



# Sharing the Light



*The mission of First Lutheran Church is to grow together in Christ through Prayer, Worship, and Education and to spread the love of Christ to our community.*

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March 2025

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## “Unbelievable Loss”: Historic First Lutheran in Pasadena Finds Strength in God, Church

*From an article in The LCMS Reporter Newspaper, February 5, 2025*

On January 7, a wildfire broke out in the foothills of Angeles National Forest, just north of Altadena, Calif. The Santa Ana winds, blowing at record speeds, rapidly spread the flames. Within hours, entire neighborhoods in Altadena were ablaze.

“For me as pastor, there was a total feeling for about the first four days of total helplessness,” said the Rev. Christopher Schaar, pastor of Historic First Lutheran Church in Pasadena, Calif. “There was absolutely nothing anybody could do, and [everything] just seemed so unbelievable.”

All in all, six families at First Lutheran lost their homes, and an additional six families (who are former members or immediate family of current members) have also had total losses. One former student of First Lutheran’s school died in the fire.

### ***“Yet I will praise Him”***

On Sunday, Jan. 12, just days after the fire, God’s people gathered in record numbers for worship at First Lutheran, including members who had lost their homes. “Remember when the young Jesus was in the temple and His earthly parents were looking for Him?” said Harriet Dickens [whose home was destroyed]. “He said, ‘I was in my Father’s house.’ So we knew we had to go to our Father’s house, where we could be loved, prayed for, supported.”

“[I’ve been] encouraging [the congregation] that we need to be together around Word and Sacrament,” said Schaar. “People are recognizing that we need to be together at a time like this, and, as Scripture says, to grieve with those who grieve and to rejoice with those who rejoice.”



Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson (right), director of LCMS Disaster Response, meets with Rev. Christopher Schaar, pastor of Historic First Lutheran Church, Pasadena, Calif., in front of the burnt remains of a member’s home on Jan. 29 in Altadena, Calif.

*(Continued next page)*

Schaar said that Psalm 43:5, “Yet I will praise Him,” continually comes to mind. “The psalms are just full of that refrain. It seems like every single psalm talks about some kind of tragedy. And yet, ‘I will praise Him!’ ... God is going to be at work through all this in some way.”

### ***Response efforts underway from many sources***

Schaar has seen his congregation come together and be the Body of Christ to each other in many ways, such as cooking meals for each other, helping victims with insurance paperwork, and replacing Bibles for members who lost theirs in the fire. The congregation has also given generous financial support to their members who lost houses and to another family who lost their livelihood in the fire.

The congregation has also raised thousands of dollars to purchase Target and Visa gift cards to help victims (both their own members and those in the community) kickstart the process of replacing lost belongings.

LCMS Disaster Response provided an additional \$10,000 in Visa gift cards so the church could continue to support their community, as well as an initial \$25,000 grant to help with emergency rehousing needs.

### ***District is still encouraging everyone's support***

The Pacific Southwest District continues to encourage and accept donations to its Disaster Relief effort. For more information and to make a donation, please visit <https://www.psd-lcms.org/disaster-response>. To read this entire article, please go to reporter.lcms.org.

## **Our Faith Giving Tithe to the Pacific Southwest District: Did You Know?**

In recent years, our congregation's faith giving tithe of 10 percent of our income followed this formula:

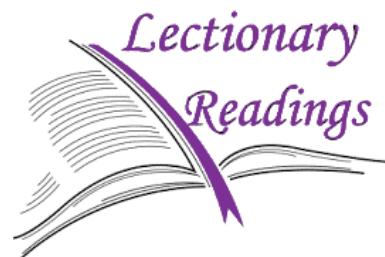
- 7 percent to the District
- 2 percent to support our missionary, Anna Rostek
- 1 percent to Lutheran Social Services

And now in our January 26 Voter's Meeting, we voted to add one more percent in our giving for the District's dedicated fund for wildfire disaster relief, for a total of 11 percent.

The concept of tithing comes from the Old Testament: “*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.*” Leviticus 27:30. The Israelites were expected to tithe, and the first 10 percent was considered “holy” or set apart for God.

