

Faith Matters

May 2026



Pastors' Page

Bless the Years is just around the corner. It's on Sunday, May 3, this year. That means we are taking a look at the world of aging persons again, especially those we know maybe ourselves.

Recently "aging" was the topic at our Seniors' Potluck. We had some lively discussion about the problems and joys of the later years. I believe we concluded that aging is not easy, but also is not a sentence for doom.

A huge issue, of course is one's health. If I am an average person I can expect to experience something going wrong with limbs or joints, heart or lungs, an attack on an organ in my body, maybe a brain problem, or a mental disease, etc., something that is a serious interference on my life of retirement or sense of well-being.

How we face those interferences is a major matter. A recent book from the Mayo Clinic on healthy aging lists things we can do to face aging setbacks, things like diet, exercise, sociability, goals, proper medical care, support network, and more. To make them a daily practice can help us live longer, but especially make us healthier and happier. You likely knew most of these things already.

But there is one thing missing from this list. I would like to make the case that all of the list above is of lesser value without pursuing what I will call "spiritual health." Spiritual health is simply a recognition that all healing and well-being comes from God Himself, and that our God of grace and mercy cares about any unhealthy experience that enters our being. So, we can "take it to the Lord in prayer," as the hymn says.

I've always been amazed at the healings Jesus did, as recorded in the Gospels. In most of them Jesus commends people for their great faith. However, the only thing we can observe in the way the Gospels are written is that they cried out to Jesus for help, and Jesus healed them. How simple, yet powerful!

That suggests that faith, or "spiritual," is a matter of coming to Jesus with any and every health issue I have—expecting He will help us, in some way. Just how, is God's business. I had a custodian in one of my parishes who suddenly found he had a grapefruit-sized mass in his chest. He was a man of simple faith. He prayed and followed a treatment program, and some months later discovered that cancer was gone. We had no explanations, but we knew God did it. Another person, a director of nurses in the local hospital—she, too, a person of deep faith—turned to God, as she did every day. For her it was a matter of gaining strength to trust her Savior as she was leaving this life for what God the Father promised and Jesus fulfilled for her...eternal life in God's glory. Two different outcomes; both from our God of perfect love.

Continued on page 2



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LIVE TV BROADCAST
SUNDAYS AT 8 A.M.
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Faith in Christ is our greatest tool against aging health problems. It must be genuine. It is neither magic nor a gimmick. Faith to face aging losses is a product of our daily walk with our gracious God. In His mercy He forgives our sin. So we know any illness or disability is not punishment. Luther taught that the New Testament references show suffering as a "test" or discipline, which eventually can lead us closer to the God of our salvation. The peace of His grace, holding nothing of our sinfulness against us, and holding a place in heaven for us, is already healing and wholeness. As God told St. Paul when God chose not to relieve him of his illness, "My grace is sufficient for you; My power is made perfect in weakness." (II Corinthians 12:9)

Pastor Paulus Pilgrim



The Spotlight on Seniors this year shines on Ralph and Geri Johnson. We met on a windy but sunny afternoon, and shared stories and memories of growing up, raising a family and being part of a church and a community. Our visit went much longer than expected but was so rewarding, and now I am excited to share it with you.

Both Ralph and Geri lived on farms in the Mayville, North Dakota area. Geri was the oldest of three sisters and Ralph was the youngest of five with four older sisters. They attended the same church but didn't know each other. Early church memories were never missing Sunday School or Sunday services. They never doubted God's existence or questioned the teachings of the church. They both came from families who attended church and it was just part of their family life. Ralph and Geri both remember hearing the phrase "reading for the minister" from older family members. They were not certain, but maybe that was exactly what confirmation students did. Geri referred to her pastor, recalling he was older at the time of her confirmation but very modern in the confirmation practice. There was no oral exam for her confirmation. Each student was to pick a topic chosen by the pastor, research that topic, and write a paper to be shared with family at a private service. It was very different than the public exams many of us remember from our confirmation days.

