### **First News**



### Blue Christmas



Finding comfort in God's Word

A fairly new holiday tradition is the Blue Christmas Service, designed for those who are having a hard Christmas in the midst of all the merriment. The pain of loss is especially tough during holidays in which loved ones are no longer present. I have held Blue Christmas services here in recent years, and this has always been a very poignant evening, especially for those who lost spouses during the year. Christmas 2020 has been a Blue Christmas for everyone. The songs seem less joyous, the lights less cheery, the "ho-ho-ho's" less sincere. We have all experienced isolation, worry, depression, and grief this year.

Few of us can live without human contact for very long, yet we have all had to stay home more than we'd like. When we go out, we have to mask our faces, avoid all human touch and hugs, and keep our distance. The very essential human need for contact is not being met.

We are all worried. We are afraid for our loved ones and afraid for ourselves. We are afraid for our health, our jobs, our relationships. We are worried that things may never return to "normal."

All of this leads to depression. It is hard to get up, hard to not fall asleep on the couch and stay awake all night, hard to get motivated to work, play, do anything. Even things we used to enjoy – having food delivered, watching TV, playing on the computer – feel like work and drudgery now.

So much grief. I have lost an uncle who was like a brother and an uncle who was a father-figure, yet I know that my losses pale in comparison to many, if not most, of you. We just feel sad much of the time, even when nothing is really wrong.

Pastor Will Stenke, Pastor Sarah Schaaf, and I have recorded and posted a Blue Christmas Service for all of you today. This is the link: (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ls1Qedomdc&t=13s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ls1Qedomdc&t=13s</a>), which can be accessed on our webpage (1stlutheranchurch.org) or found by going to YouTube and then typing "blue christmas service for dec 21 2020" in their search box.

It is our hope that you will find comfort and support in God's Word for you today. Also, our dog, Mazie is making her online debut. You wouldn't want to miss that!

May you feel God's hand upon your shoulder and God's love in your heart this Christmas season. Love,

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Pr. Bob

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We collected about 40 coats this fall for Coats for Christmas. There are a lot of community members warmer because of you. Thank you!

#### R E V E R S E ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

For ALL of you who "shopped" The Reverse Advent calendar this past season, thank you so much! Thanks to Cyndy Rotman and Marilynn Dunn for the idea, and Kathy Brooks, Marti Schmidt, and Kurt Ebersole for schlepping the boxes and bags to LSS. We didn't weigh the contents (and boxes continue to come!), but there were hundreds of pounds, and the items you chose are many of the things which our clients don't have dollars to spend. Thank you for sharing Christmas with those in need!

Our **Love and Memory Tree** collected over \$6,500 for our local Lutheran Social Services. Your donations will be used for their food pantry and counseling services for Hancock County residents. This was our best year yet!

"In response to God's love for all persons, Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio provides human services that will strengthen the mental, moral, physical, social and spiritual well-being of those who seek this agency's services."



#### COMMUNITY DINNERS STILL 'GRAB AND GO!'

Many of you have asked about the Community Dinner.... "What's happening with that?" "Are you still doing those?" "Is there any tomato bread?"...you know who you are (and there are more than one of you!)

We are currently, and most likely until we are able to worship inside, doing the Community Dinner the first Sunday each month on a "grab and go" method as are the other four churches. As a Community Dinner Council, we feel this is the safest way to continue to help feed our Community.

We are always looking for ways to enhance the meal....we have continued to be mostly eco-friendly, with no styrofoam or excess non-recyclable materials. In December, Carolyn Bryant shared a lot of produce left from the Riehm Farms delivery. In November, we added a note of encouragement. Emily Meier decorated bags and put a prayer on each for October. Some churches are including small goodie bags.

So, if you think of a way to help, please call or get your committee together to make it happen. We served around 150, last month sending 25 extra lunches to City Mission. And, the bottom line is the cost. Our funds have dwindled from \$4,000 in January to \$2,119.02. As I have explained before, the sack lunches are more expensive than our good, old casseroles. And our frame of reference has been the 2007 Flood....which took out the kitchen for 6 months. We are now in our 10th month as of January 3. So, if you were used to making a jello salad or a cake, please consider a small donation. Thanks to the Chubb Family for designating Bill's memorials to the Community Dinner!

