



BULLETIN

BRINGING GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE IN CHRIST JESUS TO ALL THE WORLD

The Lutheran Church-International *and the* Lutheran World Parish

Lent – Eastertide 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the LC-I Family,

I pray that each one of you are richly blessed through this holy Lenten season as we reflectively look forward to the joy of the Resurrection. For all of us in the church universal and especially for those who live an evangelical catholic life infused and guided by the Holy Spirit, strengthened and inspired by the liturgy, Lent is a time of both special reflection and commitment to turn away from sin so that we can give glory to God with a repentant spirit.

In writing these lines I am put in mind of the Medieval Hymn often sung at Easter Vigil. That hymn is called Exsultet. The Latin words 'O felix Culpa,' "Oh happy (fortunate) fault." The idea is that the fall of humanity in original sin was fortunate in that it resulted in the incarnation and sacrifice on the cross of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For us Christians it is a happy and fortunate event that though the Fall was evil, it was the occasion of God's grace entering the world in a special way. Our work does not enter the equation. The universal catholic church has always known this truth through St. Paul's teaching. Luther clarified that truth for us. Unfortunately, even in my day in post-Vatican II Roman seminaries in the 1960's, that reality was not often stressed in preaching nor in practice.

In this season we are given an overview of Christ's life and message through the Scripture readings. It is a tradition in the church to make use of the time by doing something to mark the time as special. This was thought of as behavior that would earn merit in heaven. Although the church always has taught that it is by Christ's sacrifice on the cross alone that salvation comes to us, the teaching became somewhat obscured by false teaching and practice. As Lutheran Christians we know that our works do



++Robert W. Hotes, Archbishop

not lead us to salvation. It is by faith in Christ alone that we are able to receive that gift. But, as human beings, we also know that our actions can help to reinforce our faith. So, it seems to me that doing something special to aid our faith is a good idea.

You may remember a time when for some Lutherans eating fish on Fridays or giving up smoking were common Lenten practices. That was a time when fish was cheaper than meat. That has most certainly changed. These are still traditions observed by many Christians during Lent. In my opinion, something positive, like being more generous in

helping others and spending more time with God's Word in the Bible is worth considering instead of thinking about "giving things up" for Lent. Since all things belong to God and He provides them to us, how can we really give them up to honor Him? But if we listen to the Holy Spirit, we will not go wrong in what we choose to do or not do. For that to happen we must be attentive to His Word in Holy Scripture.

The Old Testament readings in the liturgies for the season and the Psalms remind us of God's original promise of salvation to the people of Israel, while the Epistle readings give us explanations and admonitions in relation to the life in Christ in His church on earth. And, of course, the Gospel readings teach us about Christ's teaching and the witness of His miracles.

Scripture and the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion give us strength and hope as we prepare for the Kingdom to come. Whether we pray in the strengthening fellowship of corporate worship in church or at home or as we can in this holy season, may we receive these gifts with gratitude as we follow His light on our path in communal love and service.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthian 12:12-13:

12 For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also, is Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and given to drink into one Spirit.

Whatever challenges we face as members of the LC-I and in the catholic/universal church of and in Christ, we know that God is with us. Our faith tells us that His will will prevail. We can have confidence in His promises.

Through my decades of ministry within the LC-I my faith that there is a special mission that God has set before us as an evangelical catholic church body has remained firm. As we ask prayerfully for strength, as we face challenges to come, I ask each one of you to make every possible effort to attend the upcoming 2026 Synod Assembly in Lyons, New York.

Perhaps such an effort might be an expression of faith through a Lenten sacrifice. The effective ministry of the LC-I will be strengthened by your prayers and presence.

May God bless and keep you always in His care.

++Robert

A reading from Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983)

(A Russian Orthodox theologian who taught at St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York.)

Healing is a sacrament because its purpose or end is not health as such, the restoration of physical health, but the entrance of man into the life of the Kingdom, into the "joy and peace" of the Holy Spirit. In Christ everything in this world, and this means health and disease, joy and suffering, has become an ascension to, and entrance into this new life, its expectation and anticipation.

In this world suffering and disease are indeed "normal," but their very "normalcy" is abnormal. They reveal the ultimate and permanent defeat of life, a defeat which no partial victories of medicine, however wonderful and truly miraculous, can ultimately overcome. But in Christ suffering is not "removed", it is transformed into victory. The defeat itself becomes victory, a

way, an entrance into the Kingdom, and this is the only true healing.

+ From *For the Life of the World*.

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For our next newsletter, Pentecost, I would like to include pictures of our churches decorated for Holy Week and/or Easter.

