

First Words

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SUNDAYS in ADVENT

December 4, 11, & 18 at 10:30 am

Sunday Advent services will feature music for Advent candle lighting, Advent hymns, and anthems by Biebl, Handel, Uves, Manz, Near, Patterson, Saint-Saens, & Victoria sung by the First Lutheran Choir & First Kids Choir

42nd ANNUAL SANTA LUCIA FESTIVAL

Sunday, December 11th

SMÖRGÅSBORD at 5:30 pm; MUSIC at 7 pm

The festival will include feasting followed by a musical tribute to Santa Lucia performed by Lucia attendants & featuring First Kids Choir

CHRISTMAS EVE

Saturday, December 24th

FAMILY SERVICE at 5 pm

Featuring First Kids Choir under the direction of Julia Simon

MUSIC at 10 pm

Benjamin Britten: Ceremony of Carols

First Lutheran Choir • Katherine McKee, choir director • Dan Levitan, harp

Organ Prelude music played by Andrew Chislett

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE at 10:30 pm

Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, William Mathias, and David Hurd

Margaret Marshall, soprano soloist • First Lutheran Choir

Andrew Chislett, organ & piano • Gwen Adams, organ • Dori Shimer, tympani

CHRISTMAS DAY

Sunday, December 25th at 10 am

Lessons and Carols for Christmas

First Lutheran Choir • Katherine McKee, choir director • Andrew Chislett, organ & piano



Prepare to marvel and meet

“Stir up your strength and come to help us. Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.”

– Psalm 80

The psalmist’s plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers.

It is one of the primary characteristics of this first season of the Christian year, our liturgical (and real) plea for God’s saving help to invade our lives.

The incarnation—God invading our world in the infant Jesus—is the fulfillment of the plea and the core tenant of Christian faith.

At this time of year we begin to open our hearts and homes to this astounding message.

In the preface to the delightful “The Martin Luther Christmas Book,” Roland Baintain, comments on Luther’s understand-

ing of the Christmas story.

“Christian teaching is that in Christ God became flesh...[that] if one could but believe that God lay in the manger, one could let go the star and the angel’s song and yet keep the faith” that “the Virgin birth appeared to [Luther] a trivial miracle compared with the Virgin’s faith.”

Baintain concludes, “[Luther] was simply amazed that all the characters in the Christmas story were themselves able to believe.”

Once again during this Advent season let us not become distracted by fanciful images of cataclysmic intrusions from the heavens, or by a world-defined season of selling us trinkets, but by a God who stoops to us in a manger and from a cross.

“The Gospel,” Luther said, “is not so much a miracle as a marvel.”

God’s face does shine upon us from Bethlehem’s manger. Let us prepare to marvel



and meet the Christ child.

Advent Blessings,



From the archives: Christmas Eve 2001

Row 3: Alex Gaya, Nicholas Gaya, Haley Harrier, Heather Bogott, Hana Kajimura

Row 2: Maggie Schoenholtz, Lauren King, Melissa Nuckolls, Evan Graf-Jan, Annie Harrier, Heather Gaya, Jordan King, Emily Simon

Row 1: Christopher Kelly, Haley King, Emma Souders, Taylor Mendiola, Lindsey Bogott

Reviewing and reaffirming

It is my pleasure to inform you that we have a new Financial Secretary. George Knudson has volunteered to fill this position and the council elected him to that post at its November meeting.

Please be sure to thank George for his willingness to serve in this capacity and volunteer your support and assistance in whatever way may be useful to him.

We wish to thank Alice Robinson for filling in since Karen Krogh passed this summer. We also thank Alice for providing guidance and assistance to George as he makes this transition.

One way to help George, the stewardship committee, and the council, is to get your pledges in as soon as possible.

We had a great response on commitment Sunday, but in order to develop a sound budget for 2012, we'll need the remainder of the pledges by early December.

I'd like to thank the council for spending five hours of their time on Saturday, November 12th, at our council retreat.

We met to review how we as leaders are guiding the congregation towards meeting the goals and objectives of the Plan of Ministry adopted in 2008 and identify

specific action items to help reach the goals of this plan.

