



Herald of Peace

February 2021

Peace Lutheran Church,
1301 Ave. D, Billings, MT 59102

(406) 252-5504
peacelutheranbillings.com

Making Christ Available to All by Rejoicing, Renewing and Reaching Out

Peace Lutheran Church Mission Statement

Leadership Directory

Pastor: Rev. Will Sappington
prsappington@gmail.com
office 252-5504 Home 647-8568
Office Manager: Dean Jenson
peaceoffice1301@gmail.com
252-5504
Youth Director: Vanessa Stieger
peacelcyouth@gmail.com
office 252-5504 cell 698-5576
Intern Pastor: Josh Wyman
internpeace@gmail.com
252-5504

Treasurer	Steve Frank
Worship Accompanists	Robin Goodheart Sue Vigesaa
Bells of Peace	Julie Draeger
Altar Guild Treasure	Molly Johnson
WELCA Treasurer	Connie Hausauer

Church Council

Dewey Anderson
Mike Brown
Robin Felton
Wendy Goodheart
Holli Miller
Tony Pecarina
Jody Pierce
Dan Quanbeck
Bryan Peterson
Nate Sider
Linda Strosky
Nancy Taylor

Worship Schedule

Saturdays: 5:00 pm
Sundays: 10:00 am
Education Hour: 11:00 am
Sunday Channel 7 at 9:00 am



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Trust and Love, Love and Trust

Hebrews 11:1-2

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd. good news!"

Luke 10:25-28

Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?" He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?" He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself." "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live.

I share two of my favorite passages from the New Testament with you this month. In The Message translation what you've usually seen translated as "faith" is translated as, "this trust in God, this faith." This trust in God is the bedrock of our Christian journey and daily walk. We are sorely tempted to put our trust in so many other things than God.

And sometimes when someone uses the language of "trusting in God" what is actually be talked about is "testing God."



Prayer Concerns of those we prayed for January 2021

We Believe in Prayer For praise and thanksgiving ...

Elizabeth A. Eaton - Presiding Bishop, ELCA

Laurie Jungling - Bishop - Montana Synod;

For people around the world in need ...

Needs of our neighborhood coping with

Covid - 19 virus

President Joe Biden (requested by Peace member)

Christine & Scotty Soileau – Quantico, VA. (member of Peace)

For illness or injuries .. of members

Marilyn Berry

Bob Voight

Luella Ketterling

Lisa Grimsley

Nancy Whitmer

Ron Zech

Howard Albers

Doris Berg

Ken Hoefner -

Kathy Gilbertson

Hank Tungstall - healing

LaWanda Sherseth - healing

John Modde - recovery

Kathleen Gregg - healing

Larry Heiser –

For illness or injuries .. of family and friends.

Dot and Paul

Gary Boje - Darlene Thompson's brother , recovery

Karen Anderson - healing

Denise- Bonnie Hovik Clausen's daughter in law

Kim Anderson - friend of Jo Pates, Illness

John & Rosanne Mode - John's son JC kidney cancer Chemo

John & Rosanne Modde - Rosanne's Wayne , bone cancer

Jon - healing

John, for peace and healing

Mary - comfort

Dorothy

Briana, Lucas, Todd and Kendra

Jim Zeiler, brother of Sharon Hedden, healing

Jenny - Rick & Barb Olson daughter, cancer

Malcom - 6 yrs. old with a brain tumor

Rako Zech & family, Ron's Zech son - cancer diagnosis

Gary Fink - healing

Ann Strecker - friend of Rick & Barb Olson - healing

Laura Fisher (Jodi Peterson's cousin) cancer

Shawn Hanser

Bud Leuthold - friend of Joy Lindberg leukemia

For those grieving...

Dick & Paula Reich and family on the death of

Annetta Reich

Prayer Concerns is a published list of those on the prayer chain, who have given permission to publish their names. If you are interested in praying for these, as well as others, please join the prayer chain. They have leaders who call or email. Please call lone Bloom at 652-2441 or Lisa Grimsley (698-4121).



