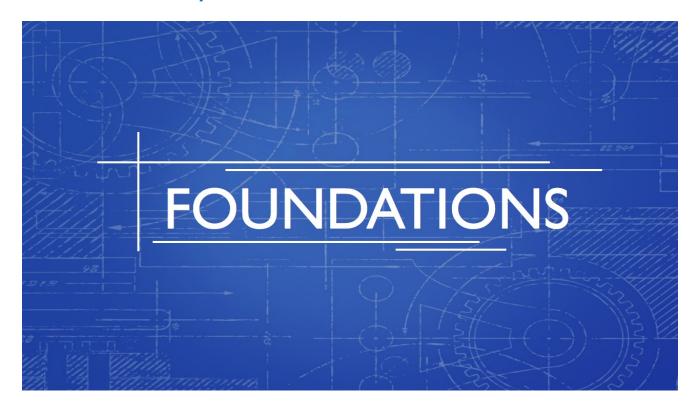
# **FOUNDATIONS**

Building Christian foundations in our homes, church, and community



pmc Inc.

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# Introduction

#### Foundations

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who will follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear — hating even the clothing stained by corrupt flesh.

—Jude 17-20 (NIV)

Brokenness is all around us. Many seek to divide and segment us into color, age, creed, race, or opinion. Our world seems to 'follow mere natural instinct' often to its own detriment. We ourselves are plagued with pain, loneliness, depression, debt, broken homes, shattered dreams, and the loss of innocence and happiness. Nevertheless, in spite of our suffering, there is Jesus and there is His Church — a lasting remnant of God's people, united under His authority, and forgiven despite our color, age, creed, race, opinion or... sin. As we live out our lives as His disciples we, therefore, recognize our blessed obligation to share His Gospel message — with love to; our neighbor (Matthew 22:39).

Nearly 100 years ago, First Lutheran was firmly established on the foundation of Jesus Christ. For, after all, there is no other foundation on which to build (I Corinthians 3:11). Today, more than ever, God is calling us to follow Him even as many around us—our

family, neighbors, and friends—don't know Him as their Savior... the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Then, from one of the one of the shortest books in the Bible, Jude (Jesus' servant and the brother of James), tells believers to persevere in this life and keep 'building,' as the foundation of Christ was given for us to build upon! Jude stressed, "But you, beloved, build yourselves up...in your most holy faith" so that we will be able to, "be merciful... save... (and) show mercy."

God has blessed our congregation for many, many years. And now, we have a bold request to make of Him: Send us into our homes and out to our communities as your witnesses, confident that You are the foundation we rely upon to KNOW, GROW, and SHOW the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ!

#### Chapter 1

# The Vision TO Build or NOT TO Build.

Notice, that chapter heading is not a question.

#### **GO BIG**

I want to go big. I want to go far. I want to wow you with deep and insightful truths that bring healing to our divisions and frustrations at First Lutheran. I desire to embolden us to Know, Grow, and Show Jesus in new and meaningful ways. I value creativity and working together. I pray that the Lord would give me the words to motivate us — His Church — to bring hope and peace and love and change to our homes and communities. So, here's a vision:

The south-east corner of 169 and 68. A massive sport complex with soccer fields, baseball and softball fields, a walking trail, and a great little concession stand serving hotdogs cooked with just the right amount of carbon on them. A church building with a cross rising high in the sky with adequate capacity to minister to the spiritual, health & wellness, educational, and civic needs of our community. In short, a ministry where we — the Church — are founded to, funded by, and supporting efforts to reach into our community and bring an answer through lesus Christ to this daily grind called life.

That's a big vision! And one we should **NOT** build... yet.;-)

#### THE FOUNDATION - FIRST

The vision I outlined above may be in our *future* but what is in our *present* is the need to lay a firm Foundation. When there is something new we want to accomplish, there are things we must change. Where there is a commitment to growth, there we will find hard work and sacrifice but, also, reward. No matter what we set ourselves to accomplish we must first ensure we are together and united on building from the same foundation — Jesus Christ!

