

The SPIRIT *March 2026*

The Lenten Journey

Lenten Practices

Lent is a time of many different traditions and practices. There are some people who fast on specific days of the week or fast from sweet treats. Some people prefer taking on devotionals or spiritual practices during Lent. I once wrote down 5 things I was thankful for each night of Lent.

Lenten practices like these and others are meant to remind us of God's constant closeness to us. It is a season where we remember Jesus' time wandering in the wilderness and that we too are in a wilderness of our own as we prepare for the slow climb up the mountain to face the cross. We need to remember that God is near at hand, ready with the promise of the resurrection.

Time spent in the wilderness feels particularly relevant this year (or maybe I just feel close to the wilderness this Lent). We are in a time when our country is extremely divided, and the world is changing at a rapid pace. The news is rarely comforting, and it can be difficult to recognize where God is in each moment.

So, as we walk through this wilderness together, I encourage you to find a practice that helps you feel close to God. Find ways to cut through the noise and screams of the world to sit in the silent peace that God brings. Make your Lenten practice life-giving so that the wilderness will not be a scary place, but a place of spiritual wholeness with God.

Blessings,
Vicar Abbey Knappman

This Month's Highlights

- A/V Team Pg. 5
- Food Fight Pg. 5
- Love Thy Neighbor Pg. 7
- Thank You Pg. 7
- Meet Your Council Pg. 10

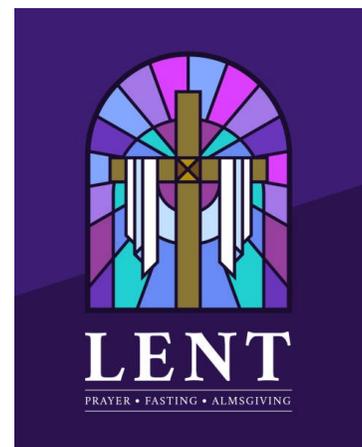


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From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Saints,

Greetings in the name of our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord and coming Savior, Jesus Christ!

Did you know that March was originally the first month of the year in the ancient Roman calendar? That changed sometime between 700 and 450 BCE. The month of March was named for Mars, the Roman god of war, because it marked the time when military campaigns resumed after being paused during the winter months.

Today, however, March is more commonly associated with spring, the season of warmer temperatures, longer days, and renewed life. In this season, we spend more time outdoors, tend to blooming plants, and witness the earth awakening from winter's rest.

As we enter this new season, may we also reflect on the new life we have in Christ. In Holy Baptism, we were buried with Christ and raised with Him. The Old Adam was drowned, and the new creation emerged. And so, our identity as God's people rests not in what we do, decide, or achieve, but in what Christ has done for us in His atoning death and victorious resurrection. From that fountain of grace flows our vocation to care for the world and to serve the neighbor God has placed before us.

So, I encourage you to reflect on this new life by being a good neighbor. It is common for individuals who are preparing to change residences to say, "I hope we have good neighbors." That is a noble aspiration. But we often give little thought to how the receiving community might think about us as we arrive.

The story is told about a boy who believed that his neighbor hated his family. When his father died, the neighbor did not attend the funeral. He even complained, "Your guests blocked my driveway!"

It is one thing to have good neighbors, and another thing to be a good neighbor.

Six years later, when the family decided to move, the boy found an envelope under the door. His hands shook when he saw it was from that same neighbor. Inside was \$40,000 in cash and a note: "Your dad asked me to watch over you if anything happened. I stayed distant so you wouldn't rely on an old man who could die any day. This is from selling my car, my boat, and everything I could for you to go to college. I'm sorry I couldn't be kinder. I just couldn't risk you loving someone else you'd lose."

What did Jesus say about being a neighbor? "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). As Luther teaches in his explanation of the Fifth Commandment, we are not only to avoid harming our neighbor, but to help and support them in every physical need. This is the fruit of faith. We are not justified by our love. We are justified by grace alone through faith alone for the sake of Christ alone. Yet the faith created and sustained by the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments is never idle. It is active in love.

So, we are shaped by God's grace to be good neighbors who are present, compassionate, generous, and faithful reflections of Christ's love in our communities. For this is the life to which we have been called, redeemed by Christ, sustained by His Word and Sacraments, and sent into the world as His instruments of love and mercy.

