

FIRST EDITION



FIRST EVANGELICAL
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H O U S T O N

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
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After More than a Decade of Service, Carroll Shaddock Retires as Director of Music

For fifteen years, First Lutheran Church has been blessed by the Music Ministry of Carroll Shaddock. Carroll, “an attorney by vocation and a church musician by avocation,” introduced early music (Renaissance and Baroque eras) to First Lutheran Church upon his arrival. That music is now the norm for our congregation, and what a blessed norm it is.

Carroll’s involvement with First Lutheran Church began in 2001 when he saw an historic map of Houston. When he examined it more closely, he discovered that Central Congregational Church had actually begun in 1851 as Houston’s Historic First German Evangelical Lutheran Church. Soon thereafter Carroll, along with several others, began work to restore the church more fully to its Lutheran tradition. He paved the way for it to join the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Without that change, First Lutheran Church might not have survived the next decade. His vision and his understanding of the opportunities open to this church have undoubtedly helped it survive and thrive.

Carroll and his wife Dorry have both been passionate about historic church music for decades. Before arriving at First Church, they worked tirelessly as members of Christ the King Lutheran Church (ELCA), founding the Bach Society, advocating for a new and larger nave, and researching and advising on the design and construction of the Bach Organ, which is a landmark organ built in the historical style and based on Saxon design characteristics. Dorry and Carroll are known throughout Houston, and indeed the United States, as indefatigable proponents of early church music and advocates for high quality music in worship.

Watch for an email notice of a date when we will recognize and honor Carroll for his many achievements throughout his career. In the meantime, Dorry will carry on as our outstanding organist. The search for our next Choir Director has begun.



Three Steps in Talking to Non-Believers

McClanahan's Minute

During the three years I have had my evangelism shingle in front of the church for HCC students, I've had enough conversations to develop a pattern. While no two conversations are exactly alike, I now can pretty easily steer a conversation into the place I feel it ought to go. I am not trying to manipulate or outmaneuver someone who is not used to those conversations, but rather to get the most out of the conversation. As you meet folks who are not believers, I thought this simple method would be helpful in getting to their reasons for unbelief. From there, you can point them to resources that have answered their questions...assuming they really want the answers.

But first, it is important to lay basic worldview groundwork. No amount of evidence will change the mind of an unbeliever if they do not possess a worldview that makes your evidence possible. So my first question when engaging someone is always whether they are a naturalist or a supernaturalist. This may elicit strange looks, but these really are the only two options in town for meta-worldviews. Either nature is all that there is or there is something or someone beyond nature. Carl Sagan famously began his *Cosmos* series with the following words: "The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be." That is definitional naturalism.

If they are a committed naturalist, you might ask them how "something can come from nothing?" because that is what they have committed themselves to: the absolute absurdity of infinite regresses and causeless beginnings. If you learn someone is a naturalist (or materialist or physicalist), then you might want to research those worldviews so you know just what lengths they are willing to go to deny God. For the naturalist, by definition, has taken transcendent and ultimate meaning, purpose and design out of his worldview. Help them feel the burden of that choice by asking the right questions.

If the person you're talking with is a supernaturalist, you can carry on. That means they are at least open to God, to something beyond matter. Now you know that the evidence you could use to argue for Christianity fits within their worldview.

Someone being a supernaturalist is just the beginning, though. They may still be polytheistic, believing in many gods as do Hindus or Mormons, for example. So from here I argue against polytheism. The idea is simple: there can only be one god. One being must be the most

powerful, the almighty, the most wise, etc. If any other god was wiser or mightier, then that god would be God. We do affirm angelic beings, of course, who are neither God nor human. But there can only be one most-powerful being.

Each polytheistic religion is different, so to respectfully dialogue with a polytheist would require some extra research. The Mormon conception of polytheism is different from the Hindu conception. Mormons believe men can become gods themselves and there is literally an infinite number of potential gods because they believe time stretches into an infinite past. Mormons and Hindus, in fact, both affirm impossible infinite regresses where time (and by extension matter, space and energy as well) have always existed. Our own scriptures, not to mention modern cosmology, makes such a view impossible.

