

# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH HISTORY

Missoula, Montana

2000 to 2023

## Significant Events: 2000

- The First Lutheran cornerstone was laid on March 5, 2000 – one year and five days after the 1999 groundbreaking.
- On Sunday, May 21, 2000, the dedication service of praise and thanksgiving for the new church building was held.
- The First Lutheran Centennial Celebration of glorification and blessing commemorating 100 years of sharing His Word was held on December 3, 2000.

## Significant Events: 2005-2010

- A Long-Range Planning Report at the same meeting stated that a survey had been completed for establishing a parochial school at First Lutheran. There was overwhelming support for this idea.
- On January 27, 2008, the Voters Meeting approved financing for this school. This venture has been very successful. Results include extending a solid (Classical) education for our students and establishing another outreach program for the community. There have been numerous part-time teachers, paras, aides, and volunteers, as well as church staff, who have contributed greatly to the Lutheran School. A basic outline of historical reference markers for the school is outlined below.

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Full-Time Teachers</u>	<u>Enrollment K-8</u>
2009-10	Sue Eberhard, Jo Anne Renfro	5
11-Oct	Connie Lee	6
12-Nov	Julie Wilson	9
13-Dec	Julie Wilson	11
13-14	Sue Eberhard, Julie Wilson	15
14-15	Sue Eberhard, Julie Wilson	12
15-16	Sue Eberhard, Julie Wilson, Judy Lange	18
16-17	Sue Eberhard, Julie Wilson	22
17-18	Tyler Taylor, Jessica Patton, Leah Klemp	27
18-19	Sue Eberhard, Susan Pagan, Candi Shaw	15
19-20	Sue Eberhard, Michael Cavalli, Sue Abbot	22
20-21	Sue Eberhard, Sue Abbot	19
21-22	Sue Eberhard, Sue Abbot	23
22-23	Sue Eberhard, Sue Abbot, JoAnn Steen	14
23-24	Sue Abbot, JoAnn Steen	18

- On July 5, 2009, the Grace House Property was deeded to First Lutheran Church. This property was purchased for the purpose of expanding the church's ministry. It is currently being handled as a rental.
- Discussion was initiated in 2009 to plan and initiate a series of missions to assist the Casa de Elizabeth orphanage in Mexico. Later, the "Kids Kingdom" orphanage in Imuris, Mexico was added to this endeavor. Since 2009, there have been at least two missions per year to support this cause.

- On January 31, 2010, it was reported that the office remodel has been completed to accommodate expanded staff and meeting rooms.

### Significant Events: 2011-2023

- In September of 2011 the Board of Lay Ministers moved that First Lutheran should extend a call to Mark Christenson to serve as Pastor to the congregation. Pastor Mark was ordained on Sunday, December 6, 2011. He continued to serve as pastor and vacancy pastor until he retired in September 2017.
- During this period, Kent Stenzel was another vacancy pastor that assisted with pastoral duties.
- At the Voters Meeting on April 21, 2013, mention was made to set up a committee to study the service of women in church leadership roles.
- At the Voters Meeting on September 22, 2013, a motion was made and seconded that “Women who are members of the Congregation, and 18 years or older, may serve in worship services as authorized by the Pastoral Office.” Motion passed by voice vote.
- On August 15, 2013, Pastor Renfro received and accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
- On November 1, 2015, Rev. David Johnson was called to serve as pastor of First Lutheran Church. He was installed on January 10, 2016.
- 2013-Sonja Reeves initiated discussion and started the Deaconess Distance Ed Program.
- 2013-2015-After completing Deaconess Studies from Concordia Theological Seminary-Ft. Wayne (both on-line and on-campus) Sonja was installed as Deaconess at First Lutheran on August 30, 2015.
  - The focus of the Deaconess Program is to lead Women in the Word weekly Bible Study between September and May of the following year. In addition, the Deaconess duties include member care; hospital visits, home visits, assisting Pastors with chapel services for the Classical School, assisting with various office duties.
- On April 24, 2016, a revised Constitution for First Lutheran Church was sent to the Montana LCMS District Office for approval.
- On February 11, 2018, Rev. Steve Carlson was installed as Associate Pastor. Before this date, he assumed several other titles to assist with the church’s ministry.
- March 2020 – The Covid-19 pandemic caused First Lutheran to suspend church services and restrict other activities of the church to comply with certain guidelines designed to mitigate exposure to the disease.
- During this period, it became apparent that the church’s online ability to serve those homebound for the duration of the suspension was not adequate. At that time our audio-visual resources were outdated. The result was dark, poor-quality video and compromised sound.
  - Extensive research was conducted by the Long-Term Planning Committee between March and December 2020. Based on this research, specification bids were sent to three companies that specialized in audio-visual (AV) equipment and installation. The successful bidder was Montana Pro Audio at \$89,140.
  - On May 18, 2021, the congregation approved the financial request for the new AV system. On June 21 the system was ordered, and on January 3, 2022, it was installed and became operational.
- During this same period discussion began regarding updating the Church’s website. On June 25, 2023, the Voter’s approved a motion to hire Rodli Web Strategies to update and redesign the website.
  - In August of 2023 the website went live with vast improvements in creativity, navigation, and content. An added value to this project was the added ability to

optimize search engine recognition. This result almost immediately raised the church's search position on the web for browsers looking for a church.