Both attended the same high school and had mutual friends, but didn't actually connect until attending Mayville State University. While in college, they were married. Ralph went on to graduate with a degree in elementary education. After graduation, they moved to Rapid City, South Dakota, where Ralph taught for two years at the military base. In 1968, the family moved to Hutchinson, where Ralph taught 6th grade for 36 years before retiring in 2001. Since retiring, he still subs at the local high school when needed. During busy holidays, he delivers flowers for Cashwise floral and we have all seen him assisting with funerals, working for the Hantge-Dobratz funeral chapel. While Ralph was teaching Geri, chose to be a stay-home mom and her life rotated around the family. She was active in the classroom as a 'room mom' and was very involved helping wherever needed at the church. For years she was in partnership with a friend making items to decorate the home. She worked at Telex long enough to purchase a washer and dryer, but then it was back to being a full-time mom again. She has created a backyard filled with beautiful flowers that is a nursery for butterflies. Many of us have received a knitted or crocheted prayer shawl from Faith Lutheran. Geri has been very involved with that ministry. Both the Johnsons remain active in the community just completing their 28th year associating with the Tim Orth Memorial Foundation. They have also been involved with Common Cup Ministries for the past 25 years.

The family joined Faith Lutheran in 1969. Asking them why they chose Faith, the answer was partly because they were living in one of the Jefferson Street apartment buildings and it was an easy walk to church. That statement reminded me of an interview with Dick and Dorothy Desens a couple years ago, who gave that answer also. Laughing at the similarity between the two families, Geri noted it was Dorothy that had invited her to sing in the church choir.

Senior Spotlight continued from pg. 2

At the time, Faith had a young couples group that provided an opportunity to make new church friends and build relationships. Geri remembers being befriended by many of the older widowed ladies of the church. Being away from family made these church relationships very important.

Both Ralph and Geri feel God has blessed them through their lives. Ralph recalls the close bonds he had with his family growing up and the opportunity to gather together. Living in a small community gave the closeness we are sometimes missing now. Having their grandparents in their adult lives was also a special time. Trying to maintain that family closeness, Ralph and Geri try to spend time in North Carolina with their son, Lee and his wife Deb. Lee and Deb have three adult children and seven grandchildren. Their daughter, Lori, and her husband, Mike, have two adult children and now live in Hutchinson. Ralph feels very blessed with good health and the ability to stay active. Geri recalled her two trials with cancer, both were very difficult. But in the next breath she states it is more often the trials of others that they question. Instead of *why me*, their concern was more for others and *why them?*

Both Ralph and Geri have noted how the church is different than the one they grew up in. A good Sunday outfit is not the norm anymore. Beverages were not permitted in the church and you needed to register for communion. You certainly weren't allowed to laugh, something we at Faith do often. If there was something they wish we could change at Faith, a couple of items came up. Geri wishes for a bigger choir. Ralph stated that with three services it is difficult to know everyone. But, with that being said, they both praised the pastors and staff for providing three different types of services, so depending on your personnel preference Faith has a service for you. Both Geri and Ralph are proud that Faith Lutheran is such a presence in the community and the openness to share our facility with the community.

In closing our visit, I asked both Ralph and Geri if God seems more important as they get older. Ralph noted that as he gets older, death just might happen. He thought a good age would be about 88. Geri smiled and said she is giving God more credit now as she ages. It is not what we do but what God does for us. Every day the sun shines brighter and the flowers smell sweeter as we age. Isn't that the truth?

Submitted by Virginia Brodd

Seniors Scene



Can you believe that we are headed toward our final meeting of this program year for **Seniors' Potluck** before we break for the summer? Our next meeting is **Thursday, May 30**, beginning at **12:00 noon**.

Our program is a special one. Have you heard of **Global Health Ministries**? Their headquarters are in Fridley, Minnesota. Along with those who guide this ministry, there are thousands of volunteers who come to their warehouse to help sort and pack donated medical equipment and supplies to send around the world. They send them to countries that would never have them were it not for these donations. This ministry raises the level of medical care in clinics and hospitals far beyond anything they could ever have on their own. They also share medical and administration volunteers who teach local leaders and practitioners.



Our Faith Lutheran quilting group has a long history of supplying items to Global Health Ministry. Fun fact for you: in 2025 Faith Lutheran quilters and sewers sent to Global Health Ministries 510 pairs of socks, 21 body slings, 86 gowns and uniforms, 26 bed pads, 150 assorted blankets, 1,900 rolled bandages, and 62 newborn kits.