What makes a vision tricky is that it comes to you (in my experience anyway) through sleepless nights, long and frustrating days, over philosophical cups of coffee and pints beer, through long hours of study and prayer, the reviewing of facts and figures and charts and demographics until your mind goes numb, having the same conversation with none of the same people, and reading — lots and lots and lots of reading. But, through it all, I find there is 'something' there. 'Something' I cannot leave alone. 'Something' that perplexes me and fascinates me and calls me all at the same time. Helping families teach the love of Jesus Christ in their homes has always been my 'something.'

Helping families is the purpose for which God has created me and it perplexes me and fascinates me and calls me. I can't ignore it. I've tried to walk away from it and... God. Always. Brings. Me. Back. And right now — as pastor of First Lutheran — He has called me to prepare His people for acts of love and service by helping families teach the love of Jesus Christ in their homes so that, as we build firm foundations for our families, they, in turn, change our communities as they encourage stability, instill hope, speak life, bring peace, assist in recovery, pass on the faith, and give the glory to God.

So, for me, 'TO Build or NOT TO Build' is not a question... it's a perplexing, fascinating, calling — challenge. 'Something' God has laid before us. It just needs a vision. And to that I say, "Challenge accepted!"

#### Our Building

Our building has needs. In fact, some among us have shared with me that before our building was here there may have been... a marsh or swampy area. If that's the case, (and some of our own geological evidence does show signs of agreement) then it appears our building *may* have been built on an old stream or river bed or marsh or swamp or something that a bunch of shale for us to build on. This would explain the lack of bedrock and could contribute to the slow but repeated sinking of our wall. And, as many are aware, it is not just in need of a fix — it's in need of being replaced.

Now, I know fixing a wall is *not* the most exciting endeavor. I understand that funds used on a building do not so easily get translated into lives changed for Jesus. And I sympathize with those who see us fixing the wall - again - rather than accomplishing the expansion of our current congregational ministries, preschool, or previous building projects. Nevertheless, we have a responsibility... to the safety of those who worship with us, to our Preschool, and to the future availability of a space from which to gather, organize, and go. But, before we go further... a story:

In Luke 14 Jesus says,

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it

will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.

— Luke 14:28-30 (NIV)

This passage does an amazing job of pointing out the futility of poor planning and acknowledges the criticism of those who are unwilling to count the cost. Many of us upon hearing this passage respond as follows: in one hand we hold our need to repair the wall and in the other we hold the responsibility of covering that cost. Therefore, we rightfully conclude we must fix the wall, but first we must count the cost of doing so, lest we suffer ridicule.

However, what if we heard this story and wrestled with our 'sinking wall' dilemma another way? What if we held in one hand our need to repair the wall and its subsequent cost and in the other we held the responsibility of covering the ministry to our families and community? Would we not be ridiculed just as soundly if we simply repaired our wall but lacked the necessary vision and resources to simultaneously build a foundation for the demands of ministering to our families and community? Might we have opportunity today to begin to lay two foundations: one underground, the other in the hearts of people?

I believe there is more to be done with our Foundations vision than simply building a wall. There is a need to expand our education spaces for all ages and for our Preschool. We need (and currently have seed monies for) a more useable kitchen from which we could bless not only our congregation but, also, potentially house a soup kitchen, feed hungry children in our community, and the like. We must wrestle with how best to convert or adapt our current spaces into multifunctional spaces. This will open the door for us to better serve our civic and community commitments as well as providing

adequate opportunity for the engagement of new ideas and methods to reach younger generations.

#### Our Homes

While one foundation effects our structure, the other effects our people. In order for our congregation to be able to both take-in the beautiful moments and face the brutal realities of life we need to strengthen our homes and families. I am confident when we intentionally equip homes to build upon the Foundation of Christ when they sit, walk, lie down, and rise (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) as a family they will be more able to and confident in navigating and celebrating their life's journey. After all, Jesus never promised us that the storms of life would pass us by... instead, He reminds us of His commitment to be our sure foundation *in-spite* of and *through* those storms.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

— Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore, we must partner together to expand the resources available to our homes, families, and communities. We must invest in new staff and perhaps reassign current staff so as to most successfully organize ourselves to be a church that is equipping,

encouraging, and enabling families to teach the love of Jesus Christ in their homes and show that same love to their neighbor.

