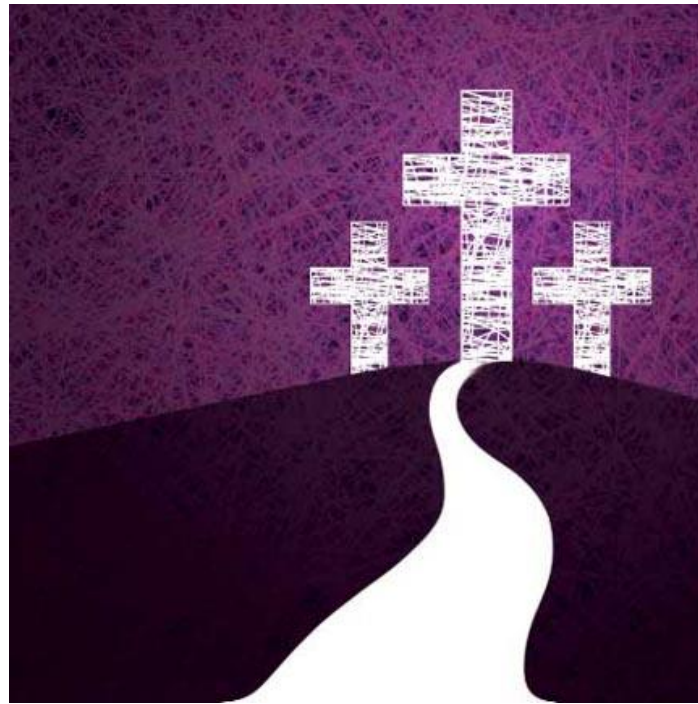


Christ's Ambassador

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Preston, Minnesota



February 2016

LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE, FOLLOW JESUS

Christ Lutheran Church - Preston, Minnesota

Telephone: (507) 765-2161

Email: christluthpres@centurytel.net

Website: www.christlutheranpreston.org

Pastor: Pastor Dan Bredberg (cell: 507-838-1745)

(email: pastordanpreston@gmail.com)

Council Members: Jim Keune, LaVerne Paulson, Cheryl Krage, Sandy Amundson, Carol Solberg, Bill Stockton, Kim Ristau, Diane Carr, and Deb Ebner.

Office Administrator: Amanda Means

Volume 51: Number 2

Church Office Hours:

Mon.-Thurs., 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.; Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Worship: *Sunday morning – 9:00 a.m.*

Sunday School: *Sunday morning – 10:10 a.m.*

Worship Assistants

Greeters

February 7 Arnie & Char Keene
10 **Ash Wed.** Jon & Deb Ebner
14 Steve Corson & Nancy Hengeveld
17 **Lent II** Todd & Darla Ebner
21 9th graders
24 **Lent III** Tom & Marcia Johnson
28 Scott & Andrea Hellickson

Lectors

February 7 Courtney Nelson/Theo Parker
10 **Ash Wed.** Kevin Ostern
14 Kaylee Arndt/Cory Brown
17 **Lent II** Karen Quanrud
21 Rylie Gatzke/Dilynn Ristau
24 **Lent III** Kim Ristau
28 Maegan Kiehne/Hadie Williams

Acolytes

February 7 Cassidy Broadwater/Makenna Gatzke
10 **Ash Wed.** Kaylee Arndt/Kelly Ristau
14 Jeremiah Grabau/Paige Donlinger
17 **Lent II**
21 Nick Marzolf/KJ Corson
24 **Lent III**
28 Marissa Bremseth/Keanna Weedman

Communion Assistants

February 7 LaVerne Paulson/Cheryl Krage/Carol Solberg
10 Cheryl Krage/Sandy Amundson/LaVerne Paulson
21 Diane Carr/Deb Ebner/Carol Solberg

Altar Guild – Mary Specht/Mindy Parker/Paula Severson

Ushers – *Youth

Money Counters

3 Darrel & Bev Olson 20 Harrison's
10 Sandy Amundson & Ron Laughlin 27 Ron and Sandy

February Service Group

Chairpersons: Sue Ostrom; Haley.....507-268-4262
Keene, Doug & Tona507-696-1292

Bakalyar, Carl & Arlene.....2585
Burmeister, Rich & Jackie.....507-886-8252
Donlinger, Jessica & Matt Schultz507-923-3959
Every, Kevin & Joyce4484
Hahn, Brenda.....507-273-9149
Herron, Stacy; Cailey Rindels507-273-7775
Johnson, Richard & Florence4560
Johnson, Tom & Marcia.....4753
Jones, Justin & Becky.....507-421-6307
Keene, Cassie.....
Kerns, Katie.....507-421-1256
Mensink, Christopher & Kari507-259-1040
Olson, Jerry & Diane3327
Pfremer, Curt & Wendy.....2155
Solberg, Don & Phyllis2574
Underbakke, Judi507-743-8466

