

FEB 2025

The Flame

A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS AND FRIENDS



“We’re excited to have Curt Wollan, who helped create the series, coming here to direct our production.”

More Fun With The Church Basement Ladies!

THE IDEA BEHIND WORKS OF ART, WHETHER IT’S THEATRE, MUSIC, BOOKS, PAINTINGS, OR ANY OTHER FORM OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION CAN COME FROM A VARIETY OF UNEXPECTED PLACES. THIS ONE COMES DIRECT FROM YOUR LOCAL CHURCH BASEMENT KITCHEN!

THE LAST (POTLUCK) SUPPER opened at the Plymouth Playhouse in Plymouth, MN on August 1, 2013. It was produced by Curt Wollan with Troupe America Inc., who will be directing our production this summer. The show features the same five characters as the previous shows in the series that so many of you have enjoyed here – Pastor Gunderson, Vivian Snustad, Mavis Gilmerson, Karin Engelson, and Beverly Engelson Hauge. While they are decidedly Minnesotan / Midwestern in locale and flavor, the nine Church Basement Ladies musicals have played to over four million audience members in 48 states and Canada.

As we begin, it is 1979, the day of the church’s Centennial Celebration, and folks have gathered to share hotdish, bars, and stories from the

last 100 years. As the women work in the kitchen, shared memories burst into life through a series of flashbacks. Travel back to 1897 and meet Vivian’s grandmother; see Karin as a newlywed cautiously navigating the politics of the kitchen; and be there in 1944 when Mavis first barreled her way through the door. The Centennial Celebration is bittersweet. Times are tough in this small farm community, and hard decisions have to be made, with Karin now head of the Council.

The idea for turning the work of authors /humorists Janet Letnes Martin and Suzann Nelson into musical comedies came out of a conversation Curt Wollan had with his in-laws about how to



CELEBRATING 61 YEARS OF KLOPCIC FAMILY HOSPITALITY!

celebrate the work of the women who ran the church kitchen. Both 100 percent Norwegian-American Lutheran, Martin and Nelson are high-demand speakers and performers. The two met in 1964 during Freshman Week at Augsburg College in Minneapolis and became lifetime friends and partners in writing. Together they've co-authored nine Scandinavian American "heartwarming humor" books, including "Growing Up Lutheran: What Does This Mean?" which was a national best seller and won them the 1998 Minnesota Book Award for Humor.

THE LAST POTLUCK SUPPER is funny and down to earth, and will no doubt bring back memories for many of you. Perhaps some of you are church ladies yourselves, or were raised by one. They are the salt of the earth, the heart of the community, and very entertaining! Here are a few reviews the series has enjoyed throughout the Midwest:

" . . . an affectionate peek at community life with a pinch of whimsy . . ."

- St. Paul Pioneer Press

" . . . a clever take on worship life, no matter what your stripe."

- Minneapolis Star Tribune

"You don't have to be Lutheran to get all the gags . . ."

- Fargo Forum

"Bus drivers report people are still doubled over with laughter when they get back on their chartered bus."

- Minot Daily News

We look forward to seeing YOU
in the church basement soon!

Scenes from other Regional Theatre
productions of THE LAST POTLUCK
SUPPER.



THE INSIDE SCOOP



**Emmanuel
Church Morrison**

Rich Criss - leading by example, blessing others as he has been blessed!

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER!

Rich Criss and Lynelle, his wife of 33 years, grew up in Fulton, IL, not far from where they are now in Morrison. During his time away from the area, Rich earned a degree in Vocal Music Education from NIU in DeKalb where he then worked as a full time firefighter and paramedic while also serving as part time Director of Music at First United Methodist. There he founded the ecumenical Celebration Chorale that performed Christmas, Easter, and Patriotic productions each year.

After 13 years there, Rich was called to his current position at Emmanuel Church to serve as Music Coordinator and lead the Senior Ministry. Since 2007, he and their dynamic Senior Pastor have built a robust regional ministry that survived Covid 19 and continues to thrive. He directs two adult choirs and leads a blended worship service that features traditional organ music as well as a contemporary band with "drums and all" each week. It's become their niche and their unique draw for all ages to worship together. He also directs the 85-voice "Voices of

Praise" which present Christmas and Spring cantatas each year.

Emmanuel's Senior Ministry is largely offered through their YEAH group - Young & Energetic At Heart. Rich leads the group on a mix of service activities such as providing 10 weekly community meals each spring and fall that serve 300-400 people each and an annual mission to serve the homeless in Lansing, Michigan with monthly entertainment and social opportunities. These are mostly affordable day trips including musicals at Circa '21 in nearby Rock Island and The Fireside's Christian Concert series (a 2.5 hour trip) plus an annual mystery trip and at least one multi-day tour. This year's Christmas in Nashville trip sold out in six days and he's excited to return to the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter in Kentucky. (You need two days there and he recommends you do the Creation Museum first.)

