

FAITH FORWARD



August 9, 2021

Grace and peace be with you.

First Lutheran's Leadership Team is called to steward the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a unique calling and is different from the guiding principles of a non-religious organization. For 179 years, it has required each generation of leaders at First, to prayerfully respond to the challenges and opportunities presented at specific points of time. As leaders, we are informed by unique contextual and historical realities.

Our Lutheran tradition demands that we consider all things through the lens of faith. Yet, this does not mean that we are prohibited from using the gift of reason. Faith and reason are yoked together. This relational proximity quite often creates situations that are messy and uncertain. The struggle with the bell tower is one example of this.

As representative leaders at First Lutheran, we seek to listen to the members of our faith community. Our faith is relational and so we seek to understand the position of those we worship with. First Lutheran is a diverse gathering of people. This is something that we celebrate. It is however something that makes leadership at First more complicated than a community of like-minded individuals.

The Christian faith also calls us to consider the needs of our neighbors, those who are not part of our community. This means any considerations we make about First Lutheran Church we do so, not just with an eye to our own needs, but also to the needs of those around us. Once again, the bell tower, and the extensive consideration we have given to the current situation, provides an example of how we take this call to serve our neighbor seriously.

Last Wednesday, August 4, the First Lutheran Leadership Team received a proposal from the Community Save The Bell Tower Team asking that the decision to demolish the bell tower be reversed. After thorough reflection and conversation, guided and informed by the varied complexities and considerations outlined above, we have reluctantly, yet resolutely, voted to stand by the June 23 decision to demolish the bell tower.

We recognize and appreciate the effort put forth by the community to save the tower. The efforts of the community have been thorough and passionate. This outcome should in no way be a negative reflection upon the efforts of the Community Team. We also affirm the dedicated and professional work of the many contractors, engineers, and city employees who have sought a path to save the tower. They too should not be the recipient of critique as they provided their professional services. First Lutheran, as the owner of the bell tower, bears sole responsibility for this decision.

We long and pray for the day when we can together find healing and new paths to focus our passions on in a world that desperately needs unified voices.

In Christ, Pastor Brian Ferguson and the First Lutheran Leadership Team

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The Purpose of First Lutheran is to Share the Love of God