Please send them to me at:
mve5022@gmail.com.

Thank you! Mitzi Eberhardt

Ash Wednesday



*Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:20

HOLY WEEK





SPECIAL PRAYER REQUESTS

These prayers have been requested through communication to the Archbishop's office. Please include them in your personal prayers and in the prayers of your congregation. Prayers, thoughts, and joyful remembrances may be sent to the Archbishop: dbldoc@sbcglobal.net.

WE PRAY FOR...

For peace in our cities where there is civil unrest.

For all captives who have been deprived of their freedom throughout the world, that the hearts of leaders of all nations may be filled with compassion and forgiveness.

For the people of Ukraine, as they continue to fight for their freedom and independence.

For those suffering through wars and natural disasters in other parts of the world.

For all who suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially those in the LC-I family in Asia.

For those suffering from illnesses in mind, body or spirit, especially those in the LC-I family.

For Bishop Rodney Eberhardt, as he continues his recovery from open-heart surgery.

For Pastor Robert Rainis, as he continues his recovery from heart surgery.

Those who mourn the deaths of loved ones from disease and disaster, from violence and war.

For Brenda and Shanon Brendlinger, as they mourn the loss of their husband, father.

For Patrick Rooney, as he recovers from health issues.

For Pastor Gies and his family in their time of suffering.

For Deacon Eric Frank and the members of Zion, W. Jefferson, Ohio.

For Phyllis Bischoff, mother of Bishop Jeffrey, who is facing health issues, and for Michelle her daughter, who is caring for her.

For Pastor Peter Jacobson facing health issues.

For healing of Bobby and Charley, members of Deacon Eric's family.

For the Society of the Holy Trinity as they discern their new Senior.

For those who seek freedom from repression, torture and death, as they seek asylum in the United States.

For firefighters and other first responders in lives of service that they be protected from all danger and harm.

For our President and all elected officials, give them wisdom and strength to know God's will and to do it. Help them to remember that they are called to serve the people as lovers of truth and civil justice.

For the Deacons and Deaconesses of the Lutheran Diaconal Association.

For those planning the 2026 LC-I Synod Assembly.

WE PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING...

For our Synod officers and members of our Executive Board as they work to further the mission and ministry of our Synod.

For all of our rostered LC-I pastors and deacons, that they may be blessed as they work with us for the building of the Kingdom.

For Pastors Peter Jacobson and Isaiah Bai who will receive historic succession at our Synod Assembly in July 2026.

For all the saints in the Church Militant, and in thanksgiving for all the saints in the Church Triumphant.

For all members of the Lutheran World Parish.

For the memorials received in memory of Gary and Virginia Ettlemeyer to further the Synod's mission and ministry.

For our Archbishop who so personally exemplifies the love of Christ in his pastoral and priestly ministry as he shepherds our flock.

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Mitzi V. Eberhardt, Editor
Assistant to the Archbishop for Communi-
cations
mve5022@gmail.com
The people, clergy, and bishops of the
LC-I contributing

To Our Readers:

The Editors of the LC-I and Lutheran World Parish BULLETIN are always eager to receive news of interest to the friends, members, and ministries of the LC-I. Articles in this BULLETIN reflect the opinions of their authors and are not to be understood as official statements by the LC-I. All items must have relevance to the identity and mission of the LC-I as expressed in our Constitution. A copy of the Constitution is available on the LC-I website. The LC-I reserves the right to approve all content as well as the right to copyright any material published with permission of the authors.

The deadline for articles for our Pentecost/ Pre-Synod Issue is APRIL 17, 2026.

Please help us with relevant materials to make the upcoming season more meaningful than ever for our readers.

ANNUAL DUES

Please note that annual dues are **required** of ministerial members in the amount of \$75 and for communities of faith in the amount of \$150 each year in order to be in good standing.

They are due on January 1st of each year unless waived by your Bishop or Archbishop upon your request and approval by the Executive Board.

See form for submitting dues on **page 12** of this newsletter.

**2025-2026 LC-I OFFICERS
AND EXECUTIVE BOARD**

(Terms end as indicated)

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The Most Reverend Doctor Robert W. Hotes
Archbishop@LutheranChurchInternational.org

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Mitzi Eberhardt
mve5022@gmail.com

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RevRodney14@gmail.com

Missionary Bishop

The Right Reverend Richard W. Horn
Bp.RWHorn@gmail.com

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+Bishop Eberhardt and I were discussing the purpose of Lent, what to do to make it more meaningful in our lives and help us to focus our lives on that purpose. I personally can admit that I have always had a very short attention span due to my attention deficit, but I believe that the following might be an aid in not only your but also in my Lenten journey.

