



Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Bethlehem News



Dear Friends in Christ,

It is hard to believe as January is behind us we will soon welcome Ash Wednesday and the Lenten Season.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14, 2024 and so does our emphasis on Moses' book called Exodus. In it, Moses asks Pharaoh to let God's people go seven times (Exodus 5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3) and Pharaoh finally does it! When he does, God's salvation is so amazing that the event becomes the Gospel of the Old Testament. Israel's Scriptures mention the exodus 125 times!

Throughout the book of Exodus God reveals who he is through his absence and his presence, through his silence and his speech, through his wrath and his mercy, and through his judgment and his amazing grace. In doing so, the book paints a beautiful portrait of *Jesus*. I will be doing a sermon series on Exodus starting with Ash Wednesday and finishing on Easter Sunday. Lent one through five will be during our Wednesday service starting at 10:30am.

Sermon plans are as follows:

Ash Wednesday "**Big Things with Small Stuff**" (Exodus 2:1-10)

Lent One "**How God Changes Us**" (Exodus 3:1-14)

Lent Two "**Stop Trying and Start Trusting**" (Exodus 14:1-29)

Lent Three "**Strike the Rock!**" (Exodus 17:1-7)

Lent Four "**Mine!**" (Exodus 20:1-17)

Lent Five "**Digging Ourselves into a Hole**" (Exodus 32:1-14)

Palm Sunday "**A New Beginning!**" (Exodus 34:1-8)

Maundy Thursday "**Access!**" (Exodus 24:1-11)

Good Friday "**Agnus Dei**" (Exodus 12:1-13)

Easter "**Against all Odds!**" (Exodus 15:1-18)

The Sunday Morning Bible Class will look at the exciting history and theology connected with the book of Exodus. *It will all be very practical and useful!* There is also a Lenten devotional booklet based on Exodus. I can send out a link to those who are interested. I will also have some available in print for if needed. Dr. Reed Lessing of Concordia Seminary Saint Louis put the devotional and series together so many thanks to God for him and all involved.

You will find this series very enlightening and inspirational as we begin our Lenten season.

Lent gives us an opportunity to reflect on what God has done for us, even though we are in a sinful condition. Ashes can symbolize "dust-to-dust" and remind worshipers of the need for cleansing, scrubbing and purifying. If they are applied during an act of kneeling, "the very posture of defeat and submission expresses humility before God."

May God please you all

Pastor Karl



News and Updates



We are beginning the preparations for this year's VBS. Watch for meeting dates and some of the things we will need in the upcoming newsletters and bulletins. Let me know if you think you may be able to help. We are also planning a field trip for our youth. Details will be forthcoming. Any adults will also be invited.

And remember to check out the books and puzzles in the fellowship hall, where all proceeds go to the youth events and projects. Anytime is a good time to join in on a Bible study. I encourage you to check them out. Yearn to learn with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sandy



February is the 2024 LWML Month, a monthlong celebration for our Bethlehem LWML. We will be selling fresh muffins on Feb 4 to raise funds for "muffins for Mites". Our purple ladies will be ushers and readers for worship services during the month. The February church dinner proceeds will be donated to LWML. On Feb 25, LWML Sunday, we will have a "noisy offering". We ask all members to save their coins for this special offering to support our missions

Pam Rugenstein



We will be replacing the street lights in our parking areas in the near future.

Jeff Kirsch



During January make sure that those eligible apply to Thrivent for their Choice

Dollars to direct to Bethlehem. This is usually done quarterly, but if you have missed a quarter, you can now direct all of 2023 at this time. If this is not done, the money is lost. If you have any questions, please ask me

Betty Willis



Pastor is leading an effort to expand our Evangelism board and our activities. Please let him know if you are interested in becoming involved.



QCD Your RMD To BLC

Are you aware that you can make a tax-free gift to the church from your 401k or IRA?

If you are 72 or older the IRS requires that you to withdraw a minimum amount from your IRA/401k annually. This is known as a required minimum distribution or RMD. The IRS computes this annually at the beginning of the year based on your IRA/401k balance. You are taxed on this withdrawal at your regular tax rate. If you fail to withdraw this amount, the tax penalty is 50% each year.