#### Chapter 2

# Together First, Comes Love... Then, Comes Marriage

We all know the song... just pick two people and start singing and spelling! Beyond its folklore and playground taunts this little ditty could help us communicate some important perspectives concerning our vision — first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in a baby carriage!

Remember, Adam and Eve? In Genesis we find,

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

— Genesis 2:18-22 (NIV)

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to

them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

— Genesis 1:27-28 (NIV)

Notice, first came a *longing*, "it is not good for the man to be alone." Then, came a *suitable helper*, "the Lord God made a woman." Then, came... *multiplication*, "Be fruitful and increase in number." You could say... first came love, then came marriage, then came the baby in the baby carriage!

#### **OUR LONGING**

It wasn't good for Adam to be alone. He wanted something. He had a longing. He had a desire. Do we desire to see others experience the presence of God — in worship? At work? In their homes? When they serve? Do we long to see and hear the truths of God in the lives of our spouse, children, and grandchildren? Do we have a longing to be a church united as a network of homes and families in support an care for one another? Where we influence our community and leave them knowing that we care?

When the church steps up with a longing to actively seek out opportunities to participate in the community and becomes aware of what's happening in the lives of those around them (both the good and the bad) and commits to bring glory to God through its ownership of God-pleasing solutions... then, the Gospel becomes more than a word of hope or a sympathetic gesture. It becomes tangible. It has a face. It becomes incarnational. It is serving as Jesus spoke of when He quoted Isaiah,

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,

because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives

and release from darkness for the prisoners

— Isaiah 61:1 (ESV)

#### SUITABLE HELPER

Adam needed a suitable helper. He needed someone to, 'complete him' (cheesy, shameless Jerry McGuire reference). We know it is Christ who completes us as He sacrifices Himself for us and takes away our sin (Romans 3:23-24, 2 Corinthians 5:21)! Now, as we look at our new lives in Christ we see that we have a need to seek out other 'suitable helpers' who assist us as we seek to Know, Grow, and Show Jesus Christ to the world.

In fact, sometimes these 'helpers' are (as stated above) in the form of staff who are called to equip, encourage, and enable families to teach the love of Jesus Christ in their homes and show that same love to their neighbor. As Ephesians tells us God gives us workers in His Church,

...to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

— Ephesians 4:12-13

However, most often our most effective 'helper' is our brother or sister in Christ who lives life with us. Who experiences the same stressors and temptations and frustrations. Whose own home and family — like ours — wrestles with hardships one day and blesses others generously the next. With the help of brothers and sister in the faith surrounding us we have friends. We have some watching our back. We are not alone... and we need 'helpers' like that in our lives regardless of our — or their — age. Recall Ecclesiastes 4,

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

— Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (ESV)

#### **MULTIPLICATION**

When we last left Adam and Eve they had a job to do... I hope they got busy! God had called them to "be fruitful and increase in number" because He wants to see His creation grow in relationship, love, and abundance. After all, that would reflect His abundance, love, and relationship. Likewise, when Jesus ascended to be with the Father He left us with a clear directive — Go and make (increase)!

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

— *Matthew 28:19* 

When we, as God's people are doing as He has commanded us by fulfilling this Great Commission, then, we are living the lives He has called us to His Glory. For we are multiplying and increasing ourselves — we're making disciples!

### A Call to Sacrifice

My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds,
of your saving acts all day long—
though I know not how to relate them all.
I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign Lord;
I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone.
Since my youth, God, you have taught me,
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.
Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, my God,
till I declare your power to the next generation,
your mighty acts to all who are to come.