We had a very good discussion regarding the history of this plan and developed a number of actions specific to those objectives.

I'd like to thank Russ Grove, who as a non-council member, volunteered to facilitate this event; Holly Pearson for arranging and providing food and coffee; and University Church for allowing us to use their facilities. We are compiling the results and we hope to share those with you soon.

At the retreat, the council did review and reaffirm the vision statement and goals:

Vision Statement

FLC is a vital, growing and welcoming congregation. We embrace the fullness of human experience, offering a sacred space where faith, reason, music and the arts flourish.

As a community of compassion, we open our hearts and doors to support and nurture causes consistent with our mission.

Our Goals

(2006 and reaffirmed in 2011)



- Youth & Family Ministries
- Spiritual Growth
- Outreach

We will strive to keep these in focus as we make decisions as a council and as a congregation.

– MARK BOGOTT

Fall Stewardship campaign update

Thank you to all who have pledged for 2012.

Your commitments make it possible for us to continue our operations, support new initiatives, and meet the challenges of the coming year.

The campaign is not over!

As of this writing, 48 pledges for a total of \$185,674 have been received. In order to reverse the various cost containment measures which were put in place this year, total envelope offering (both pledged and non-pledged) must be at least \$21,000 (or 7.5%) above budgeted total envelope offering of \$288,500 for 2011—that is, \$309,500.

If you have not yet pledged, you may do so by completing the form that you received in the mail and placing it in the offering plate or mail or bring it to the church office (mark the outside of the envelope 'For the Financial Secretary'), or pledge online (at flcpa.org, click "Contribute," then "Annual Pledging").

Thank you for opening your minds and your hearts to the campaign. We appreciate your interest, your generosity, and your commitment to First Lutheran and its ministries.

– JOHN ALLURED

Stewardship



Carols around!

Masterworks Chorale

Masterworks Chorale invites you to join us in welcoming the holiday season with a joyous choral concert featuring Bach's Cantata # 140, Wacht Auf (Sleepers, Wake).

We will also be performing Ralph Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on Christmas Carols and Bob Chilcott's arrangement of "Mi zeh hidlik" – one of the Three Israeli Songs.

Feel like singing? Join in our carol sing-along tradition. And stay for holiday cook-

ies galore. Come lift your spirits for the rest of the winter season!

Advance tickets \$20 (\$25 at the door) or \$10 with student ID

When:

Saturday, December 10, 8:00 PM

Sunday, December 11, 4:00 PM

Where:

Grace Lutheran Church

3149 Waverley St. Palo Alto



<http://www.masterworks.org>

650.574.6210

– BONNIE FULLERTON



Friends, staff, grads, students and faculty of PLTS gathered at the Mira Vista Country Club in El Cerrito for the fourth annual Great Thanksgiving. Each November, when the seminary's Board of Directors meets, PLTS uses this occasion to say a special word of thanks to members of the President's Circle and the Remember the Future Society, as well as to faculty, staff and graduating students. In addition, several members of the seminary community are honored as Champions of PLTS by President Phyllis Anderson.

This year, those honored as Champions included Mark and Susan Bertelsen of Palo Alto, Mary Wiese Gundelach, also of Palo Alto, and Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon.

WELCOME YULE!

MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS & THE NEW YEAR



MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS EVE at 10:00 pm

The First Lutheran Choir will be joined by harpist Dan Levitan to present Benjamin Britten's CEREMONY OF CAROLS

En route from New York to England in 1942, Britten came across a book of medieval poems, which he set to music for choir & harp. This brilliant collection of carols evokes every Christmas vision imaginable, from the solemn plainchant of the early church and jubilant songs of praise to a mother's lullaby and the music of crackling icicles on a freezing winter's night.

Candlelight Service for Christmas Eve will follow at 10:30 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY – A SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS

See the Glory, Hear the Story, Christ the Babe is Born for you!

Our Christmas Day service at 10:00 a.m. will include the great stories surrounding Christ's birth, and a chance to sing a host of our favorite carols.



