

# the Voice parish newsletter



*Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful...* –Joel 2:13

Thomas Wolfe's portrayal of his hometown in his first novel, *Look Homeward, Angel* offended many who lived there. Their outrage was not unexpected, but stung him nonetheless. Coming to terms with rejection, Wolfe continued writing. Another novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, published posthumously, has become an American classic.

Robert Frost in *The Death of the Hired Man* also wrote about home: *'Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.... I should have called it something you somehow haven't to deserve'*. The fictional character, Dorothy Gale, famously said in *The Wizard of Oz*, *"There's no place like home."*

In the Bible, the prophet Joel interpreted a year of agricultural collapse as God's judgment and called people to repentance. *"Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful...."*

Lent begins this month on Ash Wednesday, February 22. I've always understood Lent as more than 40 days of "giving something up." Lent is a time to come home to God. The Lord is, after all, our true home. Saint Augustine said in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, "Our hearts our restless, O Lord, until they find their rest in thee."

Since God is our home, I don't believe the title of Wolfe's book, *You Can't Go Home Again*, is true. I believe what Frost wrote is true, *home is something you should not have to deserve; it's the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in*. Dorothy Gale also got it right, *"There's no place like home."*

Lent is a season of coming home. Lent midweek devotions will be posted on our Facebook page and YouTube channel every Wednesday in Lent. Sunday worship will continue to be in person at 8:30 AM and 10:00 AM (and live-streamed at 8:30 AM as we've done since the pandemic began). This year, I'm hoping we'll receive Joel's words as a gracious invitation. As the old hymn goes, *"Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling; calling, O sinner, come home."*

With you in Christ in Lent and always,

Pastor Doug Heagy



February, 2023



Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church  
975 Washington Road Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania 15228



Looking back to **Valentine's Day**...looking ahead to the **Season of Lent!**

# **MOUNT LEBANON LUTHERAN CHURCH YOUTH GROUP MEETING**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

**6 PM - 8 PM**

**(in the Social Hall)**

**Grades 7-12**



**Come join the fun!**  
**Games, Pizza, Food, Drinks**



**Invite your friends!**

**(Note to parents: Adult leaders will be present)**



# THE LECTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A **lectionary** is a book or listing that contains a collection of scripture readings appointed for Christian or Jewish worship on a given day or occasion. The lectionary is organized into three-year cycles of readings. The years are designated *A*, *B*, or *C*. Each yearly cycle begins on the first Sunday of Advent (the Sunday between November 27 and December 3).

- **Year A: Gospel of Matthew (Advent 2022 through 2023 - current year)**
- Year B: Gospel of Mark (Advent 2023 through 2024)
- Year C: Gospel of Luke (Advent 2024 through 2025)

The Gospel of John is heard in church in years A, B, and C throughout Easter, and is used for other liturgical seasons including Advent, Christmas, and Lent where appropriate. The early Christians adopted the Jewish custom of reading extracts from the Old Testament on the Sabbath. They soon added extracts from the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, which later would be formalized in the canon of Scripture as the Gospels and Epistles.

The purposes of the lectionary are to provide a comprehensive exposure to God's Word over the course of three years, focusing on Jesus Christ. People who make Sabbath worship a weekly part of their lives are shaped and formed by the lectionary in ways not possible by irregular worship patterns. Over the course of time, some worshippers develop a preference for one gospel over the others, but all four gospels enrich our devotional lives. The Gospel of John is different in many ways from Matthew, Mark, and Luke; one difference is its topical format. Most chapters of John are extended stories with complex dialog and character development not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Martin Luther was enamored with John's gospel.

The structure of the lectionary readings (three readings and a Psalm) has the purpose of revealing Christ and showing how he fulfills God's covenant promise articulated in Genesis 12:1-3. In Christ, all the families of the earth are blessed through faith with forgiveness, life, and salvation. By the rhythm of the lectionary, we anticipate Christ in Advent scripture, meet him at Christmas, worship with awe as he calls his disciples and reveals himself to the world at Epiphany and the Sundays thereafter. During Lent, lectionary scripture draws us into the reality of our sinful life and why it was necessary for Christ to die. Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost scripture are joyous. We celebrate God's victory over sin and death and celebrate how Jesus and the Spirit formed the redeemed community that is now the world-wide Church. Following Pentecost, the lectionary focuses on mission with scripture intended to strengthen our walk of faith.