I do not have to convince you that the world really needs good neighbors, perhaps now more than ever.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Orin

From the Desk of Council President

March 2026 – To me that means Spring is just a few days away!!!

Today I want to talk about Full Communion Partners with other denominations. I find the topic fascinating.

Full communion is when 2 denominations develop a relationship based on a common confessing of the Christian faith and a mutual recognition of Baptism and sharing the Lord's Supper. Merger of 2 denominations is not what we are talking about. It means we are reaching agreements and denominations also respect differences. These denominations can worship together, may exchange clergy and also share a commitment to evangelism, witness and service in the world. Each denomination agrees that even with differences, there is nothing that is church-dividing.

A central document to ELCA Lutherans is the *Augsburg Confession*, which states that "the true unity of the church" is present where the gospel is rightly preached and sacraments rightly administered. The ELCA is committed to this model of full communion as an authentic expression of Christian unity.

ELCA Characteristics of full communion:

- Common confessing of the Christian faith.
- Mutual recognition of Baptism and sharing of the Lord's supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members
- Mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all, subject to the disciplinary regulations of other denominations.
- Common commitment to evangelism, witness and service.
- Means of common decision-making on critical common issues of faith and life.
- Mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between denominations.

ELCA Full Communion partners:

- Presbyterian Church (USA) – 5 locations in Springfield
- Reformed Church in America – 0 locations in Springfield
- United Church of Christ – 6 locations within 50 miles
- The Episcopal Church – 9 locations within 60 miles
- The Moravian Church – 0 locations in Springfield
- United Methodist Church – 45 locations with 50 miles

So, if you travel and there is no ELCA Church close by, please give consideration to attend one our Full Communion partners.

When was you last time you brought a friend or neighbor to your Church – Messiah?

Crosslines

At Crosslines February 5th, Carolyn Gerdes, Martha Morris, Dean McDowell, Patty Hangen, Sheila Schaefer, Vicar Abbey, Jack and Carol Flanders and Susan Lane served 109 families/254 people. Messiah donated 72 lbs of dry goods and canned food this month! We are still collecting plastic grocery bags and Best Choice UPC labels. Any donations can go in the wagon. Cash donations are always welcome.

A/V Team

The Messiah Audio/Visual team is looking for volunteers to help with the slide presentation for the Saturday and Sunday services in both the Sanctuary and for our online live stream. Volunteers are usually only scheduled once a month. Slide advancement is an easy position that does not take much training. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering or if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Drew Bowman
A/V Technician
drew.bowman@messiahmo.org

“Food Fight” for Holland School

Springfield Public Schools will compete for the title of “Food-Fight” Champion while raising meals for our neighbors facing hunger.

Messiah will be helping Holland Elementary School (our community partner) in their goal of collecting non-perishable food items for **Ozarks Food Harvest to distribute. All foods will be distributed locally.**

Next time you are in the grocery, give a thought to this effort and pick up an item or two of canned goods or other non-perishable foods to bring to church. Boxes will be set up in the entry and office for your contributions from **Feb. 27 to March 12. Last year we filled 3 boxes to overflowing.** Our challenge this year is to fill 4!

Thanks for your help and support!!
Holland School Committee



Parish Life

Sunday Morning Fellowship Time

Our committee continues to host “coffee hour” in the fellowship hall following Sunday morning worship. Please join us for refreshments and the opportunity to visit and fellowship with your church family.

Lenten Suppers on 4, 11, 18, & 25

Supper will be provided by different groups from within the church throughout Lent on Wednesday evenings from 5:15 -6:30pm. Below is a list of the groups and what they provide. Come join us for food and fellowship.

March 4	Music Ministries	Taco bar
March 11	Property & Lay Internship	Sloppy Joes & Sides
March 18	Congregational Care & Evangelism	Potato bar
March 25	Men's Bible Study	Soup & Bread

Easter Breakfast

This year we are doing things a little differently. We will be having a breakfast potluck following the Sunday morning service. There will be a signup sheet in Mission Hall mid-March for breakfast casseroles, fruit and pastries. Beverages will be provided. Please plan to join us.

Congregational Care

Our forty-day Lenten journey began Ash Wednesday: “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” It is time for reflection, repentance, and renewal. We pause to remember who we are as well as humbly think about our relationships with one another and with God. Thankfully we are beloved by God and held by grace.

