

Small Group Ministry

I probably am best at small group ministry, because I am good at facilitating conversation and keeping the group on task. I did this as part of my internship project, with an ecumenical group discussing evangelism. Success in small group ministry comes from building strong relationships with those in attendance. I have also been leading a grief support group for the last year.

Chaplaincy

This is similar to pastoral care. I served as an intern chaplain at Hershey Medical Center in Hershey PA. I am a good listener and am good at providing care in many different situations at a hospital. I received a good evaluation at Hershey; one of the things that stood out was I had to manage a team unexpectedly during a bus crash crisis as I was on duty. I also have a special interest in supporting grieving families, as I experience grief when my husband died several years ago.

June 22, 2025

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Preaching / Worship Leader
Small Group Ministry

Pastoral Care and Visitation
Chaplaincy

Teaching

AREAS OF STRENGTH

Administration
Christian Education

Building a Sense of Community
Self-Care / Family Life

Ecumenical Work

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCIES

Preaching/Worship Leadership

This church is my first call congregation. My preaching has steadily improved over the 6 years I've been here, and there are many in my congregation that enjoy and learn from my sermons. There are some that are challenged by my preaching, as I believe God is touching them in a way they don't expect.

Pastoral Care and Visitation

I have always been able to provide pastoral care in several situations, from providing for family and friends, as well as visiting members of the congregation. I find visitation as something I do very well. I am a good listener and know how to provide support during times of crisis. Part of a strong visitation ministry means building relationships with those who need visitation.

Teaching

I taught at the university level for several years. I taught undergraduate students and graduate students. I am especially good at mentoring young adults. I also taught for science camps and STEM programs on campus. I also participated in teaching teachers about energy content. I have taught in church settings, both in my home congregation, during internship, and in my current congregation. I have taught adult, confirmation, and senior high classes. I organized VBS for 3 years in my home congregation and participated in a Bible summer camp at my internship congregation site. I have taught and participated in VBS for the 6 years I have been at Harrold Zion Lutheran Church. I am currently coordinating youth ministry.

REVEREND DR. CAROLINE CLIFFORD

TRANSITIONAL INTERIM - THREE MONTH CONTRACT STARTING AUGUST 1, 2025

FORMAL EDUCATION

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|------|
| Master of Divinity | Religion/Religious Studies | 2016 |
| Luther Seminary | St. Paul Minnesota | |
| Doctor of Philosophy | Other Sciences | 1994 |
| Pennsylvania State University Main Campus | State College, PA | |
| MASTER OF SCIENCE | Other Sciences | 1991 |
| Pennsylvania State University Main Campus | State College, PA | |
| BACHELOR OF SCIENCE | Chemical Engineering | 1984 |
| Texas A&M University Canyon, TX | College Station, Texas | |

WORK HISTORY

| | | |
|--|--|-------------|
| Pennsylvania State University | Senior Research Associate | 1999 - 2016 |
| West Texas A&M University | Postdoctoral Fellow | 1998 - 1999 |
| University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa, TX | Research Associate/Visiting Scientist | 1995 - 1998 |
| Monash University Clayton, Australia | Postdoctoral Fellow | 1994 - 1995 |
| Sun Exploration and Production Co. Corpus Christi, TX | Operations Engineer | 1985 - 1987 |

CURRENT MINISTRY

| | | |
|--|------------------|-----------|
| Harrold Zion Lutheran Church Greensburg, PA | Assistant Pastor | Full Time |
|--|------------------|-----------|