We are in for a treat, hearing about Global Health Ministries. So don't miss this one, and bring a friend. **See you at Seniors' Potluck!**

STUMP THE PASTOR

Stump the Pastor

Q: Christian doctrines and theology are so complicated and get really confusing. Aren't we just supposed to have simple faith like children?

A: The person who asked this question phrased it as an either-or proposition, but the issue it raises is actually a both-and. Because of what God has done in Jesus Christ, we can hold a childlike faith in God. As Jesus himself said, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." (Mark 10:15) In that statement, "as" does not mean at the *age* of a little child, but in the *manner* of a child, with unquestioning trust.

Just as children grow out of such unquestioning trust, however, so does our faith. At some point, we begin to seek understanding. We start to have questions. As Nicodemus asked Jesus in John 3, we, too, wonder, "How can these things be?" That is where theology and doctrine become vitally important. They protect our faith by directing it toward correct teaching and equipping us to discern false claims.

Working to understand theologically what we believe implicitly also equips us to witness more effectively to others. We can and should proclaim the basic good news that Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins and God raised him again from the dead, but when our hearers respond with Nicodemus' question, we need to be able to provide some further explanation. As I Peter 3:15-16 urges, "Always be ready to make a defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

Philip Melanchthon, Martin Luther's brilliant colleague and dear friend, warned that "the Church must always be erudite (well-educated), or it will be squalid (very foul)." That does not mean that faith in Christ *depends* on such learning; faith is simple, heartfelt and uncomplicated, like the trust of a child. But it does acknowledge that God created us with intellects, language and understanding that drive us to pursue that key question in the *Small Catechism*, "What does this mean?"

Stewardship Matters

Stewardship
A way of living

Hebrews 13:5 warns, "Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for (God) has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'" Similarly, I Timothy 6:10 declares, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith..."

In both of those verses, money is not the source of the trouble. The *love* of money is. Money itself is a good and powerful tool that God gives to us. However, just because it is good and so powerful, it is very easy for sinners to put our trust in it, to seek it above anything else, and to treat it as our god.

Trying to appreciate the goodness of money while avoiding the temptation to idolize it lies at the heart of Biblical stewardship. Christians are encouraged to give generously because it cuts against the more natural desire to hang onto it and use it for myself. Giving money away also points our trust back to God who blessed us with it in the first place, and away from the money itself. So, the call to give is not only or even chiefly about meeting the church budget, but a means to align our hearts and finances with the call of Hebrews 13 and I Timothy 6.

Outdoor Worship Is Returning Soon!

The staff and music and worship ministry team are already planning for outdoor worship to begin on Sunday, May 24, at Library Square. Get your lawn chairs out, shake out your blankets, and get ready to pray and praise God under bright and sunny skies. The 8 a.m. First Word services will continue inside the sanctuary as usual. The two 10:10 a.m. services will be joined together into one blended service in the park. If the weather does not cooperate, the service will then move back to Faith into the sanctuary.

Church Office Closed Monday, May 25, 2026

In honor of Memorial Day, a federal holiday honoring military personnel who died in service, the church office will be closed.



Worship Snapshot: Reflecting on the Goodness of God

In every generation, the Church finds new ways to sing an old, unchanging truth: the goodness of God. The contemporary Christian song, “Goodness of God” (written by Jenn Johnson, Ed Cash, and others), has become a meaningful expression of trust in the Lord’s steadfast care. While its musical style may feel unfamiliar to some, its message is deeply rooted in the same faith the Church has always confessed. At its heart, this song is a testimony. It does not attempt to argue doctrine or explain theology in systematic terms. Instead, it simply confesses:

“All my life You have been faithful, All my life You have been so, so good...”

That kind of language should sound strikingly familiar to us as Lutherans. Martin Luther placed great importance on personal confession of faith—not as a display of emotion, but as a response to God’s prior action. We love because he first loved us. We speak because he has spoken to us through his Word. In that sense, “Goodness of God” follows a very Lutheran pattern: it begins not with human effort, but with divine faithfulness.

The song recounts what God has done:

“You have led me through the fire.” “You are close like no other.” “I have known You as a Father.”