More information about the lectionary can be found on pages 13-63 in the front of our hymnals. Take some time to acquaint yourself with these pages before worship. Aim to make lectionary reading and reflection a part of your daily life. You will be the better for doing so. Jesus, the Lord of life, will become more and more the center of your life. See you in church! --Pastor Doug

*When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,  
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...." —Luke 4:16-18*

# **BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE SEASON AFTER EPIPHANY**

*Monday Nights & Thursday Mornings*

*Exploring Stories & Themes of the Sundays after Epiphany*

## MONDAY NIGHT

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Readings for the Sundays after Epiphany*

7:00PM-8:00 PM

February 6

Isaiah 58:1-12

February 13

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

(and a peek at Sirach 15:15-20)

February 20

Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

(and a peek at Exodus 24:12-18)

**February 27**

**Lenten Bible Study begins**

## THURSDAY MORNING

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings for the Sundays after Epiphany*

10:00 AM-11:15 AM

February 2

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

February 9

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

February 16

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

**February 23**

**1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23**

**(and a peek at 2 Peter 1:16-21)**



## FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

### *Ash Wednesday's wake-up call*



“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

With these words from Genesis 3:19 and the swipe of a dirty thumb across our foreheads, Ash Wednesday propels us into Lent with the proper context to understand our lives as stewards of all that God entrusts to us. Ash Wednesday, which falls on Feb. 22, teaches us that we are mortals, after all. It crushes our ego, dispels our pretensions and drives us deep into God's mysteries: Why are we here? What are our lives all about? What's *really* important? Pray over these questions and profound insights emerge.

**We are dust.** Yes, but we are *God's* dust. Our body consists of trillions of atoms, each a speck of “dust” created by of God billions of years ago. God put us together from the stuff of the universe. Therefore, we are quite literally “earthy” beings, made of the same material as air, water, soil and stone.

As part of creation, we work to preserve, protect and sustain creation. Therefore, we have reverence for our bodies, expressed through healthy living.

**We are breath.** We are “dust” into which God has “breathed the Holy breath of life” (Genesis 2:7).

Therefore, every breath we take is holy, reminding us of God's life force in us. Therefore, we look to God to align our lives with God's holy realities of peace, love, joy, justice and truth.

**Our time is brief.** Our “dust” will return to the earth someday. We are mortal.

Therefore, every hour, every second is sacred. We spend our time wisely, carefully, prayerfully. Therefore, we do not cling to possessions, knowing that we hold onto them only for a little while. Therefore, we fill our lives with treasures of lasting value – friendships, trust, love, joy, service, generosity and harmony.

This Lent, spend time in prayer, with openness and honesty. See how God will turn your heart and mind, transforming you into the person you were created to be. Reflect each day on Ash Wednesday. “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

--**Rob Blezard**

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# Musical Musings— February, 2023



Chris Keenan

This month we highlight upcoming and past recitals by members of our music ministry. Alexandria Zallo will give a recital at Carnegie Mellon University on March 1st at 8PM. The program will include Berg's *Altenberg Lieder*, Schumanns' *Maria Stuart Songs*, and *Changing Light* by Kaija Saariaho among other works.

On Monday, January 30th, Charlene Canty performed a solo recital on the Saint Vincent College Concert Series. Her program was titled "The Art of the Spiritual," and also featured CMU pianist Thomas Douglas. Chris Keenan will perform an organ recital on May 14 at St. Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York City at 5:15 PM. The recital will feature works of Bruhns, Bach and Gigout.



## SUNDAY SERVER SCHEDULE:

**February, 2023**

If you cannot serve as scheduled, please switch with another server. If you cannot get a substitute call the church

office at 412-563-0300 or Pastor Doug at [412] 926-5440; or email the church at [mtleboluth@aol.com](mailto:mtleboluth@aol.com)

		8:30	10:00
February 5	Crucifer	TBD	Milo Bucher
February 12	Crucifer	Addison Mayer	Cameron Mayer
February 19	Crucifer	Henry Keplar	Jack O'Brien
February 26	Crucifer	Annaleigh Dwulit	Gabriel Provins



The worship links to Facebook & You Tube can be found on our website:  
[www.mtlebanonlutheran.org](http://www.mtlebanonlutheran.org)

**Sunday's**  
**8:30 AM & 10:00 AM**  
*Virtual Worship 8:30 AM Facebook LIVE*  
*Posted later on our YouTube channel*

## THE WORD of the LORD

February 5 The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 58:1-9a  
 Psalm 112:1-9  
 1 Corinthians 2:1-12  
 Matthew 5:13-20

February 12 The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Deuteronomy 30:15-20  
 Psalm 119:1-8  
 1 Corinthians 3:1-9  
 Matthew 5:21-37

February 19 The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Exodus 24:12-18  
 Psalm 2  
 2 Peter 1:16-21  
 Matthew 17:1-9

February 22 Ash Wednesday  
 11:00 AM / 7:30 PM

February 26 First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7  
 Psalm 32  
 Romans 5:12-19  
 Matthew 4:1-11

Sunday School 10:00 AM



## The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Sunday, February 19 2023  
 [The Last Sunday after the Epiphany]



If you have ever struggled with a novel that takes you through countless plot twists and turns, and you have skipped ahead to read the final chapter in order to see more clearly where you are going, then you have a sense of how the Transfiguration works in the Gospel, and how Transfiguration Sunday works in the church's year of grace.

The Transfiguration of our Lord is not only the last of the manifestations [epiphanies] of Christ which we encounter on the Sundays after the Epiphany, it also offers a glimpse of the resurrected Christ in His glory. Peter and the disciples objected to His suffering and dying, to this turn in the plot of Jesus' life [as they perceived it], but now, at the Transfiguration, they see what is to become of Him.