...*Vice President and Editor, Mitzi Eberhardt*

The Wilderness of the Heart: A Personal Reflection on Lent

Lent is often misunderstood as a season of mere restriction—a forty-day marathon of giving up chocolate or social media. However, when we look past the surface of these rituals, we find that Lent is actually an invitation to a deeply personal and transformative journey. It is a season designed to help us clear the "clutter" of our lives so we can hear our own hearts, and the voice of the Divine, more clearly.

The power of Lent begins with the concept of the "wilderness." This is modeled after the forty days Jesus spent in the desert, facing his own hunger and temptations. In our modern lives, our "deserts" are rarely physical places; instead, they are the quiet spaces we create when we intentionally step away from our comforts. When I choose to fast or give something up, I am not trying to prove my willpower. Rather, I am creating a vacuum. By removing a distraction, I am forced to confront the restlessness, the anxiety, or the loneliness that I usually drown out with busyness. Lent asks us to stop running and finally stand still.

The three pillars of the season—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—act as a compass for this journey. Prayer becomes less about reciting words and more about listening. Fasting becomes a physical reminder that our true "hunger" is often for something deeper than food. Almsgiving turns our gaze outward, reminding us that we are part of a human family and that our personal growth is hollow if it doesn't lead to greater love for others. Together, these practices help us undergo *metanoia*—a total shift in the way we see the world and ourselves.

There is a beautiful, albeit somber, honesty in the way Lent begins. On Ash Wednesday, we are told, "Remember that you are dust." While that might sound morbid, it is actually incredibly freeing. It levels the playing field, reminding us that we are all fragile, all temporary, and all in need of grace. This humility allows us to shed the masks we wear in our daily lives. We don't have to be perfect during Lent; in fact, the season is built for the "imperfect"—for those of us who feel a bit broken or lost.

Ultimately, the significance of Lent is that it prepares us for a joy that is earned. If we skip the somber reflection of the wilderness, the celebration of Easter Sunday feels like just another day on the calendar. But if we have truly wrestled with ourselves in the quiet of the fast, the light of the Resurrection feels like a homecoming. Lent teaches us that there is no shortcut to transformation; we must walk through the shadows to truly appreciate the sun.

To help you dive deeper into the personal "wilderness" mentioned above, here is a list of reflective questions. These are designed to move beyond surface-level habits and look at the underlying intentions of the season.

On the "Wilderness" and Distraction

- **The "Clutter" Check:** If I were to sit in total silence for thirty minutes, what thoughts or anxieties would I be most tempted to "drown out" with my phone, work, or noise?
- **The Comfort Audit:** What is one comfort I rely on so heavily that it has become a crutch? How would my perspective change if I let go of it for a season?
- **Identifying the Desert:** What part of my life currently feels like a "wilderness"? Is it a place of loneliness, a place of testing, or a place of hidden growth?

On the Three Pillars (Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving)

- **Meaningful Prayer:** Instead of asking for things, what would happen if my prayer this season was simply "listening"? What is one thing I think I might hear if I were quiet enough?
- **The Purpose of Fasting:** When I feel the "hunger" or the urge for the thing I gave up, what does that physical feeling tell me about my spiritual needs?
- **Expanding the Heart:** In what ways have I become "self-centered" lately? Who in my immediate circle or community is suffering in a way that I have been too busy to notice?

On Growth and Transformation (*Metanoia*)

- **The "Dust" Reflection:** Knowing that my time is limited and I am "dust," what is one grudge I am holding or one fear I am harboring that feels insignificant in the face of eternity?
- **True Change:** By the time Easter arrives, what is one specific quality (e.g., patience, humility, honesty) I hope has taken deeper root in my character?
- **The "Bright Sadness":** Where can I find beauty in the "somber" parts of my life? How can I allow my struggles to prepare me for a more authentic joy?

*To help you navigate your own "wilderness" this season, here is a structured 7-day journaling template. Each day includes a Core Focus, a Specific Prompt derived from the article, a Lenten Action to ground your reflection in reality, and a **daily "breath prayer"** for your use.*

***How to use a daily breath prayer:** Whenever you feel the "itch" of a distraction, the hunger of your fast, or the stress of the day, take three deep breaths and repeat the prayer for that day. It acts as a "spiritual reset" to bring you back to your Lenten intention.*

Day 1: Identifying the Distractions

- **Core Focus:** The noise of the world.
- **The Prompt:** If I were to sit in total silence for 30 minutes right now, what is the first thought or anxiety I would try to "drown out"? Why am I afraid of that silence?
- **Lenten Action:** Set a timer for 10 minutes of complete silence today—no phone, no music, no books—and just observe where your mind goes.

