

# FAITH at WORK

January 2024

Sisters and brothers in Christ –

This is a hard letter to write. I have sojourned with you as your pastor for almost eight years, through joys and sorrows, through eastertides and advents, through the ordinary time and the extraordinary times. It has been an honor and a privilege to accompany you on our walk of faith, to listen as you shared your stories, to lead worship and to gather with saints in blessed fellowship.

There is a lot of uncertainty about what the future will bring here at Faith Lutheran Church. We are in a changing time. We are in a liminal space – a space and time between one thing and the next. You are trying to figure out what ministry looks like here and how you can love and serve God and each other. At the same time society has changed drastically from the way it looked when this congregation began over sixty years ago.

In this uncertainty, I know that Faith is also in a good place. I know that you are in good hands. You have a capable group of servant leaders, a passionate musician, an organized office manager. But more than that you have God going with you on your way. God grasps our hand, walks with us and makes sure we are never going on our own.

God is all about in-between spaces. God journeys with people on the way. So many stories in scripture are about transformational experiences on the way: God calling Abram, sending Jacob dreams, speaking to Moses from the bush, guiding by cloud and fire through the wilderness, rescuing Hagar and Ishmael, feeding Elijah, standing in the river with John the Baptist, walking on the road to Emmaus and going with Jesus all the ways and places he went in ministry. There are more too, as you know through your faithful reading and study of scripture.

I bring this up because the God on the way is with the people of the Way (one of the New Testament names of Christians). God is with you in all your life's journey. From the waters of your baptism where the Spirit rushes in, through all of our life, you are claimed and formed by God. And so as Faith and I go to a new thing, God goes with us.

Peace in Christ,  
Pastor Mark

## Faith Lutheran Church

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## How Long Is A January?

How long is January, you ask?  
Because it seems  
an endless wait till Spring  
And the days when every little thing  
seems so much better.

How long can a month run on tired legs?  
Some say thirty one days no more,  
eleven days and a score.  
Expressed another way;  
too long to the next pay day.

When Christmas has extracted its ravages  
And like savages we roamed around the shops  
blindly spending money we hadn't got  
But what the heck,  
although our finances are on the skids;  
Christmas is all about the kids.

Their turn will come  
When they have to pay  
for their own kids  
And then they'll find  
themselves singing this song;  
January is much too long.

—By Paul Reed



Faith Lutheran Church		2024
<b>STAFF</b>		
Pastor		Mark Bringman
Office Manager		Carol Armstrong
Organist/Pianist		Cheryl Blum
Custodian		Hart's Janitorial
<b>CHURCH COUNCIL</b>		
President		Gordy Gamet
Vice President		Terry Virnig
Secretary		Mary Sabatka Gamet
Treasurer		Janice Lee Virnig
Financial Secretary		Alice Weber
Education/Youth		Vacant
Evangelism & Mission		Dick Olsen
Fellowship & Social		Peggy Preston
Property Management		Vacant
Stewardship & Resources		Wally Oster
Worship & Music		Vacant
Mission Endowment		Carol Olufson



### Financials as of: December 27, 2023

Undesignated Income: \$5,334  
 Budgeted Undesignated Income: \$8,166.67  
 Net Undesignated Income: (\$2,832.67)  
 Total Expenses: \$5,326.28  
 Total Net Income: \$4,487.72

# ***Church Announcements and Events***

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## **Circle of Friends—9:00am**

**Saturday, January 20**

Join us in the Fellowship Hall for a fun time. Sewing supplies, sewing machines and practice fabrics will be available for those who would like to learn to sew. The quilting frame will be set up so folks who would like to help tie quilts can do that too. See you there!

## **Bingo & More Games—3:00pm**

**Sunday, January 21**

All ages are welcome to join in the fun! There will be Bingo and other games to suit your fancy. Cost of Admission is a food donation for Albany F.I.S.H. Popcorn and Lemonade will be served. See you there!