However, if you contribute to a charity (Bethlehem Lutheran) as part of your RMD, you are not taxed on this amount. The contribution is known as a qualified charitable distribution or QCD. It helps ease the burden of weekly giving while also being a benefit to Bethlehem. Please consider this in helping the church and in reducing your taxes.

Bob Jurs, Stewardship Board

Lent





February 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School Muffins for Mites	5 VBS Meeting 11 AM LWML 1 PM	6	7 10:30 Bible Study	8 4-7 Church Dinner	9	10
11 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	12	13	14 Ash Wednesday 7 PM Worship	15	16	17
18 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	19 President's Day	20	21 10:30 Worship	22	23	24
25 LWML Sunday 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	26	27	28 10:30 Worship	29		

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES	
2	Lori & Chris Jensen
14	Gary & Carolyn Fernberg
21	Mickie and Klaus Naumann

May God Bless Each One of You As
We Celebrate Your Special Day!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS	
3	Al Vine
5	William Weyl
9	Judy Wittenberg
13	Paul Rugenstein
14	Ginny Glander
18	Joseph Kogoy
22	Karen Keiper
23	Norm Wellman
25	Mickie Naumann





Bethlehem Lutheran Church Website:
Phone: 239-694-3878 www.bethlehemlutheranfortmyers.org
Email: bethlehemlc@gmail.com

Prayer Chain Needs

Do you know that Bethlehem has a prayer chain that prays for the sick, dying and hurting needs of our church family?

Call or email Linda at (239) 693-5026 or

jlkirsch3@comcast.net

Your needs will be taken to the Lord!

Sunday Worship

10:30 AM Worship Service

Rev. Karl Glander

pastorkarlglander@gmail.com

239-293-1489

Organist: **Holly Bell**

Church Secretary: **Linda Kirsch**

What is the significance of Lent?

Early in the Church's history, the major events in Christ's life were observed with special observances, such as His birth, baptism, death, resurrection, and ascension.

As these observances developed, a period of time was set aside prior to the major events of Jesus' birth and resurrection as a time of preparation.

During Lent, the Church's worship assumes a more penitential character. The color for the season is purple, a color often associated with penitence. The "Hymn of Praise" is omitted from the liturgy. The word "Alleluia" is usually omitted as well.

By not using the alleluia — a joyful expression meaning "Praise the Lord" — until Easter, the Lenten season is clearly set apart as a distinct time from the rest of the year.

Additionally, it forms a powerful contrast with the festive celebration of Jesus' resurrection when our alleluias ring loud and clear.

Finally, the penitential character of Lent is not its sole purpose. In the ancient Church, the weeks leading up to Easter were a time of intensive preparation of the candidates who were to be baptized at the Easter vigil on Holy Saturday.

This time in the Church's calendar was seen as an especially appropriate time for Baptism because of the relationship between Christ's death and resurrection and our own in Holy Baptism (see Rom. 6:1-11).

This focus would suggest that the season of Lent serves not only as a time to meditate on the suffering that Christ endured on our behalf but also as an opportunity to reflect upon our own Baptism and what it means to live as a child of God.

Ash Wednesday

Lutheran Worship: History and Practice, a commentary on Lutheran Worship, one of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod's hymnals, says this about ashes on Ash Wednesday: "Other customs may be used, particularly the imposition of ashes on those who wish it. This ancient act is a gesture of repentance and a powerful reminder about the meaning of the day.

Ashes can symbolize dust-to-dustness and remind worshipers of the need for cleansing, scrubbing, and purifying. If they are applied during an act of kneeling, the very posture of defeat and submission expresses humility before God."

The use of ashes on Ash Wednesday is a more recent custom among most LCMS congregations, although some have done it for decades.

Usually, the pastor takes the ashes on the end of his thumb and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each worshiper, saying these words: "Remember: you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This follows most effectively prior (or as part of) the Service Corporate Confession and Absolution on pages 290-291 of the *Lutheran Service Book*.