Scheduled Events: 12 dozen cookies +1 block of cheese (sliced) and crackers for each Sunday



February is YOUTH MONTH

Traditionally, February has been “Youth Month” at Christ Lutheran. The purpose of this designation is to highlight the youth of our congregation and to encourage them in their participation in the life of the church, and in their walk with Jesus. During February our youth will be providing leadership in our Sunday morning services. Sunday, February 21st will be Youth Sunday.

Birthdays & Anniversaries in February

2/1 Marga Moen

2/2 Arlene Bakalyar, Stacy Herron; *Phil & Sandy Milne – Anniv.*

2/3 Gatlin Woellert, Dianne Ruud

2/4 Betty Hellickson, Jamie Solberg

2/5 Jayden Reicks

2/6 Mary Irish

2/7 Bonnie Hahn

2/8 Melanie Hahn

2/10 Kayla Baker, Sheila Marzolf, Dick Hellickson; *Bob & Donna Conlan – Anniv.*

2/11 Carter Johnson, Wenonah Berkland

2/12 Sandy Milne, Shari May

2/14 Travis Ristau, Pat Nelson; *Scott & Andrea Hellickson – Anniv.*

2/15 Anita Turck, Rich Burmeister; *Tony & Paula Severson – Anniv.*

2/18 Linda Britton, Kody Ebner, Casey Ristau, Janice Schultz, Shauna Hoff; *Travis & Tammy Gatzke – Anniv.*

2/19 Keith Johnson, Diane Olson, Amber Conlan; *David & Rita Joerg – Anniv.*

2/20 Marion Anderson, Marcia Specht, Gunner Benson

2/21 Greg Hoff

2/22 Dean Schumacher

2/24 Cadence Jones, Norma Vogt, Syrus Wingert

2/26 Jessica Woellert

2/27 Jeff Buenger, Dan Christianson, Barb Hanning

2/28 Randy & Bonnie Hahn – *Anniv.*

Dear Partners in Mission,

You have called me to be the pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, and according to the Bible, the primary job of the pastor is to equip the saints (that's each of you) for the work of ministry. That means one of the most important things I can do is not to just stand up and feed you God's word each Sunday, but encourage you to feed yourselves by establishing a habit of regular Bible reading and prayer. Why? Because the best way to discern God's will is to read his Word- the Bible- and pray about how God wants us to apply His word to our lives. The problem is, most people struggle with regular Bible reading. That's why I continue to be excited about The Essential Question Challenge, our 10 week journey through the book of Acts. This challenge is designed to help us develop a habit of regular Bible reading by providing manageable daily readings with two 'grace days' a week to catch up if you get behind. It's also designed to help us remember we're not just reading for the sake of reading, but are prayerfully reading God's Word to discern God's will for our lives—especially *how* God wants to use us and our church to make a difference in the world.

I hope that most of you have been participating in the Essential Question Bible reading challenge and have found it to be enjoyable and beneficial for you faith. I also hope you have been able discuss the weekly readings with family, friends or a small group here at church. If you have not yet started reading through Acts with us, it is not too late. Please join us for the rest of the journey. You will find a list of our weekly readings in the church office and this month's ambassador. I also encourage you to get a copy of The Essential Question discussion book which includes a list of the weekly readings along with background information, application ideas and discussion questions. We have a copies available in the office and can order more books if needed or you can buy the kindle edition if you want an instant digital copy.

One of things I like about the book is that it lays out a 4 part process for the daily Readings. Prepare, Read, Reflect and Apply. Even if you don't get the book, it can be helpful to follow this process in your daily readings. First, prepare yourself by taking time to breath, let go of your busy schedule, and pray for God to help you focus and truly listen as you read His Word. Then read the Bible carefully and re-read anything that is confusing. (It really helps if you have a modern translation of the Bible that is easy to read and understand). After you read the verses, take a moment to reflect on what they mean for your life. What do these verses tell you about God, yourself or the world? Finally, think of at least one way to apply the reading to your life. What might God be asking you to do as a result of this reading?