Congregational News

A Day in the Life of the Intern

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

-1 Thessalonians 5:24

This month we will be entering the season of Lent. This is a season in the church year where we are meant to prepare ourselves for the coming celebration of Easter. It is typically observed by fasting, or giving something up in order to help us focus on the one thing that is most important. Some churches spend this season focusing on the brokenness of the world, and feeling the weight of sin that led Jesus to the cross. It is often seen as a time where people are supposed to reflect on the ways we have fallen short, in hopes that the light of Christ's resurrection and forgiveness will shine all the brighter when we get to Easter Sunday.

This year, I feel like we've done that. I feel like we have become well acquainted with the weight of the brokenness of this world. I feel like we have given up so much in hopes of keeping the other safe. We have been through one of the darkest times I can remember, and we have experienced the weight of that. I feel like we have spent plenty of time preparing our hearts for some good news to come. We do not need to be reminded of the hard parts of life, as the difficult things of the world have been at our doorstep for long enough. As we have lived through a year that has looked different than any year I can remember, I think it is important that our time of preparing for Easter looks different than it may have in the past.

For my Internship Project, I will be developing a Liturgy for us to use for worship on Wednesday nights called "Preparing with Promise." Promise is central to who we are, and to what Easter is. The promises of our God are the things that we are able to cling to in the moments when hardship and struggle seem to overwhelm. These promises are signs of God's faithfulness to us, especially when we are traversing our way through the muck and the mire. The celebration of Easter Sunday is our celebration of God coming through on the promises that God makes to us, in the resurrection of Jesus. In order to prepare ourselves for this glorious celebration, we will be spending Wednesday nights during the season of Lent resting in the promises that carry us through, and lead us to the joy of Easter Sunday. Together we will remember the steadfastness of a God who abides with God's people in all circumstances, and who continues to be at work among them through the promises God makes. I look forward to journeying through this Lent with you, and encountering the peace, hope, and love of our God as we Prepare with Promise together.

God Bless,
Intern Pastor Josh

Create in me a clean
heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit
within me.
Psalm 51:10

2021 Offering Envelopes

Your 2021 offering envelopes will be available for pickup during regular office hours. The envelopes are located just inside the parking lot door next to the elevator. Please call the office if you have any questions



Congregational News

con't from pg. 1

I have been asked many times over the last few months if I truly trust in God. The implication being if I trusted in God more I would never have advocated moving Peace to remote worship. I once responded to a comment about my lack of trust in God with, "I trust in God and I tell my kids to wear helmets when they ride their bikes. I trust in God and I look both ways before I cross the street." Trust in God for me does not mean putting my community in danger. Trust in God for me means loving my neighbor. As Jesus says in Luke 10 loving God and loving neighbor is the only way to live.

I share this with you as background on your Church Council's continuing work on keeping our community safe in this time of a pandemic. Each month your Council evaluates what is best for the people of Peace in the realm of our worship and fellowship life. We have seen numbers decline in Montana and Yellowstone County over the last month and that is a good thing. We are starting to see members of our community receive the vaccine and that is a very good thing. Even as we see these good things we are going to continue being careful and cautious for your sake. If you have questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me or any Council member.

I am hopeful that we can gather together again soon, but we will always act with the safety of the community first. I am planning on an Easter celebration on April 4th. It may be an outdoor celebration, but it will be a celebration where we can gather as the people of Peace. I know this has been a long and difficult time for you. I do not take that lightly. This has been the hardest year of my ordained ministry. In this hard time I feel God calling me to lead with patience. I remain hopeful because my trust is in God and my love is for my neighbor.

Peace,
Will +



Cookies for College Students

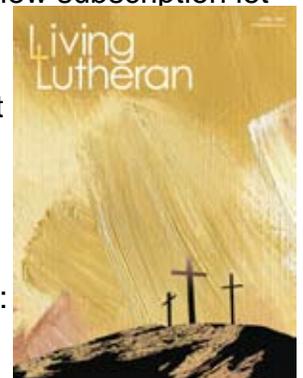
We will be packaging treat boxes for our college students to be delivered around Valentine's Day. If you would like to contribute goodies, please leave 2 dozen individually wrapped goodies in the kitchen by Sunday, February 7th. Your contribution of love to our college students is greatly appreciated. If you have questions, please contact Dean Jenson or Sharon Schatzke.