## **Theology Pub/Gather: Rivers of Mercy—6:00pm @ Block 15 South Town**

**Wednesday, January 24**

Join us for fellowship, discussion, food and libation at Block 15 South Town in Corvallis. This gathering is casual: checking in, usually a low key discussion relating to faith and nurturing community. This group is aimed at 18 - 35 year old young adults through support from the ELCA. This also means that we are glad to buy your food at the Theology Pub. Hope to see you there.

## **Ecumenical Service —11:30am**

**Thursday, January 25**

This is a service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity that we will be joining with a few of our neighboring congregations. We will gather for prayer together and then share a meal together. We would love to see you join us for this worship service.

## **Mark Your Calendar & Sign Up Online!**

**Thursday, January 25**



The Blood Drive will be in the Fellowship Hall at Faith Lutheran Church from 11:30 am to 5:00 pm. To schedule your appointment, call **800-733-2767** or sign up online at [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org), using sponsor code: faithlutheranalbany.

## **Game Day @ Luther House—1:00 to 7:00pm 211 NW 23rd St, Corvallis, OR 97330**

**Saturday, January 27**

Join us for Gather: Rivers of Mercy—Game Day at Luther House. We will have a variety of games: a co-operative board game where we work to stop climate change, a game about birds, party games, social deduction games and others. Get your game on, get to know friends and acquaintances and join us. This event is for young adults 18 - 35.

## Farewell Luncheon for Pastor Mark—11:30am

Sunday, January 28

There will be a luncheon after church on January 28th. When the council asked me what I wanted for my last Sunday, I suggested eating a meal together - that we don't do enough fellowship together. So we are going to have lunch after church. What that looks like is yet to be determined, it will be shared at worship over the next couple weeks.

## Food Collection for F.I.S.H. of Albany



We are collecting non-perishable food items FISH of Albany. Donations can be placed in one of the baskets in the parking lot entryway.

**\*\* Please check expiration date markings -FISH cannot accept foods past their marked expiration dates.**

## Quilting and TOPs

Wednesdays @ 9am



Wednesday mornings are a busy time at Faith Lutheran Church. We have quilters working to create comforting quilts that are donated to bring people warmth, privacy and shelter. If you are interested in joining them, there is always plenty to do.

TOPs (stands for The Old People, though age is not requirements for the group) are busy working to keep our church property maintained and our grounds clean. If you have able hands and a willing heart, the TOPs will always welcome some help.

## Mary Martha Circle



This is a Bible Study for women. We meet on the **second Tuesday of each month @ 1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall**. If you would like more information, please call: Karen Glenn at (541) 928-4729 or Shirley Karstens at (541) 967-8309.

**Prayer Chain:** We are asking those who are part of the prayer chain to lift up the concerns of Faith Lutheran congregants on a weekly basis and to pray for other concerns as they are shared. This is can be as simple as taking a few seconds to ask God to be with those listed, lifting each one up by name. Peggy Preston will be heading up the prayer chain. **If you are interested in being on the prayer chain, send her an email:**  
[pegprestonn@aol.com](mailto:pegprestonn@aol.com)



## Church Office Hours

10:00am-2:00pm ♦ Monday—Wednesday—Friday



<b>Worship Leaders Team 2024</b>				
<b>January</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>
Assisting Ministers	Janice	Shirley	Pam	Ellen
Lector			Elaine	
Altar Prep	George	Elaine	George	Pam
Ushers	Wally	Dick	Wally	Dick
Sound Technicians	Terry	John	Gordy	Daniel

## A Prayer for the New Year

As the dawn breaks on a new year, let us give thanks for all we hold dear: our health, our family and our friends.

Let us release our grudges, our anger and our pains, for these are nothing but binding chains. Let us live each day in the most loving ways, the God-conscious way. Let us serve all who are in need, regardless of race, color or creed.

Let us keep God of our own understanding in our hearts and to chant God's name each day. Let us lead the world from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth and from wrong to right.

Let us remember that we are all one, embracing all, discriminating against none.

