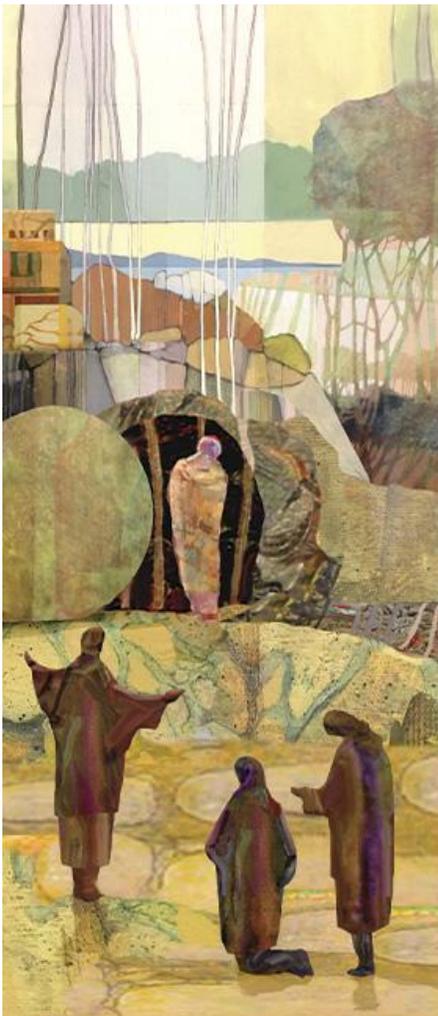


**First Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 W. Decatur St.
Decatur, Illinois
(217) 423-7783**

**Website: www.felcdecatur.org
Email: felc_decatur@outlook.com**

*We have a livestream option on our website!
<https://felcdecatur.org/live>*



**UNBIND HIM,
AND
LET HIM GO**

JOHN 11:44

**March 22, 2026
at 9:30am
Fifth Sunday in Lent
HOLY COMMUNION**

Come Experience God's Unlimited Grace, in a Most Welcoming Place

INTRODUCTION

In today's gospel Jesus reveals his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies God breathing new life into dry bones. To those in exile or living in the shadows of death, these stories proclaim God's promise of resurrection. In baptism we die with Christ that we might also be raised with him to new life. At the Easter Vigil we will welcome the newly baptized as we remember God's unfailing promise in our baptism.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

C: Amen.

P: Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt
and blots out all offenses.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdaining the living
water Christ offers: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound.

Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace.

C: Amen.

***GATHERING SONG**

"Restore in Us, O God"

ELW #328

- 1 Restore in us, O God,
the splendor of your love;
renew your image in our hearts,
and all our sins remove.**

- 2 O Spirit, wake in us
the wonder of your pow'r;
from fruitless fear unfurl our lives
like springtime bud and flow'r.**

- 3 Bring us, O Christ, to share
the fullness of your joy;
baptize us in the risen life
that death cannot destroy.**

- 4 Three-personed God, fulfill
the promise of your grace,
that we, when all our searching ends,
may see you face to face.**

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944

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GREETING

ELW p. 203

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also, with you.**

*KYRIE

ELW p. 203

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray,

C: **Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

CHILDREN'S SERMON

WORD

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a promise that Israel as a nation, though dead in exile, will live again in their land through God's life-giving spirit. Three times Israel is assured that through this vision they will know that "I am the LORD."

¹ The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' ¹² Therefore

prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.”

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths

I cry to you, O LORD;

² **O LORD, hear my voice!**

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

³ If you were to keep watch over sins,

O LORD, who could stand?

⁴ **Yet with you is forgiveness,**

in order that you may be feared.

⁵ I wait for you, O LORD; my soul waits;

in your word is my hope.

⁶ **My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch for the morning,
more than those who keep watch for the morning.**

⁷ O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love;

with the LORD there is plenteous redemption.

⁸ **For the LORD shall redeem Israel**

from all their sins.

ANTHEM

“Behold, The Shepherd”

Natalie Sleth

Second Reading: Romans 8:6-11

For Paul, Christian spirituality entails living in the reality of the Holy Spirit. The driving force behind our actions and values is not our sinful desire for self-satisfaction but the very Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us from the dead.

⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed, it cannot, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of

righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

"We Are Turning"

ELW p. 205

P: The holy gospel according to John the 11th Chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Gospel: John 11:1-48

Jesus is moved to sorrow when his friend Lazarus falls ill and dies. Then, in a dramatic scene, he calls his friend out of the tomb and restores him to life.