Where did the word “tithe” come from? In Hebrew the word **tithe** is

**עֶשֶׂר**  
which means **ten!**



These are the Lectionaries for March, beginning the Transfiguration of Our Lord and continuing with Ash Wednesday through the first four Sundays of Lent.

	<b>Old Testament</b>	<b>Psalms</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
<b>March 2</b> Transfiguration of Our Lord	Deut. 34: 1-12	Psalm 99	Heb.3:1-6	Luke 9:28-36
<b>March 5</b> Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:12-19	Psalm 51:1-13	2 Cor. 5:20b-6:10	Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21
<b>March 9</b>	Deut. 26:1-11	Psalm 91:1-13	Rom. 10:8b-13	Luke 4:1-13
<b>March 16</b>	Jer. 26:8-15	Psalm 4	Phil. 3:17-4:1	Luke 13:31-35
<b>March 23</b>	Ezek. 33:7-20	Psalm 85	1 Cor. 10:1-13	Luke 13:1-9
<b>March 30</b>	Isaiah 12:1-6	Psalm 32	2 Cor. 5:16-21	Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

**Sunday Worship Times** Rev. Gregory Otte will serve as pastor all Sundays in March.

March 2, 8:30 a.m.  
March 9, 8:30 a.m. (Change to Daylight Savings Time)  
March 16, 8:30 a.m.  
March 23, 8:30 a.m.  
March 30, 8:30 a.m.

**Sunday School Time** Every Sunday, 9:45 to 10:45 a.m.



**Ushers:** Craig Boehne, Dave Lassanske, and Don Lammerts

**Greeters:** March 2: Connie Kean  
March 9: Pat Caballero  
March 16: Sharon Corey  
March 23: Norma Boehne  
March 30: Diane Oberlander

**Readers:** March 2 and March 16: Richard Swanson  
March 9 and March 23: Christine Geltz  
March 30: Jo Tschopp

**If you are unable to attend worship, you may:**

- Listen to the Lutheran Hour sermon at 8:00 a.m. each Sunday on station KBRT AM 740.
- View Worship Anew at 8:30 a.m. on Sundays on DirectTV, Channel 377. This service is filmed at our Fort Wayne Seminary in Indiana. The Worship Anew worship service can be viewed on the internet at any time at <https://worshipanew.org/by-type/watch?>.
- **Access and/or review First Lutheran sermons online by going to:**  
<https://firstlutherantc.org/Media>.





## Gatherings

Volunteers at Friends in Deed in Pasadena  
Ash Wednesday Service

March 1, Saturday, at 8:00 a.m.  
March 5, Wednesday, at 11:00 a.m.  
with Vicar Les Schaefer. Lunch served at noon.  
March 7, Friday, at 8:30 a.m.  
March 9, Sunday, at 11:00 a.m.  
March 25, Tuesday, at 10:30 a.m.

Load the Van to Friends in Deed  
Board of Directors' Meeting  
Mission Development Team Meeting

## Mission Development Team: Walking the Talk!



Each month, members of our Mission Development Team walk around to homes in our church neighborhood, handing out colorful flyers that invite neighbors to our events. The flyers are enclosed in clear cellophane bags that include a treat, sticker or toy reflecting the theme of that month's event.

Five FLC members visit about 250 homes in nine specific street areas including Loma, Wedgewood, Duffy, Rancho Real, Broadway, Encinita, Harker and Noel.



Is it worth it? The team thinks so, but they leave it up to the Lord! Often the team members get to greet neighbors on their walks, and several neighbors attended the recent Chinese New Year celebration. More signed up for the Red Cross Blood Drive (see below).

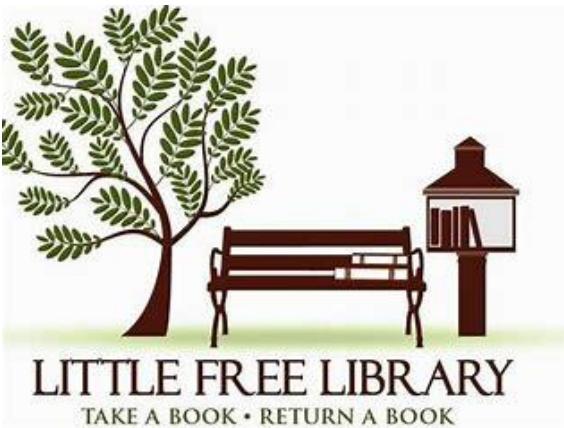
Even if people don't come to the events, they can read info on the flyers about our worship and Sunday School times. And they can also learn about other campus events and services (like Foothill Preparatory School and our Community Prayer Box and Little Free Library)—and receive inspiration from a Bible verse.

