



Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Bethlehem News



Dear Friends in Christ

Not long ago we had just celebrated the Birth of Jesus and now marching onto the Lenten Season. Ash Wednesday marks the first day of Lent, the 40 days of fasting and penance that culminate in Easter Sunday. We will wear the sign of the cross made on their foreheads with ashes to mark the holy day.

Though Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Lent was established and accepted only after the early church sorted out how to calculate the date of Easter. At the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, "all the Churches agreed that Easter, the Christian Passover, should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox." Since the spring equinox usually falls on March 21, the date of Easter in the Western Church occurs "between March 22 and April 25."

At Nicaea, the council settled on the 40-day fast period for Lent because it has roots in biblical writings. God sends rain on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights when Noah and his entourage go into the ark (Genesis 7:4). Moses sits atop Mount Sinai receiving instructions from God for 40 days (Exodus 24:18). Elijah "walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb" when he flees Jezebel's wrath (1 Kings 19:8). The 40 days of Lent, however, are primarily identified with the time Jesus spent in the desert fasting, praying, and being tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). But though the length of Lent was set by the council, its start date in relation to Easter was still undecided.

It was not until AD 601 that the start date of Lent was set. Pope Gregory moved the start of Lent to 46 days before Easter, and established Ash Wednesday at the same time. This allowed for 40 days of fasting – where only one full meal and no meat are to be consumed – with six Sundays counted as feast days – when fasting does not apply – for a total of 46 days. He also established the tradition of marking parishioners' foreheads with ashes in the shape of a cross. But why ashes?

The symbolism of marking oneself with ashes traces its history to ancient traditions. The Old Testament depicts several moments of figures who used ashes and sackcloth, both of which were often present when mourning or making a petition or repenting to God. In Esther 4:1, it says that "When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry". In an example of repentance, Job 42:6, as he repented before God, says, "Therefore, I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes". In Daniel 9:3 says, "I turned to the Lord God, to seek help, in prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." Also in Jonah 3:6, after he preached to the people of Nineveh, it says: "When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." And in 1 Maccabees 3:47, it states the army prepared for battle: "That day they fasted and wore sackcloth; they sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their garments."

(Continued on page 3)



News and Updates



I would like to invite everyone to participate in the planning for VBS.

The first meeting is February 2 at 10:30 in the fellowship hall. If you have some ideas and cannot make the meeting, please feel free to contact me via email, klausandmickie@gmail.com, phone, 401-441-8819 or talk to me after Service on Sunday. Thank you in advance for your ideas and participation.

Mickie Naumann



When is the last time you said "thank you" to someone? Maybe they held the door for you, topped off your coffee or gave you a great gift. It's good to show our thanks. How would you say thanks to someone who saved your life? How about if they saved it for all eternity? That's what God has done...for all believers. Good stewardship is a key way we show our thanks. It's not all about money, although we do need to pay the mortgage, utilities, salaries, etc Today let's focus on Time, Talents and Treasure.

There are many ways to show thanks to God without reaching into your wallet. Let's look at opportunities to show our thanks to Him. You can: Usher at services ; play an instrument or sing...we can use you; bring snacks on Sunday; Kitchen help Sundays; Monthly dinners -cook, serve, set up, clean up, bake a dessert ; Help on a committee; Take on a leadership role (Evangelism, Treasurer are open). There are many ways to serve...you may even have other ideas about serving...we welcome them.

Thank you to all who offer their service currently. Join us in showing thanks to God for what He has done for us and given us. All that we have is from Him...Thank Him.

1Peter 4:10 "...use whatever gifts you have received to serve others as good stewards of God's grace...:

May God bless you in all you do.

Your brother in Christ ,

Tim Tobeck



This is the last month to direct your Choice Dollars for last year. If this is not donated the money will be lost. Donations to Bethlehem are appreciated.

Betty Willis



LWM has had a busy January and will have an even busier February. On January 12th we invited the ladies of Bethlehem

to a luncheon. We welcomed 19 ladies and Pastor. Thank you to all who joined us. Some of our new projects included: new artificial plants in the entrance to the fellowship hall and in the narthex, new blue curtains on the back windows of the fellowship hall, a second serving cart for use at the dinners and other projects during the year, and a committee was formed to choose new banners for the walls on the sanctuary.

February is LWM month. The ladies will be ushering and reading the scripture on Sundays. Feb. 8 is muffin Sunday. The muffins may be purchased for a free will donation and either eaten during fellowship time or taken home to enjoy. The quilt raffle is ongoing throughout February and the drawing will be held the last of this month. Our 3rd year of a "noisy" offering will be on the 22nd. Save your coins or dollars for this special offering.

Our next meeting is Feb. 2nd at 1 P.M. All ladies are invited to attend. We hope to see you there.

Sandy

Elders' Monthly Devotion

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WAY

The godly sufferer that's true, godly wisdom is to reverently love God more than all his gifts and to trust the wise goodness of God even though his ways are often beyond the power of man's wisdom to fathom.

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

Job 1:21

Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of God Almighty.

Job 5:17

For He wounds, but He also binds up;

Job 5:18

From six calamities He will rescue you; in the seventh no harm will touch you.

Job 5:19

What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient?

Job 6:11

Why it is so dark you cannot see, and why a flood of water covers you.

Job 22:11

And he said to man: Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and depart from evil, is understanding.

Job 28:28

Today read the Book of Job and reflect on it.

Lord, would you bless and keep us,

Lord, please make your face shine upon us.

Amen



FEBRUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	2 VBS 10:30 AM LWM 1PM	3	4 10:30 Bible Study	5	6	7
8 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School Muffin Sunday	9	10	11 10:30 Bible Study	12 Dinner 4-7 PM	13	14 Valentines Day
15 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	16 President's Day	17	18 Ash Wednesday 7:00 PM Worship	19	20	21
22 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School Noisy Offering	23	24	25 7:00 PM Worship	26	27	28

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES	
14	Carolyn & Gary Fernberg
21	Mickie & Klaus Naumann

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS	
3	Al Vine
9	Judy Wittenberg
13	Paul Rugenstein
14	Ginny Glander
18	Joseph Kogoy
22	Karen Keiper
25	Mickie Naumann

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

Pastor's message continued

In addition to these biblical accounts, there are examples found in the history of the early church. In the book *The History of the Church*, the church historian Eusebius writes about the use of ashes where "an apostate named Natalis came to Pope Zephyrinus clothed in sackcloth and ashes, begging for forgiveness." Another use in the eighth century was for those who were dying, "who were laid on the ground on top of sackcloth and were sprinkled with ashes. The priest would bless the dying person with holy water, saying, 'Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return.'

This month we will celebrate this tradition on Ash Wednesday. Most importantly, however, Ash Wednesday and Lent lead up to the holiest day in the Christian calendar, Easter. Ashes and fasting, both drawing on several biblical traditions, create a season of penitence and expectation as Easter approaches. In this way, the Bible's impact on our rituals and sense of sacred time becomes clear.

Blessings

Pastor Karl P Glander





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

Sunday Worship

10:30 AM Worship Service

Rev. Karl Glander

pastorkarlglander@gmail.com

239-293-1489

Organist: **Holly Bell**

Church Secretary: **Linda Kirsch**

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!



Pastor joins the Bethlehem ladies for the LWM luncheon on January 12th

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these is **love**.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13 NKJV



Last Month:
Offering: \$17,367
Expenses: \$11,492

Lent