SAVE THE DATES FOR MUSICAL TREATS IN THE NEW YEAR!

The Boar's Head Festival

Join San Francisco Renaissance Voices under the direction of Assistant Music Director Katherine McKee for a traditional celebration of 12th Night.

Following the program of music, poetry & dance from Merry Olde England, (including a chance to sing along!) enjoy a traditional buffet of Wassail, King's Cake, and Meat & Vegetable pies!

*Sunday, January 8 at 4:00 pm at First Lutheran Church
(Note: Seating is limited; pre-sale purchase of tickets is recommended)
Tickets: \$30 general, \$25 student/senior;
at the door or online at www.SFRV.org*



January 22 AT 4:00 p.m.

CLERESTORY: RESOLUTIONS

The ten men of Clerestory greet 2012 with a kaleidoscope of madrigals, elegies and more by composers as diverse as Josquin, Vaughan Williams and Steven Sametz.

Christmas Food Ingathering

Could you help to brighten the holidays for families in need of food assistance?

Our congregation has the opportunity to help the Ecumenical Hunger Program by donating funds to purchase Safeway gift cards for the families they assist.

On December 4th and 11th we will collect cash donations in the Fellowship Hall, or you can write checks payable to FLCPA, with EHP-Christmas written on the memo line.

The donations are needed on or before December 11th, so that EHP will be able to distribute the gift certificates by mid-December.

As we are able, let's share our blessings to support this worthwhile ministry. Together, we make a difference. We are blessed, as we bless others, in sharing the Grace of Christmas.

– LINDA HOGLE



Heading to New Orleans

The ELCA National Youth Gathering is an event that is held every three years. This year it will convene in New Orleans July 18-22. The city of New Orleans asked the ELCA to consider coming back because of all the great work we did there in 2009.

First Lutheran will be sending a group of seven young people and two adults.

The young people are Amber Valentine, Madison Valentine, Lindsey Bogott, Haley King, Gillian King, Melissa Nuckolls, and Taylor Mendiola.

The adults going are Sally Mendiola and Jeremy Serrano. Because the total cost for this group is \$13,725, we will be doing several fundraisers throughout this next year.

We will be doing several single event fundraisers and two ongoing fundraisers. The single event fundraisers are:

- December: Christmas bake sale
- January: Chili cook-off
- February: Valentines Day Parents' Night Out
- April: Easter Breakfast

The ongoing fundraisers are below:

Flamingo Fundraiser

We are also beginning in December our Flamingo Fundraiser. Here is how it works. You donate \$30 to the youth group.

You then give us the name and address of someone you would like us to put a dozen or so pink lawn flamingoes on their yard.

With the flamingoes is a sign that says, "You have been flocked by a member of First Lutheran Palo Alto." Before Christmas it will also say "Merry Christmas."

The flamingoes stay up for 24-48 hours. If however, you do not want those flamingoes to appear on your own lawn, then you can buy flamingo insurance for \$90. This will guarantee those unsightly birds will not land at your house.

On Sunday mornings, after the second service, there will be a youth sitting at a table in the fellowship hall available to help you sign up.

It is confidential, we will not tell the person nor you who is flocking who. Besides, part of the fun is guessing who was thinking of you.

Youth



Envelope Fundraiser

In January we will begin an envelope fundraiser. In this fundraiser it is as simple as taking an envelope off the wall and putting the dollar amount that is written on it.

Check the weekly bulletin insert and eFirst Words for more info about upcoming events.

– JEREMY SERRANO

Sister Parish delegation to visit FLC!

It is with great joy that we welcome a four-person delegation from our Sister Parish in El Salvador, arriving Tuesday, January 2nd, to spend over a week with us, sharing faith, experiences, hopes and dreams!

The four members of Rios de Agua Viva include Pastor Vilma Rodriguez, Ana Rivera, Sandra Argueta, and Diana Muñoz.

Ana is a long-time leader of the congregation in social ministry as well as overseeing the scholarship program, which members of FLC support.

