



The Messenger

February 2026

**St. Paul's
Evangelical
Lutheran
Church**

3295 S. Union Ave.
Alliance, Ohio 44601
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FROM PASTOR MUSE

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you" Matthew 7:7

Jesus' words in Matthew 7 are both tender and daring. They invite us into a relationship with God that is honest, trusting, and—yes—bold. Ask. Search. Knock. These are not timid verbs. They are the language of children who know they are welcome, the posture of people who trust that the One on the other side of the door is good.

And yet, if we are honest, many of us struggle with boldness in prayer. We ask cautiously. We limit our requests. We add all kinds of quiet disclaimers: "God, if it's not too much trouble..." or "I don't want to bother You..." Sometimes we shrink our prayers not because we doubt God's love, but because we doubt God's capability—or perhaps we doubt our worthiness to ask. Jesus gently but firmly dismantles that fear.

He reminds us that God is not a reluctant giver, not a distracted parent, not a divine accountant measuring whether we have earned the right to pray. God is a loving Father who delights in hearing the voices

of His children. When Jesus says, "Ask," He is not inviting us to a transaction. He is inviting us into trust.

For Lutherans this matters deeply. We do not come before God because we are deserving; we come because Christ has already opened the way. Our boldness is not rooted in our faithfulness, but in God's grace. Prayer is not a test of spiritual performance—it is a response to the promise that God is already for us. To ask boldly, then, is not arrogance, it is faith.

But bold asking does not mean demanding specific outcomes on our terms. Jesus pairs asking with seeking and knocking. These words suggest movement, openness, and attentiveness. They remind us that God's answers often come in ways we do not expect. We may ask for relief and receive strength. We may ask for clarity and receive patience. We may ask for change and discover that God begins by changing us.

One of the great challenges of faith is learning not to limit God to the size of our imagination. We sometimes pray only for what feels reasonable or

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*Ask, and it
will be given
to you!*

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manageable. We pray within the boundaries of what we think is possible. But Scripture consistently shows us a God who works beyond human limits—bringing life out of barrenness, hope out of exile, resurrection out of death. God’s provision is rarely small, but it is often surprising.

That is why openness matters just as much as boldness. To be open to what God provides is to trust that God knows not only what we want, but what we truly need. It is to believe that even when the door that opens looks different than the one we were knocking on, God is still faithful. And when we recognize that faithfulness, gratitude naturally follows.

Gratitude is not simply saying “thank you” when things go our way. Christian gratitude is the practice of noticing God’s presence in all seasons—joyful and difficult alike. It is the recognition that God is at work even when our

prayers are still unfolding. Gratitude reshapes our hearts, helping us see God’s gifts not as entitlements, but as grace upon grace.

As a congregation, we are invited into this rhythm together: bold asking, open receiving, grateful living. We ask boldly for healing, for reconciliation, for wisdom, for our community, for our world. We remain open to the Spirit’s surprising work among us. And we give thanks—not because everything is perfect, but because God is faithful.

May we be a people who pray with courage, trust without limits, and live with grateful hearts—knowing that the One who invites us to ask is the same One who promises to give good gifts to His children.

Soli deo Gloria, Pastor Muse

FROM PASTOR THOMPSON

Preparing for the Death and Resurrection of Christ: Lenten practice for spiritual growth.

“As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus’ death and resurrection.” (ELW Ash Wednesday Service)

We hear these words every year on Ash Wednesday. Yet, entering into the discipline of Lent is not always easy. We live in a world where immediate gratification, ease of distractions, and overall busyness do not stop just because Lent begins.

Committing to one of the disciplines may be all that you can manage. I encourage you to try! It would be nice to be able to restructure our days to practice all of them, but we know that for most of us, that is physically and emotionally not

possible. Lent is not a time of punishment, from God or ourselves. It is a time to grow in faith and dive deeper into our relationship with God.