Silence

(Inhale) Be still... (Exhale) and know I am God.

Day 2: The Purpose of Your "Fast"

- **Core Focus:** Physical and spiritual hunger.
- **The Prompt:** Think about the "comfort" you have chosen to give up (or one you *should* give up). When you feel the urge to reach for it, what does that physical craving reveal about your deeper spiritual needs?
- **Lenten Action:** When you feel the impulse for that comfort today, stop and say a 30-second "breath prayer" instead.

Fasting

(Inhale) Not by bread alone... *(Exhale)* but by Your word.

Day 3: Entering the Wilderness

- **Core Focus:** Facing yourself.
- **The Prompt:** What part of my life feels like a "desert" right now? Is it a place of loneliness, a place of testing, or a place where I feel I am waiting for something to happen?
- **Lenten Action:** Write a short "letter to yourself from God," imagining what words of encouragement or challenge He would offer you in this specific desert.

Wilderness

(Inhale) Guide my feet... *(Exhale)* through the desert.

Day 4: The Humility of "Dust"

- **Core Focus:** Mortality and honesty (*Metanoia*).
- **The Prompt:** If I truly accept that I am "dust" and my time is temporary, what current grudge or fear suddenly feels insignificant? What am I ready to let go of?.
- **Lenten Action:** Identify one person you are holding a grudge against and say a prayer for their well-being, even if you aren't ready to speak to them yet.

Humility

(Inhale) I am but dust... *(Exhale)* held in Your hands.

Day 5: Looking Outward (Almsgiving)

- **Core Focus:** Compassion and service.
- **The Prompt:** How has my focus been too small or self-centered lately? Who is someone in my life who is "carrying a cross" that I have been too busy to notice?.
- **Lenten Action:** Perform one "hidden" act of kindness today—something no one else will see or thank you for.

Charity

(Inhale) Not my will... *(Exhale)* but Yours be done.

UPCOMING 2026 SYNOD INFO

Annual Synod XXVII

JULY 13-15, 2026

The Synod will start with the Bishops' Dinner and Meeting on Monday evening, July 13, and end after the Closing Pontifical Eucharist on Wednesday, July 15.

LOCATION:

First Lutheran Church
35 Broad Street,
Lyons, New York

(In the heart of the Finger Lakes Region)

Hotel: Microtel by Wyndham, 434 East Union Street, Newark, NY. We have secured a block of rooms at the room rate of \$109 per night. Complimentary breakfast is provided.

Group Name: Lutheran Church International

Arrival Date: Monday, 13 July 2026

Departure Date: Wednesday, 15 July 2026

Cutoff Date: Saturday, June 13, 2026

Booking Link:

<https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/microtel/newark-new-york/microtel-inn-and-suites-newark-ny/rooms-rates?&checkInDate=07/13/2026&checkOutDate=07/15/2026&groupCode=071326LUT>

Group Code:

Visit : <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/microtel/newark-new-york/microtel-inn-and-suites-newark-ny/overview?CID=LC:5b3ss9kd80xe5ox:56061&iata=00093796>