May your year be filled with peace, prosperity and love. May God's blessings shower upon you and bestow upon each of you a bright, healthy and peaceful new year.

—Rev. Marcy Sheremetta

## December 2023 Worship Schedule



<b>January 7</b>	<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Worship</b>
<b>January 14</b>	<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Worship</b>
<b>January 21</b>	<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Worship</b>
<b>January 28</b>	<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Worship</b>

**All Worship Services are filmed and available on YouTube**

## **Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting Information**

On December 10, 2023, the semi-annual Congregational Meeting was held to elect new Church Council members, approve the 2024 Budget, and to discuss the path forward for Faith Lutheran Church. There were 33 members attending. Gordy Gamet was elected as Council President, Terry Virnig was elected Vice President, Peggy Preston was elected Fellowship/Social Concerns Committee Chair, and George Hunt was elected to serve on the Endowment Committee. The 2024 Budget was approved. The meeting minutes and a presentation of future possibilities are listed below.

### **12-10-23 Meeting Minutes**

#### **Meeting called to order by council president Terry Virnig.**

- Began with donuts and devotional to ask God's help in guiding us through the wilderness.
- Sign up sheets were used to ensure we had a quorum. No minutes were taken for the last Congregational meeting so none were included with agenda.
- Once it was determined that there was a quorum (76 confirmed members—need 16 for a quorum), the proposed budget for 2024 was presented.
- It was noted that both Jackson Street and Family Tree were looking to move in 2024. But Terry could not elaborate on that since he was still in negotiations with the tenants.
- Family Tree has purchased a new building but had no idea when it would be ready or when they will be vacating their space. Only six months of rent were budgeted for Family Tree for 2024.
- Undesignated contributions in the 2024 budget were based on the 2023 actual number. Giving is going to be an important factor in 2024.
- Pastor Mark is resigning effective 1/31 so that expense is going away. Will be paying supply pastors after that.
- Carol Armstrong's role may increase. She has been informed of this.
- Property projects scheduled for 2024 include new roof on the preschool and Jackson St building and window replacements. Carol Olufson announced funds will come from Endowment to cover the property improvements.
- Terry called for a vote on the budget. It was passed with 2 abstains.

#### **Agenda item: Election of Officers**

- Positions open this year are president and vice-president. Gordy Gamet is to replace Terry as president.. Terry will take the Vice President position. All other positions stay the same.
- Terry went through each position. Other nominations asked for and none received. George Hunt volunteered to fill open position on Endowment Committee. His name was added to the ballot.
- Ballots were collected.

### **Other Business on the agenda:**

- Faith will host the next Advent evening meal on 12/13 at 6 pm. Terry urged folks to bring a soup to share. There will be a short service following at 7 pm.
- Discussion on Future Direction of Faith Lutheran (with Slides):

### **Expected Changes and Impacts to 2024 Budget:**

- Operating funds have been holding steady at around \$30,000. There is a savings account containing a little over \$16,000.
- Rental income will diminish in 2024.
- Facility needs repairs.
- Congregational size is dwindling.
- Pastor's leaving will save us money but services will be greatly impacted.
- In the synod: 8 out of 14 churches do not have a pastor; 6 out of 14 do have a pastor.
- If did hire a new pastor, budget would be accurate if was  $\frac{3}{4}$  time and had 17 years of experience.
- Question: why are there no pastors available? Pastor Mark noted the effect that the pandemic had on pastors and congregations both. There are no large concentration of Lutheran churches in Oregon so pastors would have to move here from other areas. Pay would not be high enough to entice them to move their families for a part-time call.

### **Short Term Options to stabilize:**

- Use Endowment Fund for maintenance and repairs. Look for alternative tenants.
- Use remaining Endowment Funds to cover future budget shortfalls.
- Find creative, alternative ways to use property or sell assets.
- Merge with another church. Much more work needs to be done on that.