How might one of these disciplines look? Self-examination and repentance may mean journaling and writing a letter to someone you harmed. Or journaling and writing yourself a note of forgiveness for how your self-talk is destructive.

Prayer and fasting could mean that when you give up an activity or food for Lent, you use the time you would have spent on that activity or food for prayer (speaking with and listening to God).

Maybe your sacrificial living and works of love are serving in a service organization or social service (food ministry, justice organization, etc.), making time to improve the world around us.

These are just examples. If you need ideas, see Pastor Tim or me. If you want to discuss your plan or need an accountability partner, we are also open to talking with you.

Peace, Pastor Diana

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Our theme for 2025-2026 School year

“Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them.”

Psalms 111:2

February is a great time to commit to learning about faith. Join our education program. We have classes for all ages, so we invite you to come out and grow in faith. If you would like to participate in the teaching team, please see Pastor Muse.

Bible Study gathers on Wednesdays at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM. All are welcome to join. Bible study will pause during Lent.

“Christ in our home” devotional books are available on the table in Garnes Hall.

If you would like to receive the Daily Devotional email sign up through the web-site or contact the pastor for assistance.

The youth group meets every Wednesday. We gather at 5:30 PM for a meal and conclude at 7:00 PM. Our leaders are Pastor Muse, Pastor Thompson, Diana Cullen and Jill Mehl.

Our Library continues to grow and expand. Take the opportunity to visit our collection and see if there is something that speaks to you.

HEALING EVENT TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 7:00 PM.

A healing event will be held on Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 PM. This event will include a sound bath, meditation, Reiki, Hot stones, deep heat, Light therapy, Red Light, and other avenues of healing. All are welcome to attend, and no experience is needed.

LENTEN MID-WEEKS BEGIN ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH.

Soup supper at 6:00 PM
Worship service at 7:00 PM

Lenten Devotional Material will be available on the table in Garnes Hall prior to the season.

MUSIC & WORSHIP

Music & Worship Committee will meet on Tuesday, February 3rd at 7:00 in Garnes Hall. Please see Gina Falconer if you are unable to attend.

Ash Wednesday is February 18th. A chapel service will be held at 10:30 AM and an evening service will be held in the sanctuary at 7:00 PM. Please come and prepare your hearts with us for the Lenten season.

Midweek Lenten services will begin on Wednesday, February 25th and will continue until Holy Week. Please join us for a casual worship every Wednesday at 7:00 PM. There is a soup supper each week at 6:00 PM, prior to worship.

We are in need of Ushers and Lectors for Sunday services. You don't have to wait to be asked. Please sign up in the hallway outside the church office.

Apostle Build 2025

We have been invited into the 2025—2026 Apostle Build program. This is a unique opportunity for the church to partner with Habitat for Humanity to help provide a house for a family. We are blessed to be one of ten churches in this process. We invite you support in this program. There are three ways you can support this work.

1) Prayer. As you come before God in prayer, lift up this program that it will have success. 2) Volunteer. This program involves an investment of time. Either working on the site at the house or making lunch for a work day. More information will be brought forward in the spring. 3) Financial donation. We do have a financial investment in this program and would welcome any support and participation from the community. You can make a direct donation through the offering plate, there will be a change collection container in the welcome center. Please consider a donation, even in a small way to this incredible project.

RETURN YOUR PALMS

Please return your palms from last Palm Sunday to the church by Sunday, February 15th. These will be collected and burned to create the ashes for Ash Wednesday.

*The Eternal Flame is given to the glory of God
In loving memory of my husband, Jerry
Valentine by Jan Valentine.*



ALTAR FLOWER NEWS

We have been notified by DeHoff's of an increase in the cost of altar flowers. It has been four years since the base prices have increased. Beginning January 1, 2026 the total cost for both vases per Sunday will be \$82.00. This is the base price and special requests can be honored but will be at an additional cost.

When asked if you're interested in altar flowers for a particular date you've had in the past or you choose an open date and don't feel you want to pay for both vases, let Cathy Brookes know and she will try to find another person to share the altar flowers for that Sunday. The cost then would be \$41.00 for each person.