This reflects a theology shaped by lived experience under God’s care. It resonates with the Lutheran understanding of vocation, where God meets us in the ordinary rhythms of life such as guiding, sustaining, and preserving us through both hardship and joy. Like the Psalms, the song becomes a mantra of God’s faithfulness across a lifetime. Its imagery also echoes Scripture directly. The refrain describing God’s goodness “running after” us recalls Psalm 23: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” This is not sentimental optimism, but a bold confession grounded in who God is. Even in suffering, we proclaim that God is good. Not because circumstances are easy, but because Christ has secured us eternally.

This invites the question we often bring to any hymn or song: how does it point us to Christ? While “Goodness of God” does not name Christ directly, the language it uses of God’s faithfulness, nearness, and enduring mercy reflects the very character of God most fully revealed in God made flesh. In that way, the song still speaks in a distinctly Christian voice, echoing the same trust we place in our crucified and risen Lord. When it is sung within the life of the Church, where the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are given, it naturally becomes a response to the Gospel we hear week after week: that our sins are forgiven, that Christ has died and is risen, and that God’s mercy endures forever. In this way, the song does not replace the liturgy but echoes it.

Of course, musical style can be a sensitive topic. Some people are formed by the rich depth and structure of chorales; others connect more readily with newer musical expressions. These preferences are real, and they matter, but they are not what ultimately defines us as the Church. Our unity is not found in organ or guitar, in hymnals or screens—it is found in Christ. Perhaps songs like “Goodness of God” invite us into a deeper kind of listening. Not first asking whether the style matches our preference, but whether the confession aligns with the faith once delivered to the saints. Where it does, we can receive it with thanksgiving, as we do with hymns from every century. After all, the same faith that sings “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” can also sing:

“Your goodness is running after, it’s running after me.”

In the end, whether accompanied by organ, piano, or band, the Church continues to do what she has always done: proclaim the Word of God. And in that proclamation, we stand together as one people redeemed by Christ, confessing with one voice: “The Lord is good!”

Austin Willhite

MISSIONS

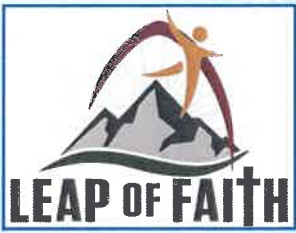
Once a Mission Field, Now a Sending Church *Pastor Paul Knudson*

Over the years, others must have gotten tired of my sharing the story of a hundred years of missionaries from multiple countries bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of Ethiopia with modest results. After that century of witness from us from distant lands, there were approximately 50,000 brought to Christ through our initial witness. This is a number of some significance, but the witness of native Christians in the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in the past several decades has dwarfed that number by now becoming the largest Lutheran Church body in the world, over 11 million members.

What struck me recently is hearing from a special brother in Christ from Ethiopia, who has become the director of EECMY'S outreach to other nations. He shared with me that his national church body is presently sending out over 50 missionaries to neighboring nations. Yes, in time indigenous folk who have come to Christ in these nations will take the lead in witness. The Great Commission call has captured our sister body of Christians to move out from their Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the "ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Praise be to God. The Holy Spirit is still at work calling, inspiring, and sending out witnesses to distant places. This truth is humbling and yet life-giving.

Leap of Faith Capital Campaign



The family of Faith Lutheran continues to support the Leap of Faith capital campaign with steady giving. The total amount in the campaign fund is nearing \$1.25 million, nearly all of it invested in safe, interest-bearing accounts. There is still a long way to go, of course, but the way the campaign fund has grown in just its first year is an encouraging sign that this is a ministry goal the church can meet.

Have you made a commitment to Leap of Faith? If so, **thank you!** If not, **please pray** for God to show you how you can help to provide the much-needed ministry space that Phase II of the build-plan would provide. Let's all make the leap together!



**Leap of Faith
Online
Pledge Card**

Faith Lutheran Church Support Groups



For more information or to plug into any of the following support groups, please call the church office at 320-587-2093 and ask for Pastor Paulus Pilgrim, Jeff Amundson, or Marsha Schmit.