I have found conversations with polytheists to be among the most rare and the most difficult. In a sense, it is easier to interact with a committed naturalist or monotheistic, such as a Muslim, because the issues are clearer.

So that gets us to monotheism. From here, there are only three significant games in town: Judaism, Islam, and, of course, Christianity. Having a firm grasp of the doctrine(s) of the Trinity (and by extension the two natures of Christ) will be critical as those are the essential stumbling blocks for non-Christian monotheists. Arguing that Jesus fulfilled prophecy and is the Jewish Messiah is essentially what the apostles preached. To familiarize yourself with those arguments, you might re-read the sermons in Acts 2 and 10 by Peter, Hebrews, and Galatians. And Romans for good measure.

For dialogue with Islam, there exist now scores of books, debates and podcasts to learn what the key issues are and how to discuss them. While showing respect, I always try to help the Jesus-respecting Muslim see that if he/she wants to learn more about Jesus, the New Testament is the most reliable and earliest source material to do so. Reading the scriptures would be the best way anyone, but particularly a Muslim who assumes supernaturalism, monotheism and has a high view of Jesus, can come to appreciate the work and person of Jesus. In the end, this is an argument for the reliability of our revelation over and above the incomplete revelation of the Hebrew, and not-from-the-true-God revelation of the Muslim.

So that's my three-step approach: meta-worldview, mono- or polytheism, and then which revelation is true?

August, 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost 6 pm BH Dinner / Bible Study	31	1 9am-2pm First Friends 7p BH Pub Outreach	2 6p BH Bible Study/Evangelism	3 9am-2pm First Friends	4	5 9am-2pm First Friends
6 The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 6 pm BH Dinner / Bible Study	7	8 9am-2pm First Friends 7p BH Pub Outreach	9 6p BH Bible Study/Evangelism	10 9am-2pm First Friends	11	12 9:00am Oromo Prayer Service
13 The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 6 pm BH Dinner / Bible Study 12:30p Church Council	14	15 9am-2pm First Friends 7p BH Pub Outreach 7-9pm – Saengerbund Rehearsal	16 6p BH Bible Study/Evangelism	17 9am-2pm First Friends	18	19 9am-2pm First Friends
20 The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 6 pm BH Dinner / Bible Study	21	22 9am-2pm First Friends 7p BH Pub Outreach 7-9pm – Saengerbund Rehearsal	23 6p BH Bible Study/Evangelism	24 9am-2pm First Friends	25	26 9am-2pm First Friends
27 The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost 6 pm BH Dinner / Bible Study	28	29 9am-2pm First Friends 7p BH Pub Outreach 7-9pm – Saengerbund Rehearsal	30 6p BH Bible Study/Evangelism	31	Sunday Schedule 9:30 am Choir Rehearsal 10:00 am Sunday School 11:00 am FELC Worship in Nave 11:00 am Oromo Church Worship in Great Hall	

An Easy Way to Donate to First Lutheran

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compete for your business and rates drop, My Best Plan will change your plan for you and you will see the savings every month. My Best Plan retains a portion of your savings to make it worth their while to find you the best plan on the market every 3, 6 or 12 months. They also have an easy way you can make First Lutheran a little extra income.

The Give More™ program at My Best Plan will allow you to pass on part (or all) of your savings to your favorite non-profit. Hopefully in this case, it's First Lutheran! When you join the Give More program, you control 60% of the total savings. My Best Plan will retain 40% of the savings you see and you retain 60%. From that you can designate a portion or all of your savings to the charity. My Best Plan will act as your agent; collecting the savings each month, sending it to First along with a record of your donation. My Best Plan doesn't make money until you save money.

To get a free savings estimate by sending all pages of your electric bill to sabrina.smitherman@gmail.com or by visiting www.mybestplan.net/savings/felchouston/.

Financial Update

Due in part to a number of property projects that were unexpected and lower than budgeted giving, our deficit has crept up a bit as we hit the summer months. So far this year, the deficit is at about \$9,000. Our cash holdings remain about the same as at the start of the year, mostly due to one of our lease agreements that continues to pay back the investment we made on our Education Building roof. (That repayment is almost complete.) Still, we are not keeping up with our Part 1 needs at present. Especially as we hit the summer months, please continue to remember First!

