

The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham
The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
www.firstlutheranwaltham.org

September 2026
781-893-6563
tmaehl@rcn.com



The Mission of First Lutheran

For many years we have summarized and articulated our core mission as follows.

We perceive Christ calling us to: Walk together in God's love: nurturing faith, doing justice, serving all.

This brief mission statement was developed in 2011 by a group of First Lutheran folk during a day long retreat. During that retreat we read scripture and considered what we perceived to be needs of the wider community and gifts of the Spirit we sensed we were being entrusted with by God to share.

Needs of the wider community included: belonging (that we are not alone), a place to talk and be heard/accepted, food and housing, the Gospel (which one participant described as, “A script for life that says we are loved, forgiven, and not the center of the universe”), tools for dealing with change, and a place to turn for help.

Our perceived strengths included: a place for welcome, intimacy, vulnerability, and deep conversation; a willingness to try new things, a degree of diversity, music programs, pastoral leadership (including interns); and an ample measure of faithful care & generosity for the needs of others.

There were a variety of scripture passages that shaped our process, in particular the Road to Emmaus story (Luke 24), where followers of Jesus encounter him unexpectedly as they walk together, retelling the story of Jesus to a stranger, sharing their own struggles along the way. It is only when they offer to share food with the stranger that they recognize the stranger to be Jesus who is in fact serving them.

(continued on page 3)

Thinking about the Future A Conversation

Sunday, September 13
(after worship)

Lunch will be provided

On Sunday, September 13th after worship I invite you to join with me and others in Founder's hall for a conversation about the ongoing mission of First Lutheran. I have ideas for the future and eventual leadership transition that I wish to share. I hope you will attend, if able.

For those unable to attend in person, yet who would like to participate, a Zoom link will be shared a week prior via email.

- In faith, hope, and love, Pastor Maehl



Fall Schedule

Starts September 13

9:15 am—Learning Hour

10:30 am—Worship

Nurturing Faith



Sunday School, Youth, and Children's Choir

Again this year, roughly every other week, in the place of Sunday school Cynthia Niiler will be leading a youth and children's choir. Then Sunday school will be held on non-choir Sundays.

The schedule for this fall is as follows:

Youth/Children's choir will meet on September 20, October 4 and 18, November 1 and 29, and December 13. *Join us for singing, tone chimes and more!*

Sunday school for children ages 5 through 6th grade will meet on: September 13 and 27, October 11 and 25, November 8, 15, and 22, and December 6 and 20.

Youth Bible study for 7th grade and older will meet on the non-choir Sundays in La Casa.

Confirmation

We have a new confirmation program starting for youth entering 7th grade or older. We will be meeting twice a month on Sunday afternoon from 5 pm to 7 pm; beginning September 13th. Please contact Pastor Maehl if interested.

Name Tags!

Our new intern, Vicar Jessi Labenski, begins on September 1. She has a lot of names to learn!

Your
Name Here



This is a great time of year to get back into the habit of wearing our names tags on Sunday mornings. It will help everyone else too! If you need a name tag, let the church office know.



*You are invited
to join
the Chancel Choir!*

The Chancel Choir is for older youth (post-confirmation) through older adults!

Here are the basics:

Tuesday rehearsals
every other week
7:15 pm—8:45 pm

Sunday worship
every other week
rehearse at 9:45 am
sing at the 10:30 service.

Choir members sit in the pews wherever they usually do during worship and come up front during the offering to join the choir in sharing their musical offering.

- ✦ If you like to sing hymns during worship—you can sing in the choir! *The choir loves to sing!*
- ✦ If you are looking for a way to feel more connected into the church community—you can sing in the choir! *The choir supports and cares for each other!*
- ✦ If you are looking for a way to add some balance into your life—you can sing in the choir! *Choir can be a great stress buster at the end of a busy day!*

Our first rehearsal is Tuesday September 8—7:15 pm in Founder's Hall (downstairs at church). Talk to Cynthia - firstlutheranwalthamoffice@gmail.com. Talk to another choir member - or just come!