Living Lutheran Magazine Please call or email the church office to renew your "Living Lutheran" subscription. If you would like to start a new subscription let us know in the office. The price is \$8.95 for the year. Make checks payable to Peace. Please note that it is for your subscription.

Deadline is Feb. 28th

Living Lutheran signifies this church's living, daring confidence in God's grace. The magazine features: — **Monthly reflections** from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.

Coverage of religious news, events and social issues. As a partner in God's mission, Living Lutheran shares with the ELCA's diverse membership the stories of God's people living their faith.



Mission and Service News

Mission & Service Committee Happenings

The Mission and Service committee continues to offer many opportunities to serve others in this New Year. Please consider praying for where you can personally be doing God's work with your hands and talents.

Here are the upcoming Mission and Service opportunities



Souper Bowl of Caring- We are still doing the Souper Bowl of Caring, but you won't get to put your donation into a soup pot. This year we are asking you to vote for your favorite conference. Send in your donations to Peace marked with "AFC" or "NFC" and we'll see who wins.



Lenten Offerings- Ash Wednesday is February 17th. Our Lenten offerings will be supporting Family Service, Meals On Wheels, Christikon, Friendship House, Prison Ministry, and Billings Senior High homeless students. Our goal is to evenly distribute Lenten offerings among these six programs.



Spools of Thread for Lutheran World Relief- Mission and Service is asking for donations of spools of thread to build fabric kits to send around the world. If you are able, please purchase two spools of matching or neutral-colored general purpose thread, 250-300 yards each.



Family Service can use volunteers for sorting items as they come in.

As you can see from the opportunities above, Peace can still fulfill our mission of Reaching Out to others during the pandemic. Thank you for all of your support and all you do!

Fabric Kits are one of Lutheran World Relief's projects to help people gain a skill they can use to earn an income. In 2019, more than 16,600 Fabric Kits were shared with people in 9 countries. The Quilt Group has been gifted pieces of fabric that are large enough to make many Fabric Kits for LWR, so as part of our outreach during Lent, the Mission and Service Committee would like to invite Peace members to participate in making these kits by donating the following:

- Neutral-colored spools of general-purpose thread, 250-300 yards each. Each Fabric Kit requires 2 spools.
- Fabric. Pieces of cotton or cotton-blend fabric should be any of the following sizes: 2 ¼ yards of 58-62", 3 yards of 42-45" or 4 yards of 34-37".

All items may be dropped off at church or call 896-0715 for pick-up.



Worship News

Lenten Worship Schedule

The season of Lent begins with our Ash Wednesday service on February 17th this year. This service traditionally reminds us of our human frailty with the imposition of ashes and the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This year instead of ashes reminding us of mortality and human frailty we will invite you into a different way of marking the cross on our heads, hearts, and lives. Before worship make sure you have a bowl or basin of water and we will affirm our baptisms as a part of our Ash Wednesday service.



During the season of Lent we will have worship Wednesday evening together virtually. Worship will begin at 7:00 pm.

Our Lenten offerings will be supporting Family Service, Meals On Wheels, Christikon, Friendship House, Prison Ministry, and Billings Senior High homeless students. Our goal is to evenly distribute Lenten offerings among these six programs.

February 17th Ash Wednesday

Readings: Luke 9:51-62

Jesus's eyes are fixed on Jerusalem and what will be accomplished when he gets there. Let us fix our gaze on the Son of God who will not waver in accomplishing the promises God makes to us.

February 24th *Life Abundant*

Readings: John 10:1-10

We rest in this text that tells us that Jesus is the shepherd who promises life and life abundant to his flock. Let us follow our Good Shepherd, and rest in the promise that life will emerge out of chaos.

Christikon Clips

February 2021

[Christikon Youth Camp Brochures](#) have been mailed to every young person in your congregation who are completing grades 4-12. Save by registering before March 15. Additional brochures are available from your church office.