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your

brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus began to weep.³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.”⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him.⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council and said, “What are we to do? This man is performing many signs.⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY** *“When Our World is Rent by Violence”*
(Tune: *Fortunatus*)

ACS #1052

- 1** When our world is rent by violence
and our lives are marred by grief,
when our songs of calm assurance
turn to cries of unbelief:
God, we raise our lamentation
seeking refuge and relief.

- 2** When our cities stand forsaken
and the poor must beg for bread,
when the pris'ner sits forgotten
and the homeless find no bed,
God, we raise our lamentation:
waken justice from the dead!

- 3** When our lives are burnt to ashes
and our hopes fade like a dream,
when our stories lose their meaning
and despair becomes their theme,
God, we raise our lamentation:
Come, Lord Jesus, to redeem!

- 4** Raise up beauty from the ashes;
end our violence; tend our peace.
Give us visions of a future
where all captives find release,
where oppression is evicted,
and all works of hatred cease.

Text: David Bjorlin, b. 1984
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***APOSTLES' CREED**

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
 born of the virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,

**was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen**

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

A: We pray for the church. Grant life and peace to all who gather in your name. Breathe into us so that we may share your message of forgiveness, hope, and love. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for creation. Renew landscapes that have dried up, prosper the work of those who restore homes and habitats after natural disasters, and sustain places where biodiversity thrives. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for the nations. Unbind leaders trapped by fear to act boldly for justice, free all who live in places of war and violence, and guide refugees and asylum seekers to safety. We pray especially for peace in the Mideast and Ukraine. Open the hearts of all the world leaders to seek peace. Guard and protect all those serving in the armed forces. Comfort the families of victims of war and conflict. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for all people in need. Take away the stone of poverty that weighs down so many. Console any who weep and heal all who are sick. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for this assembly. Ready the hearts and spirits of all preparing to be baptized. Deepen our wonder at the mystery of your resurrection and life. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We offer our thanksgiving for all people who have died in faith. Give us faith to trust in your power to redeem and save, and bring us up from our graves to life in you. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

C: Amen.

***PEACE**

MEAL

OFFERING

(We thank you for your time, talent, and money toward ministry at FELC and beyond. Please place your money donation in the offering basket at the back of church, or on-line at <https://felcdecatur.org/give>, or by mail.)

OFFERING

“Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery”

**ELW #334
st. 1-3 & Lent 5**

- 1 Tree of Life and awesome myst'ry,
in your death we are reborn;
though you die in all of hist'ry,
still you rise with ev'ry morn,
still you rise with ev'ry morn.**
- 2 We remember truth once spoken,
love passed on through act and word;
ev'ry person lost and broken
wears the body of our Lord,
wears the body of our Lord.**
- 3 Christ, you lead and we shall follow,
stumbling though our steps may be;
one with you in joy and sorrow,
we the river, you the sea,
we the river, you the sea.**

Lent 5

**God of all our fear and sorrow,
God who lives beyond our death,
hold us close through each tomorrow,
love as near as ev'ry breath.**

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.
You call your people to cleanse their hearts
and prepare with joy for the Paschal feast,
that renewed in the gift of baptism,
we may come to the fullness of your grace.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

ELW p. 207

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
you have brought us this far along the way.

In times of bitterness you did not abandon us,
but guided us into the path of love and light.
In every age you sent prophets
to make known your loving will for all humanity.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.



LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p. 208

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

At each worship service FELC celebrates communion around the altar rail using non-alcoholic sacramental wine so that all present may receive God's Grace in this sacrament. If anyone is unable to come to the altar, the Pastor and assistants will bring the sacrament to you. (If possible, please alert the Pastor or Assistant prior to Worship service if you want communion at your seat). You are also welcome to pick up a disposable chalice containing wine or juice at the back of the church. If you are taking communion at the rail and feel less steady on your feet, feel free to come to the front of the communion rail rather than walking around toward the back.

COMMUNION

"Lamb of God"

ELW p. 208

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P: God of our salvation,

**C: we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls,
reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey.**

**Through the body and blood of your Son,
may we become Christ's body in the world,
bearing witness to your love for all creation,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENDING

***BLESSING**

P: Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity:
God, who calls all things into existence,
Jesus Christ, who redeems us,
and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,
✠ bless you now and always.