Gardening Thanks

Many thanks to those who helped weed, mulch, trim, and water our church gardens this summer. Special thanks to: Lukas Binggeli, Trevor Boe; Kate Chittum; Heather Fahey; Diane Friebe; Carlos Guillen, Meg Maehl, Paul Pintus, Alan Sieving, Sylvia van der Weide; Helen Yarbrough.

Nurturing Faith



VBS Thanks

We had a wonderful week of Vacation Bible School (July 6-10) with 40 children and lots of youth and adult helpers.

Our thanks to all who helped lead, all who participated, and all who prayed for the children and adults. Our particular thanks to the following leaders:

Sarah Rauhut, director
 Sylvia van der Weide, registrar
 Vicar Trevor Boe, storytelling
 Jackie Zuniga, music
 Gabriel McCreath, Janet Scully, and Lucas Binggeli, pre-school leaders
 Sam Menapace, Leslie Ontiveros, and
 Inpakala Pandian, small group leaders
 Penny Alexander, Lynne Parker,
 and Karin Conrad, arts and crafts leaders
 Victoria Devault-Nelson, afternoon science leader
 The Rev. Matt Carriker, mindfulness presenter
 Rafaela Radcke, Rosa Santiago, Luz Alicea, and
 Glenda Santiago, Lunch coordinators
 Maddie Jerram, Henry Niemann, and
 Milena Rauhut, youth helpers
 Susan and Paul Pintus, art kits coordination
 Steve Hoff, tent and fencing coordination
 Holly Diaz, decorating coordinator
 Anne Dugan, background checks
 Alan Sieving, emergency plumbing help!

So too, our thanks to all who helped with decorating, tent set up and breakdown, made financial contributions to art kits and/or the program, and to all who held us in prayer. Finally, thanks be to God for guiding and providing.

(From the Pastor, continued from page 1)

After 15 years, I find the succinct mission statement still resonates for several reasons. First, because it puts Christ at the center. Christ is the one whom we strive to listen to. As we gather for worship, Bible and book studies, regular conversation and prayer, and as we collaborate to do justice and serve others, we do so in the hope that the risen Christ may continue to show up, even if unexpectedly at times, blessing us, calling us, guiding us.

Second, because it acknowledges that we are still on a journey. We are still walking, we have not yet arrived. We who are walking together, we are ones who need our faith nourished.

Third, because it acknowledges the essential need for love. We acknowledge that we are not called to simply walk together aimlessly, sharing just with those we like and agree with, but we are called to strive to walk together in love.

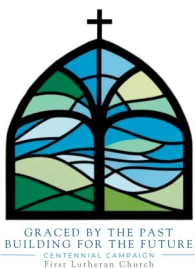
God is Love. Love pushes and pulls us. Love reveals our brokenness and forgives our sins. Love compels us to seek justice (which is God's love for all spread out over all). Love calls us out into service to our neighbor. And because we are flawed, we recognize that we are going to need help with all of this, so we add that we strive to *walk together in God's love*.

Finally, I am thankful that how our brief mission statement pushes us toward each other in community, and at the same time out into the world through justice and service. In this way it is profoundly relational, as is the one God who is revealed to us in relationship: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and whom we may trust is still powerfully at work in the welcome of strangers and in mutual love. May this keep us vigilant!

Thanks be to the Spirit for calling us together, for giving us a mission as one part of Christ's body, and for walking with us.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl

Walking Together in God's Love



Pearson Room Renovation

I noted in a previous newsletter that we were planning on applying to the City of Waltham for Community Preservation Funds to be used toward the renovation of the Pearson Room. With agreement from the church council, we are no longer planning on doing so. What follows is an explanation of why.

The Pearson Room renovation is the biggest and most complicated part of our campaign; and it must be done as the Pearson Room wall is deteriorating. Thinking that the complete project was beyond our ability to fully fund, at the end of 2025 we began exploring the possibility of applying for Community Preservation funds. These funds are only given for three purposes: open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation. We thought we might qualify as being historic.