In addition, this glimpse of the final chapter of Jesus' life will be our guide through the twists and turns of the wilderness of Lent, where we will end our journey, with the disciples, at the tree of life.

The Transfiguration is not only the story of Christ's life, it is also the story of our life as well, for "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" [Saint Paul].

Transfiguration Sunday is also the day we return the Palm branches from last year so that they may be imposed on Ash Wednesday.



### Daily Bread Meal....

The next Daily Bread Meal will be on **March 12**. The menu will be determined at a later date. At this time, monetary donations are being welcomed. Please remember this much needed ministry on the North Side. Thank you.

### IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL OUR CONGREGATION

If you have not already picked up your 2023 Church Offering Envelopes we ask that you please stop by the Church office either before or after Worship, or call the office to make arrangements for pick up Monday-Friday 9:00 am—1:00 pm. This will help defray the cost of having to mail the remaining boxes. If you have decided to use our new **E-Offering Link**, please call the church office to let us know so we can set your box aside. Thank you for your stewardship.

## **NEW COLUMBARIUM - South Chancel Wall**

Interment is available in the new columbarium and open to church members and their extended families, and the specific policy covering the use of and payments for the columbarium niches is available upon request from the church office.

The cost of each niche is \$1,000 for interment of a single individual and \$1,500 for the interment of two.

**Please contact the church office to indicate your interest.**



### **Altar Guild Members and Ushers Needed**



Volunteers are needed to serve on the Altar Guild  
or as an Usher Team Member.

Altar Guild members serve as part of a two-person team for an alternating month, two or three times throughout the year. Responsibilities include setting up the altar for worship services and preparation of Holy Communion elements, typically one to two hours weekly.

Ushers serve individually or as part of a two-person team at one church service for an alternating month, three times throughout the year. Responsibilities include greeting worshipers, directing to Holy Communion, counting attendance and delivering offering to treasurer's office.

Please contact the church office or Cindy Brown at 412-779-2020 or [cindysgb@icloud.com](mailto:cindysgb@icloud.com) to volunteer or for additional information. Your service to the church will be gratefully appreciated. THANK YOU!♥





# ONLINE GIVING

*Is now available in association with*



myEoffering

[www.mtlebanonlutheran.org](http://www.mtlebanonlutheran.org)

## WHAT IS myEoffering?

myEoffering is a service we've teamed up with to give you the ability to send your offerings online in the same way that many of you already pay bills and purchase products. We chose to use myEoffering because they are part of a trusted, Christian family-owned company, who have been serving the needs of churches for nearly 100 years. Their product is solid, secure, easy, and convenient.

## WHY SHOULD I USE myEoffering?

Many of you already pay for most of your purchases electronically, whether online or with a credit or debit card. So we have decided to offer this service as a convenience to you - you can stop writing checks or having to remember to bring cash every Sunday. Simply log in to our service and set up your offering. You can set the donations to match your pay periods, and even send your one-time donations to the special offerings we may have from time-to-time. This new service allows you to give any amount, at any time, from home or on the road, with your computer or even your mobile device. Now you can control how and when you give your tithes.

## HOW DOES IT HELP?

Online giving is the future. In the lifetime of our young people, we will see electronic payments overshadow traditional methods of paper payments. In order to position ourselves to continue doing the work of God in the future and to make it as convenient as possible to be a cheerful giver to God's work, we have decided to offer online giving to you. In addition to easier access to giving and more engagement with young stewards, online offering has many benefits for the church. It allows us to more easily track contributions for budgeting. It saves us from manually tracking those contributions every week. It saves us from large fees on check processing and allows us to more accurately forecast expenditures and needs.

## HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Signing up is as simple as going to our church website listed above and look for the green computer mouse icon. That button will take you to the myEoffering page for our church. Simply sign up and begin giving online today! Or scan the code to the right with your mobile device to get started now.



SCAN THIS  
CODE WITH  
YOUR MOBILE  
DEVICE NOW





## WE REMEMBER in our prayers:

**O God, fill us with your light, that we might delight in your goodness and glory and serve you with joy. Illumine with your light, we pray, those who struggle in sickness and in sorrow with the warmth of your healing presence which will remind them that they are not alone. Especially we pray for:**

Bishop George Bashore; Craig Elias; Deb Cecotti; Scott Halapin; Patty Pavlak; Kalie Radigan; Cheryl Poenisch; Rian Dankert; the family of Annabelle Santos; Aurora Schultz; Janice Seigle; Elena Getz; Nancy Ingles; Levi; Maria Simbra

**NEWSLETTER ARTICLES** for the March issue of the *Voice* are to be submitted by Sunday, February 12th. Articles may be left in the church office or email: [mtleboluth@aol.com](mailto:mtleboluth@aol.com).

### *You're Invited...To the Sunday Morning Fellowship*

Each Sunday worshippers have the opportunity to greet one another and welcome visitors at our: **Sunday Morning Fellowship** in the Narthex. Join us in between the early and late Liturgies to share greetings and conversations with friends and visitors. Refreshments are available for all.