— Psalm 71:15-18 (NIV)

By now I hope and pray you see that I am attempting to unite us together. For the vision that stands before us will never come to fruition if we only and always talk past each other. There are many things that we need to share and pass on from our lives and the generations of those who are coming up underneath us — even if they don't always want to listen to what we have to say!

In the end, we are the church – the body of believers gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ. We do His work not ours. We gather for His glory not ours. We are His people and we move in this world ministering to all and loving all because He first loved us. With this in mind, let me suggest before we can get started that each one of us must be willing to admit the following to ourselves, "The first thing that must change is... me." That is a humbling statement! In fact, CS Lewis said it this way in Mere Christianity, "True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." As we move forward we must follow our Savior's lead and sacrifice of ourselves in order to reach out with understanding to and for our brother and sister in Christ.

And, now, a message of sacrifice to each of our prominent age groups:

#### ... TO OUR OLDEST

Please don't step away from the plans that stand before our congregation - especially if you do not, at first, see yourself able to benefit from or participate in them. The truth is that you hold the greatest collection of resources. Your sacrifice of being willing to relinquish a portion of your 'Elder Reward' and let go of the idea of settling back into a life without work and full of play is something other generations will never know and cannot understand. Nevertheless, we need your presence and your help. What's more, please, don't walk away if (and when) we seek to do it our a new way.

We need you to be our Moses... patient and full of long-suffering with your arms stretched out to bless God's work among us with your financial resources in one hand and your accumulated life wisdom in the other. Use the gifts God has given you to make a way for God's people to cross through this difficult transition that lies before us and will probably last through another generation! In short, our world is in decay and you are still needed to strengthen it. However, that strength will not come through lectures and

frustration about 'what was' or 'how you were raised' but, instead, through stories of survival, lessons of morality taught in the home, and an active mentoring of self sacrifice and lack of desire to have it your way. Instead, help us navigate the challenges of our world by listening and encouraging others to our problems knowing you'll be with us the whole way. After all, we still need our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents!

#### ... TO OUR MIDDLE AGERS

We need you to be back and involved — we need you to care. There are many things that need to get done and we need your practical, no-nonsense attitude present at our meetings and when we make decisions. You've been able to withdraw from civic life unto yourselves but now your movement must be toward gathering others together and creating workable solutions to the problems that seem to plague our homes and communities. We know you simply want to accomplish tasks and then, with an honorable pride, walk away... but we beg you to resist this urge! If the resources and wisdom are coming from above it will be your temperance that ensures younger generations exercise the necessary forbearance to sustain the desired long-term change and outcome. We will need you to continue to function as careful mediators managing the zealous calls for immediate compliance from the Oldest among us while at the same time ensuring the leaders of tomorrow continue to have adequate resources to accomplish the 'good deeds' needed to bring hope and peace and change. And, as much as we love it, try and harness your beautiful, maniacal cynicism for good!

#### ... TO OUR YOUNG MEN & WOMEN

Time to come of age! The sooner you show the strength and number of your positive abilities and your amazing, collaborative nature to accomplish good — both civilly and morally, the more readily the older generations will be willing to generously pour their dollars and cents (and themselves) into what is happing. When you show you're listening

it goes a long way. So, while the reality exists that you may not understand or agree with the moral truths of which many older adults (and even your parents) continue to rail against, please, listen. Curb your intolerance for what appears to you as moral supremacy and note that there is a kernel of wisdom in there coming from a life lived in this broken world. In other words, when someone 'older than you' appears to have a zealous and cynical opinion on full display don't block them out and walk away. Instead, register what they have to say... and then forgive any hypocrisy paying attention to the lessons taught, for they carry experience we (as your parents and grandparents and great grandparents) may have failed to teach you and which may prove to be invaluable in your quest for truth. For, you have been marketed to and sold to and product placed until your senses are highly tuned to detect 'BS,' but don't always reject our guidance while you explore and discover this world for yourselves.

