

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” (Isaiah 1:18, ESV)

As I sit in my office on this last day of January, 2019, I’m thinking about cold weather. Early this morning, just before dawn, the northern half of Illinois experienced some of the coldest temperatures ever recorded in the state. I still haven’t seen the official low temperature for Princeton, but it had to be close to -30 degrees Fahrenheit. I say this because the Quad Cities airport reported a low of -33 and the Peru airport had a low of -28.

But those weren’t even close to the lowest temperatures recorded this morning! Some towns in the northwest part of the state are reporting temperatures near -40 which, if verified, would break the record for the coldest temperature ever recorded in the history of the state of Illinois (the current verified record is a reading of -36 in the town of Congerville on January 5, 1999). So it was probably the coldest night that any of us will ever experience in this area for our entire lives.

But now, as I look out my office window in the middle of the afternoon, I can see snow falling. We’ve had a good amount of snow already this season. But this new snow is a sign that the extreme cold is over and the temperatures are rising again. I know that it will have to be shoveled and plowed and stomped off of our shoes before we step in the house, but right now it is a beautiful sight. Everything outside is being covered by a glistening blanket of pure, white, untouched snow.

I wonder if the prophet Isaiah was looking at the same kind of scene when he wrote the words at the top of this page. In the verses just before these words, Isaiah was speaking a harsh prophecy from the Lord, condemning the people of Judah for their sin and immorality. He called them “a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly.” He accused them of “forsaking the Lord,” and “despising the Holy One of Israel.”

Then, in Isaiah 1:18, the Lord says, “Come now, let us reason together.” It was an ominous statement. It sounded like God was about to bring down the hammer. It sounded like he was about to pronounce some terrible judgment on his people. But the next words were something completely unexpected. The same Lord who had just condemned the people for their sin and rebellion suddenly said to them, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” It was an invitation. He was saying, “Right now, you have the blood of your sins on your hands. But I will cleanse you. I will make you as white as snow.”

But how could this happen? How could the sins of the people simply be washed away? We find the answer in the New Testament, in 1 John 1:7. How will God turn our bloody sins into pure white snow? John writes, “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” All we need to do is humble ourselves before the one who died on the cross for us.

These last few days have been cold and harsh, like the harsh words of judgment from our holy and righteous God. But the snow that is falling now is like a beautiful reminder of the mercy of our tender and forgiving God. It reminds us that if we will surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, his blood will wash away all of our scarlet sins. It will drive away all of God’s judgment. And our Lord and Savior will cover us with the pure white blanket of his perfect love and his amazing grace.

Pastor Bill

A Note About The New Member Class: The New Member Class will continue to meet through February. We will welcome all new members at the beginning of the worship service on Sunday, February 24th.

Deadline for the Bulletin is Thursday morning 10 am.
Deadline for the Newsletter is the 20th of each month.
Listen to or watch Pastor's sermons on our website.

Office Hours: 9-12 & 1-4 Mon. – Thurs.
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Council Summary: January 15, 2018

Members present: Pete May, Judy Mugerdichian, Mary Ann Smith, Dianne Van Drew, David Ohlson, Pastor Shields & June Ohlson. **Absent:** Glenn Allen

The meeting began in prayer. The agenda & minutes from the December meeting were approved.

Pastor's Report – Along with his usual schedule of meetings & worship services, other activities were as follows: Advent Suppers & Worship services, Staff party, Children's program, Caroling with Chili Supper, & 2 funerals. A New Member class will begin in January. Pastor would like another Lenten Challenge—to read the Bible in 1 year. Special Bibles will be purchased where all recommended readings are together on one day, making it easier for people to follow. We will have these ready to pick up before Ash Wednesday.

Administrator's report – 105 average Sunday attendance in December. Wednesday Advent services averaged 47 and a total of 187 worshiped on Christmas Eve.

The Financial Reports were approved subject to audit.