### **Long Term Options:**

- If we merge can keep our assets. Our assets would become part of the combined church. Will be meeting with Bishop in December to determine what is needed to make that happen.
- Could share a pastor who would go back and forth between churches. Two facilities would have to be maintained.
- "Friendship": sharing just the pastor; everything else would be separate.
- Merger: close of the facilities but merge the council members.
- Terry and Mary Gamet have talked with Good Shepherd and Grace in Corvallis about options.
- Some discussion about FT pastor versus PT. Easier to find a FT pastor than it is to find an interim pastor.
- Care pastor versus Interim pastor:
- Care: leads worship of times a month but use supply pastors also. More work for us to keep Sundays staffed.

## Interim: pastors until a new pastor is hired.

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- Become a mission church and partner with outside agencies. Would attend church services in other places.
- Continue with care/supply pastors until we run out of funds.
- It is up to the congregation. But right now it is just Terry and Mary working on this. Other congregation members must be involved and engaged.
- In the next few months determine what YOU would like and engage with Terry and Mary.
- In February will vote on direction—will have more info at that time.
- Let Terry, Mary, or Carol Armstrong know your thoughts on this.
- Question: How would Endowment fund be handled if we merged or partnered? Answer: That would be decided by the councils of both churches working together.
- Pastor Mark noted that we would need to know exactly how a merger would work before any voting can take place at the February meeting. If we don't have a clear idea by February meeting, the vote can be postponed but need end point—need to get an idea of which direction to head. Also by February we should have a better idea of how long tenants will be staying in 2024. Pastor Mark stated we need direction on general direction; not a specific one.
- There was a suggestion (not a motion) that a committee be set up to handle all this. But then it was noted that all congregational members need to be involved, not just a committee.
- Ballots were counted and all officers elected.
- Meeting closed with Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janice Lee-Virnig, Treasurer

## **Presentation to Congregation**

Condensed to fit Newsletter Format

### **Expected Changes and Impact to FLC in 2024**

- Last year we spent about \$20,000 more than we took in. Our checking balance now stands at about \$30,000. We currently have enough in checking to maintain cash flow ( the amount on hand to pay bills). Another year like 2023 and we will need to move our savings cushion to the checking account to protect cash flow. Need about \$25,000. If the trend continues we will not meet obligations.
- Revenue from our Long term Tenants is being impacted. <sup>17</sup>Two long term tenants have told us they plan to vacate mid 2024.
- Facility is in need of maintenance and improvements. Costs are going up every year.
- Congregational population is dwindling. Beside impacting giving, this places more work on fewer individuals. We may need to hire out tasks currently performed in-house (yard maintenance, repairs, etc.)
- Pastor Mark will be leaving FLC end of January 2024. That salary is the largest part of our budgetary obligations. Those obligations will be reduced by his leaving but our services will be impacted.



## Things are “Tuff”

- Finding a Pastor will be difficult as 6 out 14 ELCA churches in our area do not have a permanent pastor.
- If we had a  $\frac{3}{4}$  time Pastor in 2024, the 2024 Budget would be projected to be short by \$9,500. If we pursue a “full” time pastor going forward, a larger deficit can be expected every year.

## Short Term Options to Stabilize

- Use some of the Endowment Fund Reserves to make necessary maintenance and improvements to the facility. This is happening now. The current 2024 proposed budget takes this into account.
- Look for alternate Tenants. This may be a long term project and its unknown if any improvements and costs to the facilities will be required, etc. Suffice it to say that there is movement in this regard.
- Use remaining Endowment Fund to continue to cover future annual budget shortfalls.
- Look at creative or alternative ways to leverage, sell or use existing assets (buildings, parsonage, etc.) and resources that can be used to prolong the financial longevity of FLC.
- Look at merging or pastor-sharing with another church in the area. This will require a lot of work and investigation along with more clearly defining what a “Merger” can mean to FLC.

## Longer Term Options

After some work over the last year, Terry Virnig and Mary Gamet (T&M) have theorized that we have a few Longer Term options.