Sandra is responsible for the Youth Ministry program, as well as the after-school tutoring program held at the church.

Diana, the youngest delegate at 16 years old, is a leader in the Sunday School program at Rios.

It has been over 6 years since a delegation of our youth traveled to Rios, and almost 10 years since we have hosted a group from Rios at FLC. They, and we, are excited to once more meet face-to-face together!

There will be several great opportunities to meet and hear from our friends, and our own Maria Cortez will serve as translator at the events we have planned.

All members and friends of First Lutheran are welcome and encouraged to be a part of the experience!

Here is the schedule so far:

- Tuesday, 1/3: Arrival at SFO, 9:18 pm
- Wednesday, 1/4: Lunch at Channing House with the Women of FLC; supper with Rios Scholarship sponsors!
- Thursday, 1/5: a visit to the Sierra Pacific Synod office and a tour of San Francisco
- Friday, 1/6: touring around the local area in the morning and an **Epiphany Potluck and Celebration** for all ages at 6 pm! *Please put this on your calendar!*

- Saturday, 1/7: Sharing at the Men's Breakfast, with a beach trip with the FLY group planned in the afternoon
- Sunday, 1/8: All four delegates will share in the Education Hour at FLC, participate in the worship at both services; Social Ministry Committee will host a lunch after the 10:30 service to provide more time for Q and A and sharing with the delegates.
- Monday, 1/9: visit to PLTS
- Tuesday, 1/10: the Church Council will host a dinner and include the delegates in their meeting agenda
- Wednesday, 1/11: Ladies Night Out at a local Salvadoran restaurant
- Thursday, 1/12: Packing up and Departure at Midnight for return flight home to El Salvador

Watch for more details to come in eFirstWords and in flyers posted at FLC!

We also need one or two more families or individuals able to host two of the women for two or more nights during their stay.

This would be an overnight bed-and-breakfast situation and a great opportunity to befriend our friends from Rios.

Also, if you have a free day, please volunteer to help drive on one of the day trips. Think about it! and contact one of the members of the Rios Visit Committee.

Bienvenidos, Rios!

– **CHRISTINE SEGERHAMMAR,
KARAN BARICH, ERIN GUHR,
AND ALICE ROBINSON**

Our goals

At a recent meeting of the FLC Social Ministry Committee, we came up with a list of goals which we hope will guide our visit with our Sister Parish Delegation:

- For us at FLC to learn more about the ministries and spiritual life of Ríos de Agua Viva;
- to acquaint delegates from Ríos about our ministry and spiritual life at FLC;
- to find out more about the demographics of the Ríos community;
- to provide fellowship, build up friendship and companionship between our two congregations;
- to provide opportunities to share faith-based stories and experiences;
- to give us all opportunities for cultural exchange;
- to show and share caring and solidarity;
- to help us expand our own sense of identity and ministry;
- to inspire us to reach out to our local Salvadoran community;
- to inspire renewal and expansion of our scholarship sponsorship program for the students of Rios; and overall
- to inspire us, inform us, and renew in us our commitment to sisterhood with the people of Rios de Agua Viva!

December Forum topics

Adult Forum is held in the Library on Sunday mornings from 9:15 am to 10:15 am.

December 4th

As we enter a year when readings from the Gospel of Mark will often be part of the Gospel message, Martha Stillman will lead a discussion of the Book of Mark.

December 11th

Advent and Christmas music

Choir Director Katherine McKee, Organist Andrew Chislett, and Children's Choir Director Julia Simon will lead a discussion of Advent and Christmas music at FLC.

December 18th

Ken Schreiber will lead a discussion of Gospel messages from the life of Saint

Martin of Tours (316 - 397), an early Christian leader who influenced not only the early church but Saint Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther.

December 25th

Merry Christmas! There's no Forum today.

If you have an issue that you would like Forum to take up, whether you would like to develop information and lead a discussion or have a suggestion for others to follow up on, please contact Ken Schreiber (talk to him before or after Forum, call him at 650.853.1049 or email him at krsplan@mindspring.com).