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First



Well, there is GOOD news and BAD news. The good news is WELCA's initiation of the reverse ADVENT calendar to which so many of you donated canned and dry goods! Also, there was a significant donation to the Love and Memory Tree for LSS which will be divided between the counseling services and

Certainly, counseling services are vital in

this time of uncertainty and worry for those in Hancock county. LSS of NW Ohio has applied to United Way of Hancock County for only counseling this year. The generous United Way grant monies which were \$5,000 in 2019 and \$3,000 in 2020 will be unavailable for Findlay's LSS food pantry this year. And that's the BAD news. We will need to rely on the generosity (and this is 2021 - The Year of Generosity!) of local churches and individuals to fund LSS"s Food Pantry for the year. This is uncharted territory for me, as the "shopper" for our local LSS, although we started with much less years ago.

Due to the reconfiguration of St. John's, who is keeping the pantry and supplies, we have slightly less space. So, we are in God's hands and yours for supplying our clients with a 3-day emergency food supply. Keep all the food pantries (CHOPIN Hall, CCH, Salvation Army, and City Mission) In your prayers!

—-Jane Ebersole





### Northwestern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

#### 2021-The Year of Generosity **Fueling Our Mission**

Always in time for making a New Year's Resolution, Caroline Guy—Coordinator of Communications and Technology for the Northwestern Ohio Synod, sent the following ideas:

- Bishop Daniel has written a Bible study for The Year of Generosity based on the Book of Acts with contributions by Rev. Sarah Schaaf and Deacon Sherry Krieger. (That will be available in late January.)
- There will be a Bible Reading plan for anyone who would like to participate. We will take the entire year to read through the New Testament together. This might be something we could do interactively via e-mail or conference calling.
- There will be a virtual Epiphany worship service that features partners in ministry from around the synod and around the world. That should have been sent out December 18.
- Throughout the year the Synod office will also be hosting some educational opportunities for anyone, rostered or lay, but those are still in the planning stages.
- Please pray about how you and First Lutheran can be a part of The Year of Generosity as well as Boarding the Steward Ship!



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# Alle Ombord! STEWARD SHIP



\*NORWAY\*

What comes to mind when you think about Norway? The land of the midnight sun? Cities like Oslo and Bergen? Ibsen, Grieg and Munch? The beauty of the mountains and Artic Circle villages? Lefse, krumkake and lutefisk? Ah, I know what you are thinking about: the majestic coastal fjords! The world-famous Norwegian fjords are without doubt the country's number one tourist attraction. Glaciers carved the fjords of Norway out of the land over many thousands of years. They truly are one of nature's remarkable creations. ["'Fjord' is an ancient Viking term related to the phrase for 'where you travel across' (der man ferder over) and the word 'ferry' (ferje)"] Today they are renowned for their beauty, but years ago they were crucial to the livelihood of Norwegians. Abandoned farmsteads on the steep cliffs serve as a reminder of those times. The Geirangerfjord and the Nærøyfjord are on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The organization says these fjords are some of the most scenic landscapes in the world. With the many slender waterfalls, woodlands, glacial lakes, and rugged mountains, it's hard to disagree!

've heard it so many times. People whose budgets are being stretched responding to a congregational appeal, "I can't afjord it." ["After all, I am driving an old Fiord and I can't afiord that!"] After forty years of Church Council meetings, I can't count how many times councils have considered the congregation's income and expenses and declared that a new project or position is out of reach financially Those who know the financial facts often throw up their hands and declare: "We can't afjord it." Maybe that's why we are a congregation. Because what we can't do alone we can do together. remember what Bishop Eaton said, "We are a church for the sake of the world." We have a purpose. We have a mission. We are seeing lives transformed and people rejoicing in the generosity of the Lord. Yes, our money is tight and our resources limited. But we have one priceless gift that never stops giving: we