My prayer is that this will be a time of excitement for our church as we take an important journey of seeking God's will and reading God's word together. And as we read through the Book of Acts, I pray God will build up our faith and help each of us discover the specific ways God wants to work through us to make a difference in this world.

Trusting in God's Amazing Grace,

Pastor Dan

FAITH



Every night in every home



SHARE

highs and lows



READ

a Bible verse or story



TALK

about how the Bible
reading might relate to
your highs and lows



PRAY

for one another's
highs and lows



BLESS

one another

- | | |
|----|----------------------|
| 1 | Mark 12:30-31 |
| 2 | Romans 12:9 |
| 3 | Romans 13:10 |
| 4 | 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 |
| 5 | 1 Corinthians 13:13 |
| 6 | Ephesians 4:2 |
| 7 | 1 Peter 4:8 |
| 8 | 1 John 4:7-8 |
| 9 | 1 John 4:18-19 |
| 10 | John 15:13 |
| 11 | Colossians 3:14 |
| 12 | Proverbs 10:12 |
| 13 | Proverbs 17:17 |
| 14 | 1 John 3:16-18 |
| 15 | 1 John 4:8 |
| 16 | John 3:16 |
| 17 | Psalms 18:1 |
| 18 | Matthew 6:24 |
| 19 | Matthew 22:37-39 |
| 20 | 1 Corinthians 13:8 |
| 21 | Isaiah 49:15 |
| 22 | Song of Solomon 8:7 |
| 23 | Psalms 37:4 |
| 24 | Romans 5:5 |
| 25 | 1 John 4:16 |
| 26 | Ephesians 5:1 |
| 27 | Romans 8:28 |
| 28 | 1 John 3:1 |

Essential Question Reading Challenge 2016

February 7- week 5 (The Good News Is for Everyone)

1. Bold Humility *Acts 9:32-43*
2. The Divine Choreographer *Acts 10:1-48*
3. Holy Legalism *Acts 11:1-18*
4. The Church Goes Viral *Acts 11:19-30*
5. The Unstoppable Force *Acts 12:1-25*

February 14- week 6 (The First Mission Trip)

1. A Mission from God *Acts 13:1-12*
2. Pioneering Ministry *Acts 13:13-52*
3. Successful Ministry *Acts 14:1-28*
4. Ministry Disagreements *Acts 15:1-21*
5. Personal Disagreement *Acts 15:22-41*

February 21- week 7 (More Mission Trips)

1. Jailhouse Rock *Acts 16:1-40*
2. Flexible Ministry *Acts 17:1-34*
3. The Mission Team Experience *Acts 18:1-28*
4. The Real Problem *Acts 19:1-41*
5. Ministry Snapshots *Acts 20:1-38*

February 28- week 8 (Paul's Journey to Jerusalem)

1. Knowing God's Will *Acts 21:1-26*
2. Outside the Comfort Zone *Acts 21:27-36*
3. The Essential Question *Acts 21:37-22:21*
4. Blessed Assurance *Acts 22:22-23:11*
5. The Paradox of Ministry *Acts 23:12-35*

“Did You Know...?”

Did you know that February is Youth Month? Our youth room at Christ Lutheran is going to get a new look as a generous donation was given in order to give the room a face lift. We will soon have a bulletin/brag board for our youth. Please bring in newspaper clippings or a write up of something you are proud of our youth for. This includes any out of town youth of your children or grandchildren. Please share their accomplishments with us. We are planning many fun events for our youth at Christ Lutheran including, Super Night, a fun filled night in Rochester with over 600 youth from area churches sponsored by Rochester youth for Christ. Those going will have the opportunity to stay up all night and go to the Rochester Athletic Club, the Rec Center, and Bowlocity, to name a few!! A ski trip is also in the works and watch for more events to come. We are busy planning. Let's all encourage our youth to get involved in these great opportunities.

NEWS from COLOMBIA

Pastor Rocio recently sent a brief message for their brothers and sisters at Christ Lutheran that 2016 will be filled with beautiful blessings from God. She also included 2 pictures that are posted on the bulletin board in the Narthex, one of the Administrative Committee and one of the Ministry Coordinators who were elected at the Annual Meeting at San Pedro in December. Pastor Rocio also shared the news that Martha Gualtero was elected to serve as president of the congregation. Martha visited us in 2013 along with Pastor Rocio. She concluded the message with a hug for everyone and that we are in their hearts and prayers.