July 2025



| DATE | 6 | 13 | 20 | 27 |
|---------------------|--|--|---|---|
| ASSISTING MINISTER | Georgia Richardson | Carmen Cypher | Tammy Manko | David Coulter |
| COMMUNION ASSISTANT | William Kerr | René Copeland | David Coulter | Georgia Richardson |
| LECTOR | Tammy Manko | Georgia Richardson | Carmen Cypher | Mary Beamer |
| CANTOR | Gregg LeMay | Gregg LeMay | Gregg LeMay | Gregg LeMay |
| USHERS | Melvin Silvis Donna Stone John Hollis Sandra Hollis | Melvin Silvis Calvin Deemer Robbie Deemer Joe Marchitelli | Melvin Silvis Eloise Loughlin Kim Kneppshield Kim Harmon | Melvin Silvis Calvin Deemer Jack Tickle Beverly Tickle |
| ACOLYTE | Kim Harmon | Melvin Silvis | Calvin Deemer | Robbie Deemer |
| ALTAR GUILD | Robbie Deemer Marlonna Moore | Lisa Carnahan Cindy Shaner | Georgia Richardson Grace Olson | Kim Harmon Eloise Loughlin |
| PEW COMMITTEE | Lisa Carnahan | Lisa Carnahan | Lisa Carnahan | Lisa Carnahan |
| CAMERA PERSON | John Shaner | Calvin Rodnicki | Kevin Geer | Lisa Carnahan |

Please obtain your own substitute if these dates conflict with your schedule.

Please notify the church office by Wednesday of any changes.

If we are not in the office, you may leave a message on the answering machine.



Thank You!





July 2025



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| | | 1 Pastors' Text Study @ 10 a.m. | 2 Building & Grounds Mtg. @ 9 a.m. | 3 Pastor in the office @ 10 a.m. | 4  OFFICE CLOSED | 5 |
| 6 11 a.m. Worship | 7 | 8 Pastors' Text Study @ 10 a.m. | 9 Council Mtg @ 10:30 a.m. | 10 Pastor in the office @ 10 a.m. | 11 | 12 Men's Breakfast @ Valley Dairy @ 8:30 a.m. |
| | Community VBS - 5:45 pm to 8:15 pm @ Boiling Springs Presbyterian | | | | | Ladies Lunch Bunch Meeting at church @ 11 a.m/Villa Ballanca |
| | | | | Quit Club Mtg. @ 7 p.m. | | Quit Club Sew-In |
| 13 11 a.m. Worship | 14 | 15 Pastors' Text Study @ 10 a.m. | 16 | 17 Pastor in the office @ 10 a.m. | 18 | 19 Quit Club Sew-In |
| | Lions Club Mtg. @ 6 p.m. | | | Ministerial Assoc. @ 11 a.m. | | |
| | | | | Quit Club Mtg. @ 7 p.m. | | Quit Club Sew-In |
| 20 11 a.m. Worship Gibbons Big Band Concert @ 3 p.m. | 21 | 22 Pastors' Text Study @ 10 a.m. | 23 | 24 Pastor in the office @ 10 a.m. | 25 | 26 Pastor Phil's Retirement Dinner @ 4:30 p.m. |
| | | | | Newsletter Assembly & Mailing @ 10 a.m. | |  |
| 27 11 a.m. Worship | 28 Lions Club Mtg. @ 6 p.m. | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

Memorial Calendar

Open Memorials

Stop by the office and sign up for the days you want. Dates are starting to fill in. We prefer you to sign up rather than ask Leslie to do it.

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Flowers \$50 | ----- | August 17 & 24 |
| Bulletins \$10 | July 6, 20 & 27 | August 3, 10, 24 & 31 |
| Celebrates \$10 | July 13, 20 & 27 | August 3, 10, 24 & 31 |
| Oil \$20 | Open for July | ----- |

Openings: Please do not assume by sending in money that you will get that date.
Others may have already taken the date you want.

Ethel L. Verney Fund Grant

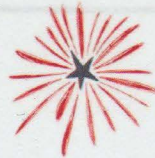
Mission Endowment Fund of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod

This fund was established in 2014 as a result of a bequest from Ethel L. Verney for "relief and support of people living in poverty" on the territory of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod. Congregations, agencies, institutions, camps, and Rostered Leaders of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, may apply for grants for up to three years in a row with the consideration of the amount requested/received decreasing in successive years.

First Church took advantage of this generous offer and applied and received a grant in the amount of \$10,000 for Food4Kids in 2024.

In 2025, we applied again. On March 5, 2025, we received a letter from Pastor Jeffrey Schock, Board Chair of the Mission Endowment Fund Board, awarding us \$9,950 for our Food4Kids Ministry. The monies will be released in quarterly distributions throughout 2025.

We pray that this ministry will continue to flourish and bless the many people who serve. We are very grateful to have received this grant.