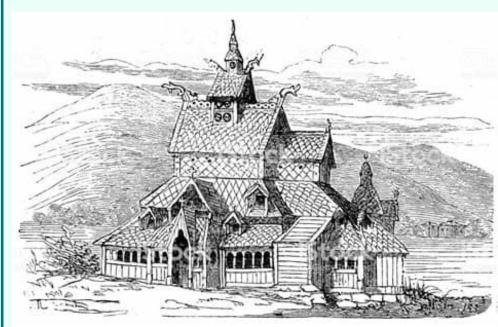
have the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are making a difference here in Findlay and around the world. Through our ministry the Spirit is working to transform lives in Jesus Christ. No, our pockets are not as deep as the fjords of Norway, but we have the abundance of the Spirit. With a mission and opportunity like this, how can we afjord not to give our hearts, our gifts and out lives to it?



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Did you know there is an English-speaking congregation in Oslo that is a congregation of the ELCA? Following World War II there was an increase in American citizens in Oslo and with them, the desire for an American Church. Dr. Oscar C. Hanson was tasked to establish and organize the new congregation. His dedicated efforts over two year's time laid a strong foundation for ALC. The first service was held on October 12, 1958. "Over these past 50 years we've changed and developed as a congregation. Starting out with mostly Lutheran Americans, we are now an international congregation with members from more than thirty countries and nearly as many church traditions. Ex-patriots have always been essential in the American Lutheran Congregation, but in addition we are now made up of students, and researchers, refugees and academics, business people and asylum seekers, diplomats and families, visitors passing through and folks who have been a part of this church for their whole life. And we recognize that with the Spirit's guidance we continue to change today." Remember, the American Lutheran Church in Oslo is a congregation of the ELCA, just like First Lutheran! The pastor [Tim Peterson] is always an ELCA pastor. As such he or she serves as an ongoing connection between the congregation and the ELCA. The congregation at times has also served as an internship site for ELCA Seminarians. The congregation also supports the ELCA's mission work around the world through outreach contributions. Other ELCA churches overseas include Copenhagen and Jerusalem. The ministry of the ELCA is indeed world-wide, and through our stewardship we are a part of it!

Let us pray, Gracious and loving God, everything that we have, and everything that we are, has come from you. You have provided us abundant resources of time, talent, and treasure. More importantly, you have entrusted us with your mission to love and serve the world. As rich as we are, we are still greedy for joy. Teach us to see your generosity, and participate in your grace, so that your joy, and ours, may be complete! Amen







For we are
God's servants,
working
together; you
are God's field,
God's building.
1 Corinthians
3:9

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# Happy New Year to all of you. I hope and pray that 2021 is filled with

Happy New Year to all of you. I hope and pray that 2021 is filled with happiness, good health for all and a return to "normal." Wow, 2020 has been such a trial on all of us. We hang on to our faith in God, knowing that He will get us through this. But, Lord, we are tired and at our wit's end. Who knew that we would still be dealing with COVID-19 in this new year?

In the month of December, my reading seemed to be blatantly themed. Johanna Lindsey's <u>The Present</u>, Sunni Jeffers et al's <u>Christmas Traditions at Grace Chapel Inn</u>, <u>Chicken Soup for the Soul's Christmas Magic</u> and Lee and Donna Allen's <u>The Special Guest</u>. Along with the Daily Chronological Bible, I got myself into the spirit of the holiday. Let's face it, we are all in charge of our own happiness.

In the last month or so, Miriam Gibson has been sorting through books and books and books. At this printing, she has donated 150 books to our library...well, now let me clarify – she included some wonderful cookbooks for me. J The selection of books is wonderful and I can't wait for the church to be fully open so we can again use our library. What a grand collection of books we have in there. Thank you, Miriam. God bless you.

And these are just a few. Happy New Year. God bless and keep reading. Kathy Brooks



Now, in light of the fact this is the new year, I am going to give you some new years' activities to change your life. These suggestions come from Patrick Lindsay's book It's Never Too Late ...172 simple acts to change your life.