– KEN SCHREIBER



Book Group explores Christian spirituality



Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality, by Donald Miller, will be the focus of discussion at the December meeting of the FLC Book Group.

We will meet on Monday evening, December 12th, 7-8:30 pm upstairs at the church.

An engaging book in which the author "shares his reflections on living a Christ-centered faith in a self-centered world", it calls its readers to be authentic in relationship to God, others, and themselves.

All are welcome!

– CHRISTINE SEGERHAMMAR

Coming in December: The FLC Advent Banquet

Please hold the date and time: Tuesday, December 20th, 6:30 pm

Frankie, Johnnie & Luigi Too
939 W. El Camino Real
Mountain View, CA 94040

Ring in the Holidays with a fabulous Italian Family Dinner Banquet!

Antipasto, Pastas, Yummy Entrees, Tiramisu and Coffee + No host bar

\$40/person, adult beverages extra

Evite and flyer to come! For more information, contact Judith Stanley or Christine Segerhammar.

– ROBIN HOLBROOK

December birthdays

1	Aimee Campbell
3	Margaret Schoenholtz
5	Chris Lundeen
6	Carol Larson, Lynette Brohm
7	Henry Moshfeghi
9	Dave Heppner, Kathy Varney

10	Audrey Hansch, Esther Dechow
12	Carolyn Swanson
13	Joyce Rice
15	Maria Fletcher
19	Virginia Randall
21	Stephan deGery

Prayer petitions for Sundays follow the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle and can be incorporated into the prayers at weekly worship. Weekday entries are offered as guides to prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the church.

Thank you for your continued prayers for the life and mission of this church.

1 On this World AIDS Day, pray for all people affected by HIV and AIDS and for those who minister to them, including the AIDS Circle of Hope of North Texas, located in Wichita Falls.

2 Pray for the Latin American and Caribbean companion churches and organizations that have developed ministries with individuals living with HIV and AIDS in the region.

Grant that their love, compassion, and advocacy on behalf of those living with HIV and AIDS bear witness to a love for all of creation.

3 Pray for congregations who gather holiday gifts for children in need. Make these gifts a sign of God's loving presence and love for all God's children.

4 Second Sunday of Advent

God of the nations, we entrust to you the countries of Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.

Give hope where there is despair, strength where there is weakness, and faith where it is sought.

5 Give thanks for the 33 ELCA members who volunteered for 3 to 11 months through the ELCA Global Mission Volunteer program in 2011.

Thank God for the generosity of these teachers, medical trainers, financial consultants and pastors.

6 Pray for those living along coastal lines, that they may be protected from the devastation of annual typhoons and hurricanes, and those living in arid places that they may be saved from drought and famine.

7 Pray for Robert Kasworm who serves the Machame Lutheran Hospital in Moshi, Tanzania.

He is strengthening health-care delivery by creating strategic alliances between Tanzanian and U.S.-based health providers.

8 Pray for the ELCA Malaria Campaign, which provides mosquito nets, insecticides, medication, health care, education and more to help eliminate deaths from this disease throughout the world.

9 As we give thanks for the gift of God's Son and the growing presence of Christ in our world, pray for missionary children who live, learn and grow in their faith in a variety of settings around the world.

10 Pray for the continued advocacy of human rights as we celebrate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that we might engage and remind people of the internationally recognized rights.

11 Third Sunday of Advent

We pray, O God, for the people of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. Give strength to the churches in these lands as they witness to your peace and joy in the midst of great challenges and changes in their countries.

12 Pray for the Rev. Philip, Lou-Marie Knutson and their family, who serve with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

Philip works as a resource person for the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa's Christian education program. He also serves ELCA Global Mission as regional program assistant for Southern Africa.

13 Pray for your local, state and federal elected officials, as they consider decisions that will affect you, your community and all of God's people.

14 Give thanks for the ministry of presence that young adults serving through ELCA Global Mission provide throughout the world.