Remember to keep San Pedro and IELCO(Lutheran Church of Colombia) in your thoughts and prayers during this time of transition and for Pastor Rocio as she finishes her time at San Pedro.

THRIVENT MEMBERS: The deadline for designating 2015 Choice Dollars is March 31, 2016. Please check to see if you have any undesignated dollars left from 2015. Thrivent phone number: 800-847-4836.

FIRST COMMUNION RETREAT

First Communion Retreat for parents and 5th grade youth will be taking place on Saturday, March 5th from 9am-noon at the church and the First Communion Celebration taking place Sunday, March 6th at 9:00 a.m. with a reception to follow.

Adult Classes & Fellowship Groups

Essential Question Challenge Small Groups

During our 10-week reading experience on Acts we will be meeting in small groups to discuss these readings. We will meet Sunday mornings after worship at 10:20 a.m. in the Heritage Room, Tuesday Mornings at 9:30 a.m. and Thursday evenings at 7:00 p.m. at the church. Please join us!

Men's Fellowship Group

The Men's group will meet on Thursday, February 18th, 2016 at 8:30 A.M. in the Heritage Room. **All men are welcome!**

Couples Fellowship Group

The Couples Fellowship group will meet on Sunday, February 21st from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. There will be a light supper and a time of fellowship in the Heritage Room. **All couples are welcome!**

Christ Lutheran Church Council Unofficial Meeting Minutes – 1/13/16

Present LaVerne Paulson, Carol Solberg, Bill Stockton, Jim Keune, Pastor Dan, Cheryl Krage, Kim Ristau, Diane Carr, Deb Ebner

Absent Sandy Amundson

Meeting called to order at 7pm by President Jim Keune

Devotions Jim Keune

Agenda LaVerne made the motion to approve the agenda; Carol 2nd. All approved. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report Deb made the motion to approve the Secretary's Report; Kim 2nd. All approved. Motion passed.

Treasurers Report

Kim made the motion to approve the Treasurer's Report; LaVerne 2nd. All approved. Motion passed.

Team Reports

Pastor's Report - Thank you to the council for the gift of Preston Bucks for him and the staff. Thank you also to the congregation members who gave the Bredberg family Christmas gifts/cards. Glad to celebrate Christmas as Christ Lutheran. Music was good and service was well received. Performed a wedding ceremony for Brian and Autumn Collett on January 2nd. Hospital and shut in visits and prayers this month. Men's Discipleship Group started on January 13th. Essential Question Challenge has started.

Evangelism - Gail and Andy Bunge have volunteered to give lay home communion at Traditions once a month. Char Keene, Helen Haugerud and Betty Hellickson will also help with lay home communion. Muriel has lined up volunteers for the office on Fridays.

Education NO REPORT

Property - Screen and projector installed but wiring is not yet done. We did receive a bill from the ramp people that is not being paid until they come back to fix it. We may have found a company to retrofit the doors for crash bars that included a handicap push button for automatic opening in back. Will be looking into siding for the church.

Stewardship - Dean Schumacher has resigned from this team. Stewardship team is looking for new members. Designated Mission Sundays for 2016 will be April 10th, May 8th, and June 12th.

Worship - We discussed Christ Lutheran's website and we were all impressed with it. Felt it was easy to navigate and had a lot of useful information. Next month we will review our

team's responsibilities and duties. We also discussed possibly bringing to the team an idea that was seen on another church's website or from visiting another church that may blend with Christ Lutheran. One item was unleavened bread for communion, and talked about inviting members of our congregation to bake ours. Christmas and Advent Services went well. The Christmas program was really nice and went well. Both Christmas Eve services were well attended. We briefly discussed the times of the services. The Essential Question Challenge, the book of ACTS – books are available in the office. We also discussed groups of people going over the book. Pastor Dan mentioned putting these sermons on the website. There will be no Gospel or Psalm readings during this 10 week period. Pastor Dan is looking into service options for Lent. February is Youth Month. First Communion was discussed and planning dates for instruction and First Communion Sunday.