The Sunday Morning Fellowship also provides opportunities to volunteer:

\*Sponsor the Coffee Project of Lutheran World Relief, helping small growers, their families and communities through the fair trade of coffee.

\*Volunteer to set up and clean the Fellowship refreshments table. It's easy to do and a member of the Hospitality Committee will show you how. Also, written instructions are available.

\*Provide sweet (or healthy) treats for all to enjoy. (Gluten free and nut free treats are also welcomed)

If you'd like to help you can sign up on the bulletin board in the main hallway, or contact the church office.

## Lenten Devotions for All Ages

We have Lenten Devotional booklets for all age groups. These will be available prior to Ash Wednesday.

**Adults:** "*Amazing Grace: Devotions for Lent*" by Michael Hoy. In honor of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the writing of the beloved hymn, these devotions tie the words of the song (and the history surrounding it) to our lives today and to those in the Bible who experienced God's amazing grace. Available in the Narthex in the coming weeks.

**Children:** "*Trust in the Lord: A Lenten Path for Families*" by Danielle Bean. These devotions encourage families to increase their trust in the Lord through warm and approachable conversations and lessons. They include Bible verses, activities, prayers, and reflections and will be distributed during Sunday School.

**Teens/College:** "*Tick, Tock...It's Lent! A Timely Journey Through God's Grace for Teens and Young Adults*" by David Mead. These daily encouragements prompt us to take just a minute each day to read, reflect, rewind, repent, and repost about the Lenten opportunities we have to serve, share and spend time in Scripture. To be distributed in Catechetics and mailed to college students who provide their mailing address to the Church office.



**Please remember** while shopping, the ministry of the Food Bank at St. Michael and All Angels' Lutheran in Spring Garden on Pittsburgh's North-side with your contributions of non-perishable food, cleaning and laundry products and monetary donations. When making monetary donations, please make your check payable to *Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church* and designate your donation for St. Michael's Food Pantry [Your donation will be recorded and then forwarded.] or to the ELCA World Hunger ministries using a *designated gift envelope* in your pew. Items may be brought any Sunday. Thank you to Clarence Gourley for making the monthly delivery to St. Michael's.

# Images of Lent



The ashes of Ash Wednesday remind us that we, as a people baptized into the death of Christ, are repenting in order to follow Jesus. So, what does God want from us?

An answer comes early in our Lenten readings. God wants a great deal more from us than just our presence in worship, and the prophet Isaiah calls us to account when we have failed to do it. Lent is an invitation to a fast, but the kind of fast God wants us to observe is not merely an abstention from gluttony, but a deliberate, dedicated striving aimed at achieving justice for all of God's children. It was the challenge Isaiah offered to his listeners, and it is the challenge that remains for us today.

Isaiah told the people then [and those now who wear the ashes] that they missed the point of the ashes by concentrating on their dramatic portrayal of repentant suffering. The focus should be on what is really important: those who are poor, oppressed, hungry, and homeless. Sacrificing for others was and is a profoundly counter-cultural indictment of things the way they were, and of the way people allow themselves to become.

The ashes of Lent remind us of our call to be servants, and lead us also to acknowledge that, no matter how hard we try, we cannot save ourselves.

In truth, the real discipline of Lent is intended to clear away what is extra so that we might focus on what is essential: our relationship with God. Lent invites us to fast, because we do not live by bread alone. Lent calls us to give offerings in response to what God gives us in Christ. Lent reminds us to pray, not to get something from God, but because God is God and worthy of our prayers of thanksgiving and praise.

Those who bear the cross of ashes know this truth. It is the truth we must not forget even though so much of the world and even so many members of our families, get swept along by a glib psychology of life.

Isaiah knew the temptation to ignore the truth, and it is hard to resist that temptation, and difficult to do God's will, and painful to work for justice.

But the faithful will follow God, empowered by their baptism, and marked with the cross of Christ.



**LENTEN MIDWEEK  
VIRTUAL DEVOTIONS**  
**Beginning March 1**  
**7:30 pm**

## How to prepare for fasting...

Genuine, Spirit-filled fasting calls for intentional preparation. Such fasting calls for the following as a minimum:

- Examine your motives (Isa. 58:3-7)
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior (Rom. 12:1,2)
- Ask God to reveal your sins to you (Ps. 19:12)
- Confess your sins (1 John 1:9)
- Seek forgiveness from those you have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3,4)
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads (Matt. 5:23-26)
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
- consult with your physician before beginning a fast of any length.

## What to do while fasting...

- Pray (Dan. 9:3; Acts 14:23);
- Meditate on the Word of God (Ps. 1:1,2; Col. 3:16).
- Meditate on the attributes of God: love, grace, wisdom, compassion, sovereignty (Pss. 48:9, 10; 103:1-13).
- Expect God to bless you and reveal Himself to you (Heb. 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition (Gal. 5:16, 17)
- Refuse to yield to your worldly nature (Rom. 12:1,2).
- Exhibit an attitude of joy (Zech. 8:19; Matt. 6:17,18).

