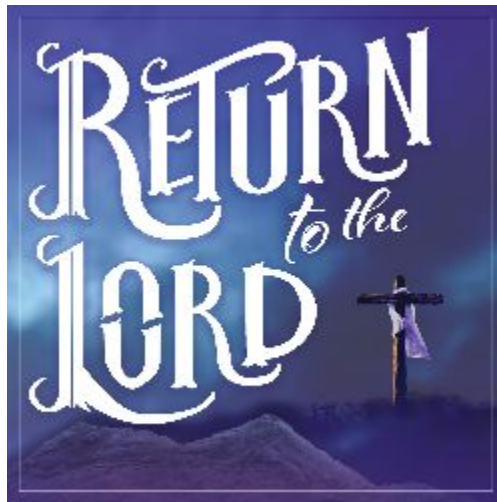




## **First Hearts   February 2021**

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### **From the Pastor**

Joel 2:13b “Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.”

Lent was historically a season of preparation for Holy Baptism. During Lent the Church refocuses herself on what Baptism means. Luther’s Small Catechism puts it this way: “It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil

desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Daily we die to sin and live to Christ. Repentance is part of Christian discipleship. That repentance reaches a fever pitch during Lent. This repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit using the Law and the Gospel. The Law crucifies that Old Adam while the Gospel raises up the new man in Christ. The Holy Spirit strengthens our faith in Jesus, in who Jesus is, and in how Jesus is our Savior.

Lent is penitential season where we focus on the cross and Passion of Jesus. The aim is forgiveness of sins. During this season we have extra Midweek services where the cross is brought to sinners and sinners are brought to the cross of Christ. This begins with Ash Wednesday where we remember that we are but dust — redeemed, forgiven, and restored by Christ. Lent culminates in the Upper Room where Christ instituted His Supper, travels to the Cross, and finds its rest in the tomb whereby our tombs are also made holy.

This season our theme is Joel 2:13b. Return to the Lord.

Joel, the prophet, paints a vivid picture of the coming judgment of God. But there is hope in the judgment. There is also an invitation from the Lord: “Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster” (Joel 2:13b).

Come and join us this Lent as we repent and are drawn closer to the cross and empty tomb. We will see how salvation played out for those who walked with Christ during the Passion and for us today.

Pastor Ed Maanum



### **Weekly Events**

Sunday - Divine Service 8:30 am and 11:00 am; Bible Study 9:45 am

Wednesday 2/17 and 2/24 - Ash Wednesday and Lenten Service 7:00 pm

## Board Happenings

2/9- School Board 6:00 pm

2/9 - Elders Meeting 7:00 pm

## Other Church Activities

2/1 - Ladies' Bible Study 7:00 pm

2/6 - Men's Bible Study 8:00 am

2/7 - Confirmation 9:45 am

2/14 - Voter's Meeting 9:45 am

2/15 - Ladies' Bible Study 7:00 pm

2/20 -Men's Bible Study 8:00 am

2/20 - Work Day 9:00 am

2/21 - Youth Group (immediately following 11:00 am service)

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	Feb. 7	Fifth S. a. the Epiphany	Is. 40:21-31	Psalm 147:1-11	1 Cor. 9:16-27	Mark 1:29-39
	Feb. 14	The Transfiguration of Our Lord	2 Kings 2:1-12 or Ex. 34:29-35	Psalm 50:1-6	2 Cor. 3:12-13 (14-18); 4:1-6	Mark 9:2-9

<b>ASH WEDNESDAY</b>	Feb. 17	Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:12-19	Psalm 51:1-13 (14-19)	2 Cor. 5:20b-6:10	Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21
<b>LENT</b>	Feb. 21	First S. in Lent	Gen. 22:1-18	Psalm 25:1-10	James 1:12-18	Mark 1:9-15
	Feb. 28	Second S. in Lent	Gen. 17:1-7, 15-16	Psalm 22:23-31	Rom. 5:1-11	Mark 8:27-38

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## In Other News

### Stewardship

"I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).

Without commands or even arm-twisting, St. Paul encourages, even challenges, the Church in Corinth to demonstrate the sincerity of their faith by their generosity in giving. He does this because giving generously is a gift of the Spirit given to us through the Gospel.

St. Paul wrote: “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7). In other words, just as we grow in faith and speech and knowledge of eternal things by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, so also do we grow in giving from the same Spirit through the same Word.

The problem is that the grace of generosity often grows cold in us. It’s not so much that we stop giving, but we don’t put it first. We treat it like all the other bills that must be paid. It becomes a chore, just one more thing to check off a list of things to do. That empties it of its spiritual power and robs us of the joy that Christ and the Scriptures assign to it.

On top of that, since this generosity is linked to faith and knowledge of divine things, a lack of excelling in giving is sure sign that our faith and knowledge of God are under attack as well.

Thus St. Paul points to the foundation of generosity: the generosity of Christ Himself. Even though He was rich, He became poor so that we who are poor might become rich. Thus, the incarnation, suffering, and death of our Lord on the cross is the reason, source, and driving force for our generosity in giving to the church.