While reading an article from the Clergy Coaching Network Forum by Rick Kirchoff, he asked the question, “Were you part of the movement WWJD: What Would Jesus Do?” Today we might commit ourselves to a different acronym: “DWJT: Do What Jesus Taught.”

Jesus clearly taught us the Great Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind....and you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37-39). He also gave us the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

Actions to be lived: Love your enemies (Matt 5:44), Forgive seventy times seven (Matt 18:22), Care for the least of these (Matt 25:40), Seek first the Kingdom of God (Matt 6:33), Take the log out of your own eye (Matt 7:5), Build your house (your life) on the rock (Matt 7:24-27), Go and do likewise (Luke 10:37).

World leaders have been influenced by Jesus. Bishop Donna Simon recently mentioned Mahatma Gandhi, known for his selflessness, knew Jesus and employed nonviolent resistance in the Salt March of 1930. Recently we witnessed Buddhist monks “walking for peace, life, hope, truth and love.” Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his life to nonviolence and civil rights. Mother Teresa exemplified love for everyone she encountered. True leadership looks like humility in action.

Hopefully, as we reflect on DWJT: Do What Jesus Taught, the written story of our footprints will be a blessing of love, resilient hope and renewal in today’s broken world.

Lunch & Scripture

Everyone is welcome to join us at MaMa Jean’s on the corner of South Campbell and Sunshine for Lunch and Scripture on **March 10 at 12 noon**.

If you have any questions please reach out to Ileen Kendall.

Choir News!!!

Alleluia Singers continue to thrive! We are gaining new members and working hard to prepare inspiring music for the Lenten and Easter seasons.

We will be hosting the Lenten dinner on March 4th. It will be a taco bar so please come join us for food and fellowship!

And while you are eating tacos, chat with our choir members and find out more about our choir ministry. If you enjoy singing praises to our Lord, come join us every Wednesday evening following the Lenten service in the choir loft. We would love to have you in our choir family!

In His Name,

Sheryl Hansen
Choir Director



We invite the women of Messiah to join us for Wine, Wit and Wisdom on **Thursday, March 26th at 5:30 p.m. for dinner and fellowship**.

This month we will meet at **Palm and Paddle Grille, 2515 S. Campbell Ave., Suite 400**. We would love to have you come whenever you are available. We meet every fourth Thursday of the month.

For more information, please contact Debbie Corlett at 417-848-9426 or email me at debbiecorlett@sbcglobal.net

Messiah Book Club

We will meet March 12 at 2:30 p.m. in the Library at church.



March 2026 The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters, published 2023, is a debut novel that follows a Mi'kmaq family from Nova Scotia who travel to Maine each summer to pick blueberries. The story centers on the disappearance of four-year-old Ruthie from the fields, and the impact it has on her brother Joe, the last to see her.

Thank You!!!

Thank you to everyone who supported the youth group and helped with the Mardi Gras pancake breakfast. The youth would also like to extend their gratitude to all who contributed toward the purchase of the Gaga Ball Pit. We are happy to share that it has been purchased and is currently being set up in the Youth Space upstairs.

Gaga ball is a high-energy dodgeball-style game in which players use their hands to keep the ball from hitting their legs. If you would like to see it, please feel free to check it out once it is fully set up.



Love Thy Neighbor

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we journey into this new season, I invite us to reflect on what it means to be a good neighbor, not just as individuals, but as a congregation rooted in God's love and the vibrant diversity of our community. Jesus reminds us in Luke 10:27, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This simple yet profound call guides us as we seek to welcome all into worship and church life.

Being a good neighbor means more than just opening our doors; it means opening our hearts. We are called to reach out, listen, and build relationships across all backgrounds—racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and LGBTQIA+ identities. Inspired by the ELCA's commitment to diversity and inclusion, and Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry's vision for a church that strengthens belonging, our congregation strives to affirm the dignity of every person and ensure that our actions reflect these deep values.

Our church is part of a larger community, and we want to be known for our kindness and care—not only in words, but in action. This includes being prosocial: participating in community events, fostering connections, and supporting those who need a welcome hand. It also means stewarding our property well. We know our electronic welcome sign has become worn and outdated, and it's time to renew our focus on making sure our church remains inviting and accessible to all. The council is actively working to ensure our facilities reflect the warmth and hospitality we want to share with our neighbors.

As we move forward, let's continue to listen for new ways to serve, invite everyone to share their ideas, and nurture a culture where all voices are valued. Together, we can create a church that truly welcomes all—where every neighbor feels seen, heard, and loved.