# Lenten Service Project

## Lenten Service Project 2023

Ash Wednesday, Feb.22- Easter Sunday, April 9

### *Donations for Local Refugees "Hello Neighbor" Resettlement Program*

#### **More refugees are resettling in Allegheny County than ever before, agencies say**

Refugee resettlement in the Pittsburgh area reached historic highs over the last year. Between October 2021 and October 2022, agency leaders in the region helped relocate more than 1,000 people fleeing conflict, persecution and disaster.

Nearly three-quarters of those who resettled in the region fled from Afghanistan.

Approximately 76,000 Afghans were evacuated from the country after U.S. troops withdrew from the region in August 2021.

Together, the region's four refugee resettlement agencies with federal contracts—Jewish Family and Community Services of Pittsburgh, AJAPO, Bethany Christian Services (LIRS-Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) and Hello Neighbor—aided 701 Afghans as they relocated to the region from U.S. military bases last winter.

That figure, however, doesn't include refugees coming to the U.S. through other means, like humanitarian parole. Ivonne Smith-Tapia, JFCS Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services, said the actual number of Afghan refugees resettled in Pittsburgh is likely closer to 800.

"We have never seen that many refugees coming to Allegheny County," she said.

With this large influx of refugees, the need is GREAT!

#### **Matthew 25:35-40**

***For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, <sup>[a]</sup> you did it to me.'***

Continued...

# Our Congregation will be collecting donations for most-requested items that are difficult to fund by the resettlement agencies

We will be collecting money that will go towards purchasing larger items- specifically:

**Sewing Machines**

**Rugs**

**Large Stockpots**

We will also be collecting smaller items that can be purchased and brought to church-specifically: (ALL NEW)

Slippers (men and women's)



Sewing Kits



Tool kits



Irons



Coffee makers



There will be boxes in the narthex labeled for all items.

Thanks to our generous congregation for all the help for those in need in our community. Any questions, contact Sara Dougherty [tjdsjd@verizon.net](mailto:tjdsjd@verizon.net)

[John 15:12](#)

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”*

## Annual Blanket-tying Event

**After a long hiatus, we are finally ready to tie blankets together!!**

Please join us on Sunday, **February 5<sup>th</sup>**, immediately following the 10:00 service (11:00 am) in the social Hall for our annual blanket-tying ministry.

We will be joined once again by 25-30 of our Senior Bhutanese neighbors who reside in the South Hills.

This year we have enough supplies to create 30 blankets that will be donated to our friends at Daily Bread Ministries in the Northside.

Please join in this fun activity, meet and work alongside our neighbors from the Bhutanese refugee community and create a warm blanket for those in need. Any questions, please contact Sara Dougherty at [tjdsjd@verizon.net](mailto:tjdsjd@verizon.net)



# Souper Bowl of Caring

## Sunday, February 12

The 2023 Souper Bowl of Caring event will be held on Sunday, February 12. Please help to transform Super Bowl weekend into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving!

The Congregation is invited to bring cash or checks to place in soup pots in the Narthex. Our youth will be collecting your monetary donations in soup pots in the Narthex after worship service has concluded. Checks should be made payable to "Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church" and include a note in the byline "Souper Bowl".

We will also be collecting canned soup. There will be a collection area in the Narthex through February 19.

More than 30 years ago, the Souper Bowl of Caring began with a simple prayer from a single youth group:

*"Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game,  
help us to be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat."*

This year's collection is for St. Michael's Food Pantry. Your help is greatly appreciated!



## Education Ministries Update

**Sunday School:** Classes start each week at 10:00 with a Children's Message from Pastor at the beginning of Worship, followed by lessons in the classrooms at 10:10. Every other week, we conclude with music practice in the Social Hall at 10:55.

**Service Projects:** Our Sunday School students are participating in the annual Souper Bowl of Caring to support local hunger relief efforts. They decorated soup cans to promote the canned soup drive. On February 12, kids will be in the Narthex after Worship Liturgies to receive monetary donations for the Food Pantry at St. Michael's. Kids are also invited to help tie fleece blankets for the homeless on February 5.

### Seeking VBS Leaders:

Volunteers are needed for key leadership roles in Vacation Bible School, to be held mid-July. Some tasks are done in advance (Spring and early Summer), and some are on-site during the week of VBS. Please contact Vedette Keplar at [vkeplar@yahoo.com](mailto:vkeplar@yahoo.com) for more information.

## 2023 Congregational Council Officers Installed



### Our New Congregation

**Council....**Prior to worship, on January 31, the 2022 Congregation Council was installed. Welcome to:

Julia Nelson (Youth); Rick Spickard (Finance); and Tom Ultsch (Property); Cindy Brown (Worship), Jim Needles (Stewardship), James Brentzel (Evangelism) Sara Dougherty (Social Ministries), Don Snyder (Property), Jody Lutz (Vice President), Alan Trivilino (President), Vedette Keplar (Christian Education), Jeff McGraw (Congregational Life), and Amy Stabenow (Secretary); Pastor Heagy

Thank you to our outgoing council members for sharing their time and talents. We offer our heartfelt thanks for their leadership, commitment, and faithfulness.