Youth - First Communion instruction will be March 5th & 6th. Youth room will be a creation theme and the carpet will be replaced. Confirmation is going well. The group will do a better job of watching the cans and making a plan for turning them in. February is Youth Month and a schedule was handed out to those in confirmation. Discussion was had about what they can do for B&B. Supernight in Rochester is February 27th and costs \$5. The Youth account will cover the rest.

~~ Council went into CLOSED portion of the meeting ~~

Meeting resumed to OPEN meeting

New Business

- 'Did you Know' for February Ambassador – Youth Team
- Mutual Ministry Team – the ELCA is asking congregations to be focused on inviting everyone in the congregation to provide pastoral care.
- Safety Policy – tabled
- Small Group Leadership Campaign – there are 3 small groups meeting about the 10 Essential Questions.
- Council Retreat will be held on Saturday January 30th at Good Earth Village.
- Preston Chamber of Commerce Membership – LaVerne made the motion to renew our membership with the Preston Chamber of Commerce; Bill 2nd; All approved.
- LaVerne will read the announcements in church on February 14th and February 21st
- Website – Pastor had a conversation with Jason Sethre about the possibilities of SMG and the church website.
- The heat in the sanctuary needs to be a more regulated temp throughout the week.
- Special Offering for Paul and Shelly Hanson – Diane made the motion to have the Ash Wednesday Chili Supper donations and all Lent (Wednesday) offerings go to support the Hanson family. Monies will go into a special benevolence account until Lenten season is over. Kim 2nd; All approved.
- Youth communion was discussed and we need to come up with a process for that to happen.

Next Team Night – Wednesday February 3rd, 2016

Next Council Meeting – Wednesday February 10th, 2016

LaVerne made the motion to adjourn meeting at 8:50pm; Kim 2nd. All approved. Motion Carried.

Meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Krage, Council Secretary

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

February Bible Study Verse: *Philippians 1:27 - 2:18*

'...Then make me truly happy by loving each other and agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, working together with one heart and mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing...' (Philippians 2:1 - 4)

MAKE ROOM FOR ONE MORE

Recruits in the army have been told, "Always dig your foxholes big enough for two." It takes more effort to do this, but it could save one more life. Making room for one more person in your life is a good principle. The Bible states it like this: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

One plus one: This sets a goal within reach. If you were told to help all humanity, you would say, "How can I possibly make room in my life for billions of people?" But to make your proverbial foxhole big enough for two – big enough for one more – that you can do.

In bearing Christian witness we can "each one, reach one." That is how it worked among the first disciples. Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus, and Philip brought Nathanael. This kind of discipling starts right in our own families or friendship circles. Save the world? For one person that is mission impossible, but to reach out to one near and dear is mission possible.

During their training period, the disciples went out two by two. The apostle Paul often made room in his ministry for a fellow missionary. Moreover the one-plus-one formula involves more than companionship; it involves prayer. As Jesus said, "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father" (Matthew 18:19).

Jesus always made room for one more: for the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, for Zacchaeus, for the penitent thief on the cross, for you and me – because He died for us all.

Prayer Suggestion: Ask the Lord Jesus for an increase of love that results in caring for one more needy person.

*From Each Day with Jesus, Daily Devotions through the Year b Rudolph F. Norden

WELCA Missions Areas

Growth:

To provide a variety of learning experiences which strengthen each woman as a whole person, develop her potential and equip her for ministry. These include fellowship gatherings, Bible Studies, Leadership gatherings, evangelism and witness.

Community:

To enable each woman to value herself and others as created in God's image and redeemed through Christ; and to build up and celebrate relationships which are global, diverse, and interdependent.

Action:

To enable women to articulate and act upon their faith as Disciples of Christ in all areas of life.

WELCA is women making a difference in the world because God has made a difference in our lives. We want to be what God has designed us to be as we work towards mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

No matter what stage of your life you are in, whether you are single, married, have no children, children at home or are an empty nester, whether you are a grandma, or whether you are "young at heart," we have a place for you in WELCA. We would like to extend this invitation to you to join us in our Women's Ministry and to connect with other women in your church, as we continue to explore ourselves, our lives and our ministry.

BE WHAT GOD HAS DESIGNED YOU TO BE!!!

WELCA GENERAL BOARD MEETING - January 13, 2016

The meeting was called to order by President Karen Quanrud. Other members present were: Donna Dreier, Diane Johnson, Denise Paulson, Phyllis Solberg, and Norma Vogt.