May God's spirit guide us as we grow in faith, deepen relationships, and live out our calling to be good neighbors.

In Christ's love,

Lindsey Dillion, MS, LPC
Congregation Council

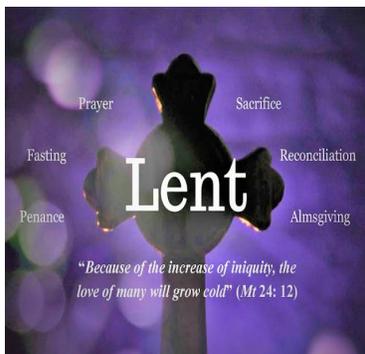
Meet Your Council



Hello, my name is Sarah Gunion, and I am excited to start my term on church council and working with the Worship and Music Committee.

I grew up at Messiah, joining the church when my family moved to Springfield when I was 6. I was very active in youth choirs and bells, as well as with the youth group. I attended Missouri State University for all my degrees (Bachelor of Science in Biology, Master of Science in Student Affairs, and my most recent Master of Accountancy). When I graduated with my first master's, I took a job in Philadelphia at Temple University and was there for 3 years. During that time, I was active in a local church singing in the choir and serving on their church council. Eventually, I decided to move back to the Midwest, and after a brief pit stop back in Springfield, I ended up in Wayne, Nebraska where I worked at Wayne State College. During the 6 years that I was in Nebraska I was involved with a local church and community theater and picked up on a love of the AV world. I moved back to Springfield just in time for COVID and decided to pick up where I left off, rejoining Messiah, and enrolling back at MSU to work on my Master of Accountancy. I graduated with my Master of Accountancy degree in 2025 and now work for the State Auditor's Office. I am also currently working toward my CPA.

If you haven't had a chance to meet me, you will often see me in the back of the church during service helping Drew and Kenny with AV needs. I also sing with the choir when I am between CPA exams.



Faith is not believing God can,
It's knowing **He** will!

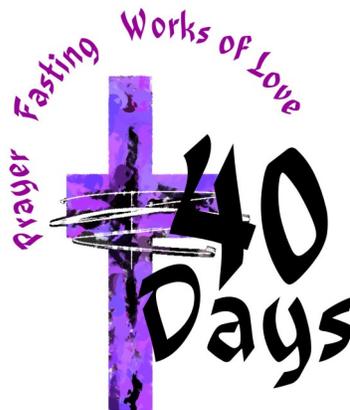
March Flowers

	3/1	7/8	14/15	21/22	28/29
Vase 1	Gene Chrisman			Cathy Carleton	
Vase 2					



Flower Vase Costs

Cost per vase is \$20. Please make checks payable to Messiah Lutheran Church, and then in the memo line, write "Altar Flowers" and the date for which you are paying. If you are using an offering envelope, you will find a line for "Altar Flowers" and the amount.



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MessiahMOELCA



MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

MessiahMoELCA



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*He restores my soul, He leads me in the paths of
 righteousness, for His name's sake. Psalms 23:3*

March Scripture Readings

DATE	FIRST READING	PSALM	SECOND READING	GOSPEL
2/28-3/1	Genesis 12:1-4a	121	Romans 4:1-5, 13-17	John 3:1-17
7/8	Exodus 17:1-7	95	Romans 5:1-11	John 4:5-42
14/15	1 Samuel 16:1-13	23	Ephesians 5:8-14	John 9:1-41
21/22	Ezekiel 37:1-14	130	Romans 8:6-11	John 11:1-45
28/29	Isaiah 50:4-9a	31:9-16	Philippians 2:5-11	Matthew 26:14--27:66

Mark Your Calendars

03/01—03/29	Sunday's Adult Education Forum	03/04—03/25	Alleluia Singers (Wednesday practice)
03/04	No Mutual Ministry Meeting	03/05	Fireflies
03/04—03/25	Lent Wednesday Midweek Service 12 noon	03/10	Lunch & Scripture
03/04—03/25	Lenten Supper Wednesday 5:15-6:30 p.m.	03/15	Lay Internship
03/04	Youth Group 5:30 p.m.	03/15	Church Council Meeting
03/04—03/25	Lent Evening Wednesday Worship 7 p.m.	03/21	National Quilting Day
		03/29	Palm Sunday