Membership Roll

Changes in May and June: None

Membership	July 1, 2017	May 1, 2017	July 1, 2016	July 1, 2015
Child Members	15	15	12	13
Confirmed Members	<u>142</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>135</u>
Total Members	157	157	154	148
Associate Members	16	16	16	26
Total Members and Associate Members	173	173	170	174

Whom we prayed for in June

- Alex and Lauren Baird, Levi Carson, Minnie Lou Gaeckler, Carl W. Sontag, Norman and Joy Speck, Dick Petruschke, Justin Cordero, Michael Denny, Michael Derrick, Kaye Griggs, Roy Swineherd Jon Fielder and family, medical missionaries to Kenya
- The Christian Community Service Center
- Those serving in the military, especially Mary Almquist

Post-Debate Thoughts

Did you know we are one of the only churches in the country that regularly hosts debates? It's true! Even the atheist, Dan Barker, at our last debate, was surprised we would host such a debate. Perhaps that is because he blasphemed our Lord and couldn't understand why a church would tolerate such malfeasance. (It's because we trust that God always gets the last word and the only way I – Pastor McClanahan – know to get a church literally full of atheists to hear the Gospel is to host a debate.) Indeed, the reason we hosted the last debate is not because I arranged for the speakers. They actually found me because they were in need of a host site. It is possible that in the future we will not have to try to arrange debates, but we will simply choose which debates we want to host as others arrange them and need a space willing to host. We had about 125 people in the audience, and I would say a good 75% identified as non-believers. That is an excellent percentage. Within one week of it being posted to YouTube we had almost 2,000 views and that will only grow. To hear a more robust review of the debate, see the radio show I recorded about it on our podcast feed.

This and That

- Why only one newsletter for two months? As things slow down a bit for the summer, we have combined the July and August newsletters. To those who love reading our newsletter, please accept our apology!
- A handful of property projects have either spruced things up or kept things working as of late. A powerful LED floodlight was added to the main parking lot for safety and theft deterrence. We went with LED because the trouble of changing out light bulbs on so high a fixture creates a safety issue. We replaced a condenser coil on one of the AC units for the Bonhoeffer House. Apparently, something hit the pipe and caused the Freon to bleed out. We also had several small repairs on the main chiller. And thanks to the Houston Saengerbund, the Parish Hall received a fresh coat of paint from baseboard to ceiling. We are also working with the Saengerbund to install fans in the choir room to help with airflow and replace the florescent lights with something more attractive.
- I (Pastor McClanahan) was twice able to venture onto the main airwaves of KPFT 90.1 FM. This, of course, is the long term goal of the radio show as it is now: to be a Christian voice on the main FM dial of a secular station. Many churches pay for airtime to promote their message, and that is usually on Christian radio. To be able to be on secular radio (for free!) is a great evangelism opportunity. Those shows were on June 1 and June 12 during a 9-10am timeslot that they keep open for a variety of hosts. Unlike the other show that has a smaller audience base, these shows quickly filled up with callers, some of whom appreciated the show and some who really did not like them. Well, Jesus said his message wouldn't always be popular!

CCSC Update

Thanks to everyone who brought feminine hygiene items for donation to the CCSC. It's not something that churches usually collect, so I know they will be very grateful for our contributions.

For June and July, we will be collecting food items – but something different than canned goods. The CCSC food pantries are often short on boxed or bagged items such as rice, beans, pasta, and cereals. We will focus on these items for the next couple of months. Low-sugar cereals are preferred, so bring your reading glasses to the store and check those labels!

- Donna Bing

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Houston, Texas

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Houston's historic First Evangelical Lutheran Church is a congregation of the North American Lutheran Church. Founded in 1851, it played a vital role in the history of Lutheranism in Texas. Located at Holman and Caroline, across from Houston Community College, three blocks east of the 3400 block of South Main, it is convenient to the Ensemble/HCC stop of MetroRail.

713-529-3589 • www.felchouston.org • www.facebook.com/felchouston

The Rev. Evan S. McClanahan, *Pastor*
Dorry Shaddock, *Organist*
Carroll Shaddock, *Director of Music*

Jane Almquist, *Deaconess*
Genta Tessema, *Sexton*
Catherine Burst, *Office Administrator*