July 2025

CONGRATULATIONS to all those celebrating Birthdays:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 – Lou Ann Branthoover | 10 – Gregg Goodbread | 14 – David Coulter | 22 – Darren Papaila |
| 3 – Benjamin Coulter | 10 – Madyson Moore | 14 – Kaylie Peace | 22 – David Smeltzer |
| 5 – Tom Mangus | 10 – Makenzie Moore | 16 – Diane Papaila | 23 – Deborah Zahumensky |
| 7 – Vicki Held | 12 – Emma Frain | 20 – Kendall Beitel | 30 – Holly Kunicki |
| 7 – Shawn Peace | 14 – Melvin Silvis | 21 – Rich Cypher | |

CONGRATULATIONS to all those celebrating Wedding Anniversaries:

12 – John & Cindy Shaner 45th
15 – Rich & Carmen Cypher 58th
26 – Carmen & JoEllen Vergari 50th

Members & Friends in our prayers: Family of Bob Reed, Vince Milie, Family of Ernie Miller, Robert Gibbons, Thomas Coulter, Carol McCain, Melissa Held, Family of Arline Calhoun, Linda Smith, Lavina Stefaniak, Pearl Held, Frank Stefaniak, Jr., Kelly Gourley, Anthony Ward, Darwin Moore, Deacon Amy Santoriello, Mark Otwell, Doug Rearick, Barry DeMay, Joey Valella, David Fallecker, Debbie Townsend, Sandra Rivera, Nancy Hart, & Katie Loftus, Thomas Hileman, Tyler Stone, Eric Kennedy and Baby Lucas Michael.

Members and friends in our continuing prayers: Mary Ellen Emerick, Mark Kestner, Pastor Al Petrill, Pastor Jack Delk, Barbara Grance, Pastor Richard Grance, Ed Smith, Scott Aikens, Brian Stone, Jim Stone III, Heather Eppley, Barbara Altmire, Al Kochka, Audrey & Susan Siems, David Ellison, Debbie Hill, Virginia Madison, Jack Tickle, Darlene Davis, Ed & Rose Haberchak, Bill & Diane Sloan, Luke Kanish, Tim Kanish, Dakota Stone, and Shane Carnahan

Our Homebound Members: Donna Wilver, Lillian Yamber, Annette Cholock, Judy Altman, Yvonne Hilty, Earliene Klingensmith, Frances Klingensmith, Richard Mangus, Tom Mangus, Elinor Moody and Diane Papaila.

We ask God's care for the following Military Personnel and their loved ones: Stephen Porter and Nevin Downey.

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*The Mission of First Church is
to make God's good news
in Jesus Christ a reality
in the world*