It's never too late...
to say sorry.
to get a life.
to start again.
to get fit.
to learn to paint.
to make a friend.
to write a poem.
to listen to your heart.
to plant a tree.

to dance.

to forgive. to listen to the birds.

to laugh at yourself.

to smile. to look at the stars.

to help someone. to take a stand.

to watch a sunset. to be patient.

to be patient. to say I love you. to listen. to relax.
to break away from the

herd

to enjoy the rain. to be yourself.

to ask for help. to stop worrying. to be kind.

to persevere. To be silent.

#### **Giving**

## Thanks to God All Day, Every Day

The daily practice of giving thanks to God for blessings received is at the heart of our lives as women of faith. Even the ordinary blessings of daily life call us to gratitude. Here are some short prayers of thanksgiving that you can use any time during the day.

#### MORNING COFFEE OR TEA

Blessed are you, alert and active Lord, for your gifts of morning coffee and tea, which help inspire and energize your people to sing your praises. Thanks be to God! Amen!

#### **AT ALL TIMES**

I give thanks at all times, for the Lord is good, for God's mercy endures forever. Amen! Adapted from Martin Luther's Small Catechism in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 1167

#### **SUNRISE AND BIRDSONG**

Thank you, Creator God, for this new day – a day which you have made. I lift my voice in grateful song along with the psalmist and the birds: Let us rejoice and be glad! Amen.

#### HOME SHELTERING

God, you give your creatures places to call home. I thank you for this, my home, where love can live and faith can grow, all in your care. Move my heart and hands, Lord, that all your people may have safe places to call home. Amen!

#### SOAP AND WATER

Creator of rivers and rain, as I wash my face and hands, I thank you for your gift of lifegiving water. May it prepare me to begin again the work you ask of me: to love you and my neighbor. Amen!

Adapted from "Lent: A time to rehydrate," by Karen Craigo, boldcafe.org. Copyright © 2020 Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Written by Audrey Novak Riley.

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#### **WELCA Calendar of Events for January**

Hannah Circle is in-service for the month of January

Jan. 12 Martha Circle, Martha Circle, 9:00 am in the Church Lounge

Hostess: Lynda Branceleone Leader: Jane Ebersole

Jan. 12 Rachel Circle, Rachel Circle, 9:30 am in the Fellowship Hall

Hostess: Sharon Thompson Leader: Cindy Fizpatrick

Jan. 18 Hannah Circle, 7:00 pm in the Church Lounge

Hostess: Bev Yammine Leader: Arlene Schriner

Because of the fluid situation all dates, places, and times are subject to change.

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# First News Paragraph As long as Hancock County has a Covid status of "Real"

we will continue our parking lot worship at 10:00 on Sundays.

If "Purple" we will continue worship in the parking lot, as allowed
by the city/county. The building will be closed.

Phones and emails will be answered.

2021 Council Members

Julie Buck JaBuck67@hotmail.com

Cindy Fitzpatrick cbrenfitz@aol.com

Tim Franks TFranks75@hotmail.com

Rob Leipheimer RLeip@sbcglobal.net

Beth Meier Beth.Meier@gmail.com

Nikki Needles equestwynr@hotmail.com

Karen Rose KRose13995@gmail.com

Daryl Rotman Rotman4@aol.com

MariaSchell Biddy45@aol.com

Arlene Schriner Ollie2Bob@aol.com

Jeff Short JShort@bright.net

#### Snow Emergencies

Level 1—Worship & meetings will be held as scheduled.

Level 2—Worship will be held—use your discretion; check with your chairperson to see if your meeting has been canceled. Please be safe.

Level 3– All worship & events are canceled.

Annual Meeting Sunday, January 31st 11:00

Agenda Items

- Approve 2020 Annual Report
- Approve 2020 Budget
- Elect Synod Assembly Delegates—if there is an assembly
- Elect 2020 Nominating

#### **Recycle Bins to be Removed**

Due to the increase costs of recycling and the decrease in return of recycling materials, our recycling company is removing our bins. After much research and not finding a free vendor, it was decided not to continue with the service. It would cost more than \$175 per month. Please take your recycling materials to Litter Landing, 17200 E. Sandusky St. So sorry!!!!!