Karen led us in devotions entitled "Make Room for One More". The Purpose Statement was read together.

The agenda was adopted.

The **Secretary's Report** was reviewed and approved with one correction on a motion by Donna Dreier, seconded by Phyllis Solberg. (Total money received for Thankoffering Sunday was \$1,125 – not \$1,135.) The **Treasurer's Report** was reviewed and approved on a motion by Diane Johnson, seconded by Donna Dreier. Correspondence was read. We received "thank you" notes from many of the organizations that we had donated to during the 4th quarter of 2015.

Announcements:

1. World Day of Prayer: March 4, 2016 at the United Methodist Church
2. Root River Conference Spring Event: April 30, 2016 at Highland Prairie Lutheran Church in Peterson, MN
3. Women's Day at Good Earth Village: June 25, 2016
4. Tenth Annual Triennial Gathering: July 13-16, 2017 in Minneapolis, MN
5. Southeastern MN Synodical Women's Convention: 2017 at St. Olaf Lutheran Church in Austin, MN

Reports:

1. Mitten Tree Update: 117 items were donated (divided between Fillmore Central Schools, Fillmore County Food Shelf in Preston, Social Services of Fillmore County, & Open Hand Midway in St. Paul)
2. Thankoffering Service Recap: Donations collected totaled \$1,125
3. Christmas Swags: Donna Dreier, Norma Vogt, & Joyce Hellickson decorated the new swags purchased for the fellowship hall. The old ones will be put on the upcoming rummage sale.

Old Business:

1. The slate of officers for 2016 was approved on a motion by Phyllis Solberg, seconded by Donna Dreier:
 - a. Co-Chairs: Karen Quanrud & Sandy Amundson
 - b. Secretary: Diane Johnson
 - c. Treasurer: Norma Vogt
 - d. Do-Day: Donna Dreier & Denise Paulson
2. Youth Team – Paul Schmidt/Pastor Dan: T-shirts for confirmands (no action taken).
3. Bibles: no need order more at this time
4. Rummage Sale: to be held on March 19, 2016

New Business:

1. Installation of Officers: Sunday, January 24, 2016
2. The 2016 budget was reviewed and approved on a motion by Diane Johnson, seconded by Phyllis Solberg. It was agreed that \$500 should be set aside in a "local disaster fund" to be used in our community as needed.
3. Upcoming Mission Sundays: April, May, and June (Open Hands Midway, MPM Orphanage Kenya, and TBA (Ford Resource Bank)
4. Bus to Triennial Gathering: discussed the possibility of chartering a bus for a day trip if members are unable to stay overnight

In closing, the Lord's Prayer was prayed together. A motion to adjourn was made by Donna Dreier, seconded by Denise Paulson.

The next meeting will be held on March 9, 2016 at 6:00 PM.

Lent 2016

Ash Wednesday Service – February 10

The important season of Lent in our church begins with Ash Wednesday service at 7:00 p.m. The service will include Holy Communion, the mark of ashes, and message from Pastor Dan. Before the service there will be a Chili Supper from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall served by our Senior League youth.

2016 Lenten Theme – “The Essential Question”

Lent is a time when we are reminded of our humanity and also our **need for Jesus. As we meet each Wednesday evening during Lent (February 10, February 17, February 24, March 2, and March 9. March 16th will be a special service of prayer and healing),** we will have ‘blended’ worship services which will include songs, prayers, Scripture, hearing congregation members share some of their faith story, and discussing our weekly readings from the book of Acts. We will also be trying something new this year by including a time of interactive prayer in our service. During that time you are free to move to one or more of the prayer stations which will be set up each week. You will find instructions at each station that will guide your actions and prayers. For example, you may be asked to write down a sin or regret on a piece of paper and then place it into a paper shredder to symbolize how Jesus has forgiven your sins and given you a new start each day. You may also gather in groups with others for prayer, have Pastor Dan and/or other church members pray for you, or simply remain in your pew and use one of your own ways of praying. Our schedule for each evening will be a soup supper from 6:00 – 6:45 p.m. followed by worship service from 7:00 – 7:45 p.m. Hope to see you there!