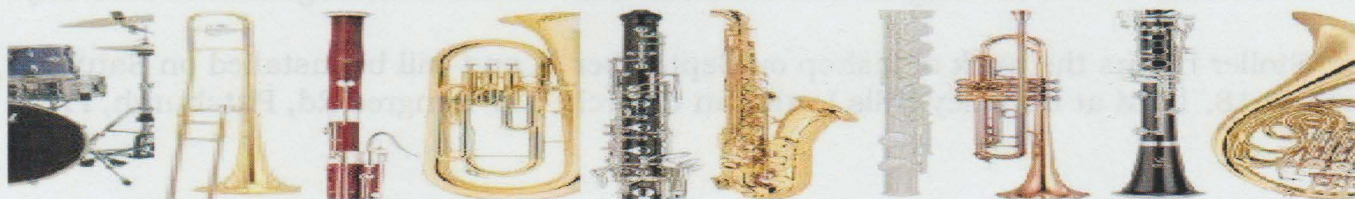
SPECIAL EVENT

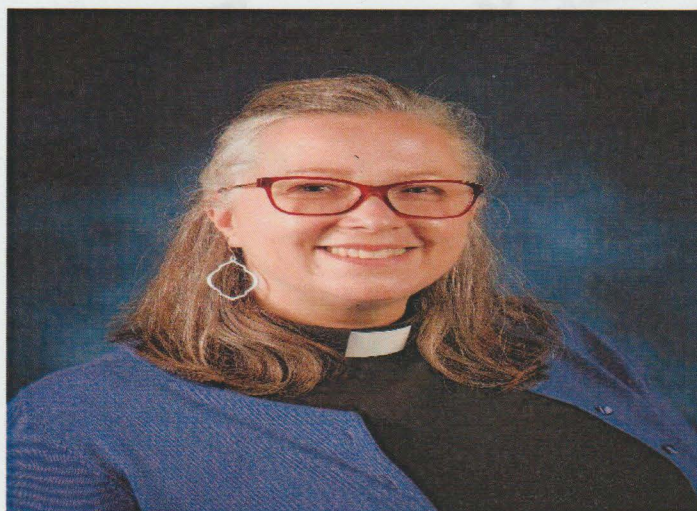
**On Sunday, July 27th at 6:00 PM,
the Apollo United Presbyterian Church
is happy to present
THE KISKI VALLEY COMMUNITY BAND**

This group of musicians range in age from 14 to 80+ and meet each Tuesday at the Leechburg Elks to practice the one thing they all love . . . playing music. Their concerts are "free-will offering" with proceeds going to purchase music which assists in expanding their repertoire.

The Kiski Valley Community Band performs at many community functions during the year. Several holiday concerts are presented to benefit local service organizations, such as volunteer fire departments and food banks, and a concert before the Leechburg Elks lodge Flag Day ceremony is an annual tradition.

During the performance there will be food items for sale. Hot dogs, snacks, baked goods, & beverages will be available. Come for dinner and entertainment! Everyone Welcome! Bring a friend!





Rev. Melissa Stoller Elected Bishop

The Rev. Melissa L. Stoller was elected on June 13 to serve a six-year term as bishop of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). She is the first woman to hold the position of Bishop in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod.

The election took place during the synod assembly, held June 12-14 at La Roche University. Rev. Stoller was elected on the fourth ballot with 189 votes.

"In these liminal times, it is important that we strengthen our ties," Rev. Stoller said, "so that we may be Church together, communities of justice of hope, sharing the Good News with our neighbors."

The bishop-elect has served as Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) and Assistant to the Bishop for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod since 2017. Prior to this role, she was Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Penn Hills, Pennsylvania (2011-2016), Trinity Lutheran Church in Cook, Minnesota (2005-2010), and Intern Pastor at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy in Russia (2003-2004). Before entering ordained ministry, she worked in housing and healthcare advocacy for the Minnesota Senior Federation. Her current synod leadership includes stewardship coaching, transitional ministry training, and vocational formation initiatives.

Rev. Stoller earned her Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Governmental Affairs from Augustana University.

Rev. Stoller begins the work of bishop on September 1, and will be installed on Saturday, October 18, 1 PM at Berkeley Hills Lutheran Church, 517 Sangree Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15237.

The Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow has served as bishop since 2007 and was re-elected for a total of three terms. He will retire on August 31.

JULY AND AUGUST SUMMER CONCERT SERIES
3:00 PM – FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
214 NORTH PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE – APOLLO



SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2025
GIBBONS BIG BAND



SUNDAY, AUGUST 17, 2025
ALLE-KISKI COMMUNITY BAND

REMINDER

REMINDER

As you read in the June Newsletter, we are having a dinner for Pastor Phil on Saturday, July 26. We are asking each attendee, or anyone unable to attend the dinner, to write a note to Pastor Phil. Your note may include a memorable moment, express your personal thanks, or simply convey your appreciation. This gesture aims to demonstrate our gratitude for Pastor Phil's significant contributions to us, our church and community. All collected notes will be presented to Pastor Phil at the dinner. If you prefer not to write a note, a card would also be appreciated. We believe these notes will serve as a valued keepsake for him to read and cherish.

Please return your note and reservation form by **Friday, July 11th**.

You can give it to Dot Doty at church, or,

Mail to: Apollo First Lutheran Church, P.O Box 275, Apollo, PA 15613
Attention: Dot Doty

**PASTOR PHIL'S RETIREMENT DINNER
SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT 4:30 PM
RESERVATION FORM
DUE BY 7/11/25**

Name: _____

of Adults attending: _____

of Children _____

12 & Under \$5

Under 6 Free

Pastor's Gift: _____

Total Enclosed: _____

Phone No. _____

Over time, the tomato plants keep growing. New leaves emerge, and the stalks and stems grow taller and wider. A yellow flower blooms, and soon, green and then red fruit begins to form.