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.*  
1 John 4:7-8

## 2023 COUNCIL MEETINGS

**February 26**

**March 26**

**April 23**

**May 21**

**June 25**

**August 27**

**September 24**

**October –Annual Meeting TBD**

**November 19**

**December 17**

**GLOBAL LINKS**  
*Sharing Surplus. Saving Lives.*

**Saturday, February 11**  
**10-12 pm**

### Volunteers Needed To Help Pack Surplus Medical Supply for those in need.

Sign-up sheets have been placed in the narthex or if you are interested in volunteering. Please contact Sara Dougherty at 412-523-1499 or [tidsjd@verizon.net](mailto:tidsjd@verizon.net) if any questions.

**FINAL 2022 Financial Giving Statements** have been mailed. If you have questions about your statement, please call Allan Copenheaver at 412 563-6865, or email [allancope@yahoo.com](mailto:allancope@yahoo.com). The church office does not assist with questions, which remain confidential with our financial secretary.

## Looking ahead...

**Ash Wednesday-February 22**

**Easter - April 9**

**Pentecost - May 28**

The South Hills Knitting Guild is looking for new members to join the group. They are a lovely bunch of ladies who love to knit for different causes. They meet in our church every 3rd Thursday of the month throughout the year at 10:00 am. If interested or want more information please call the Church Office.





# WHEN DOES CATECHISM BEGIN?

## *Reversing the Trend*

Congregations have different catechism requirements. Program length and rigor vary. There are differences in the grade level and ages of students. Nothing said below is directed specifically to current students and families in our catechism program. Rather, the concerns are based on decades of ministry and shared with the hope of reform.

Catechism begins the day a child is born. Parents learn this truth when they meet with pastors for baptismal instruction. They learn the duties of Christian parents include more than letters, numbers; diapers; and vaccinations. Teaching faith in Christ is the vow parents make on the occasion of their child's baptism.

### *Teaching faith includes...*

- ***Ongoing modeling and instruction in the home:*** Praying before meals; praying before bedtime; reading and teaching Bible stories (Do children see Bibles in plain view in the home and their parents reading God's word?)
- ***Remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy:*** One of the greatest, noticeable changes of the last century has been the decline in weekly church attendance. Decline is evident in Europe, North America, but not in every part of the world. Children learn the habits of their parents. Parents who worship weekly are more likely to have children who do the same in life. There's no guarantee. Children may reject their parents' way. This truth, however, remains: parents pull the sled; they set the course of family life.
- ***Sunday School Attendance:*** "Perfect Sunday School Attendance" pins were once awarded at the end of each Sunday School year. Most churches no longer follow this practice. Few pins could be given. When youth reach the age of catechetical instruction, there's a great difference between those who've attended Sunday School and those who've not. Think of a 7th grade classroom with some having a knowledge of math and reading and others seeing numbers and letters for the first time. To teach in such a context means starting from scratch, altering curriculum that assumes previous years

of instruction. The matter is compounded when adults are unwilling to serve as Sunday School teachers. Teacher shortages hurt.

- ***Practicing ongoing confession and forgiveness:*** No pastor, parent, or child is perfect. We are sinners made holy by Christ. Teaching faith includes modeling the God of grace and forgiving love. When children see parents repenting and confessing sin (in the home and in worship), they mature by the experience of grace. They learn gratitude for God and are inspired to gratefully serve throughout life, using their time, talent, and treasure.

***So when does catechism begin?*** In truth, faith formation is a life-long process that begins at birth. When our three children were born, I read from the Bible in their birthing rooms, asking God to bless their lives. Regularly, I ask God to remember these prayers made on their birthdays. Let us pray for catechism; for the renewal of faith in Europe, North America, and the entire world. Renewal includes repentance, the humility to make course corrections to begin anew. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. May love for Christ become again the first love of every home.

*With love for Christ and everyone,*

*Pastor Doug Heagy*



### Tax Reform Act May Make QCD's More Appealing

Several years ago, Qualified Charitable Distributions became an option for IRA holders, who are at least 70 ½, to donate directly to qualified charities. This has several possible good tax outcomes for the IRA holder. In cases where the taxpayer is taking the standard deduction, direct contribution will keep the IRA distribution out of taxable income, lowering taxes if you do not itemize. This also reduces Adjusted Gross Income that may reduce taxes on Social Security benefits and reduce the taxpayer's Medicare premiums.

While nothing changed in 2022 as far as these rules, the near doubling of the standard deduction makes it more likely that taxpayer's will be taking the standard deduction. Taking an IRA distribution that goes into taxable income may not be offset by an itemized deduction for charitable contributions, increasing taxes. In short, contributions to MLULC (or other charities) may be more tax effective if donated directly from an IRA to the charity rather than being distributed to the taxpayer and then contributed to the charity. "Qualified charitable distributions count towards your required minimum distribution, if you have one this year."