Over several months, we worked on a robust application that included detailed architectural drawing made by Brad Nederhoff; and also included letters of reference from our Ward Counselor and several community groups that regularly use First Lutheran. We also solicited bids from three different construction companies.

Then in June, we learned the bad news that we could **not** be considered for community preservation funding for this project, because we were changing the design of the Pearson Room wall. We were told that by changing the original design of the wall, this project would not qualify as 'historic'. Given that we had worked on a vision for the Pearson Room over two years, with lots of congregational input for the new design; **and** given that in the process we received a piece of very good news (*more about that next*), we as a church council decided to forgo applying for these funds.

The very good news is that in May we received a quote for the Pearson Room renovation from Montenegro Builders. Their quote of \$522,000 was nearly \$200,000 lower than the other quote we had received months earlier! We now recognized that we could complete our campaign goals without city funds. With church council approval, we have contracted with Montenegro builders. They are now in the permitting process and the work on the exterior wall will begin soon. Thanks be to God!

Note, we currently have \$497,000 on hand through funds given thus far to the Campaign. This is more than enough for the exterior wall, and we are only \$25,000 away from having all the funds needed to complete the entire project, which includes interior work too. We hope and pray that these additional funds may come in by the end of 2026 or in early 2027. I offer my deep gratitude to Brad Nederhoff for the architectural drawings, for soliciting bids from multiple contractors, and for communicating with City officials. So too, I give thanks for all who have prayed for and/or contributed to our Centennial Campaign.

Campaign Tithe

We set as a goal that, in trust and thanksgiving to God, we would share a tithe of our Centennial Campaign. At a luncheon in May, one strong possibility for this was offered; namely, Faith Lutheran Church in Cambridge, MA whose church burned to the ground on Easter Sunday in 2023, a tragic result of arson. They received an insurance settlement, but it was not enough to rebuild. They now are in a major fund-raising campaign too. On Sunday, October 11 their pastor, Pastor Robin Lutjohann, will be preaching at First Lutheran and after worship will be talking more about their rebuilding plans. Our current plan is to include a vote on where to direct our Campaign tithe at our annual meeting in January of 2027.

Walking Together in God's Love

2026 Synod Assembly Update

It was a Holy Spirit-filled three days at this year's New England Synod Assembly held June 4–6 at the DCU Center in Worcester. First Lutheran was represented by Pastor Maehl, Vicar Trevor Boe, Emily Citrone, Vicki DeVault, and Sammy Kalisa. Each day was full of fellowship, breakout sessions, speakers, voting on key initiatives, and opportunities for attendees and congregations to work together. What follows are some of the highlights:

Thursday, June 4: The day began with worship, followed by reports from the ELCA, the Synod Treasurer, Ascension, and Calumet. Elections took place as well. Attendees also voted to pass a resolution supporting the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action. This calls on every congregation in the New England Synod to take part in the initiative. Over the next ten years, congregations will focus on actions like reducing greenhouse gas emissions, teaching about climate change in schools, and working with other faith and community groups to address the climate crisis. The resolution also asks the ELCA to provide more funding and staff for these efforts and to start a fundraising campaign.

Friday, June 5: The Rev. Christy Lohr-Sapp spoke about her work and experiences as Pastor of the English-speaking Congregation of the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. Church of the Redeemer is part of our parter synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land (ELCJHL). Additionally, Pastor Robin Lutjohann from Faith Cambridge gave an update on the reconstruction project for their church. After lunch, there were reports from the retiree ministry, global missions, and the antiracism collaborative.

Attendees also voted to pass the following resolution: A Call for Boycotting Companies Complicit in Israel's Genocide in Gaza and ongoing Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The resolution calls for the New England Synod to "stand for justice and human dignity by acting in solidarity with Palestinian Lutherans, Palestinian Christians of many denominations, Palestinian Muslims, Jewish coalitions working for peace, and other people who protest the illegal occupation of Palestine, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the expansion of illegal settlements, by encouraging individual members, congregations, and the Synod Council to prayerfully boycott Israeli products and Israeli and international companies that are complicit in the genocide against Palestinians and in maintaining the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza."