[Family Adult Brochures](#) will be out soon. Watch for yours in the mail or at your church.

Do it online! You can use the Internet to register for all camp sessions at Christikon, or to make a gift, or to find out more about this special ministry. Go to www.christikon.org.

Save the date: [Christikon Benefit Auction](#) at the Billings Depot is coming on Sunday, April 18th. Watch for updates on our website

The past year was dominated by pandemic, masks, and uncertainty yet we were thankful for the opportunity to do ministry. We safely held camp sessions, although challenging, all our effort ended up providing a powerful experience for those who attended camp. Our plans for the 2021 season are going forward and we look forward to again welcoming all! Watch for updates on our website.

*It is the mission of Christikon to awaken and nurture faith in Christ—
exploring God's creation and the adventure of life together.*



Worship News

February Worship Themes

We turn with Jesus toward Jerusalem as we enter into the season of Lent.

(Sermon focus texts are in bold.)

February 6th & 7th Fifth Weekend after Epiphany "Compassionate Christ"

Readings: Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; **Luke 7:1-17**

The text we read today tells us two stories of very different people, in similar circumstances. One rich and powerful, one poor and needy, both need healing for someone they love. We see Jesus' miraculous work of healing on display, but we also see him doing something else that is just as miraculous.

February 13th & 14th Transfiguration of Our Lord "More than Meets the Eye"

Readings: Psalm 50:1-6; **Luke 9:28-45**

Up to this point in their ministry together, the disciples had seen Jesus perform miraculous miracles, and incredible works of healing. But they had never seen anything like this. What does it mean that Jesus was transfigured in front of them, and what does it mean when they went back down the mountain?

February 17th Ash Wednesday "Facing Forward"

Readings: Psalm 51:1-17; **Luke 9:51-62**

We get a different side of Jesus for our Ash Wednesday text. His face is turned toward Jerusalem. We know what is going to happen there and the stakes are getting higher. What does it mean to follow when the road is hard?

February 20th & 21st First Weekend in Lent "Neighbor"

Readings: Psalm 25:1-10; **Luke 10:25-42**

We know this parable very well. We know we are supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves. We know the definition of neighbor is bigger than we often want it to be. What if there is something new to hear from this old parable?

February 27th & 28th Second Weekend in Lent "Nurturing the Fig Tree"

Readings: **Psalm 22:23-31; Luke 13:1-9, 31-35**

We hear three different stories in our text today. Each of them relate, in one way or another, to the idea of falling short. How does Jesus respond in each of the situations to those who seemingly did not live up to expectations?

Mid-Week Worship Service at Peace!!!

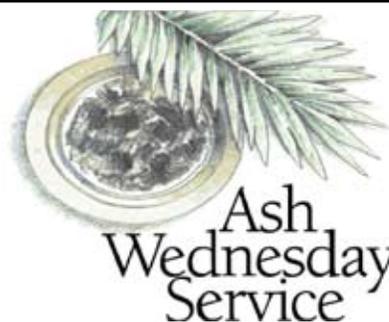


Compline Worship
Service

Everyone is invited to tune in
7pm Wednesday evenings.

Go to Website
peacelutheranbillings.com
and join in the live stream of
worship

February 3 - Evening Song
February 10 - Compline



Ash
Wednesday
Service

February 17th
Virtual Worship 7:00 pm

Education and Youth News

Peace Pals

As of now, we are not planning on meeting for Peace Pals for the time being. Although, we are working on something special for the Peace Pal kids in 2021. Thanks for being patient. Stay safe and do what you can to help your neighbor!

Youth Group Update

There will be no in-person Youth Group through for the time being. We will keep you updated as we move forward. Thank you for your patience!

Confirmation

We are shifting gears for Confirmation. On November 11th, we started an online version of Confirmation in Google Classroom. Each week, there will be a new slideshow lesson and video presentation. Throughout each month, there will be check-ins with the group and 1 on 1 with Vanessa. We are planning to do Confirmation in this way at least for the time being.

The awesome thing about Confirmation being online is that anyone can join us! No matter what age you are, if you'd like to join us for Confirmation or have questions, you can contact Vanessa at peacelcyouth@gmail.com to get more information.