Now, to those generations that have come before, please understand the burden of debt under which our youngest generations live their lives and, yet, still perform astounding acts of service and generosity. Pay attention to their proclivity to show and do their good outside of what you might call the 'normal' public arena. To find their already budding and successful accomplishments look to FaceBook — not a newspaper. Seek ample examples of their generosity via PayPal or 'that phone their nose is always in' rather than a check (BTW... does anybody still use those!). Finally, know that they are more concerned with the corporate good then with the good of the corporation! That means they want to build their lives on the care Jesus gave for others... not give others care for a building with Jesus' name on it.

### Our Prayer

Ultimately, we must all work together to accomplish the vision of building Christian Foundations for our homes, church, and community. We must listen to and respect one another. We must adapt and cooperate. For, where there is a commitment to growth,

there we will find hard work and sacrifice but, also, reward. No matter what we set ourselves to accomplish we must first ensure we are together and united on building from the same foundation — lesus Christ!

And when you are at whits end... pause, read this prayer, and come back and join us:

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (Isaiah 26:3).

Lord, help me to trust Your promises to me. I want people to see things the way I do, but they don't and I get bothered. I've given up hope in institutions; they're not functioning for us. I hear the latest talk about what's happening, and think so much is futile. Who cares about me? People will think it's strange to say what I'm about to say, but I couldn't ask for more. When I'm at the end of myself, I look to you. "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

"You keep him in perfect peace whose heart is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Fill me with Your peace that passes understanding. Calm any agitation that arises in my heart; make me instinctively recall Your words, Your Gospel promises [KNOW]. Teach me endurance that chisels Christ-like character from my inmost being, always abounding in hope because You pour Your love into me by Your Spirit (Romans 5:3-6) [GROW]. People will see my calm and wonder why [SHOW]. My trust in You is the fortress in which I will be safe.

"I bind unto myself today the pow'r of God to hold and lead,

His eye to watch, His might to stay, His ear to hearken to my need,

The wisdom of my God to teach, His hand to guide, His shield to ward,

The Word of God to give me speech, His heav'nly host to be my guard."

(Lutheran Service Book, 604, 3)

It is well with my soul. Perfect peace. Amen!

— The Meyer Minute for October 5, 2016

#### Chapter 3

## In Action

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

— 1 Peter 1:13 (ESV)

#### Know-Grow-Show

As we move forward building FOUNDATIONS that help families and homes teach the love of Jesus we will need a strategy - some way of organizing our movement that prepares us for action. That's where Know - Grow - Show come into play and the beauty is how connected but separate these three pieces are; how as one ends the other has already begun!

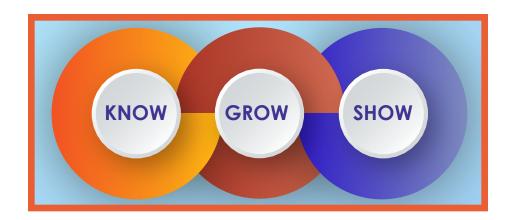
When building on the foundation of Christ (I Corinthians 3:11) we will need knowledge. This means we spend time studying Jesus teachings and reflecting on how they call us together, encourage us to participate in where the Lord is leading, and wrestle with the challenges of living the life to which Jesus has called us... we will need to KNOW. And just as quickly, we will have no choice but to stagnate or GROW. For upon the foundation of Christ we build our lives where time, trial, failure, forgiveness, and facing life again with Christ's promises held ever before us matures our faith and calls our hearts to teach others what we KNOW of this Savior, Jesus. Because, ultimately, everything we do is an endeavor to SHOW the love of Jesus to those around us - family, friends, co-workers, even strangers! In the end, this strategy becomes so intertwined in who we are it becomes what we do.

#### **KNOW**

Picture our church community, alive with activity... with Christ as the foundation both here on East Piankishaw and in each of our homes. We pray God's people first and foremost KNOW Jesus — talk about Him at home and generously demonstrate the love of Jesus with those He brings to us as we work together to increase the visible presence of First Lutheran as Christ-centered disciples in our communities.