Select Arrival & Departure Dates

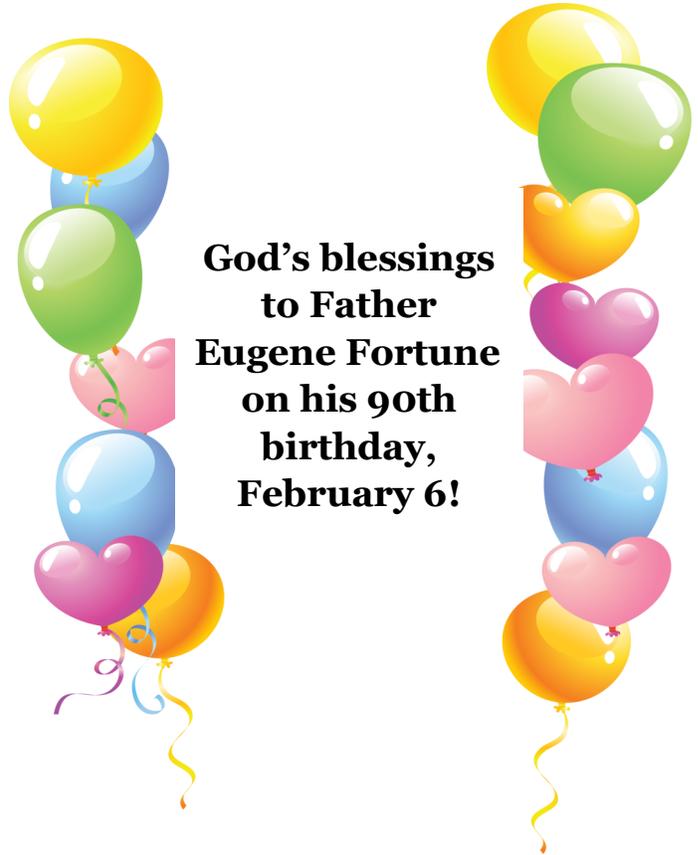
Use Group Code: **071326LUT**

By Phone:

Call Reservations at 315-359-9181

Reference **Lutheran Church International** when making reservations.

Limited financial assistance may be available for attendance at the 2026 Synod gathering. Consideration will be based on individual cases. Those interested should make their requests known to their Bishop Ordinary. Approval will be determined by the LC-I Board.



**God's blessings
to Father
Eugene Fortune
on his 90th
birthday,
February 6!**

With Thee, O Christ, we would arise indeed to
newness of life.

We beseech Thee to make all things new to us.

Let the old duties, the old work,
the old burdens, the old friendships
be transfigured as Thou dost touch
them.

Let the resurrection joy lift us
from loneliness and weakness and
despair to strength and beauty and
happiness.

We would fain live the risen life.

Help us by Thy Call, by Thy message,
by Thy beauty, by Thy goodness
to be Thy true children,
looking to Thee and serving Thee,
until at last we see Thee face to face.

Amen.

- Floyd W. Tomkins 1850-1932

REGISTRATION FORM

Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church-International
Monday, July 13 to Wednesday, July 15, 2026
Annual Synod Registration \$65.00/person

Number Attending _____ Registration Confirmed _____ Registration PAID by _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

SEND TO: The Rev. William Wigmore III, Treasurer
15 High Street
Lyons, NY 14489

OR PastorWigmore@gmail.com (215-416-9591)

===== PLEASE RETURN THE ABOVE WITH YOUR REGISTRATION FEE =====

Annual Synod XXVII of the Lutheran Church-International

July 13–15, 2026

Hosted by Lutheran Church-International Northeastern Diocese

Location:

First Lutheran Church
35 Broad Street, Lyons, NY 14489

Annual Synod Registration: \$65.00/person

(INCLUDES MEALS, BEVERAGES AND SNACKS AT SYNOD)

(BREAKFAST IS COMPLIMENTARY AT THE HOTEL)

Hotel Accommodations:

Microtel by Wyndham
434 East Union Street
Newark, NY 14513

Phone: 315-359-9181 *(for reservations)*

Please be sure to mention Lutheran Church-International when you make your reservations!

\$109.00/Night. Includes Complimentary Breakfast Buffet.

PLEASE NOTE: The Annual Synod is Monday, July 13 to Wednesday, July 15, 2026. The normal order of business and worship for the Annual Synod is to be conducted Tuesday and Wednesday. **Monday** is set aside for the Pre-Synod/Executive Board meeting and dinner. You are reminded to make reservations for your stay by **JUNE 13, 2026** in order to receive the special daily room rate.

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Annual Synod Registration



First Lutheran Church, Lyons, New York
LC-I Headquarters Church and Archbishop's Office

Reminder—2026 Dues

FOR CONTINUING SUPPORT OF THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE LC-I

CLERGY AND LAY MINISTER MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$75.00 USD

CONGREGATIONS / COMMUNITIES OF FAITH MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$150.00 USD

Please maintain your good standing and credentialing! The dues are required for ordained and lay members and communities of faith who have been received and included on the official ministerial roster of the LC-I. All additional contributions, gifts, and bequests are gratefully received.

SPECIAL NOTE: Unable to meet your responsibility for 2026 dues? Contact your bishop as soon as possible.

LUTHERAN CHURCH – INTERNATIONAL

2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

_____ 2026 Dues for Ministerial Members: \$75

_____ 2026 Dues for Congregations and Communities of Faith: \$150

_____ Gift _____ Bequest (Amount) _____

_____ In Memory _____ In Thankfulness

For _____

Date _____ Check # _____ or Electronic Funds Transfer: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

SEND TO: The Rev. William Wigmore, Treasurer
15 High Street
Lyons NY 14489

OR PastorWigmore@gmail.com (1-215-416-9591)

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Synod Dues and Thank Offerings