In addition to Rich's work with the music and senior ministries at Emmanuel, he teaches piano and voice lessons, serves on the Board

“ I remind my travelers to be kind, generous, and loving to all staff they encounter along the way. That's how we make a difference for Christ.”

of Morrison Community Hospital, and drives school bus every day. That gig started out as occasional help for his daughter's sports team and has expanded over time into its own little ministry. Rich loves the daily interaction and outreach that occurs with "his other kiddos" where he has an opportunity to "positively affect their lives." He's particularly involved with the Fulton football team, taking them to all of their away games and praying with them.

From this small city of 4,100, Rich Criss and his ministry makes a difference in many lives. He wants his groups to be the tour that blesses others as they have been blessed. That's why he encourages spreading kindness, generosity, and love wherever they go. We are always thrilled to have them visit us and can certainly see why his programming has been so successful!

KNOW WHAT'S NEW!

HAVE YOU SEEN ALL OF OUR NEW LOOKS?

Shortly after Ryan and Kristi Kloplic purchased The Fireside from Ryan's parents in 2015, they embarked on a facility-wide renovation that would make a remarkable impact on the already beautiful decor throughout the building.

Room by room they created stunning new looks with the creative team at Spolar Studios in Milwaukee. If you haven't been here in a while, you've missed a lot! Here are just a few shots of the most recent projects.

Early in 2023, the front desk, bakery, and souvenir photo spot did a three-way switch which improved the traffic flow, service and appearance for all three areas. Prior to that, the re-imagining of the elevated dining area over the bar with brighter colors and "cloud bulbs" lightened up not only that area but cast a new glow on the areas around it.

Recently, a silver replica of the Flame of Friendship sculpture that stands outside The Fireside was created and placed next to the fireplace. This serves as a reminder of the flame's symbolism for extending our spirit of warmth and hospitality to all guests. Above the fireplace, our "upstairs" seating has become a favorite spot for many. This new look with mountains surrounding the dining area (and extremely comfortable chairs!) in a quieter area makes for a truly relaxing experience.

Most recently, the walls surrounding the upper lounge were transformed into this magical look. Enjoy a cocktail here before the show and you'll feel like you're relaxing in the Rocky Mountains!

The theatre itself was upgraded in 2024 with all new carpet and seats, insuring your comfort as you sit back, relax, and enjoy the show!



THANKS TO THE ARTISTS OF SPOLAR STUDIOS!

SEE WHAT'S COOKING



FEATURED MENU

*For Thursday, Friday, and Saturday Matinees,
Saturday Evenings,* and Sunday MIDDAY.*

Asian Salad

An Asian Vegetable Mix with Cashews and Sesame Dressing topped with Fried Rice Noodles

Freshly Baked Breads from our Artisan Bakery

Braised Pork Belly

Succulent Duroc Pork Belly scored and seared to perfection. Braised slowly in Soy Sauce, Brown Sugar, and its natural juices until tender.

Supreme Cut Chicken Breast

Seasoned with Lemon Pepper and Seared.

Thai Grilled Shrimp

Fresh Shrimp, Onions, Bell Peppers, and Pineapple placed on bamboo skewers and marinated in Lemongrass, Sweet Chiles, and Garlic. Charred on the grill and served with an Apricot Lemongrass Chutney.

With Fried Rice with Peas, Onion, and Egg, and Honey Glazed Carrots.

Vegetarian Cacciatore

Lemon Chess Pie

Creamy Lemon Custard garnished with Fresh Whipped Cream and diced Fresh Strawberry Coulis.

Coffee, Tea and Milk

The Thursday Evening Signature Buffet begins with our Signature Salad topped with Papaya Chutney Dressing and served with Freshly Baked Breads. Enjoy two special entrée selections in addition to Beef Tenderloin and Roast Turkey from the Carving Station, Barbecued Pork Back Ribs, Chicken Tenderloin Tempura with Brandied Apricot Sauce, Beer Batter Fried Cod, Shrimp and Scallops Fusilli with Tomato Butter Sauce, Fresh Atlantic Salmon, Sweet Potato Soufflé, Garlic and Herb Whipped Potatoes and Steamed Farm Fresh Vegetables. Lemon Chess Pie for dessert plus coffee, tea and milk.

The Sunday Matinee Brunch begins with Pastries from our Bakery to enjoy with a Honey Glazed Fresh Fruit Medley with Yogurt and Natural Granola. We'll have two meats at the carving station along with the buffet of Eggs Benedict on Jones Canadian Bacon, Scrambled Eggs, Jones Bacon and Sausage Links, Chicken Tenderloin Tempura with Brandied Apricot Sauce, Biscuits and Sausage Gravy, Fresh Atlantic Salmon, Bread Pudding, Breakfast Potatoes, a featured Beef Tenderloin dish, and Steamed Farm Fresh Vegetables. Lemon Chess Pie for dessert plus coffee, tea and milk.

Saturday Evening's menu also includes an Appetizer course.

