



THE MESSENGER

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF WEST SEATTLE
(206) 935-6530 www.flcws.org February 2025

PASTOR'S PAGE — *Hearing God's Word*

One of the topics we will cover in our *Life in Christ* class on Sunday mornings is the role of scripture in the life of the church. There is so much that can be said about the Bible. St. Augustine spoke of the scriptures as a “mountainous difficulty enveloped in mystery.” This is why we want to approach scripture with open minds and hearts, to truly listen to what scripture says instead of putting ourselves over it. If we think we know better than God then we will not find ourselves in much of a posture for receiving.

The first place to begin in discerning the place of scripture in the church is Sunday morning. The Bible is read in public worship. Every Sunday we hear an Old Testament reading, pray one of the psalms, listen to a reading from the New Testament, and, most of all focus our minds and hearts on Christ through the hearing of the Gospel.

This use of scripture is primary and was its original intent. The Bible was never intended to be read privately, though doing so is a good and fruitful practice. Originally, scripture was read out loud in the communal worship of the church.

When Jesus visited the synagogue in his hometown, he did what was customary. Normally, Sabbath worship included a reading from the scriptures that was followed by an interpretation by the rabbi. Jesus' action that day in the Synagogue was extraordinary because his interpretation was to let people know that he was the fulfillment of God's Word. You may recall that this friendly visit to his hometown didn't turn out so well. He was essentially run out of town.

This hearing of scripture doesn't always sit well with us. At times we receive it gladly and other times we are confused or even offended by what the scripture says and how the preacher interprets the word. Still, this is the best way to receive the scriptures and to let God's Word have its way with us.

In the baptismal promises we commit to “hearing the Word of God...” Our primary commitment to the Bible is to listen, to hear, and to allow God's good news, however wonderful or off putting it may be, to enter into our ears and down into our hearts.

We are surrounded by so much noise in our world today. With that comes a lot of opinions and worldviews and even conspiracy theories. We can barely take it in let alone sort it out. What word shall we listen to? Like this cacophony of noise, we sometimes listen to God's Word but not really hear the word. Still, the Spirit calls us to gather together and to truly hear.

At times it can be difficult to hear, and at other times, we know deep within our hearts there is no other place to turn.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Alleluia!

Peace,
Pastor Bryon Hansen

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we welcome our new council members, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to our outgoing members: Secretary Lorraine King, Treasurer David King, and Carol Nelson. Lorraine, thank you for your four years of dedicated service as Secretary. Your commitment has been invaluable to our council. David, your steadfast dedication as Treasurer over the past six years has truly redefined the role. Your hard work and attention to detail have set a new standard for those who follow. Carol, I deeply appreciate your willingness to step up and take on responsibilities when needed, always with grace and reliability.

To our new council members, I am excited to work together. I look forward to the positive, rewarding, and fulfilling contributions you will bring to our council. As we continue to move forward, it's important to recognize that the past five years have been marked by transition, especially with the impact of Covid-19. Virtual meetings became the norm, and while they served us well, I hope to see us shift toward a hybrid format in the coming year. This would allow us to have more in-person meetings as we become more comfortable returning to pre-pandemic practices. As I did last year, I again ask for everyone's patience and continued support.

Nearing the one-year mark of Pastor Bryon Hansen's leadership at First Lutheran Church, I find myself reflecting on his first year with us. Pastor Hansen has asked insightful questions and worked diligently to understand how best to serve our congregation. His thoughtful approach and commitment to learning have been a blessing, and we have embraced his guidance and teachings with open arms.

Finally, I want to thank Lorraine King for her efforts in ensuring our worship services continue smoothly each Sunday. Her work coordinating substitute organists has been greatly appreciated, and we are thankful for her dedication in keeping our worship experience going.

Gracious God, we thank you for the blessings you have bestowed upon us and for the dedicated service of those who have led and served. As we move into this new chapter, guide us with wisdom and strength. Help us to work together in unity and faith, seeking your will in all that we do. May our hearts remain open to your leading, and may we continue to grow in love and service to one another. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

-Steve Liang
President, Church Council

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP: Join us in the lounge every Sunday after the service.

ADULT FORMATION Join us in Room D after Coffee Hour. This series of sessions on **Life in Christ** will follow the pattern of the baptismal promises we make and routinely affirm. Those who desire to continue toward becoming a part of FLCWS will meet in Lent for preparation of their baptism or renewal of baptism at Easter.

FOOD BANK COLLECTION: The West Seattle Food Bank box and all collections are in room C. Suggested donations for February are canned goods. Compass Housing Alliance is in need of socks for men or women for the winter months. Any non-perishable foods, personal products, or grocery store gift cards are welcome. Your much needed donations are taken to the West Seattle Food Bank, Compass Housing Alliance, Mary's Place, and Westside Neighbors (American Legion Hall Shelter).

RIVERTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH is still in need of help in housing the hundreds of immigrants that keep arriving. To help, go to: <https://rivertonparkumc.com/donate>. *(Also, the Kitchen Welcome Kits are nearly complete! Thank you!!)*

EXTENDED MINISTRY: Support the Food Bank with Your Thriftway Receipts! West Seattle Thriftway gives back 1% of sales from receipts turned in to benefit the WS Food Bank! Simply drop your receipts in the envelope at the Extended Ministry bulletin board outside Room C—we'll take care of the rest. Every receipt counts and makes a difference to those in need in our community.



Northwest Washington Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A Statement on Immigration from the Bishops of Region One of the ELCA

January 22, 2025

As Lutherans, we are called to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ, who welcomed strangers and emphasized love, mercy, and justice for all people. We believe that every human being, regardless of their country of origin or legal status, is created in the image of God and has inherent dignity and worth. This foundational truth compels us to approach the issue of immigration with compassion and a commitment to the common good.

Scripture repeatedly instructs us to love our neighbor and show the stranger hospitality. God commands the people of Israel, "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself" (Leviticus 19:34). Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) shows us that caring for people in need is central to who we are as Christians. The parable also challenges us to acknowledge the goodness in all people because the "foreigner" in the story is the one who acts in the most Christlike way. In light of these teachings, we advocate for an immigration policy that reflects Christ's love, recognizing that all people deserve respect and protection.

The Lutheran tradition emphasizes both mercy and justice. Justice requires everyone, including immigrants, to be treated fairly and equitably. While upholding the rule of law is important, it must not be done in ways that dehumanize or exploit vulnerable people. We are especially concerned about the possibility that places of worship, hospitals, and schools could be the target of deportation raids. A policy that allowed such raids would increase the suffering not only of undocumented people but also of many people who would fear being unjustly targeted and thus avoid those places. Denying people the opportunity to attend worship, be educated, or receive medical treatment violates individuals' fundamental rights. We urge those in government and law enforcement who are responsible for the detention or deportation of undocumented persons to consider how their actions might be seen in the eyes of God.

We are all members of the same human family. Therefore, we approach immigration not merely as a political or legal issue but as a matter of human solidarity. The health and prosperity of the United States are intertwined with the contributions and lives of immigrants. Immigrants bring diverse gifts and play an essential role in our communities and economies. Our immigration policies should reflect a commitment to the welfare of all, especially the most vulnerable.

As people who have received God's mercy and grace, we are called to extend that same mercy and grace to others. This means offering opportunities for new beginnings, particularly for those already present in the United States without legal documentation. A just immigration policy would provide pathways to citizenship for those who have lived in the U.S. for years, contributing to the country and integrating into our communities. It should also guarantee protection for those fleeing violence or persecution, ensure that immigrant families remain united, and make sure that children are not punished for their parents' actions.

We are called, as individuals and as a society, to remember that the immigrants among us are not intruders or enemies but bearers of the image of God, deserving of our care, respect, and advocacy.

The Rev. Shelley Bryan Wee, Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod

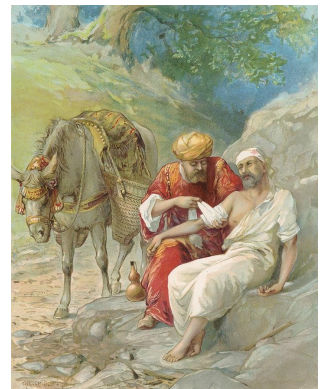
The Rev. Richard Jaech, Bishop, Southwestern Washington Synod

The Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling, Bishop, Montana Synod

The Rev. Laurie Larson Caesar, Bishop, Oregon Synod

The Rev. Dr. Meggan Manlove, Bishop, Northwest Intermountain Synod

The Rev. Timothy Oslovich, Bishop, Alaska Synod



STEWARDSHIP

I have a rough history with the offering ritual. I've learned that when I was two or three years old I decided to have fun with the offering plate as it was passed down the pew. I started taking money *out* of offering plate. Normally, my mother's watchful eye would have prevented this, but she got briefly distracted. When she saw what I had done she was more than slightly embarrassed. In my first experience of serving as an usher, the copper offering plate slipped from my hands. When the plate made impact with the floor and sent the pocket change spinning, it was like a "noisy gong" had interrupted the beautiful offering music. My vocation as an usher didn't last long.

You could say my relationship with the offering has been a little clumsy.