Children's Message

Friends! It's been a while since I have done Children's Messages during our Worship Services. I'm happy to tell you that the Children's Messages are back! If you miss the Message, you can always find it on our past live streamed services on our website and Facebook page.

Dinner Prayer

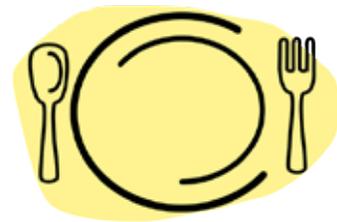
Since we haven't been able to eat dinner together, I thought I would remind you of our awesome Dinner Prayers that we used to sing! Here is one of them!

ABC Grace

This one is about as easy as it gets! It's to the tune of the ABC's!

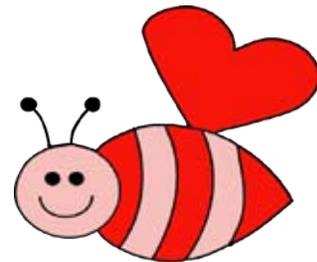
A-B-C-D-E-F-G

Thank you God, for feeding me!



Happy Valentine's Day!

Happy Valentine's Day, my friends! I hope Valentine's Day (and every other day) you remember how loved and appreciated you are. You are important! Keep being you.



Lent and Ash Wednesday

This year, we are not planning on any in person youth activities during Lent and Ash Wednesday. I do have an inventory of Ash Wednesday stickers, so if you are interested in wearing a fun sticker to school, please let me know! You know where to reach me!

Community News

Words from the Bishop:

Condemnation

These days it seems that the church as well as the nation (and world) are caught up in never-ending spirals of condemnations. All we seem to hear is “Condemn them! Condemn that! If it’s not perfect, we must condemn!” Even the calls for church leaders to condemn an action, group or individual have grown more vocal as we demand our judgmental viewpoints be echoed from someone who (supposedly) represents God.

What is this need to condemn and where does it come from? Why do we think judgment and condemnation against others is the answer to so many of our problems? And why do we feel the need to demand that our leaders condemn those we want judged on our behalf?

The word “condemn” comes from the Latin word *con-dam-nare*. *Dam-nare*, the second half of that word, means to harm or damage; the *con* is there for emphasis. So to *con-dam-nare* someone means to really, really harm or damage them.

Of course, we can all see the word “damn” in this Latin word which invokes images of God (or us) sending people to the horrible suffering of hell. And while sometimes we may have a lighter meaning in mind when we “condemn,” such as to disapprove or judge against, the weight of the word tends to imply the harsh desire to hurt or rip apart those we’re condemning.

This I think is one of the reasons behind our need to condemn: to lash out and harm others after being wounded. When we experience this hurt or remember past hurts while failing to remember the many hurts we’ve caused, we often are left with a strong craving to retaliate. We want to damage others the way we’ve been hurt through assaulting, dehumanizing, demonizing, and damning them, their identity group, their character, their actions and their personhood. And we especially like to do it on social media where we think there are no consequences to our actions.

We also seem to do this out of our own sense of powerlessness and feeling out of control of our situation. We condemn in order to lift ourselves out of insecurity and a sense of weakness; in order to bully ourselves out of anxiety and fear; in order to tear others down and rip them apart so we can feel more self-righteous and more like god and thus all-mighty and power-full so that at least in the condemning moment that sense of human weakness and helplessness disappears... until it returns when those we’ve condemned attack us back.

And this steers us toward demanding that our leaders condemn others so that we can hear our own condemnations



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

through their voices. We get stuck in echo chambers where we choose to hear only what we want to hear, and what we want to hear is our leaders confirm our opinions and echo back to us what we believe so that we can feel righteous in our own right-ness.

The fact is that all this condemning actually just perpetuates the cycle of destruction as the condemned get defensive and retaliate with more condemning words or actions. Then we retaliate with our own condemnations and so on, until we descend into violent, hate-filled damning of one another in a horror-show like the spectacle on January 6 or other violence, riots and wars seen throughout human history.