Confirmation Schedule during Lent

During Lent, our Confirmation schedule changes so that youth can join their families at the Lenten services. This will be the schedule for the five Wednesdays during Lent, from February 14 – March 16th:

6:00 – 6:15 p.m. – Soup Supper

6:15 – 6:45 p.m. – The 7th and 8th graders engage in a table discussion with members of Christ Lutheran and the 9th graders and parents meet with Pastor Dan in the Heritage Room

7:00 – 7:45 p.m. – Lenten service in the sanctuary

*There will be no Confirmation on Ash Wednesday, February 10th.



God Sightings

Starting with the very first page of the Bible, we read about a God who is actively engaged in the world. Genesis begins with the story of God creating everything that exists-- including us. The rest of the Bible is all about God's interaction with His people and His creation. Unfortunately, many people think that God has stopped being active in the world. They believe God is 'watching us from a distance.' The truth is that God is still at work in our world creating, restoring, forgiving, surprising, protecting, loving, comforting...the list goes on and on. God is at work everywhere, but we often miss it, because we are not looking.

In an effort to help train our eyes to look for God's presence in the world around us, we are setting aside time during Sunday morning worship to share 'God sightings.' Everyone is encouraged to take a minute to write down one way they saw, heard or experienced God during the week using the blue "God Sightings" sheets located in the hymnal racks. God sightings can be just about anything: the smile of a child, a beautiful sunset, helping someone across the street, caring for someone in pain, passing a test, etc. They are things that remind you God is real and active in your life. After writing down our God Sightings we will ask if anyone would like to share their 'God sighting' with the congregation. Finally, we ask that you place your God Sightings in the offering plate so that we can share them the following Sunday in our bulletin.

This practice of talking about God's faithfulness is not a new or scary thing; it has been part of church tradition for thousands of years. "I will tell of your name to my people; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you" (Psalm 22:22). I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation (Psalm 40:10). Therefore, let us encourage each other to share what God has done for us, in us and through us—not to bring attention and glory to ourselves, but to bring attention and glory to God.

I pray that as we hear each other's 'God sightings,' it will become easier for us to recognize God's presence in our lives and in the world around us, and it will form us into a community known for both sharing the Good News and being good news.

In Christ,
Pastor Dan

You will find what you are looking for, so look for God. (Jeremiah 29:13)

An Open Conversation on Communion Age

As Lutheran Christians, we believe that the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are "means of Grace," or ways by which God comes to us to give us His gifts of grace, forgiveness and new life. We believe that God is the primary one acting in the sacraments, and we are the ones receiving His gifts. We baptize infants and not just adults like some other churches, because we believe that the emphasis of baptism is on God's action rather than our faith or understanding. In baptism God claims us as His dearly loved sons and daughters, seals us with the Holy Spirit and marks us with the cross of Christ forever. These actions are done as a free gift of love, not because we understand or deserve them. In Holy Communion we believe Jesus is truly present through the bread and wine. We believe that He comes to us by faith as we receive His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Because of our understanding of God's grace and not our understanding being the primary thing in Holy Communion, many Lutheran churches do not set a specific age limit on participation in the Lord's Supper. In regards to sharing in the sacrament, Martin Luther says in The Small Catechism that, "...that person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, 'given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.' He goes on to add that "the words, for you require simply a believing heart." It is, in fact, the "believing heart" of children that Jesus is commending to us and encouraging us to follow in Mark 10.

Some may be concerned that children should not commune because they do not understand what they are doing. However, communion is a very difficult concept for people of any age to fully understand, which is why the emphasis is on receiving Jesus' gifts by faith and not our own understanding. Since no one knows how to receive a gift better than a child, perhaps children should be allowed to receive both sacraments, baptism and Holy Communion.

We also need to consider what it means when we say that a child cannot receive Jesus' gift of forgiveness through the bread and wine (or grape juice which is commonly used for children). Jesus said "let the little children come to me and do not hinder them." From a child's perspective, they can feel rejected or unloved when they see all the older children and adults receiving communion but are told that communion is not for them. Like it or not, what they are hearing is, "Jesus is not for you." But the truth of God's Word tells us that Jesus is *for* them and *for* all of us. "If our God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).


Another important thing to consider as we explore the sacraments is the importance of parents in the faith development of their children. Throughout the history of the church, parents have been the primary ones responsible for teaching the faith to their children. In fact, Luther wrote the Small Catechism to be used in homes as parents taught their children the basics of the Christian faith. The church can help teach children and equip parents, but God has given parents the primary responsibility to raise their

children in the faith.