Property – safety inspections, larger mailbox, office chair replacements, light switches in parsonage replaced, replaced classroom lights with LEDs, more emergency lights in sanctuary, redecorate kitchen & replace smoke & fire detectors.

Service & Mission – Freedom House collections March 17 & September 15 with \$250 from benevolence, 2019 benevolences have been approved, additional funds for 2018 were \$1022, \$700 for Mobile food pantry & \$322 to PADS Family Addition, Prayer Breakfast at 8:30am Feb. 16

Outreach & Fellowship – Family movie night Sat., Feb. 2nd at 6:00 with meal of Sloppy Joes & hot dogs, bring whatever to go with those items, popcorn will be provided, attendance at Bible Journaling class was 19.

Youth & Education – Increased budget for Sunday School/VBS to serve a growing program, Pastor taking youth to LCMC Event.

Worship & Prayer – in 2019 will add a 4:00pm Christmas Eve service, choir will sing at 7:00pm, will keep 11:00pm & evaluate next year, Soup Suppers coming to begin Ash Wednesday, this committee will not sponsor the Easter Breakfast this year.

Finance & Stewardship – prepared 2019 Budget, 2018 envelope giving up \$9500 compared to 2017, Budget sent to Council for approval. *(approved by Council)*

Endowment – Council to approve \$1000 for LCMC Youth Event. *(approved by Council)*

Next Council meeting Tuesday, February 12th.



Pastor hopes to get his Bible studies on Wed. & Thurs. back on track this month.



Want to try a different way to study the Bible?

Bible Journaling!
Sunday, February 10th @ 4:30pm.
Meet in the Fellowship Hall.
Talk to Emalie Ohlson.



Saturday, February 16th
Prayer Breakfast
8:30am

*Pastor & Kari will be speaking about their individual mission trips.
Please let Rick or Glenn know if you will be attending.*

CUBS BUS TRIP!

Saturday, September 14th
vs Pittsburg Pirates
Tickets & bus trip
\$80.00 per person

*Arrangements have been made for another bus trip to the above Chicago Cubs game.
Cost is \$80 per person to be paid in full by August 1st.*

*Seats are in section #229, rows 16-20
Terrace Reserved Outfield section.*

*Game begins at 1:20pm.
Departure time is yet to be determined.*

*June will have the sign-up in the office.
A \$20 payment will hold your reservation,
full payment is due August 1st.*

*You may sign-up and make payments,
talk to June to see what will work for you.
Do not put your payment in the offering.*



Coming up February 3rd is the LCW Super Bowl Snack Sale.
Bring a favorite appetizer or snack to sell.
The proceeds will go to this year's Special Needs Prom.
Anyone can bring a snack item &
EVERYONE can purchase one.

Coffee Mugs & Dishes



If you have a personal coffee mug in the kitchen, please claim it and any dishes you may have left behind. The kitchen will be getting a facelift soon. Those items need to be removed. Thank you.

"A Night to Remember" **Special Needs Prom** **Saturday, April 6th**

This event was so well received last year that they're doing it again.
If you would like to help out in any way, please talk to Dianne Van Drew or contact her at 815-677-2263 (call or text) or leave a message at 815-915-8285 or email vandrewd49@comcast.net.

Lenten Services Begin

March 6th with Ash Wednesday
And each Wednesday through April 10th
Again we will have Soup & Sandwich Suppers beginning at 5:30 & worship at 7:00pm
Pastor Bill will be sharing duties with Pastor Kevin Weeks of LaMoille

Open Altar Flower Dates:

*Feb. 24, March 3, 10, 17, & 24,
April 7, 14, 21, & 24.
Dates are reserved in the order received.*

LCW News

2019 started out well with our Jan. 2nd planning meeting, we had a few new ideas for things to do and for fundraisers.

Sunday, January 6th was the installation of LCW officers and program chairs during Sunday worship.

