

LENTEN NEWSLETTER 2021

St. John Lutheran Church, Fairfield, PA 17320

Dear St. John family members,

We want to share some resources for the upcoming season of Lent for you to use in your homes. Hopefully by this time next year, staying home and being socially distant will be a “distant” memory! We are missing our times together so much! We are thankful for being able to watch the recorded services, but we long for them to be LIVE and in person! We hope you will enjoy these family activities, hymns, readings, and even some updated news.

Lenten Calendar

<i>Holy Day</i>	<i>Date</i>
Ash Wednesday	Feb. 17
Maunday Thursday	April 1
Good Friday	April 2
Easter	April 4



Please join us online for a brief service of Word and Confession in observance of Ash Wednesday, February 17. You can find the service posted on our website www.stjohnfairfield.net and on YouTube. Because of the pandemic, households are invited to get a small amount of oil for blessing and anointing. After the oil has been blessed you are invited to anoint yourself or other members of your household. Make the sign of the cross on your forehead with the oil and on the foreheads of those in your household. This will be near the end of the service.

We have decided in a time of pandemic to reintroduce the ancient practice of anointing for healing. The usual sign of ashes was for repentance and remorse. While we cannot do what we usually do out of concerns for safety, we can return to God each day in Lent. The sign of anointing harkens back to the meaning of Christians as God’s anointed ones.

Enclosed in this Lenten packet you will find a bulletin for Ash Wednesday. If you don’t have internet you are welcome to use this bulletin in prayer and anointing privately or with family.

Mid-Week Lenten Evening Prayer

The order of Evening Prayer may be used during the Lenten Season by going to our website. www.stjohnfairfield.net

Readings and prayers appropriate for the daily cycle will be posted.

Conversation Starters

Below are the Gospel readings for each Sunday in Lent along with some question. Feel free to read through the questions and pick one, or more to reflect on each week.

1st Sunday in Lent- Read Mark 1:9-15

- *Why do you think the Holy Spirit sent Jesus into the desert to face these temptations?*
- *Just like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years to get to the Promised Land, how might Jesus' time in the wilderness help shape his identity?*
- *Mark doesn't explain the temptations that Jesus faced, but mentioned that angels took care of him. Are the temptations important to know? What might we learn from this passage?*
- *Reflecting in your daily life, what are some of your daily temptations?*
- *How have you grown spiritually through difficult times and testing?*
- *How might you make Lent more meaningful this year?*

Prayer: Mighty Spirit, lead us to the wilderness, but do not let us go. Help us to learn through the times of testing to follow Christ. Amen.



2nd Sunday in Lent- Read Mark 8: 31-38

- *How might have Peter and the disciples responded to the words that Jesus spoke, predicting his death?*
- *Jesus explains what it takes to follow Christ. What is another way of explaining Jesus' message?*
- *If following Jesus were easier, would more people believe? Why?*
- *What are some of the hardest parts about following Christ?*
- *What are you letting go so you can follow Christ more?*

Prayer: Dear God, help me see things from your eyes. Provide me the courage and strength to pick up the cross and follow you. Amen.

3rd Sunday in Lent- John 2:13-22

- *Why do you think Jesus intentionally stirred up things at the temple?*
- *In this gospel, Jesus shows some anger. What his anger justified?*
- *What can we learn from this passage about Jesus' passion for his Father's house?*
- *How can we support each other in discerning God's will?*

Prayer: Dear Lord, guide us through this life of mazes. Fill our heart with passion to serve you. Amen.

4th Sunday in Lent- Read John 3: 14-21

- *The verse John 3:16 is well known for expressing God's love. What does this verse mean to you?*
- *God wants the entire world to be saved, but not everyone desires to have God's salvation. Why might some have trouble trusting and believing in God?*
- *What are some effective ways to share God's love with others?*
- *What are some daily patterns that can help you stay close to the light of Christ?*

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help guide me in the light of Christ and help me to make choices that will reflect your love. Amen.

5th Sunday in Lent- Read John 12: 20-33

- *In this gospel, the death of the grain is explained. How is this explanation relevant to Jesus' life in his final week?*
- *Jesus shares what he is about to face. Is it troubling or assuring to see the troubles that Jesus was facing?*
- *There was mention of the sound of thunder or an angle that spoke to Jesus. What do you think the angle might have told Jesus?*
- *What does it mean to for you to walk in the footsteps of Jesus?*
- *What are some things in your life that you could change to better follow in Jesus' footsteps?*

Prayer: Dear Lord, please be with us in our times of trouble. Amen.

Source: ELCA Daily Discipleship www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch

Adult Sunday School by Zoom every other Sunday during Lent

Pastors Bev and Joey will be offering a brief class on *Praying with Scripture* beginning on **Sunday February 28 at 10:30 am**. If you would like to receive a Zoom Invitation please leave an email message with our office manager, Karen Moriarty at office@stjohnfairfield.net and you will receive and invitation. Hope you can join us!