What about our church constitution and ELCA communion policies? According to our church constitution, communion at Christ Lutheran is open to all baptized Christians. The official policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on this matter is outlined in 'The Use of the Means of Grace,' (adopted in 1997) and says, "Admission to the sacrament is by invitation of the Lord, presented through the church to those who are baptized." The policy goes on to say, "Baptized children begin to commune on a regular basis at a time determined through mutual conversation that includes the pastor, the child, and the parents or sponsors involved, within the accepted practices of the congregation. Ordinarily this beginning will occur only when children can eat and drink and can start to respond to the gift of Christ in the Supper.... In all cases, participation in Holy Communion is accompanied by catechesis (teaching) appropriate to the age of the communicant. When infants and young children are communed, the parents and sponsors receive instruction and the children are taught throughout their development. Catechesis (teaching), continuing throughout the life of the believer, emphasizes the sacrament as gift, given to faith by and for participation in the community. Such faith is not simply knowledge or intellectual understanding but trust in God's promises given in the Lord's Supper for the support of the baptized.... There is no command from our Lord regarding the age at which people should be baptized or first communed. Finally, know that throughout our Southeastern MN synod and around the country, ELCA churches have a wide variety of positions on the starting age of Holy Communion. Some churches communion toddlers, some wait until their after youth are confirmed, many are somewhere in between. All positions are respected and each church is given the authority to set their own expectations for the age of first communion. In light of all these things, we as your church leadership are considering adapting our church communion practice to allow parents to decide when their children are ready to receive communion, rather than establishing a set age for first communion. This decision will not be made lightly, but will be the result of prayer and thoughtful conversation about how we can be a welcoming church to all people while remaining faithful to the history of the church and the teachings of Scripture. We have no desire to diminish tradition or remove communion instruction. Rather, we hope to respect Scripture and traditional while offering additional instruction so that children and parents gain a deeper understanding of this sacrament. Christ Lutheran would still offer a 5th grade communion instruction class each year that all 5th grade children and parents would be invited to attend. Parents who want their children to start receiving communion before they are in 5th grade would be invited to meet with Pastor Dan for private instruction prior to their first communion. We would also add a communion instruction class for early elementary children and parents that decide to commune which would help them continue to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the Lord's Supper. We invite your input, questions, ideas and concerns as we consider making this change over the next few months. Please address your questions and concerns to one of your church council members or to Pastor Dan. We will be happy to talk with you and deeply value what you have to say. We pray this can be an opportunity for all of us to grow in our understanding of the Lord's Supper and God's amazing grace.

Sincerely, 2016 Church Council and Pastor Dan

February 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 9:30am Text Bible Study	3	4	5	6 9:00am Altar Guild
			<i>All Team Night</i>	1:00pm Quilters 2:00pm Traditions Worship		
			6:00pm Confirmation 6:30pm Evangelism 6:30pm Education 6:30pm Property 7:00pm Worship 7:00pm Stewardship 7:30pm Youth	7:00pm Small group		
7 9:00am Worship/Communion 10:10am Sunday School 10:15am Coffee/Fellowship 10:20am Adult Education 11:00am Radio Broadcast	8	9 9:30am Text Bible Study	10	11 1:00pm Quilters	12	13
			6:00pm Chili Supper 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service 8:00pm Council	7:00pm Small group		
14 9:00pm Worship 10:10am Sunday School 10:15am Coffee/Fellowship 10:20am Adult Education 11:00am Radio Broadcast 2:00pm Root River Conference Assembly in Winona	15	16 9:30am Text Bible Study	17 8:30am DO DAY	18 8:30am Men's Fellowship	19	20
			6:00pm Soup Supper 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Lent II Service	1:00pm Quilters		
21 Youth Sunday 9:00pm Worship/Communion 10:10am Sunday School 10:15am Coffee/Fellowship 10:20am Adult Education 11:00am Radio Broadcast 5:30pm Couple's Fellowship	22	23 9:30am Text Bible Study	24	25 9:00am Park Lane Worship 9:00am Martha Circle 9:00am Lydia Circle 9:00am Mary Circle 1:00pm Quilters	26	27
		6:30pm Deborah Circle	6:00pm Soup Supper 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Lent III Service	7:00pm Small group		
28 9:00pm Worship 10:10am Sunday School 10:15am Coffee/Fellowship 10:20am Adult Education 11:00am Radio Broadcast	29					