#### **Food Cart Requests**

Canned Meats,
Packaged Dinners,
package side dishes

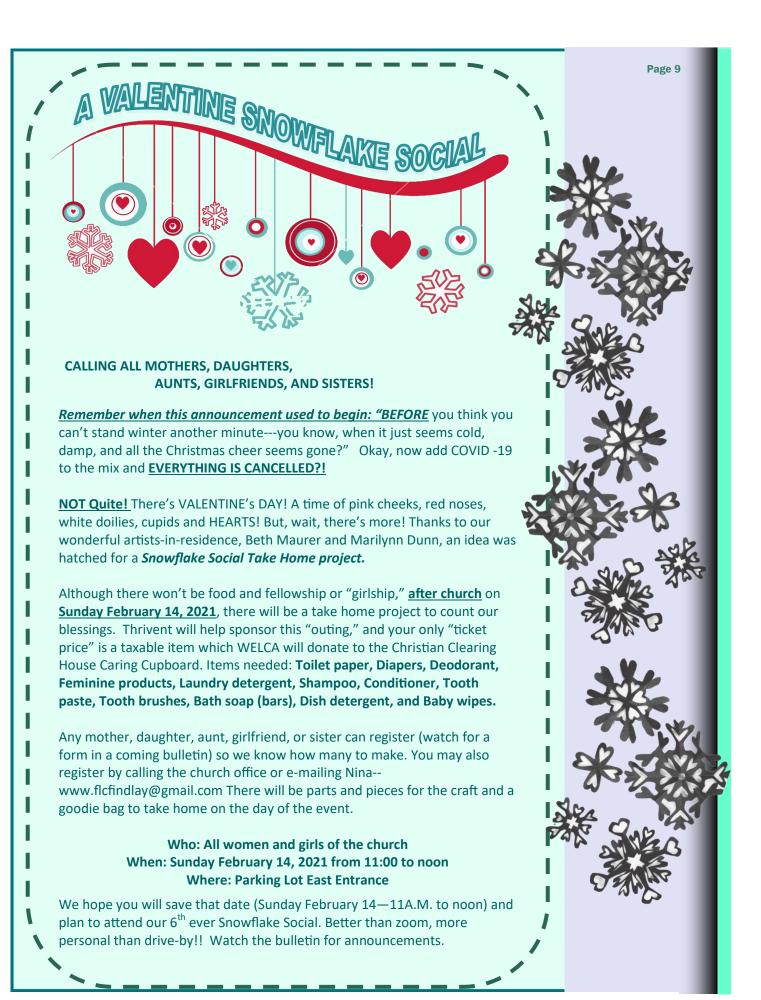
All donations benefit

Lutheran Social Services



Monday Jan. 18

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'As we celebrate the Word made Flesh, we also celebrate God's Gift of Scripture."

Please join the Northwest Ohio Synod in 2021, as we read through the entire **New Testament in Chronological** Order. Not Matthew to Revelation, but James to Revelation. You may be surprised to know that many of the New Testament

Letters were

written.

composed before

the Gospels were

Jan. 1 James 1 Jan. 2 James 2 Jan. 3 James 3 Jan. 4 James 3 Jan. 5 James 5 Jan. 6 1 Thess. 1 Jan. 7 1 Thess. 2 Jan. 8 1 Thess. 3 Jan. 9 1 Thess. 4 Jan. 10 1 Thess. 5 Jan. 11 2 Thess. 1 Jan. 12 2 Thess. 2 Jan. 13 2 Thess. 3 Jan. 14 Gal. 1 Jan. 15 Gal. 2 Jan. 16 Gal. 3 Jan. 17 Gal. 4 Jan. 18 Gal. 5 Jan. 19 Gal. 6 Jan. 20 1 Cor. 1 Jan. 21 1 Cor. 2 Jan. 22 1 Cor. 3 Jan. 23 1 Cor. 4 Jan. 24 1 Cor. 5 Jan. 25 1 Cor. 6 Jan. 26 1 Cor. 7 Jan. 27 1 Cor. 8 Jan. 28 1 Cor. 9 Jan. 29 1 Cor. 10 Jan. 30 1 Cor. 11

Jan. 31 1 Cor. 12



There is a whole new year of Sundays that you can choose to place flowers on the altar.