## February 15 Blood Drive Launched a New Batch of Heroes



"Be a Hero—Give Blood" proclaims the American Red Cross... and the day after Valentine's Day, 18 new heroes donated blood in our Parish Hall and saved lives.

FLC Blood Drive leader Peter Dille reports that 21 people participated, of whom three were deferred for medical reasons. Those 21 represented 17 who had made appointments and four walk-ins. And of all the participants, six were visitors from our neighborhood in Temple City and San Gabriel. Hurray!



## Little Free Library

Thanks to donors, there is a nice selection of gently used and also newly purchased children's books in our Little Free Library. Recently we had some Christmas fiction books on the adult upper shelf but they have been taken. Do you have some classics? Currently Beowulf, an English epic poem, probably composed around 700 AD is available. Also in the box are some short historical romance novellas. You can give your book donations to the ushers or Jo Tschopp, or put them in the box yourself.



## Community Prayer Box

*From Jo Tschopp:* I can tell some amazing stories about the prayers from our Community Prayer Box. One lady from another city made a wrong turn and drove past it, turned around and wrote her request. She left contact information and told me the story. Another woman has left three requests in the past two years. On the third request she wrote that her prayers were being answered. One person, who has a tender heart for animals has asked for prayers for animals. I believe that anyone who takes the time to write a prayer request likely believes in the power of prayer and we praise God for that.

*Psalm 145:18-19 The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He will fill the desire of those who fear Him. He will also hear their cry and will save them.*

## Former FLCTC Member Called to Glory

Helen Stedman Christensen passed away on May 9, 2024 at the age of 90 in Bakersfield, CA. Helen was born to Hubert Quintin and Katheryne (Fitzpatrick) Stedman on December 29, 1933, the second of three children. She spent most of her early years in Brainerd, Minnesota.

Helen relocated to Southern California with her family in the mid-1950s. She married Kenneth (Ken) Christensen in January 1958. They settled in San Gabriel in the early 1960s, where they raised their family and became active members of First Lutheran Church of Temple City. She remained in this home until 2012 when she moved to a retirement community in Duarte and then to another in Bakersfield in 2020.

Helen was predeceased by her parents, two brothers and her husband Ken. She is survived by her six children, 11 grandchildren, and one great grandchild. A memorial service was held November 24, 2024 to honor Helen at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in El Monte, CA.



## Up Close and Personal:

### Rev. Mark Reschke

Pastor Reschke has often served our FLC family in worship and Bible class, including the whole month of February. His family heritage is steeped in the pietistic German Lutheran tradition nurtured at Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Joseph, MI. He was graced to have Christian parents who knew firsthand the importance of being engaged through a Word and Sacrament ministry. That seed was sown early in him: His parents told the story about how as a child at home after the divine service, he would stand on the hassock and preach to everyone. After Trinity Elementary, and Milton and St. Joseph High Schools, he joined the US Air Force. When his military service was done, he used the GI Bill to go to college. Encouraged by his pastor, he attended Concordia Milwaukee and after completing his studies there, he moved back and worked the Reschke family farm for a few years...

Until his pastor gave him a ride to the Lutheran Seminary where he enrolled for “the time of my life” as he says. While there, the call came out for Navy chaplains. Pastor Reschke took the oath of office the following week and along the way, he says, “I met my beautiful wife, Lucie, and we blazed a beautiful trail together.” Pastor Reschke eventually retired from the military. “All in all,” he declares, “It has been a grace-filled life, full of hope and promise!” We have been blessed by his service here.

### Rev. Gregory Otte

Pastor Otte has also served us often and will be our pastor for the month of March. He was born and reared in Detroit, MI. His father was pastor at historic Trinity Lutheran Church in Detroit for 50 years, and before that, his grandfather was pastor at Trinity for 27 years. After graduating from the Lutheran Seminary, he attended Duke Divinity School and earned a Master of Theology degree.