If this is of possible interest to you, please contact me. I can explain further and give you account information for our brokerage account that can accept QCD's.



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# PREPARING FOR THE LENTEN SEASON

THERE ARE MANY THINGS WE CAN DO AS WE PREPARE FOR THE LENTEN SEASON, WHICH BEGINS FEBRUARY 22. HERE ARE A FEW NON-TRADITIONAL IDEAS:

1) CREATE A RESURRECTION GARDEN— [HTTPS://WWW.FARMWIFECRAFTS.COM/RESURRECTION-GARDEN/](https://www.farmwifecrafts.com/resurrection-garden/)



2) MAKE A LENTEN PRETZEL — *THE WORD PRETZEL IS DERIVED FROM A GERMAN WORD THAT MEANS “LITTLE ARMS.” THE TWISTED SHAPE OF PRETZELS IS MEANT TO RESEMBLE TWO ARMS CROSSED IN PRAYER. MAKING LENT PRETZELS IS A WAY TO REMEMBER THAT LENT IS A SEASON OF PRAYER.*



[HTTPS://WWW.FOODNETWORK.COM/RECIPES/ALTON-BROWN/HOMEMADE-SOFT-PRETZELS-RECIPE-1948242](https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/alton-brown/homemade-soft-pretzels-recipe-1948242)

3) CREATE A THORN WREATH— OUT OF CHOCOLATE COVERED PRETZEL STICKS



4) 40 DAYS OF DONATIONS-GO THROUGH CLOSET AND EVERY DAY FOR THE 40 DAYS OF LENT PUT ONE ITEM IN A BASKET. DONATE THE BASKET TO A CHARITY.

5) MAKE A RUSTIC CROSS FROM TWIGS, BRANCHES AND TWINE

ASH WEDNESDAY  
HOLY WEDNESDAY  
MAUNDAY THURSDAY  
GOOD FRIDAY

FEBRUARY 22  
APRIL 5  
APRIL 6  
APRIL 7

EASTER SUNDAY-RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD - APRIL 9



GOD LOVES YOU



FOR GOD...

SO LOVED THE  
WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS  
ONLY

BEGOTTEN

SON, SO

THAT EVERYONE

WHO BELIEVES IN HIM

MAY NOT PERISH


BUT MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

*John 3:16*



# February 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Choir 7:00 pm	2 Bible Study 10:00 am Catechetics 1 4:00 pm	3	4
5 <b>Epiphany 5</b> 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Christian Education Mtg. 11:00 Blanket Tying Event	6  Bible Study 7:00 pm	7 Catechetics 2 4:00 pm	8  Choir 7:00 pm	9 Bible Study 10:00 am Catechetics 1 4:00 pm	10	11
12 <b>Epiphany 6</b> 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School <i>Souper Bowl of Caring</i>	13  Bible Study 7:00 pm	14 Catechetics 2 4:00 pm	15  Choir 7:00 pm	16 Bible Study 10:00 am Catechetics 1 4:00 pm	17	18
19 <b>Transfiguration of Our Lord</b> 8:30 & 10:00 Live Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School	20  Bible Study 7:00 pm	21 Catechetics 2 4:00 pm	22 <b>Ash Wednesday</b> 11:00 am Worship Liturgy 7:30 pm Worship Liturgy	23 Bible Study 10:00 am Catechetics 1 4:00 pm	24	25
26 <b>First Sunday of Lent</b> 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School 11:15 Council Meeting	27  Bible Study 7:00 pm	28 Catechetics 2 4:00 pm				



**1 Black History Month** Give thanks for the gifts, accomplishments, influence and witness of our African-descent neighbors and siblings in Christ — we stand together to glorify God as partners in the gospel, doing God's work in the world together. Though unified as siblings in Christ, we ask God to guide our church in its pursuit of racial justice, socioeconomic equity, racial reconciliation and an end to hatred and mistrust.

**2** Give thanks for older adults, whose diverse gifts, life experiences, perspectives and wisdom are essential to the life, vitality and leadership of our congregations and communities.

**3** Pray for leaders of children, youth and family ministries as these leaders gather for the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza in Anaheim, Calif. Give thanks for their commitment, gifts and concern for the faith and well-being of young people.

**4** Give thanks for staff and volunteers who help congregations function smoothly, grow and thrive, including administrative assistants, accountants, property managers, program coordinators and communications staff.

**5** Jesus describes us as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Pray that, by sharing our faith and acting with compassion, justice and care for our neighbors, we might direct people's attention to our loving and generous God.

**6** ELCA World Hunger works through the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and alongside global companions and agencies in Kenya to build the capacity of families to respond to and withstand worsening droughts. Pray for our neighbors in Kenya and for the immediate and long-term success of LWF initiatives, which include training farmers in climate-smart practices, building and repairing water wells, managing water supplies and promoting hygiene.

**7** Remember in prayer those who have suffered tragedy, trauma or loss from recent winter storms, flooding and earthquakes. Pray that God will bring them hope and encouragement throughout their grieving, recovery and adjustment to the changes in their communities.