- 1) FACe Cancer Support Group** This group is open to members and non-members of Faith alike. Those with cancer, those who are in remission, and family members who are caregivers of those with cancer are encouraged to participate in this support group. The FACe group meets the second and fourth Thursday morning of each month in the third floor conference room at 10 a.m. A Zoom option is available for those who are not able to attend due to health or distance obstacles.
- 2) Caregiver Support Group** Meets the THIRD Thursday of each month September—May at 4 p.m.
- 3) Grief Support Group** meets as needed throughout the year.



CHILDREN, YOUTH & family

Why Outdoor Ministry?

Each night of a mission trip, we go around and share “Yay God” moments. A “Yay God” is a joyous moment where we see God clearly working. A “Yay God” that I want to share with our congregation is that **we have over 20 students from Faith Lutheran going to Bible Camp this summer!** This is the most students we’ve had attend a Bible camp in at least a couple of decades. Outdoor ministry is an amazing experience for children and adults to step away from the noise and busyness of daily life and pause to enjoy God in His beautiful creation. People set aside their phones, TV, social media, practices, games, chores, and work to replace them with daily prayer, worship, opening and reading their Bible, playing, swimming, hiking, relaxing, and enjoying fellowship with other believers. Not convinced? Take it from your Children and Youth ministry directors.



I, **Laura Stowman**, never attended a Bible camp as a child, but I did participate in several day camps growing up. I remembered looking forward to seeing my friends from Christ the King and my super cool counselor! The best part was probably the worship time, where we sang great songs with fun actions.

When I was in high school, my family attended family camp at Mt. Carmel Ministries. It was so cool to worship with other congregation members around a bonfire and then roast marshmallows afterwards. That weekend, I felt closer to my family and my church family.

As a young adult, I had the pleasure of working at Green Lake Lutheran Ministries, two summers as a camp counselor (same years as my sister) and the last two as an assistant program director.

My favorite memories include a cabin full of girls all bringing their ukuleles to play during our downtime, seeing the awe on the kids' faces when they saw the gorgeous sunsets, and having campers ask thought-provoking questions about God and the Bible, watching campers quickly include another camper who came without any friends, and seeing some kids year after year jump out of the car because Bible camp was the highlight of their summers.

Outdoor ministry has meant so much to me, especially as an attendee and a staff member. I, **Kristen Durst**, started going to camp when I was going into 6th grade. My parents had been intentional by having us go to family camp at Inspiration Point before I spent the week there by myself. I remember the anxiety I felt going into the week, but also how welcome I felt. That kept me coming back. My favorite moment as a camper was always the Christ Hike, where they took us on a walk-through of Jesus' life. It was always so powerful to participate in, and it helped make my faith visual.

As a staff member at Lake Wapogasset Bible camp, first year as a camp counselor and the last two years as a team leader and worship director, I got to witness so many "aha" moments in campers' lives. A favorite memory was when I was leading campfire worship time. It was freezing that night, so we had to do our campfire in our chapel. I had felt so low all of that week, and I had asked God why I was even still working there. God showed up and inspired some of the most powerful worship I have ever been a part of. Campers were singing at full volume, and I could just feel the Holy Spirit. On the last song, I felt prompted to encourage a more emotional response to what we were singing, the whole room of 4th - 9th-grade campers lifted their hands in worship with me and it brought me to tears. God was the sustainer and He reminded me that He was still using me even when I felt low.



Is your child ready to experience outdoor ministry? Consider sending your child or grandchild to Bible camp. Even better, go with them to a family camp! Faith Lutheran Church is connected with Mt. Carmel Ministries, Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camps, and Inspiration Point. You can look at any of their websites to learn more and to register for a camp that works for your family.

You can support our campers by donating to the campership fund and/or keep our students in your prayers as they get ready to experience God outdoors.



Aftershock

LAST DAY: May 6 from 1:30-4:30 p.m.
If you can volunteer for Aftershock, please reach out to Laura Stowman. Thank you!

56er's

LAST DAY OF 56ER'S is May 20
from afterschool - 5:15 p.m.
We will walk to Below Zero for a treat.
Please send money with your child.

Sunday School

LAST DAY: May 17.

Sign up for summer ministries!

Mystery Bus
5th—7th grade
June 9—11

Vacation Bible School
Preschool—4th grade
June 29 –July 2
ADULTS: Please consider volunteering
for VBS. It takes about 60 volunteers
to support this ministry!



