hello again! I'm Charles Getsman, though most of you know me as Chuck. My wife Amy and our three kids, Katie, Ellie, and Mollie have been blessed to be part of our church family for some time now. Today, I'm excited to share that I'll be stepping into a new role as your President.

Our journey together has been enriching and fulfilling, and I am eager to contribute even more in this new capacity. I look forward to strengthening connections, working alongside you in faith and fellowship, and embracing the responsibilities this role brings.

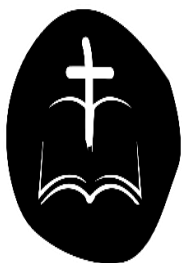
I am enthusiastic about what lies ahead for us as a community, and I can't wait to embark on this new phase of our journey together.

See you around the church!

Blessings,

Chuck

PARISH NEWS



LUTHERCREST MIDDLE SCHOOL WINTER RETREAT

RETREAT

Keep the excitement of camp going all year long by coming to camp this winter to explore the greatness of our Savior! We will lodge in cabins, dive into the Bible by looking deeper into what it means to build up our faith on our firm foundation in Christ, play outside, worship together, create community with some cool camp counselors, drink hot cocoa around a fire, and more! Don't miss this chance to be back at camp!

Camp begins at 7:00 p.m. on Friday and ends at Closing Worship around 11:00 a.m. on Sunday. *(Parents are welcome to join!)*

DATE(S): February 9-11, 2024

GRADES: 6-9*

TIME: Friday - Sunday

COST: \$205/camper (*\$50 Non-Refundable Deposit*) *(The Church pays a portion of the fee)*

*Want to bring your senior high youth? High school campers are welcome upon request. Email Tammie at retreats@luthercrest.org for high school youth inquiries.

Contact Pastor Gretchen by email (pastor@fisherbygland.org) or by phone (812-639-7816) for any further questions and to get registered. Last day to register is **Jan. 31st**.

Attendance at this event fulfills the camp requirement for FLC/BLC Confirmation.

Lodging will be in a winterized cabin with bunk-style beds, each with its own bathroom and shower. You will also be with a Luther Crest counselor and approximately 8-9 other same-aged campers.

Discernment Retreat

On January 20th several church leaders met at Trinity Lutheran Church in Crookston for a discernment retreat. The topic was our mission and future goals for our congregations.

The main questions were:

Who is the Lord calling us to be?

What is He calling us to do?

Why are we here?

FLC and BLC members had good and open discussions on each of these questions. Our groups were given a set amount of time to talk about each question and write down our answers. Then the groups shared their answers with one another.

We were given about thirty cards. Each card had a word or two, like Family Ministry, or Service etc. We individually selected two cards we felt were most important. After that, we put the cards that were alike together. We had three rows of cards that were similar in nature. More challenging, we came up with a name for each row. Beyond that, we put the rows in order of importance. Our group ended up with these three themes:

Family and Community

Gods Word

Follow Thru (doing the work)

It was a completely different and refreshing way to interpret our mission as church leaders. Many thoughts and ideas were shared throughout these sessions.

There was a long banner given to each group. It was a timeline that started at 1960 and ended at 2024. We wrote down several events that occurred during those years. Different Pastors that have served, special events, when the Churches were built. Was fun to remember and revisit our past.

The retreat ended with a few more questions and discussions.

Peace,
Steve Short

Do we listen to the Lord about who he calls us to be?

Do we listen to the Lord about what he calls us to do?

Do we pray with sincerity for guidance?

Faith Community Nurse—Danielle Gratton

Feb- What is a healthy blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force of blood on your blood vessel walls as your heart pumps. It's measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). Systolic blood pressure is the top number in a reading. It measures the pressure on blood vessels as your heart squeezes blood out to your body.

Diastolic blood pressure is the bottom number in a reading. It measures the pressure on blood vessels in between heartbeats while your heart fills up with blood returning from your body.

Mayo clinic recommends that your blood pressure be below 120/80. If your blood pressure is OK, maintaining or adopting a healthy lifestyle can prevent or delay the onset of high blood pressure or other health problems. If your blood pressure is high, a healthy lifestyle — oftentimes along with medication — can help bring it under control and reduce your risk of life-threatening complications. (Mayo Health Clinic, 2023)

Please read more at [DASH diet: Healthy eating to lower your blood pressure - Mayo Clinic](#) on ways to lower your blood press and maintain a healthy lifestyle.



Dear Family in Christ,

Hello, I am Pastor Kelly Ahola, and I serve part time at Peace Lutheran Parish, in Shelly, MN. This past week I was able to have your Pastor Gretchen at our Soul Shop for Leaders in Moorhead, MN. Maybe you have not heard of Soul Shop.

Soul Shop is a faith based suicide intervention and postvention ministry. When we look at the four faces of suicidal desperation in our training, we think about all those affected by suicide. This includes people who are thinking of suicide, those who have lost a friend or family member to suicide, those who are concerned for someone who contemplates suicide, and those who have lived experience (which means they had suicidal thoughts in the past but chose to live). When we look around our communities and churches we see that suicide affects many people. We as churches can do a small amount of training and find that we can create a safe environment for ourselves, and friends and neighbors who are affected by suicidal desperation.