#### We come to KNOW Jesus Christ through:

- Worshipping Him praising His name and giving thanks
- Studying His Word individually and together
- · Pursuing educational opportunities concerning the joys and realities of our world
- Praying individually

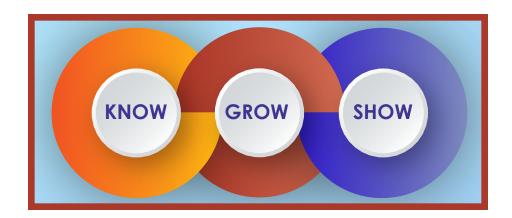


#### **GROW**

I firmly believe that God's people — especially you! — are ready to GROW powerfully as His disciples. I am confident when we intentionally equip homes to build upon the foundation of Christ we will be able to both navigate and celebrate life's journey. More than that, we will be ready to enjoy the beautiful moments as well as face the brutal realities of life. I want to challenge First Lutheran to GROW in their own faith so that our healthier homes may then serve as FOUNDATIONS and partners to expand the resources available to our communities.

#### We GROW in Christ when we are:

- Teaching and Leading others formally or informally; at church or in our homes
- Being challenged by God to trust Him through difficulty, suffering, hardship, etc.
- Sacrificing for a person, project, or institution individually or as a part of a team
- Encouraging the gathering of resources both in and outside of our church walls
- Giving generously of our time, talents, and finances
- Participating in times of fellowship
- Praying together

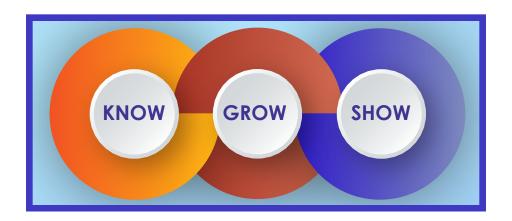


#### **SHOW**

We share a love for both our Savior and our church. In response to this love, we see countless opportunities to SHOW. Out of thanksgiving to God, we want to use the gifts He gives us by taking advantage of opportunities to SHOW His love here at church and in our community. Through our service and volunteerism we SHOW ourselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

#### We SHOW Jesus Christ as we:

- Serve others individually or as a part of a team
- Help our neighbor both in and outside of our church walls
- Live and work in a God-pleasing manner
- Adapt our congregational resources for the benefit of others our building, budget, calendar, etc.
- Take risks for the advancement of God's Kingdom
- Provide Christian education to our community through our Preschool
- Focus our efforts to solve specific problems, meet identified needs, collaborate with other organizations to produce God-pleasing solutions, etc.
- Fulfill our role to encourage, equip, and guide those around us parent, husband or wife, Christian brother or sister, co-worker, neighbor, etc.



## Conclusion

The next 2 years will be life-altering for us here at First Lutheran. We also pray that it will be eternal-life altering for many whom we do not yet know. Picture our own Sonshine Preschool growing so that it might reach and serve more families. Imagine a firm FOUNDATIONS here in our church home, as space and place are enhanced and improved and where staff and volunteers are fully resourced to KNOW, GROW and SHOW Christ's love to all ages in our homes, at church, and in our communities. Where a vibrant second century begins with us going and serving as Christ's disciples seeking to, "be merciful... save... (and) show mercy," just as Jude encouraged us.

In order to fully realize this vision for First Lutheran's future, we are asking each of you to generously respond as He has blessed you. 'FOUNDATIONS' is the title and theme of our 2-year phase of increased and inspired generosity. We boldly ask the Lord that our combined financial response totals \$950,000. With this level of generosity, we will be able to proceed with both careful investments in facility, staff, education, and ministry resources. This is going to require sacrifice — not just from some of us, but from all of us. But I promise you, it will be worth it to see what God does in and through us, as we KNOW, GROW, and SHOW confident in Jesus as our foundation and generous provider.

First Lutheran, it's time to lay the FOUNDATIONS for another 100 years, rooted in Him, together as His people — join us!

Amen.