For THE LAST POTLUCK SUPPER we have several delicious options on our menu, all starting with an Asian Salad. This salad features many awesome flavors, colors, and textures including shredded green and purple cabbage, daikon radishes, carrots, snap peas, and bell pepper. We'll toss it with a sweet sesame oil dressing and top it with toasted cashews and fried rice noodles for a delicious crunch.

One featured entree is our Braised Pork Belly which was very popular last season. It will be prepared by searing the pork belly until crisp. We will then braise it in soy sauce and brown sugar until the pork becomes meltingly tender. It'll be served sliced and roasted at high heat to give it a delicious, caramelized bark. This will come with Fried Rice and Glazed Carrots. It's the perfect blend of sweet and savory.

A new featured entree was previously offered as a menu upgrade - Thai Grilled Shrimp. There will be six large shrimp marinated in a sweet chili sauce, with each skewer also having a mix of red onions, pineapple, and bell peppers. This will be grilled until the sugar in the marinade has a nice smoky char. We'll serve it with a side of Apricot Lemongrass Dipping Sauce.

Another new option is a Vegetarian Cacciatore. This has a sauce of San Marzano tomatoes, garlic, onions, red wine, and olives. We'll add crumbled tofu and cook it until all the flavors are evenly combined. This sauce will be served over ribbons of pappardelle pasta and topped with Parmesan cheese and fresh basil. Simple yet delicious!

Jeremiah Cook
Executive Chef



Coming Shows!

We look forward to helping you promote your trips to The Fireside. Promotional materials can be ordered for any of our upcoming shows through Group Sales or on our website.

GROUP SALES CORNER



For personal help with any of your bookings, call us at 920-563-9505 or email groupsales@firesidetheatre.com.

I grew up going to a Lutheran Church in Newark, Illinois – a small Norwegian community. Funeral Corn, Hotdish, Kumla, Kringla, and Uff Da were common words in my house while growing up.

I remember every Easter the youth of the church helped prepare and serve the Sunrise Breakfast in the basement of the church. I had no idea then that one day there would be books and musicals written about the legend of the "Church Basement Ladies."



When I saw the first CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES show here in 2017 I laughed so much, mainly wondering if those kind of antics really happened in the basement of the Newark Lutheran Church of my childhood!? After that I looked forward to each new show in the series because I knew they would be just as funny.

Maybe you feel the same, because we have many dates that are nearly sold out. If you haven't already booked a date, call very soon. You don't want to miss it! Does this picture bring back any memories for you?



Our Elvis tribute, BACK IN THE BUILDING, is off to a great start and we're really looking forward to WEST SIDE STORY and the change of pace MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS will bring. Please give us a call to book an outing for your group. We're here Monday through Friday from 10 - 5 at 920-563-9505 - just ask for Group Sales. Or email your request to groupsales@firesidetheatre.com. Happy Traveling!

Franki Elmore
Franki Elmore, Group Sales Lead



GIFT SHOP SPOTLIGHT



Shop online anytime
at firesidetheatre.com

Peaches! For the taste of a homemade summer treat!

You're going to love Boston International's new Fresh Cut Peaches Collection, featuring the vibrant peach themed artwork of Lucille Price. From tea towels and aprons to wood bowls and trays and peach scented soaps it's a look that celebrates spring, summer, and freshness. Paired with some of the most delicious Country Home Creations easy to use dip mixes, you'll definitely win any potluck supper you attend!



CONTACT US TODAY AND SAVE!

CALL 920-563-9505

EMAIL groupsales@firesidetheatre.com

ONLINE FiresideTheatre.com

GROUPS ARE OUR SPECIALTY - SO SPECIAL DISCOUNTS APPLY!

WHAT IS A GROUP?

At The Fireside, there are many benefits for any group of 13 or more people (18 for the Sunday Middy). Our prices include both dinner and the show, however gratuity is not included.

Hold seating with a small deposit while you finalize your count, due four weeks before your visit. For weekday matinees, 18 paid tickets earns a complimentary package. For all other shows it's every 21st ticket. There is plenty of safe, free parking on-site for coaches and cars. The Fireside is accessible to guests with disabilities. Please let us know what special needs you have when making reservations.

- Save up to \$17.00 per person over individual ticket prices when you book a group of 13 or more. Please see our menu page for the menu choices for THE LAST POTLUCK SUPPER.
- The three-course dinner and show for groups of 13 or more is \$83.29 (\$78.95 tax exempt) per person - NO INCREASE FROM 2024.
- The Premier Group Rate offers an additional discount of \$3.00 per person when your group attends a performance of THE LAST POTLUCK SUPPER from June 5 - 29, 2025.
- 2025 Premier Group Rate is \$80.13 (\$75.95 tax exempt) per person.
- The four-course Saturday Night Group rate is the same price as the other shows!
- 2025 Youth Group Rates for ages 14 and under with the youth meals are offered at \$60.08 (\$56.95 tax exempt) per youth.
- 2025 School Group Rates are available for Thursday and Friday matinees as low as \$72.95 tax exempt rate per student. Chaperones qualify for the Group Rate.