C: Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

“You Are the Way”

ELW #758

**1 You are the way; to you alone
from sin and death we flee;
all those who search for God, you find
and by your grace set free.**

**2 You are the truth; your word alone
true wisdom can impart;
you only can inform the mind
and purify the heart.**

**3 You are the life; the rending tomb
proclaims your conqu'ring arm;
and those who put their trust in you
not death nor hell shall harm.**

**4 You are the way, the truth, the life;
grant us that way to know,
that truth to keep, that life to win,
whose joys eternal flow.**

Text: George W. Doane, 1799-1859, alt.

***DISMISSAL**

A: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

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Prayer Requests

Barb Ahlenius, Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family,
Peg Books, Jeanie Dennis, Becky Gauble, Shani Goss,
Esther Gregory, Jan Lawson, Sharon Lindeman,
RuthAnn & Don Ruby, Sebastian (Bass) Smallwood,
Mary Ann Stolley, Ken Stolley, Rick Strine, Rudy Zucker Sr.,

*If you'd like to add someone to the Prayer Request list, please contact Kay at the office.
Prayer requests remain on the list for 3 weeks and can be extended longer at your request.*

Participants

Presiding and Preaching	Minister Claire Vail
Assisting Minister	Lucas Reynolds
Slides	Jane Cade
Organist/Bell Choir Director	Rick Strine
Interim Choir Director	Milton Scott
Technical Director	Mason Oliver
Audio/Visual	Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team
Bell Ringer	Mike Reynolds
Greeter	Bruce & Tami Cannon
Check-In	Bob & Judy Carney
Acolyte	Ensley Dalen
Communion Aide	Karen Reynolds
Money Counters	Karen & Steve Wenger and Carol & Ken Broeking
SonRise Café	Quilters
Flowers	In Honor of Gemma Berry's 7 th Birthday

Announcements

- Those who sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket of LOVE. **Quilters are sponsoring SonRise this morning in honor of National Quilting Day.** Please join us for fellowship after worship service in the fellowship hall. LWR quilters are celebrating 80 years of making over 28 million quilts for people around the world. Thank you, to all of the dedicated FELC quilters.
- **The AMELCA Team** served 78 clients on Wednesday, March 18th.
- **Grief Group** meets Monday, March 23rd at 11:00am in the Lounge.

- **Mid-week Lent Services** are Wednesdays at 12:00pm and a soup supper at 6:00pm followed by Evening Prayer & Homily at 7:00pm.
- Please submit your **Easter Flower form** to the office by Wednesday, March 25th. Any type of potted plant should be delivered by 10:00am Saturday, April 4th. Forms for “In Memory of” or “In Honor of” are in the Narthex.
- The Church **office** will be **closed** on Friday, **March 27th**.
- We will be putting together a **Finals Care Package** for our 5 college students on Sunday April 28. We are looking for gift cards (coffee, pizza, grub hub, etc), snacks, de-stress (fidget toys, play-doh, coloring activities, devotions, etc). We are also hoping you will bring a note/card for each Student which will be included in the Care Package. Please consider bringing an item or two by April 28th. Please see Molly Berry with any questions.
- **We need a FELC voting member delegate to attend 2026 Synod Assembly on June 6th.** This assembly will be held via zoom rather than in person. Molly Berry will represent FELC as one of the delegates and we need 1 other person to volunteer as the 2nd FELC voting delegate. “Synod Days” of learning, worship, and fellowship for East Central Conference will be held October 4th. The theme for the assembly and synod days is “for the work of ministry,” based on Ephesians 4:1-16.
- FELC received \$334 through the **Thrivent Choice** Program. Your work strengthens communities, and we’re grateful for the impact you make every day. With the March 31, 2026 deadline approaching, please remember to direct any remaining 2025 Choice Dollars® before they expire.
- The **“Go Together”** registration deadline has been extended to March 31st. Please register on-line for the synod-wide service day in Champaign. The day of service is on Saturday, April 18th. There are many different projects and opportunities to serve. You pick your project when you register. Minister Claire Vail has offered to make lunch at her home for FELC members that participate. Please notify Claire or Kay in the church office, if you plan to attend.
- **Reminder: The Temple talk forum** to discuss the Waddell Land will be **Sunday, April 12th**, after worship service. We encourage you to share your thoughts and provide feedback prior to the 12th in the suggestion box in the Narthex.
- **Joint Worship Service with Holy Cross** will be **Sunday, April 19th**, here at FELC. We have a guest speaker, Maizee Miller from LSSI, that will present during the Sermon timeframe. LSSI Good Shepherd Sunday is the following Sunday, April 26th. Special LSSI offering envelopes will be available.