What I fail to remember each year is that underneath the torn-up plant, strong roots are being strengthened and continue to grow. Just because part of the plant was eaten doesn't mean it didn't have what it needed to flourish.

Just as in our faith life, it takes work to see growth and the bearing of any fruits. Yet God continues to work in our lives. We pray and care for our neighbors, we go to church, we read our Bibles, we practice kindness, and we find our faith strengthened.

So often, our lives get battered and bruised by the world around us, by medical emergencies and relationship challenges, yet God continues to nurture and nourish us. God provides us with the faith, support and love to keep growing.

This summer, when your patience is tested and you're tired of hearing your kids say they're bored or that they want another snack, remember that God will be with you, strengthening you for the days ahead.

Living Lutheran

Strengthening roots

Growing together — June 2025

By Kimberly Knowle-Zeller

June 4, 2025



Focal verse

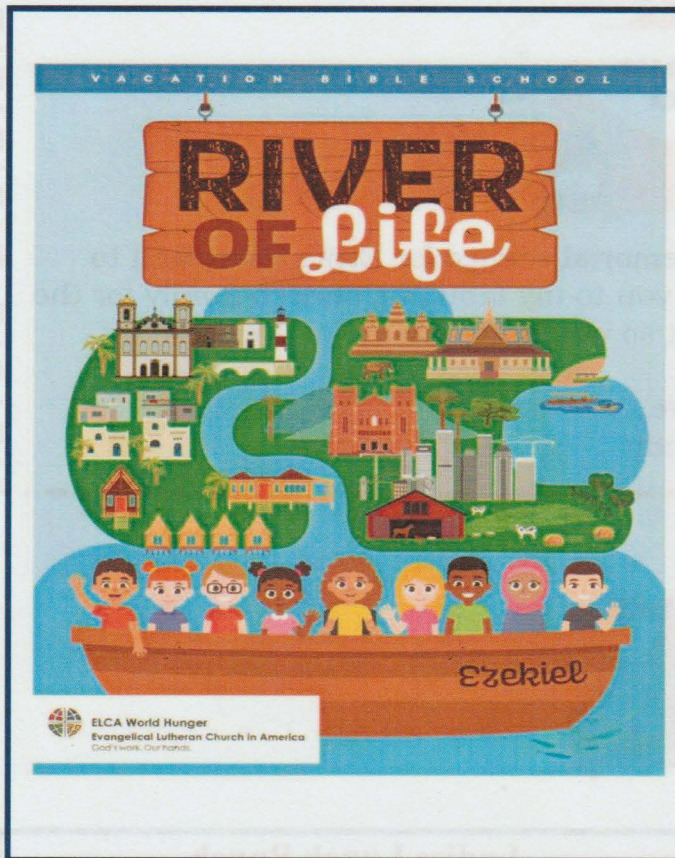
“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Reflection

Most summers, when we plant our garden, the same pattern emerges: we work the ground and soil, we weed and till, and we plant seeds and vegetables. We water, and then we wait. I say a few prayers and check the garden every morning.

Every year, inevitably, our tomato plants get eaten before we put a fence around them. Whether the work of a groundhog, a deer, a rabbit or perhaps bugs, one morning I’ll go to the garden and find half-eaten tomato plants. With a sigh, I keep tending to the plants, and we erect a fence to keep the animals out. I usually feel defeated and question why I have a garden in the first place.

But I wait. And I don’t give up.



SAVE THE DATES!! FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH ADULT – V.B.S.

Come and enjoy the same fun you did as a kid at our Adult Vacation Bible School. Join us for some Bible fun and laughter!

August 11 – 14
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Call the church office or see Lisa Carnahan to register.



We are happy to announce Pastor Caroline Clifford has been hired to replace Pastor Phil upon his retirement. She will be our transitional interim with a three month contract starting August 1, 2025. Her education & work history is included with this month's newsletter.

July's Memory Verse Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.



LAND OF THE FREE, HOME OF THE BRAVE!
HAVE A HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!