**8** Pray for pastors and deacons who serve multiple congregations, and pray that congregations sharing leadership will flourish, discovering new partners, resources and assets for doing God's work in the world.

**9** Pray that our compassion and advocacy, offered without prejudice or the expectation of any recognition or reward, might bring light, hope and relief to the world. "If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday" (Isaiah 58:9-10).

**10** Remember in prayer the 1.3 million people serving in the military and the nearly 800,000 serving in the military reserves, many of them young adults.

**11** Give thanks and pray for the ELCA's AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities), work that grows more critical every day as vulnerable youth yearn for assistance with the daunting task of finding safety, stability, respect and welcoming communities in our country.

**12** Pray for people who suffer chronic illness and pain that impacts their daily lives, activities and employment; pray that they might receive affordable health care and effective treatment; and ask the Spirit to stir our empathy and help us provide appropriate, respectful support.

**13** Pray that our civic engagement and concern for our neighbor and the world might exceed what is required or expected of us by laws, social norms, trends and tradition.

**14** Ask God to help us understand, respect and set aside our differences so that we might be empowered by our unity in Christ and embrace our complementary gifts and passions to do God's work in the world, "for we are God's servants, working together" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

**15** Praise God that, as different as we are from one another, we gather to celebrate Communion remembering our unity and strength in Christ, who frees us to love and serve our neighbor and to bear God's mercy into the world.

**16** Give thanks for the publishing ministry of Augsburg Fortress and for writers and editors who help deepen our faith, equip us for life and service, and support our faith communities.

**17** Praise God for the clarity and joy we find in following God's ways and commandments, and for the assurance that we are never alone or directionless in our baptismal journeys.

**18 Martin Luther, renewer of the church (1483-1546)** Give thanks for the life, faith, prayerful deliberation, and wisdom of Martin Luther, who continues to influence and challenge the church and our theology. Pray that we might remember Luther's human complexity and imperfections — and our own — as we strive to understand Scripture and live as children of God in an ever-changing world.

**19** We embrace the mystery of the Holy Trinity through the gift of faith. Give thanks that, through Scripture, God leads us to clarity about the true nature of Jesus Christ, who was sent to redeem us and to teach us how to live as children of God: "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5).

**20 World Day of Social Justice** Pray that our concern for social justice in the world will be grounded in our faith, Jesus' example and the ways and wisdom of God, emboldening us to serve our neighbor, respect one another and risk changing unjust laws, traditions, institutions and behaviors.

**21 Shrove Tuesday** Ask the Spirit to prepare our hearts for the season of Lent and to create in us a humble, penitent spirit that is renewed daily through faith in God's forgiveness and love, revealed and experienced in Jesus Christ.

**22 Ash Wednesday** "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Give thanks for the cross of ash drawn on our foreheads today, which assures us of God's forgiveness, love and renewing spirit.

**23** Pray for ELCA missionaries serving with our global companions in Tanzania: David and Kellen Msseemmaa, Astine and Ryan Bose, Dr. Steven and Bethany Friberg, Dr. Stephen and Jodi Swanson, Deacon April Trout, Linda Jacobson, Robert Kasworm, the Rev. Mary Jo Maas, Derrick Matthews and Dr. Dorothy Brewster-Lee, the Rev. Elieshi Mungure, and Robert and Carolee Stuberg.

**24** Shout praise and thanksgiving for God's love, forgiveness, patience, creativity and concern for those who suffer poverty, injustice and disregard.

**25** Pray for the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, an intentional group of women who respond to Christ's call through Word and Service and diaconal ministry.

**26** Give thanks for the strength and example of Jesus, who prevailed over temptation and demonstrated the power of God over evil, self-interest and greed. Pray that the Spirit will guide and sustain us through the challenges we face each day.

**27** Pray that we might understand how we stray from God's intent, harming or neglecting our neighbor. Ask the Spirit for the humility we need to confess our offenses, receive God's mercy with gratitude and make amends with neighbors we have hurt.

**28** Give thanks for synod bishops who manage their synods' work, further the church's mission in diverse contexts, and support and care for leaders and congregations. Pray for them as they gather in mutual support and encouragement for the Conference of Bishops, to advise the presiding bishop of our church and reflect on how we do God's work in the world.

## Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church

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Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
**The Reverend Kurt Kusserow**  
Bishop  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod  
**The Reverend Douglas M. Heagy**  
Senior Pastor  
**Dr. Christopher Keenan, DMA**  
Director of Music and Organist  
**Mr. Larry Allen**  
Director of Music and Organist Emeritus  
**Mrs. Kris Malia**  
Parish Secretary  
**Mr. Azmuddin Baraki**  
Sexton



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

# The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Sunday, February 19, 2023  
[The Last Sunday after the Epiphany]



A solemn day of the Church Year

## Ash Wednesday

Liturgy times: 11:00 AM & 7:30 PM  
February 22, 2023



Sealing of the alleluia, confession, imposition of ashes  
and a restrained celebration of the Lord's Supper  
to begin our Lenten journey of turning away from sin  
to be faithful to the Gospel in Jesus Christ.