Bless Megan Bucholz, Alma Gast, Laitin-Whitney Gottbrath, Sara Nobbs, Michelle Steiner and Courtney Weller, young adults serving in Jerusalem/West Bank. Bless Julie Rossate and Jeff VonWald, the country coordinators.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

15 Pray for Welcome Home, a cooperative ministry of welcome between Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Philadelphia and Lutheran Children and Family Service that provides transitional housing for refugees who have just arrived in the United States.

16 Give thanks for the ministry of the regional representatives as they accompany ELCA companion churches in various regions around the world.

Pray for Phillip Baker in Asia and the Pacific; Lou Marie and Philip Knutson in Southern Africa; Andrew and Barbara Hinderlie in East Africa; Anne and Willie Langdji, and Viking and Marissa Dietrich in West Africa; Arden Haug in Europe; and Kathryn Lawler, David Wunsch and Stephen Deal in Latin America and the Caribbean.

17 Pray for the work of Lutheran Disaster Response, which serves to empower, provide relief and educate for future preparedness in response to devastating situations.

18 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Gracious God, look with favor upon the churches in Ghana and Nigeria, that, in the midst of great challenges of witnessing to your mercy, they may find strength and nourishment in your word.

19 Pray for Mary Borgman who serves as an HIV and AIDS worker at the Diakonia Aids Ministry in Soweto, South Africa, a program of the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

20 Pray for ELCA World Hunger, which supports people who live with chronic hunger and poverty around the corner and around the world, though relief, development, education and advocacy.

21 Pray for Katie Miyamoto who teaches English at Luther Gakuin High School in Kumamoto, Japan.

She also is engaged in ministry at Kengun Lutheran Church and at the English-language gathering of Kumamoto Lutheran Church.

22 Pray for all who suffer loneliness and heartache during the holiday season.

23 Pray for David Vikner, as he engages supporters of the International Christian University in Japan through his leadership of the Foundation of the university.

24 Pray for peace in Bethlehem and all of the Middle East on this holy night.

25 Christmas

Almighty God, give to all your people the love of peace and guide the leaders of all nations so that your kingdom will go

forth in peace and the earth will be filled with your love.

26 Give thanks for the example of Stephen the first martyr, who looked to heaven and prayed for his persecutors. Pray for an end to the continued persecution of the Christian church.

27 Pray that churches throughout the world find ways to cooperate in love and trust in the common goal of pointing to the in-breaking reign of God in Christ.

28 Remember today the slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem by order of King Herod.

Pray for God to receive into the arms of mercy all innocent victims and to frustrate the designs of evil tyrants establishing God's rule of justice, love and peace.

29 Pray for an end to the greed and sexual exploitation that creates the demand for the trafficking of women and youth for exploitation and profiteering.

30 Pray for the Turnaround Synod Initiative of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA, which seeks to equip congregations for ongoing renewal.

31 Give thanks for the year past and pray that in the new year we may more fully know God's presence, see God's love at work and live in the light of Christ that grants us joy forever.

First Words is a publication of First Lutheran Church of Palo Alto, California.

Officers of the congregation:

Mark Bogott Council President
Holly Pearson Vice President
George Knudson Secretary

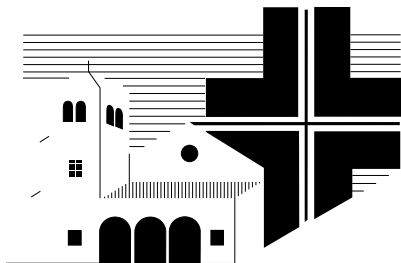
Staff:

P. Kempton Segerhammar Pastor
Katherine McKee Choir Director
Julia Simon First Kids Choir Director
Andrew Chislett Organist
Jeremy Serrano Youth Director
Karri Haddeland Childcare
George Knudson Financial Secretary
Maria Soria Custodian
Patricia Kerr Office Manager

The Rev. Mark Holmerud, Bishop, Sierra Pacific Synod
The Rev. P. Kempton Segerhammar, Dean, Peninsula Conference

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Visit our website at <http://www.flcpa.org>.



First Lutheran Church of Palo Alto

600 Homer Avenue

Palo Alto, CA 94301

650.322.4669

office@flcpa.org