Thank you to Pastor Phil for a beautiful memorial service for Ernie Miller and to Gregg for his beautiful music. Also thank you to my fabulous church family for the calls, cards and caring words. They meant so much.

Love,
Candy



Men's Breakfast Buddies

Men's Breakfast Buddies will be
Saturday, July 12, 2025
@ 8:30 a.m.

Ladies Lunch Bunch

Ladies Lunch Bunch will be
Saturday, July 12, 2025
Ladies will meet at the church @ 11:00 a.m.
to go to Villa Ballanca in Lower Burrell



2025 Summer Concerts

Take a break on your Sunday afternoon and join us for our annual Summer Concerts at First Church Apollo. Be sure to invite your friends and neighbors! All concerts start at 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 20 – Gibbons Big Band

Sunday, August 17 - Alle-Kiski Community Band

A reminder that any announcements that you would like included in the newsletter need to be given to the Office by the 20th of the month. Printing of the newsletter begins before the day of assembly.

June Council Highlights

1. Council received information from synod about a pastor to step in when Pastor Phil retires. The Finance Committee was present to go over compensation for a new interim. A meeting was set up for the Council to meet the candidate on June 16th. Information including the last couple of annual reports and other information was mailed to the pastor.
2. For God's Work Our Hands day we plan to assist the Apollo Lions Club in cleaning up the Apollo Cemetery (it is behind River View Cemetery).
3. Leslie Smeltzer will be on vacation June 27 – July 6th as had been previously planned before she accepted the secretary position.



The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Sandra Duncan, James & Christine Calhoun, Gregory Calhoun, and Christopher (Jamie Shiring) Calhoun and families upon the recent death of their mother, Arline Calhoun, on May 28, 2025.

The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Candy Emahiser upon the recent death of her fiancé, Ernie Miller, on June 7, 2025.

The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Sylvia Patterson and family upon the recent death of her brother, Bob Reed, on June 21, 2025.

+Grant eternal rest unto them O Lord+
+And may perpetual light shine upon them+

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

214 N Pennsylvania Avenue
(724) 478-1283

P.O. Box 275

Apollo, PA 15613
office@flcapollo.org

A congregation of the Southwest Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Month July, 2025

PASTORAL PARAGRAPHS

Coming and Going

This being my last newsletter Pastoral Paragraphs, I want to look back and forward. This is the last of nine interim ministries I've had, plus eight called ministries (where I was in full-time ministry). I checked my record and saw that I did lots of special services:

Southwestern
Pennsylvania Synod
Bishop Kurt Kusserow
412-367-8222

Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
800-638-3522

COUNCIL
Mary Beamer
Lisa Carnahan
Carmen Cypher
Cal Deemer
Dorothy Doty
Kim Harmon
Debbie Kerr
Pr Phil Ramstad
Georgia Richardson
Cindy Shaner

STAFF
Pr Phil Ramstad
Ken Carnahan
Lisa Carnahan
Dorothy Doty
Ben Coulter
Gregg LeMay
Georgia Richardson
Leslie Smeltzer

| | <u>FLCA*</u> | <u>TOTAL**</u> |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Baptisms | 42 | 405 |
| Confirmations | 4 | 180 |
| Marriages | 27 | 248 |
| Funerals | 136 | 549 |
| Members Received | 155 | ? |

* = First Lutheran Church, ** = total through my sixty years of ministry.

I was with you for 13 years and loved every day of it. You saw me through three significant times in my life: the death of Lynne, back problems that were rectified with surgery, and my divorce. You have been a wonderful congregation and wonderful friends. Every Sunday when I take off my vestments I thank God for calling me into ministry and for calling me to First Lutheran Church, Apollo.

As I look forward, I must tell you clearly that when I leave July 31st I won't be back except for my funeral (my congregational membership will be here). The reason for not coming back is to let you transfer your needs and loyalty to a new pastor. A new pastor will do things differently than the way I've done them, so be patient and willing to change. You will not honor me if you say to a new pastor, "Pastor Phil didn't do it that way." There's more than one way! God bless you now and always.

Pastor Phil

The Reverend Dr. Philip S. Ramstad, Pastor