

## DIFFERENT GIFTS TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH'S MISSION

Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given to us in order to carry out God's mission in the world and each person decides how he/she will use their gifts of time, talents, and treasures, so that God's mission moves forward.

The following is a brief overview of the various opportunities offered through First Lutheran Church for you to further God's mission in the world:

**General Fund Offerings:** These offerings are those given on a regular basis to help underwrite all of the congregation's ministry expenses. The General Fund offerings are used for things like: staff salaries; building costs (utilities, insurance, maintenance/repairs); ministry program expenses (e.g. worship, education, outreach, social service, etc.); office expenses (e.g. office equipment; supplies, etc.); mission support (e.g. synod benevolence, World Hunger, Lutheran World Relief, etc.).

**Capital Maintenance Offerings:** These offerings are designated and given to help underwrite specific building and/or capital maintenance projects that are not usually included in the church budget, e.g. the purchase of a new photocopier or a new lawn mower; the cost of repairs to the church heating/cooling system; etc.

**Memorial Gifts:** When Memorial Gifts are given in memory of someone who has passed away, those gifts are placed in the Memorial Gift Fund and are usually not expended until after the family has been contacted by a member of the Memorial Gifts Committee about a particular ministry project and approval has been given. The entire gift (including principal) is used to procure specific memorial gifts.

**Endowment Fund:** The income from gifts given to the Endowment Fund is divided equally and used for one of the following purposes: 1) Capital Improvement Fund; 2) Scholarships or Grant Fund; 3) Outreach Fund; and 4) Lutheran Church Mission Development Fund. Gifts to the Endowment Fund usually come in the form of bequests, charitable remainder and other trusts, charitable gift annuities, life insurance and transfers of property (cash, stocks, bonds, real estate). The principal from the Endowment Fund is never spent; only the interest received on the principal amount is used.

**The Legacy Fund:** Instituted in 2021, the Legacy Fund is similar to the Endowment Fund, except the income from gifts may be used for one of two purposes: 1) Discretionary Capital Improvements; and 2) Missions/Social Concerns. The Legacy Fund is an invested fund and both the principal and interest are intended to be spent over a long-term period (15-20 years).

**Talents/Spiritual Gifts:** God gives each person distinct talents or "spiritual gifts" and invites us to use the gifts God has given for the sake of God's mission. Some people have the gift of "public speaking"; while others have musical talents. Some people have the gift of "administration" or "leadership"; while others have the gift of "serving". What talents/spiritual gifts do you have? How might you use those gifts to further God's mission?

**Time:** God has given each person the gift of time and gives us the freedom to determine what we will do with the gift of time that God has entrusted to our care. Some people "care for others"; some people "visit" people in the hospital or at home. Some people "cook" and bring food to others; some people "pray" for others.

If there was just one thing that you could do to advance God's mission based on the time, talents, and treasures that God has given you, what would you do that could have a positive impact on the world? Each of us has the gifts of time, talents, and treasures. Each of us determines how we use those gifts to God's glory. May God continue to bless you for the gifts you share with others.

*Your fellow-servant in Christ,  
Pastor Bob Dealey  
Coordinator of Stewardship & Outreach  
First Lutheran Church*

## CREATING AN EFFECTIVE HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

Before a congregation can create an “effective hospitality ministry”, a congregation must have a “vision” or a “definition” of what “effective hospitality” is (and is not). From your perspective, what constitutes “effective hospitality”? Have you ever visited another congregation and “felt like a fish out of water”? Have you ever been to a church building and left saying to yourself, “I’ll never go back there again”? What did they do (or not do) that gave you a negative impression of the congregation? What could they have done to make you feel “more at home” or “welcome”?

As people walk into First Lutheran Church, how do we want them to feel? By entering our doors, what can we do to help them to have a positive experience (and/or impression)? What can we do to help people know that they are certainly welcomed here? How can we let people know that they are loved and appreciated? If people come into our building, what might we do to help put them more at ease?

What we say to people and how we say it makes a huge difference in their decision as to whether or not they will return. Once I served as the interim pastor at a neighboring congregation in a small town, where everyone knew everyone else. One Sunday, as a first-time guest entered the building, a prominent member walked up to the guest and asked in a rather loud voice, “What are you doing here?” The church member may have meant it as a joke, but the guest was so embarrassed when the worship service was over, he vowed never to set foot in that building ever again. In another congregation where I served, I have also witnessed a long-time member approach a first-time visitor and say, “You are sitting in my pew.” The visitor was so appalled that he stood up and left before the service even began. He was upset, because he didn’t realize that the church had assigned seating and he certainly didn’t want to offend anyone by sitting in their seat.

In order to create an effective hospitality ministry, it is helpful for each congregation to determine what roles are involved in our ministry of welcome. Obviously, here at First Lutheran, that would include people who serve as ushers and greeters, as well as those who might serve as Ambassadors for Christ, and those who participate in the church bus ministry and those who serve food and/or refreshments. In fact, each and every member can participate in this ministry by saying “Hello” to everyone, by smiling, and by offering to help someone who looks lost or confused. Everything that we say and do has the potential to make someone else feel welcome. Sure, having a friendly, out-going pastor helps, but each member has the opportunity to reach out and show hospitality through their interactions with others (and that is NOT merely the sole responsibility of the ushers and/or greeters). Many years ago while on vacation, I stopped to visit a fairly large Lutheran Church and throughout my entire time there (including worship), and the only two people that stopped to talk to me were the pastor and a former seminary classmate, whom I hadn’t seen in more than 10 years. If I had moved to that area, I would not have returned there for worship—it was NOT a friendly, welcoming experience.

“A quote often attributed to Maya Angelou sums up why we practice radical hospitality: ‘I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’ Before a guest decides to get connected into church, they first have to feel like they belong, or at least feel the potential for that. Guests return not because of what we do, but because of how we made them feel, and that starts with the ministry of welcome.” (From “The Greeter and Usher Handbook: Creating a Ministry of Welcome” by Yvonne Gentile, Abingdon Press, 2020, p. 35).

To create an “effective hospitality ministry” is the responsibility of the entire congregation. What are you willing to do to continue to help make First Lutheran a place that welcomes all people and makes them feel at home? Your smile, your kind word, your warm welcome makes all the difference in the world.

*Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Bob Dealey  
Coordinator of Stewardship & Outreach*