1. Merge with another church, either an ELCA church or a communion partner church (Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian.) While we feel that merging with an ELCA makes the most sense, that will only work if there is one nearby that is willing to work with us. The same could be said about a communion partner church. If we merge with another church we can keep our assets.
2. Turn our church into a mission church by partnering with outside agencies to provide needed services to the community. This can look like many things – a community quilting gathering space, community meeting hall, weekly soup kitchen, warming center, etc. This option would require the FLC members to find a new church on their own to attend services on Sundays. The financial part of this would be our biggest hurdle.
3. Continue as we are until we run out of funds to operate using supply pastors as they are available. Any assets left (the buildings) would go to the Synod.

These are not the only options. There are options within options. But any choice will be challenging. Whatever option the congregation selects T&M will work to carry it out. However, we would expect everyone in the congregation to remain engaged with the process. This can't be done with just two people.

T&M will continue to talk about our future over the next several weeks. You all need to do the same. It is very important that you all do the same. In February we will have another congregational meeting and ask for everyone to vote for the option they would like us to pursue. Updates will be given throughout the year so everyone will know what is happening.

T&M will be available for any questions or concerns and are always open to suggestions. Please prayerfully consider the direction you want FLC to go.

**—Prepared By Mary Sabatka Gamet**

# January

## 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>31</b>	<b>1</b> Church Office Closed New Year's Day Pastor Mark - Vacation 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 9:00am Quilters 9:00am TOPs	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 9:00am - 12:30pm String Therapy	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> 10:30am Worship & Livestreaming	<b>8</b> 12:30pm - 3:00pm Modern Travelers 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>9</b> 1:30pm Mary Martha Circle	<b>10</b> 9:00am Quilters 9:00am TOPs 7:00pm Council Meeting	<b>11</b> Janitorial Service	<b>12</b> 9:00am - 12:30pm String Therapy 1:00pm 20th Century Book Club	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 10:30am Worship & Livestreaming	<b>15</b> 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 9:00am Quilters 9:00am TOPs	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 9:00am - 12:30pm String Therapy	<b>20</b> 9:00am Circle of Friends (Fellowship Hall)
<b>21</b> 10:30am Worship & Livestreaming 3:00pm Bingo & More	<b>22</b> 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>23</b> Janitorial Service	<b>24</b> 9:00am Quilters 9:00am TOPs	<b>25</b> 9:45am - 6:00pm Red Cross Blood Drive	<b>26</b> 9:00am - 12:30pm String Therapy	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 10:30am Worship & Livestreaming 11:15am Fellowship Meeting	<b>29</b> 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 9:00am Quilters 9:00am TOPs	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

# Prayer List

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*PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER THOSE  
NEEDING STRENGTH, GUIDANCE AND HEALING:*

Tim B.	Garrett Baarsch	Karen Glenn
Brenda Carroll	Stephanie Bauthman	Drew Butler
Sandy Hina	Carl Wogomon	Pat Norby
Robert Jon	John Busher	Chuck
Linda Gail Voet	Heather	Rose Mary Aaberg
Melba Wright	Julie Shaw	Cheryl Blum
Brandon Crawford	Lee Horst	Carol Olufson
Noah Holman	Margaret Rowland	John Villani
Gigi Douglas	Olivia Hunter	Vanessa Munro
Chiera Family	Nicholas Glass	Jim Preston
Izzy Covalt	Karen Hoover	

*REMEMBER OUR HOMEBOUND:*

Ruth Irwin, Connie Griffis, Izzy Covalt, Cindy Harms, Margaret Rowland, Melba Wright, Sangsau Tran

*OUR SYMPATHY & PRAYERS TO THOSE WHO MOURN THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES*

## A Prayer for Every Day

O Lord, You are the light that guides my feet.  
You are the map that gives me direction.  
You are the peace that makes me strong.  
You are the leader whom I faithfully follow.  
May your light illuminate my life and your  
guidance bring direction. May I find inspiration in  
your word and peace in my heart as I follow you.  
Amen.





**Faith at Work**

**January 2024**

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PLACE  
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