Saturday, January 26th our congregation hosted the Church Women United Annual Meeting. I will report more on this meeting in next month's newsletter.

The Super Bowl Snack Sale is Sunday, February 3rd after Church. The proceeds will go to "A Night To Remember" Special Needs Prom. Anyone in the Church is welcome to bring in a snack for the sale and all are also encouraged to purchase these goodies. Last year we made over \$500.00 at this fundraiser...lets beat that!

Keep your eyes open for sales on items for our "Basket of Promise" collection for Lutheran World Relief, which will begin in March. The personal care kit items needed are:

- Bath Towel (dark color)
- Adult Size Tooth Brush
- Sturdy Large Tooth Comb
- Metal Nail Clipper
- Bath Size Bar Soap (in original wrappings)

These items can be brought to Lenten & Sunday worship services.

The Prayer Shawl ministry will meet on February 12 & 26 in the Church Library from 10:00-noon and our quilters will meet on February 14 & 28 in the Fellowship Hall from 1:00-3:00. You will be taught everything you need to know if you decide to join one of these groups.

3 Circles meet monthly, check the calendar for dates and times if interested, or contact the Church office or any Circle member for more details.

LCW Yearbooks will ready in February. I wanted to wait until the Church Women United Annual Meeting to get more information about 2019 planned events. If you have any changes to be made (like phone number or e-mail) please contact Laurie Anderson so the Yearbook can have up to date information. Thanks.

We have one Birthday in February, so when you see Linda Fine, wish her the best Birthday ever!

♥ Happy Valentine's Day ♥

January 10, 2019

Dear Members of First Lutheran;

I wanted to write, acknowledge and thank all of you for the many notes and cards I received congratulating me on my recent retirement. On December 16th, in our home congregation here in St. Louis I was surprised by the number of cards I received from our pastor sent by members of First Lutheran. I was unaware that Leslie had spread the news so widely, but I've enjoyed reading every one of them. Some of your remembrances made me laugh, and some brought me to tears. Thank you.

Where have the years gone? As I have had time to reflect (I am now retired and have more time to reflect) I have truly been blessed in my ministry. After serving as Associate Pastor at Salem Lutheran in Moline for a few years, members of First Lutheran trusted God and called me as their pastor, even though I was a Cardinal's fan. (a question asked of me at the congregational meeting that decided to call me, anyway) Leslie and I enjoyed living in Princeton. I loved serving and learning to how to be your pastor. I hope I served you well. We have wonderful memories of our time with you and made some lasting friendships. But, it was also during that

time, as I cared for congregational members who were sick, hospitalized or injured, and for families who lost loved ones that I came to better understand my gifts and call to serve in hospital ministry. Now, twenty-five years after leaving Princeton to explore chaplaincy I have retired. For much of that time I have served as a chaplain educator. I often told my students that I believe I was a much better chaplain because I was first a congregational minister. I credit many of you for that. Your willingness to welcome us into the joys and sorrows of our shared journey in faith had a significant impact on us. We will always be thankful for that.

And, two of our children, Alex and Ian were born in Princeton. Our three boys attended Sunday School and grew up with some of your children. It was fun to receive updates about some of your kids. Now, Andrew, our oldest, is married and has two young sons. Leslie and I are enjoying being grandparents. Ian and Alex are both still single. Ian lives in St. Louis and Alex lives in Denver. Leslie will continue her teaching career for a few more years before she retires.

As Leslie and I have more time on our hands, perhaps in our travels, we will find our way back to northern Illinois for a visit. Miracles do happen. Just look at the Cubs. All joking aside, thank you for being an important part of our lives, and for your well wishes reminding us of the time we shared with you, upon my retirement.

Should you find yourselves in the St. Louis region, you will always be welcome in our home. You can contact us at willowb40@att.net (Leslie) or james.a.bennett52@gmail.com (Jim).

With Warmest Regards,

Jim & Leslie Bennett