Here’s reality folks: condemning one another does not work! It doesn’t fix any of the problems we want to fix. It doesn’t allow us to be the solution we claim to want to be. It doesn’t cure the evils of the world. It doesn’t heal the wounds we want to heal or help those we are called to serve. Condemning only harms, destroys and damages, perpetuating the cycle of bitterness, cynicism and fear into on-going hate and finally eternal damnation.

So what do we as followers of Christ do? Do we stay silent in the face of the evil and suffering so obviously happening in the world around us? Do we ignore the pain and oppression, hate and violence against ourselves or the neighbors we are called to love and just suck it up as our “cross to bear”? Do we hide inside a comfy, nice-but-not-kind church in a false sense of safety until we get to escape to heaven?

No, of course not! But we don’t turn to condemning, which is God’s work and God’s alone -- IF God chooses to do so. God is God; we are not, and we are commanded to be on God’s side, rather than forcing God to be on our side, including the side of us that wants to condemn. (Cf. First and Second Commandment & Bp Elizabeth Eaton)

Instead, we exhort and challenge the “what is” by speaking and living God’s eternal Law of “what God wants,” namely Love, by being and doing Christ’s love in everything we do and say into the world through kindness, compassion, peace, reconciliation, generosity, justice and self-control.

Instead, we admonish through the words of God’s Law but always in humility, seeing and renouncing our own sin and complicity in the larger evils first by checking in the mirror

Congregational News

Church E-mail Addresses



Pastor Will

prsappington@gmail.com

Church Office

peaceoffice@bresnan.net

Intern Pastor

internpeace@gmail.com

Youth Director

peacelcyouth@gmail.com

Check out the web site:

peacelutheranbillings.com. Web site is updated with, up to date calendar, newsletter in color, Youth page, and photo page.



Church Council Minutes

The approved church council minutes are available at the bulletin board outside the church office. Thank you

Find us on facebook:
Peace Lutheran Church, Billings MT

Simply Giving Program - Would you find it helpful to have your offerings taken from your bank account as you do other monthly drafts? Thrivent Financial for Lutherans sponsors a program called Simply Giving which offers this service for people who wish to have offerings transferred electronically to Peace Lutheran Church account. For those who travel, this is particularly helpful in keeping up with their intended offerings, and it will keep you from having to make up the difference later. Contact the church office for more details.



Congregational Life Committee

The Congregational Life Committee is responsible to touch the lives of the people of Peace Lutheran Church by involving them in the life and ministry of the church. One of the most visible responsibilities is fellowship following worship services. We moved from asking service committee members to bring cookies, etc., to providing doughnuts. So, the duties have been reduced and only one or two people are needed for each Sunday. We will continue to assign monthly service committees as we have done in the past. If we have a potluck or other congregational function during the month, the committee may be asked to help. A committee chairperson will be assigned each month and will ask committee members to help with the fellowship/coffee following Sunday worship.

February Serving group

Holli Miller, chair
Rod Miller
Julie/Dave Draeger
Kellie/James Kintzing
Alecia/Marlon Besel
Casey Miller
Lisa and Kevin Donovan
Sandie/Tom Schillinger
Peggy/Dean Welliever



The Church Office has a new e-mail address.

peaceoffice1301@gmail.com

Congregational News

Currently Suspended

2020 Circles & Bible Studies:

Everyone is welcome!