Saturday, June 6: On the last day of the Assembly, Bishop Pipho gave a report and the event ended with worship. To learn more or watch the livestream, visit www.nelutherans.org/assembly.

I am thankful for the work of the wider church,
Emily Citrone.



First Lutheran's Welcome Statement:

Walking together in God's love, we rejoice in the diversity of God's wonderfully made children. We celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and non-binary people and all members of our human family regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, age, marital status, physical and mental ability, faith history, economic status, education, family configuration, or immigration status. We renounce the sin of racism and all forms of discrimination. We welcome all to join us in worship, leadership, participation in rites and sacraments of the church, and fellowship on our journey of nurturing faith, doing justice, and serving all.

Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



Members of our First Lutheran Community: Glow, Bethany, and Roland Adams, Joyce Anderson; Jen Biter; Ardeith Froeberg; June Jahrling; Erika Jerram; Lovequist/Shread family; Kathryn McCowan; Don & Britta McNemar; Kerry Meaney; Cynthia Niiler; Joan Niiler; Stacey Reed; Karson Sprague; Flavio Vallejos; Valarie Waters.

Friends and Family: Rhona Chen (*friend of Sandy Hebert*); Emily Dallman (*friend of Dianne Poulos*); Evan DaRos (*friend of Gail Gustafson*); Sheila Dumbrowik (*aunt of the Codner family*); Wendy Fournier (*friend of Dianne Poulos*); Lisa Fugger (*sister-in-law of Stacy Fatale*); Lee Galloway (*friend of Kat Flinner*); Jay Higham (*brother-in-law of Karen Mischke*); Josh Kalisa (*brother of Sammy Kalisa*); Sylvia and Chris Lee-Thompson (*friend of Susan Pintus*); Mark Lewis (*Mark Lewis*); Nathan Maehl (*grandnephew of Pastor Maehl*); Pappas family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Roland Pesch (*friend of Susan Pintus*); Rachel and sons; Lynn Reihart (*sister of Gail Gustafson*); Bill Sanderson (*brother of Susan Pintus*); Brian Schmitz (*uncle of Sarah Rauhut*); Margie and Roger Schroeder (*Curt Schroeder's parents*); JoAnn Shade (*cousin of LuAnn Kimker*); Fay Sieving (*mother of Alan Sieving*); Betsy Smith (*cousin of Susan Pintus*); Wilson Viertel (*great-nephew of Brad Nederhoff*); Chip Weinkauff (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Jim Wroe (*cousin of Carol Hansen*); Marlys Yu (*mother of Catherine Pinch*).

For those who grieve: the family and friends of Miles McAdams - infant son of Kevin and Samantha (cousin of Hannah and Matt Burke)

For our partners: Santuario Luterano, the Spanish speaking Lutheran congregation in Waltham. For other organizations we actively support: the Waltham Family School, the Waltham Community Day Center, Chaplains on the Way, WATCH, Camp Calumet, and ELCA World Hunger.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham

Ministers: The people of the congregation

Staff: The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
tmaehl@rcn.com
Ms. Cynthia Niiler,
Director of Music and Parish Secretary
firstlutheranwalthamoffice@gmail.com
Vicar Jessica Labenski, Intern
firstlutheranwalthamvicar@gmail.com

Council: President: Emily Citrone
Vice-President: Pat Clem
Secretary: Signe Johns
Treasurer: Susan Pintus
Victoria DeVault-Nelson
Jennifer Lambert
Brad Nederhoff
Eben Rauhut
Ted Sjodin
Krishonda Waters

Sunday Worship

9:30 am on 9/6

10:30 am starting 9/13

Sunday Learning Hour

9:15 am—Resumes 9/13

Visit us on the Web at:

www.firstlutheranwaltham.org

and on Facebook at

[First Lutheran Church - Waltham, MA](https://www.facebook.com/FirstLutheranChurch-Waltham-MA)

Our Mission: We discern that Jesus Christ is calling us to:

Walk together in God's love: nurturing faith, doing justice, serving all.