The 2021 flower chart is posted in the hallway across from the church office. This is the perfect way for you to honor, remember, or give thanks for those people and events in your life.

#### **ALTAR FLOWERS**

Jan. 3 Jan. 10 Jan. 17 Jan. 24 Jan. 31

Forms for your bulletin announcement are available on the bulletin board and at 1stLutheranChurch.org. Flowers need to be delivered to the church by noon on Friday.

**ALTAR GUILD** 

**Bob/Arlene Schriner Elaine Timbrook** 

COUNTERS **Bob & Arlene Schriner** 

LSS DELIVERY Carolyn Wilde

**FLOWER DELIVERY** Karen Rose

**ASSISTANTS** 

Jan. 3

Jan. 10 - Daryl Rotman

Jan. 17 -Jan. 24 -

Jan 31—Daryl Rotman

**Madison Kirk** Mark Kirk 1/19 **Jason Polder** 1/2 **Jason Clark** 1/20 **Denise Burson** 1/3 **Gregory Rakestraw** 1/20 **Donna Mason** 1/7 **Susan Waltermeyer** 1/20 **Brynlee Johnson** 1/8 **Richard Kondik** 1/21 **Lexington Sanders** 1/9 **Lynnette Rice** 1/22 **Jerry Luth** 1/10 **Emily Betts** 1/25 **Kaelee Mains** 1/10 Raeleigh Bower 1/25 **Chris Zawisza** 1/12 **Renee Smith** 1/25 **Andy Schriner** 1/13 **Steven Wilson** 1/25 **Voleta Willford** 1/13 **Bonnie Bosse** 1/26 **Nancy Woodruff** 1/13 **Judy Kipker** 1/26 **Ryan Price** 1/14 1/28 Jon Burnside **Richard Polder** 1/16 **Amber Leipheimer** 1/28 **Lily Cox** 1/17 1/30 **Mitchell Routson** 1/18 Phillip Bash **Nathan Routson** 1/30 **David Gerber** 1/18 **Tracy August** 1/31 **Shelby Dale** 1/19

#### Anniversary

Cheryl and Steve Seibert 1/21/1995

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: :-	1-Jan	Office Closed	*	8	9:30am Bulletin	Assembly	松		15	9:30am Bulletin Assembly	*	22	9:30am Bulletin Assembly	(6:00pm) BSA?	8	29 0.30am Bulletin	Assembly	-   **			
Thu	31	9:30am Bulletin Assembly	. ***	7	4:30pm Organ Rehearsal	5:45pm Girl Scouts	1	KT.	14	4:30pm Organ Rehearsal	<u>*</u>	21	4:30pm Organ Rehearsal 9:30am Bulletin	<i>₩</i>		28		*			
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Tue				5	4:30pm *Riehm Farm	7pm *Book Club			12	9am Martha 9:30am Rachel	7:30pm Finance	19	1:30pm Staff Meeting	4:30pm *Riehm Farm	+	97	**	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	11/0/10	3000	*
l D				4	10:30am *Ladies	Bible Study	6:30pm Worship	& Music	11	10:30am *Ladies Bible Study	7pm Social Ministry	18	10:30am *Ladies Bible Study	12pm Newsletter Deadline	7pm Hannah	25 10:30sm *I solice	Bible Study	o:subm council	*	5	
Sun		2007	秦	3	Worship	10am Parking Lot	11:30am Community	Dinner	10	Noisy Offering/Kids Choir Worship	10am Parking Lot Installation Of Council	17	Worship 10am Parking Lot	*		Worship	10am Parking Lot	31	Worship 10am Parking Lot	11am Congregational Meeting	不 人 美
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NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION US POSTAGE PAID FINDLAY, OH PERMIT NO. 338

Current Resident or:



# Moving One Step Closer to God.

**Sunday Worship 10:00**Parking Lot

419-422-2634

www.1stLutheranChurch.org