Hymns have been around since the time of Moses. They can be songs of praise like *A Mighty Fortress is our God*. They can be prayers like *Guide me Ever Great Redeemer*. They can tell a story like some of our Christmas carols and Easter hymns or they can be a combination of all the above. Regardless of what form they take, they are a means to draw us closer to God and unite us in declaring God's love for us. One of the hardest things for me since last March is not being able to sing out our songs of faith with all of you. I have written out some hymn verses that we normally sing during Lent and even though we are not able to sing these together at this time, I hope you will sing them out loud with your family or in your hearts and take time to meditate on the message of each one.

If you are comfortable with the internet, you can go to the **YouTube** website and type in the name of the hymn or just the word "hymns", to find an instrumental or vocal version of many of the familiar hymns we've sung. Also, if you have an antenna and can get channel 30-1 or 49-22, they play instrumental versions of hymns with nature scenes weekday evenings. –Carol Garman

GUIDE ME EVER GREAT REDEEMER

By William & Peter Williams

1. Guide me ever, great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but you are mighty; hold me with your pow'rful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.
2. Open now the crystal fountain where the healing waters flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliv'rer, strong deliv'rer, shield me with your mighty arm,
shield me with your mighty arm.



MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE

By Ray Palmer

1. My faith looks up to thee, thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,
oh, let me from this day be wholly thine!
2. May thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart,
my zeal inspire;
as thou hast died for me, oh, may my love to thee
pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire!



A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

by Martin Luther

- 1 A mighty fortress is our God, a sword and shield victorious;
he breaks the cruel oppressor's rod and wins salvation glorious.
The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe!
With craft and dreadful might He arms himself to fight.
On earth he has no equal.
- 2 No strength of ours can match his might! We would be lost, rejected.
But now a champion comes to fight, whom God himself elected.
You ask who this may be? The Lord of hosts is he!
Christ Jesus, mighty Lord, God's only Son, adored.
He holds the field victorious.

LIFT HIGH THE CROSS

By George Kitchin and Michael Newbolt

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim,
till all the world adore His sacred name.

Come, Christians follow, where our captain trod,
our king victorious, Christ, the Son of God.

O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw us all to thee.

So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory!



The Praying Pretzel

Lent and pretzels go back to early church days when it was common for Christians to fast during the season of Lent. They would refrain from eating meat, dairy, fats and sweets. Pretzels were good because they are made with little sugar, some yeast, flour and water.

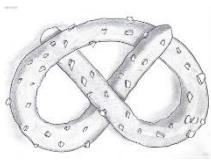
Instead of thinking of fasting as a time of going without these foods, consider it as adding an attitude or habit to help cleanse and draw us closer to God. One way to do this is through prayer. The shape of the pretzel is a good reminder because some people cross their arms in prayer.

The simple ingredients that go into making a pretzel might also remind us of the story of the woman in Matthew 13:33.

“Jesus told them still another story. “ The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast,” he said. “A woman mixed it into a large amount of flour. The yeast worked its way all through the dough.”

Working with yeast, can teach us to actively wait, and to understand that when the timing is right, we can trust that the yeast will do it’s job and the dough will raise. While we are on earth, we, as Christians, actively wait and trust that God has the timing all figured out.

This scripture might be describing the kingdom of heaven as a place that is alive and growing, similar to how the yeast causes pretzel dough to grow. Just as the dough takes time to rise, it takes time and patience to build a kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is all around us and transforms everything it touches.



- 1. Where do you see the kingdom of heaven around in your everyday life?**
- 2. How are you helping to care for it and help it grow, just as the yeast did in the pretzel recipe?**
- 3. How is the kingdom of heaven transforming our community around us?**

Resources: <https://www.connectionpointInk.org/post/what-can-yeast-teach-us-about-the-kingdom-of-heaven>
<https://buildfaith.org/making-pretzels-a-traditional-activity-for-lent/>

Update on Ruth’s Harvest-Fairfield, Inc.

Ruth’s Harvest-Fairfield (RH-F) is currently providing weekly bags of food to 31 food insecure students in the Fairfield Area School District. Each year we also pack inclement weather bags to be stored at the schools. These bags can be provided to students should weather circumstances otherwise prevent the students from receiving the weekly packed bags. This year, the inclement weather bags were used not for bad weather, but rather to send home with students when the elementary school recently and unexpectedly closed for a few days due to a high percentage of COVID-19 positive tests. We’ll be packing another set of inclement weather bags for elementary students for a possible future need. There is nothing perishable in these bags so if not used in the upcoming weeks, they will be distributed to students for use at spring break.

Recently ordered food from the Pennsylvania South Central Foodbank in Harrisburg, made its way through the snowy roads to St. John on Wednesday, Feb 3, with a delivery of 1500 pounds of food items for RH-F. Although delivery to St. John is the norm, the food items are usually then immediately taken to the pantry for sorting and shelving. This delivery was a little different, though. The recent heavy snow made us unable to safely move the items to the pantry. With the help of Kevan Taylor and the truck driver, we unloaded and

temporarily stored the food in the church social hall. Additionally, since we could not safely have packers go to the pantry for the weekly packing, we were able to use some of the just delivered food items to pack nearly complete bags for delivery to the students on Thursday, Feb 4. Yet another example of how God always has a plan.

Once again, thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way to the RH-F program. The school counselors and the school liaison to the RH-F board regularly let us know what a benefit this program is to the students. Your generosity and your giving spirit have helped so many students.

Respectfully submitted,
Linn Wichowski