Martha Circle

Meets Third Wednesday, at 10:00 am
in the Fellowship hall

Deborah-Katie Circle

Meets 2nd Saturday at 10:30 am
at Peace

Ruth Circle

Meets second Tuesday at 11:30 am
at Hardees on 24th

Peace Lutheran Church Council

President - Tony Pecarina

Vice President - Dewey Anderson

Secretary - Linda Strosky

Dewey Anderson - Abundant Life, Property

Mike Brown - Property

Robin Felton - Education/Youth

Wendy Goodheart - Worship

Holli Miller - Congregational Life

Tony Pecarina - Education/Youth

Jody Pierce - Education/Youth

Dan Quanbeck -

Bryan Peterson - Mission & Service

Nate Sider - Education/Youth

Linda Strosky - Mission & Service

Nancy Taylor - Mission & Service



Men's Breakfast and Bible Study

Meets every

Wednesday at 6:30 am in the
Fellowship Hall. New-comers

and one-timers are
always welcome

Meeting on Zoom

Boards/Committees

St John's Ministries

Rich Robbins

Rhonda Sappington

Christikon

Kaia Sappington

Mike Brown

Erl Barsness

Lutheran Center

Rhonda Hanson

Debbie Sider

Endowment Trustee

Ed Popp

Molly Johnson

Bernie Mason

Rhonda Hanson

Dean Welliever

Nominating Committee

Dean Welleiever

George Simek

Chuck Sider

Linda Strosky

Holli Miller

Questions about Council Activities? If

you have any questions or comments
regarding any council action - pending or
complete - please contact

President Tony Pecarina

Vice-President Dewey Anderson

RELIEVE EDITORIAL STRESS:

**TURN IN
YOUR ARTICLES
EARLY!**

RE M I N D E R :

**DEADLINE FOR
NEWSLETTER
ARTICLES IS**

February 18th

Catch
Worship
Service
Broad-
cast on
Community
Channel 7
Sunday Mornings
at 9:00 am





February 2021

1 Pray that the Spirit will guide, inspire and shape the Future Church structure being implemented in the church-wide organization to renew our sense of purpose and activate the entire church so that more people may know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love.

2 Black History Month Give thanks for the gifts, accomplishments, influence and witness of our African-descent neighbors who stand together with us as partners in the gospel, doing God's work in the world. Though unified as siblings in Christ, we ask God to guide and help our church in its commitment to socioeconomic equity and racial justice and reconciliation.

3 Give thanks for our freedom in Jesus Christ and pray that we might use that freedom to proclaim the glory of God and serve our neighbor in obedience to God's word, will and ways.

4 Pray for the children, youth and family ministry leaders of our church participating in the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza, "Holding Loosely." Pray that they will grow and be strengthened for ministry through this time of spiritual renewal, continuing education, networking and mutual support.

5 Pray for ELCA Global Mission and for our ministry of accompaniment with churches, leaders, institutions and companion agencies in Asia and the Pacific region as we work together to grow the church, share the gospel, equip leaders, serve the needs of communities, address issues of development and justice, and assist with disaster preparedness and relief.

6 Ask God to help us listen to each other with respect and to address and heal the political and ideological divisions that discourage us from treating one another with love and concern as neighbors and siblings in Christ. Pray that the Spirit will unite us and lead us in the work we must do together for the well-being of our communities, nation and neighbors in need.

7 Illness, oppression, desperation and spiritual darkness are no match for the healing and redemptive power of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Savior. Praise God!

8 Pray for all those who experience food insecurity across our nation and around the world. Ask God to help us envision how we can work together to bring relief and hope and to address the root causes of hunger and poverty.

9 Give thanks to God for people of all ages, cultures, races, life experiences and perspectives who are new to the ELCA. Pray that, as siblings in Christ, we will nurture and equip one another for participating in God's work in the world.

10 Give thanks and praise to God for God's abundant love, which "heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds."

11 Pray for our outdoor ministry organizations and their leaders as they continue to discern and plan for adaptation. they envision what this summer might bring.

12 Thank God for our special relationship with The Episcopal Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1999. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, and pray that together we will find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these uncertain and challenging times.

13 When have you felt proud, boastful or self-congratulatory for your ministry, witness or service to others? Ask God to forgive you and to refocus your attention on the good news and blessings of grace given to us through Jesus Christ, which we are called to share without bias, hesitation or expectation of recognition or reward.

14 We are not much different from Peter, James or John, who were unsure what they were witnessing when God's glory shined brightly in Jesus during his transfiguration. Pray for patience and for faith in God's promise, that we, too, will someday experience glory and joy in the kingdom of heaven.

15 Pray for our new U.S. president, vice president and members of Congress, that they will find strength, support and unity for their difficult work of serving a diverse nation. Ask the Spirit to help us guide, shape and embolden our culture and nation so that we practice justice, care for our neighbors in need, strive for truth and support our global neighbors.