Pastor Otte’s first parish was in Covington, Kentucky, which then relocated to Erlanger, Kentucky. He then went to Cleveland Lutheran High School West as Dean of the Chapel and teacher of religion. He moved to California to serve as an assistant pastor at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Orange, CA. He is now retired – although, as he says, “God does not allow pastors to go to pasture” -- and teaches a Men’s Bible Class at St. John’s and does supply preaching in the Pacific Southwest District. He has been married to Brenda for 58 years. She is fighting against ongoing Parkinson’s disease. His oldest daughter, Rachel, is president of the California Retailers Association. His second daughter, Rebecca, is the Louisiana Statewide Brownfield Coordinator. We appreciate his service here at First Lutheran.



### Have You Added Friends in Deed to Your Shopping List?

The Food Pantry at Friends in Deed in Pasadena provides food assistance to low-income and no-income families in the greater Pasadena and Altadena areas. They are currently providing food to over 1,225 people per week.

Consider donating canned tuna/chicken, hearty soups, pasta & pasta sauce, peanut butter, cereal, rice, cooking oil, flour, sugar, fruit juices, powdered or shelf stable milk, granola bars, and canned fruits and vegetables. Then just place your donation in the collection box at the back of the church. For more information, please consult with either Jo Tschopp or Dave Lassanske.

## News from Our Board of Directors

Since the Voter's Assembly chose on January 26 to look into sharing a pastor with another area LCMS congregation, our Board has been working with the Pacific Southwest District for counseling and resources for this next step. As we pray about our congregation's search for pastoral leadership, following is some inspiration from *The Lutheran Witness* dedicated to small parishes.

### ***"The Small Congregation" by Roy Haskins, Executive Editor, The Lutheran Witness***

How do you know God loves you?

I'm sure you know the answer: Because He has declared it to be so. He sent His only Son to suffer and die for the sins of the world — yours included — and declares that you are forgiven on account of Christ's sake and that you are His child.

In practice, this question can become more difficult to analyze. Consider two men: One has a successful job, nice house, a wife and four upstanding children. He donates to church, and his children participate in youth group. Now consider the other man: His life has been one of difficulty. He struggles to hold a job; his wife left him, and his children barely know who he is. He holds to God's promises and worships on Sunday, but he can't donate to church. In fact, the church spends more on him than it receives, helping in times of particular difficulty.

We would rightly say that God has greatly blessed the first man. But that does not mean the second man has less love from God is not a true Christian or has offended God in some way (John 9:3). Quite the contrary, God has bestowed a particular honor on the second man by providing him a congregational family to provide and care for him.

The point is this: We often treat external, material blessings as indications of God's favor. We're tempted to treat growing congregations as those that are "doing something right" and small or declining congregations as "missing something" or "on the ropes." But in truth, the size of the congregation is no indication of God's favor or disfavor.

What is the indication of God's love and favor? His declaration of His love for you on account of Christ's redeeming work. And this favor is found wherever the Word of God is declared and the Sacraments are administered according to God's institution. But in all things, we keep our eyes ever focused on Him who was crucified for us and who will never leave us, regardless of the number of people who gather in our sanctuaries on Sunday.



### **Not Receiving Email Special Announcements and/or Prayer Requests?**

**Email Newsletter:** If you would like to receive the newsletter and prayer requests by email, please share your email address with Christine Geltz, Newsletter Editor, at [cgeltz@firstlutherantc.org](mailto:cgeltz@firstlutherantc.org).

**Printed Newsletter:** If you prefer to have a newsletter hard copy mailed to you, please call (626) 287-0968 and leave a message for Elizabeth Yu, the Church Administrator.

**Pastoral Care:** Please contact Board of Directors Chairman Judy Gunther at: (626) 833-5613.

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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Temple City, CA 91780

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED  
DATED MATERIAL**

*March 2025*

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**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL**

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**8:30 a.m. TRADITIONAL WORSHIP**

**Holy Communion every first & third Sunday**

**9:45 a.m. SUNDAY SCHOOL / BIBLE STUDY**

**Every Sunday**