And since Christ who was rich became poor so that we might be rich in His grace—of which generous giving is part—so we also who are rich in His grace can excel in pressing His grace into service toward the gracious work of the church.

Pay attention to what you give to the church so that you may excel at it. And if you find that your heart has grown cold or indifferent toward it, immerse yourself in God’s Word. Read it at home. Attend Bible Class. Hear and listen to it preached in the Divine Service. Be reminded of what Christ has done for you in His incarnation, suffering, and death. For this will strengthen your faith and knowledge. And where that excels, so will the grace of giving excel also.

**Looking for substitute Organists or Pianists** for Sundays and possibly

Wednesdays. We are blessed to have Kay Irwin serving as organist for First Lutheran. The Board of Elders is putting together a list of substitute accompanists for times when Kay is not available. Please contact Jered Sprecher at [jeredsprecher@gmail.com](mailto:jeredsprecher@gmail.com) or 917.656.7844

**Parrish Education** - Are you interested in facilitating Sunday School and VBS? First Lutheran is looking for volunteers to help organize Sunday School and other Parrish Education activities. Please reach out to Pastor Ed or Jered Sprecher.

**Easter Lilies.** We are taking orders for Easter Lilies to decorate our church sanctuary for the Easter season. The cost will remain \$15 each. Order forms can be found at the back of the sanctuary. Please have order forms returned by Monday, March 8, 2021.

**Youth!** Mark your calendars, join in fun and fellowship after 11:00 am church on the third Sunday of every month.

**Online Services:** Please visit the church website [www.firstknoxville.org](http://www.firstknoxville.org) to view our worship services and to participate in worship at your home. There are also links for Bible study and other resources.

**Facebook Page:** Follow First Lutheran on Facebook for all the latest updates: <https://www.facebook.com/KnoxFirstLutheran/>

	Actual through 12/31/2020	Budget through 12/31/2021
Income		
Total Church	\$167,847.95	\$168,282.54
Total School	\$440,248.12	\$407,864.98
Total Income	\$608,096.07	\$576,147.52
Expenses		
Total Church Expenses	\$182,249.17	\$146,797.50
Total School Expenses	\$443,496.56	\$436,602.54
Total Expenses	\$625,745.73	\$583,400.04
Net Operating Income	-\$17,649.66	-\$ 7,252.52

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## **News from First Lutheran School**

"When schools flourish, all flourishes." - Martin Luther

We closed out January with National Lutheran Schools' Week celebrating God's blessings with 1,900 preschools, elementary schools and high schools throughout the world.

In addition to themed dress days, we worshipped together each morning with guest pastors or teachers leading some of the chapel services. This week was also an opportunity to serve others. We sent mailable hugs to our loved ones, prayed for church workers, and collected items for care baskets for essential workers.

Despite the fun that was had, there were elements missing this year. As the saying goes, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," and there is a great deal of truth to that. As we look back on all we have accomplished this year, we are still learning and growing in mind, body, and faith. There are still plenty of smiles under the masks, but National Lutheran Schools' Week drove home the things we cannot do at this time and many of those things are precisely what make First Lutheran such a special school.

The friendship and fellowship across grades and classrooms is sorely missed. In a typical year, students come together to worship in chapel, celebrate each other's efforts in assemblies or athletic events, even just seeing each other on the playground. Regardless of the physical distance we maintain to keep each other safe, we still manage to find those moments and makes those personal connections. I love witnessing a kindergarten student waving with unabashed enthusiasm to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade buddy as they pass in the hall or at drop off watching students in separate classes walk in the building together catching up or sharing a joke. Those moments give us glimpse of what we have to look

forward to when the risk has passed and we are able to come together as a whole school once again.

In the meantime, we look for the many blessings that God has already given us and continue to foster those relationships which grow in every classroom, so while the First Lutheran Family may look a bit different this year, the love and fellowship still remain. At this point, it seems the whole world is tired and we all need of a little extra faith, hope, and love, and with Christ at the center of all we do that faith, hope, and love can be found in our classrooms.

Jessie Irwin, Principal

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**Birthdays:**

2: Luke Buckner; Jason Gibson  
3: Sandy Linde; Denver Slifka; Brittany Tipton  
7: Dawn Johnson  
9: Kari Williamson  
10: Kara Eimmerman; Judy Kelley  
13: Morgan Lyke  
14: Elizabeth Davis; Emily Norton  
18: Shawna Anderson; Seth Nutter  
20: Lynda Elmore  
21: Steve Hardin; Joshua Keyes  
22: Easton Sternberg  
23: Julie Cloninger; Sara Keyes  
24: Dustin Breitzkreuz  
25: Don Linde; Nicaea Lukens  
27: Lindsey Blair  
28: Emily Blumenberg; Erin Rodgers

**Anniversaries:**

16: Larry & Kim Mabe