16 Pray that when people witness our actions and hear our words, they will see the light of the gospel and the love of Jesus Christ in us and will be moved to believe in God's love, forgiveness and actions in the world today.

17 Ash Wednesday Someone tracing the sign of the cross on our forehead with ash speaks to our need for physical reassurance that God has done something special and mysterious in the world through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Speak means to you and says to people who notice it on your forehead.



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18 Ask the Spirit to teach us humility and to remind us that God made us to care for one another, love one another, be generous with what we have and participate in God's good, reconciling work in the world.

19 Pray for families, caregivers and friends who cannot be physically present with hospitalized loved ones. Pray that we will support and comfort them through their time of separation and worry and reassure them of God's very real presence and love.

20 God knows our complexities, vulnerabilities and shortcomings yet still considers us with the wisdom of a fair and merciful judge. With a deep sigh of relief, lift up thanks and praise to God!

21 Renewed, claimed and sent forth through the word and the waters of baptism, we pray that our life in the Spirit will help us resist temptations that draw us away from God and God's ways and will keep us focused on our baptismal journey of faith, learning, service and sharing the good news.

22 Give thanks for everyone involved in the extensive effort to vaccinate people against COVID- 19 even as we work to prevent its spread and treat those who are ill. Pray that the hope and the emotional, spiritual and physical stamina of these workers will be sustained for the long haul.

23 Let our prayers and yearnings echo those of the psalmist who wrote, "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation."

24 Pray that throughout Lent we will reflect on our faith, lives and endeavors with honesty and humility while trusting in God's grace to restore our spirit and to reassure us that we will always be disciples of Christ and loved children of God.

25 Remember in prayer the Deaconess Community of the ELCA. Give thanks and pray for women who respond to God's call to serve as deaconesses and who use their passions, spiritual gifts and education to serve in a wide variety of roles and ministry settings worldwide.

26 Praise God for being patient and loving toward us and for saving us in our desperation and darkness through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

27 Pray for the ELCA Young Adult Ministry's work with young adults ages 18 to 30 and for leaders who facilitate young adult ministry in their communities of faith. Pray that young adults will find places in our communities of faith where they belong and ministries both at home and abroad where they can grow in faith, discern and use their unique gifts and passions, and engage in acts of service, justice and peace in the world.

28 We cannot fully comprehend God's ways or what Jesus has accomplished for our sake and salvation. Pray daily to be alert and receptive to what God is revealing to us and to how the Spirit stirs in us faith, wisdom and understanding.

Words from the Bishop cont. from pg. 9

and asking how our own words, actions, and ways of life may already be breaking God's Law, harming our neighbors and preventing Christ's kingdom from coming near. "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged." (Mt 7:1-5. See also Lk 6: 37-38 and Rm 2:1ff)

Instead, we proclaim through our actions and words the gospel of God's grace, forgiveness, welcome, and equal acceptance and love of all people of all identities, standing with the wounded in solidarity and lifting them up through the Spirit's encouragement, empowerment, and enlivening words, thoughts and actions.

And we proclaim this Gospel and Law not by tearing some people down to lift ourselves or others up, but by preaching over and over again the affirmative, positive gospel that we know through teachings and ministry of the Jesus of Nazareth in the Bible.

So no, I will not condemn. Nobody but God has the power or right to condemn, including me. But I will speak and affirm God's Law AND Gospel loud and clear ad nauseum to those who would listen. For that is my call as a pastor. And I do this knowing that I too am in bondage to sin and cannot free myself, knowing that through faith that I too am a beloved child of God and created in God's image, knowing that I too am welcomed, loved and accepted through my baptism.

And SO ARE YOU a beloved child of God, created in God's image, welcomed, loved and accepted into Christ's kingdom! What amazing, grace-filled good news this is that we all get to share with the world! So let's stop condemning and instead lift up God's love for our neighbors in all we do and say.

In Christ's Love,

Bishop Laurie

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**God's Work.
Our hands.**

**Lent begins with
Ash Wednesday on
February 17th.**