Day Camp
Kindergarten—5th grade
August 3—6

Details and registration links are on the Children's Page of our website at faithlc.com



FLY Night

Faith Lutheran Youth night continues for all high school students on Wednesdays from 7:00 p.m.—9:30 p.m.

Confirmation Mentor Meeting

Confirmands and mentors should plan to meet on Wednesday, May 6, at 5:30 p.m. for their last meeting of the program year. If you are planning to meet off-site, please let Kristen know ahead of time.

THANK YOU!

It's the end of the school year, so we want to take a moment to thank all of the amazing leaders who support our children and youth in their walk of faith.

Thank you to the Sunday School teachers, Faith Rocks leaders, 56er's helper, Kids' Music Club helpers, confirmation guides, FLY adult leaders, Aftershock helpers, Sprouts leaders, and Faith Seeds leaders.

Questions? Prayer Requests? Contact us!

Laura Stowman—Director of Children and Family Ministries—lauras@faithlc.com
Kristen Durst—Director of Youth and Family Ministries—kristend@faithlc.com

Please Remember in Prayer



Remember our Faith members in nursing homes and health care centers:

Buffalo Lake Nursing Home

Kathy Fabel

Cedar Crest - Silver Lake

Patricia Lambert

Cokato Nursing Home

Clara Betker

GlenFields-- Glencoe

Barb Helland

Harmony River

Larry DeGrote

Shirley Holtz

Wilbur Johnson

Prince of Peace

Maynard Holtz

Oaks

Phyllis Blum

Helen Kieper

Deloris Olson

Carol Otto

DuWayne Peterson

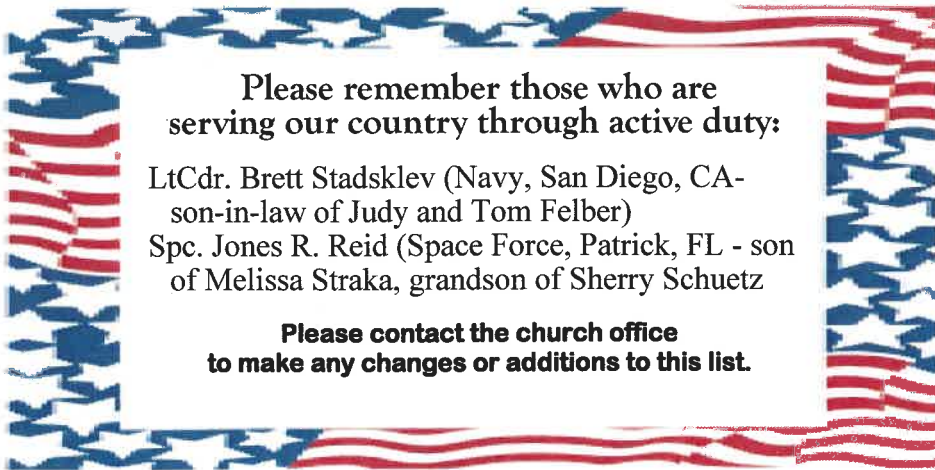
Alice Poshek

Pines

Ron Max

Woodstone

Cyndy Ollrich



Please remember those who are serving our country through active duty:

LtCdr. Brett Stadslev (Navy, San Diego, CA-son-in-law of Judy and Tom Felber)

Spc. Jones R. Reid (Space Force, Patrick, FL - son of Melissa Straka, grandson of Sherry Schuetz)

Please contact the church office to make any changes or additions to this list.



Faith Lutheran Church INFORMATION & STAFF DIRECTORY

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Owen Weikle, Custodial Services Coordinator		320-587-2093
Monica Schiller, Nursery Supervisor		

You can support the mission and ministry of Faith Lutheran Church by using this QR code or go to the FLC online giving page at Faithlc.com/give-2/



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You can request a change to e-mailed newsletters by sending a request to
office@faithlc.com or calling Wendy at 320-587-2093.



OUR MISSION IS:
BUILDING FAITH

*“EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST”*

EPHESIANS 4:12

TO LIVE OUT THAT MISSION, GOD CALLS US TO:

- FOLLOW JESUS**
- ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL**
- INVITE ALL PEOPLE**
- TEACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH**
- HELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED**