What if our churches are a place of hope, where everyone belongs? Pastor Gretchen and others have experienced time and safe space to learn some skills and talk about steps to make a difference in the world.

Did you ever read the following story in the Bible and realize it was a suicide intervention?

Acts 16: 23-34

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. ³⁴ He brought them up into the house and set food before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

There will be a Soul Shop in Fargo in April. All are welcome. You make this world a better place! I am so glad God created you! Hope be with you!

<https://soulshop424.attendease.com/>

Pastor Kelly Ahola

Soul Shop Fargo

It's estimated that one out of every two people in a given congregation has personally been affected by suicide. Soul Shop trains faith community leaders to offer support, hope, and connection to those in their congregations.

Soul Shop is for pastors, priests, youth directors, educators, counselors, therapists, faith community nurses, and any ministry leader. Soul Shop is for lay leaders as well, not just for clergy. **It's for anyone who feels CALLED to respond to suicidal desperation.**

Co-sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Soul Shop equips participants with the resources and guidance they need to foster hope and healing in their community.

Contact hours /CEUS will be provided. Breakfast, lunch, snacks, and Soul Shop for Congregations Curriculum are covered in your registration fee.

Thank you to the supporters of the F/M Area Out of the Darkness Community Walk and the Russ Boyle Memorial Golf Tournament who make this program possible.

Want more general information about Soul Shop? Please visit soulshopmovement.org

Event Details

Date:

Thursday, April 25th, 2024

Time:

8:30 am-4:30 pm CT

Location:

Courtyard by Marriott Fargo Moorhead

1080 28th Ave South

Moorhead, MN 56560



Contact:

Name: Barb Hanson- AFSP ND Chapter Board Chair [Email: barbarahanson2309@gmail.com](mailto:barbarahanson2309@gmail.com) Phone: 701-238-7739

AFSP ND Chapter staff - Samantha Christopherson - SChristopherson@afsp.org Phone: 701-371-1194

News from the Langdjis--January 2024

Living in Yaounde, Cameroon

and Helena, MT, USA

Serving West and Central Africa

The year 2023 was one of the celebrations as well as decision-making. In our family Anne and Micah moved back to the USA for schooling needs, so Micah started 9th grade at Helena High School in Montana, where Anne's parents live. It was a big change: bigger school, new environment and new learnings. He joined the cross-country team, got to meet new teachers and started making new friends. He enjoyed it and his first semester has gone well. Anne ended service with the ELCA on December 31st and has been job hunting. The last few months were a time to get settled and learn to live in the USA after 28 years of service with the ELCA overseas.

Willie continues to live in Cameroon and serve as regional representative of the ELCA in West and Central Africa for the time being. He has accumulated other responsibilities in the region, relating to companions in Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Gambia, Guinea, Cameroon and Central African Republic. He enjoys serving and the opportunities to support our church companions in their varied ministries.

We celebrated Christmas and New Year's together in Helena with Anne's parents, as well as friends, and the family at St. John's Lutheran in Helena, Montana. Willie returns to Yaounde, Cameroon in early January and has trips planned to CAR and Senegal in the next couple months.

Last year was marked by the celebration of 100 years of Lutheran presence in Cameroon and the Central African Republic. The ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic (CAR), as well as other international partners, all held events to remember the history of their work together and to look forward to the future.

Events began in Minneapolis in July, continued in Cameroon in October, and in November they concluded in CAR. In both CAR and Cameroon, the ELCA was represented by companion synod bishops, clergy, lay people, ELCA staff, and former missionaries and their kids. Cultural and religious events and services, special music and trips to communities with special significance, as well as commemorative fabric all helped to make the year momentous. 100 years of joint mission is today lived and reflected in the accompaniment model of walking together, sharing our gifts, talents, prayers, and resources, and building and sustaining relationships.

Your congregation has been and continues to be part of this calling to live together as children of the same God, united by God's saving grace. In CAR and Cameroon your congregation, synod and ELCA churchwide are involved in ministries of health, education, evangelism and outreach, theological formation, food security and disaster response, and much more. All of this happens because of your support that contributes to our companion churches' programs, as well as special giving to ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response.

This is Anne. Over the years, your support has remained strong even when our communication of stories about the work we are involved in through the ELCA has not been regular. 28 years ago, I wrote on paper and sent it to my parents who copied and addressed and mailed it to many of you! (Thanks, Mom and Dad.) It's a bit different now! How fun to send more photos! And yet we're all bombarded with information and images, so I think our way of understanding has changed. I hope Willie will keep sending news to you (and will help him if he asks). For now I am struggling to summarize the time I spent serving as an ELCA missionary in the Central African Republic and Senegal, then in a regional role that took me to about ten more countries in West Africa and Madagascar while living in Cameroon. Hard times come to mind, both personal struggles and seeing others suffer. But when we think back we mainly remember people we enjoyed getting to know -- working, crying, laughing, dancing, praying, eating and drinking, walking and driving with so many people in so many different settings and circumstances. That includes people in the US who hosted us and wrote to us and supported us. I am grateful to God for the privilege of knowing you all and for your interest in the rest of the world and commitment to making it a better place for all.

We have no mission but to serve
In full obedience to our Lord:
To care for all, without reserve,
And to spread God's liberating word.
—"The Church of Christ, in Every Age"
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship 729)