Upon reflection, I've come to believe that is true for many of us. I'm speaking not so much about the ritual itself but our relationship to money and our fidelity to God. We are called by God to steward our possessions, time, and resources. That includes money. We are torn between nagging greed within the demands of a consumerist society and the Christian call to give money away. As I seek to sort all of this out, I wish I could say I do it perfectly. Truth be known, I'm a little clumsy.

One of the astonishing wonders is that God continues to call us and use us to further the things of God's Kingdom. We're not perfect. Nor does God expect us to be perfect. Perfection is the sort of the thing we often expect from ourselves because we like to think we are in control of our lives. Instead, God knows the struggles we all face when it comes to sorting out incessant greed and using money responsibly and in service to Christ. And God continues to walk with us, hold us in love, and provoke us toward a life of generosity grounded in gratitude.

In the offertory prayer we pray, "We offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first give us – ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love." Thanksgiving grounds our offering to God. Since we all have a tendency toward being clumsy givers to a God who holds us in love at all times, our giving is nothing less than an act of thanksgiving and gratitude to God for his amazing grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love.

When we present our offerings, give to our neighbor in need, give of our time and resources to ministries of justice and compassion, we do so "with joy and thanksgiving." It is our grateful response to the God who loves us so very much. If we see our offering as only a duty, it may become for us just another law. When our giving is grounded in gratitude, our duty becomes a joy.

I like the rest of the offertory prayer. It says it so well – "Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Jesus gave himself and everything for us. I cannot think of any better reason to give. We give in return for what God has graciously and generously given us, unaltered love, even for clumsy givers.



Peace,
Pastor Hansen

✠ PARISH PRAYERS ✠

Remember in prayer before God those whom He has made your brothers and sisters through baptism.

Pray for members and friends of our congregation that God will bless and strengthen them in these days: Peter and Dana Morrison, Paula and The Rev. Douglas Lindsay, Shirley Graham, Nora Vanhalla, Don Minter and children, and Rick Hansen.

Pray for the homebound that the light of Christ may give them joy: Joan Olson, Mona Ayer, Jeannine Lingle, Robert Schorn, Lou & Lori Landino, CJ Christian, and Melanie Johnson

Pray for our bishops Elizabeth Eaton & Shelley Bryan Wee, our pastor Bryon Hansen, our choirmaster Dean Hard, and all who faithfully assist with worship. May they be strengthened in faith, love and the holy office to which they have been called. Pray for our church council, that God will guide and strengthen them in their work.

Pray that God would give us hearts to find joy in service and faithful stewardship. Pray that God would work within us to become a good steward of our time, talents, and finances. Pray to strengthen our commitment to stewardship in our congregation.

Pray for the hungry, ignored, abused, unemployed, addicted, homeless, and unbelievers. Pray God will show mercy to these people, and for all in Christ's church to see and help those who are in distress. Pray for our country and those who lead us, that our collective actions may honor God and be a blessing in the world.

Pray for people around the world who suffer from the effects of war, terrorism, natural disasters, disease, poverty, and abuse, especially the people of Ukraine, Israel, the Palestinian people, Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, all immigrants and asylum seekers, and all who live in fear.

Pray that God will bless us through the lives of the saints: Martin Luther, renewer of the church (1546); St Matthias, Apostle; Rasmus Jensen, first Lutheran pastor in North America (1620); Elisabeth Fedde, deaconess and founder of the Norwegian Relief Society (1921).

A Prayer of Francis of Assisi

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

*Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope,
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*Grant that we may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

Amen.

A Festival in February

On Sunday, February 2nd, we celebrate the feast of **The Presentation of Our Lord**. This special day is referred to in some corners of the church as *Candlemas* because of an ancient tradition of blessing all the candles to be used in the church in the coming year at the mass celebrated on that day. It was a way of underscoring the truth of Simeon's confession that this baby Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" and a light for glory to Israel. Let the light of every candle in church be a little epiphany of the love of God for all people in the person of God's son, Jesus, the light of the world.

We celebrate this day forty days after the birth of Christ when Mary and Joseph presented him in the temple in accordance with Jewish law. There a prophetess named Anna began to speak of the redemption of Israel when she saw the young child. Simeon also greeted Mary and Joseph. He responded to the presence of the consolation of Israel in this child with the words of the *Nunc dimittis*. His song described Jesus as a "light for the nations."

This song of Simeon is sung every Sunday as the Post-Communion Cantic. It is also prayed near the end of Prayer at the Close of the Day, known as Compline. Sometimes, it is sung at funerals. *The Nunc dimittis* is a fitting way to conclude the Sunday Eucharist, prayer at the end of the day, and at the end of one's life:

*Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
your word has been fulfilled.*

*My own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of
your people Israel.*



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FEBRUARY 2025



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