Happy February Birthday to You!

May you enjoy many more and may God bless each one of you in many ways as you enjoy another year in God's grace.

1 – Louis Nagy
2 – Morgan Campbell
5 – Chris Dennis
6 – Kody Ziemke
7 – Pete Raga
8 – Kaitlyn Waite
8 – Carolyn Roller
9 – Bob Kline
9 – Debbie Rhome
9 – Deanna Eshler

9 – Charles Shutler
13 – Gail Kelly
13 – Curtis Lundgren
15 – Mike Moretti
17 – Joshua O'Neill
18 – Jim Ellsworth
23 – Benjamin Craig
24 – Kevin Cubick
24 – Emily Coe
25 – Nathan Himes

25 – Terry Paina
26 – Kyle Zeigler
27 – Linda Karns
27 – Pat Kinnard
27 – Benjamin Johnston
27 – Ryan Williams
28 – Michelle Stryffeler



Sunday, February 1, 2026

Introduction

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalm, Micah 6:1-8 *The offering of justice, kindness, humility* Psalm 15 LORD, who may abide upon your holy hill? (Ps. 15:1) 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Christ crucified, the wisdom and power of God

Matthew 5:1-12 *The teaching of Christ: Beatitudes*

Sunday, February 8, 2026

Introduction

Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalm Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]

The fast God chooses Psalm 112:1-9 [10]

Light shines in the darkness for the upright. (Ps. 112:4)

1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16] *God's wisdom revealed through the Spirit*

Matthew 5:13-20

The teaching of Christ: salt and light

Sunday, February 15, 2026

Introduction

Today's festival is a bridge between the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle that comes to a close today and the Lent-Easter cycle that begins in several days. On a high mountain Jesus is revealed as God's beloved Son, echoing the words at his baptism. This vision of glory sustains us as Jesus faces his impending death in Jerusalem. We turn this week to Ash Wednesday and our yearly baptismal journey from Lent to Easter. Some churches put aside the alleluia at the conclusion of today's liturgy. This word of joy will be omitted during the penitential season of Lent and will be sung again at Easter.

Prayer of the Day

O God, in the transfiguration of your Son you confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the witness of Moses and Elijah, and in the voice from the bright cloud declaring Jesus your beloved Son, you foreshadowed our adoption as your children. Make us heirs with Christ

of your glory, and bring us to enjoy its fullness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalms Exodus 24:12-18

Moses enters the cloud of God's glory on Mount Sinai

Psalm 2 You are my son; this day have I begotten you. (Ps. 2:7)

Psalm 99 (alternate) Proclaim the greatness of the LORD; worship upon God's holy hill. (Ps. 99:9)

2 Peter 1:16-21 *The apostle's message confirmed on the mount of transfiguration* Matthew 17:1-9 *Revelation of Christ as God's beloved Son*

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 Ash Wednesday

Introduction

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that "now is the day of salvation." Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalm Joel 2:1-2, 12-17, Isaiah 58:1-

12 (alternate) Psalm 51:1-17, *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.* (Ps. 51:1), 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Sunday, February 22, 2026

Introduction

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalm Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

Psalm 32 Mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD. (Ps. 32:10)

Romans 5:12-19

Death came through one; life comes through one

Matthew 4:1-11 *The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days*

February 2026						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education	2 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm Grief Support	3 5:00 pm Catechism 7:00 pm Committee Meetings	4 10:00 am Bible Study 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Bible Study	5 6:15 pm Joy Bells 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	6 7:00 pm Euchre and Dominoes	7
8 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education	9	10 5:00 pm Catechism 7:00 pm Church Council	11 10:00 am Bible Study 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Bible Study	12 6:15 pm Joy Bells 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	13 12:00 pm Deborah's	14
15 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education Newsletter Items Due	16 6:00 pm Girl Scouts 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm Grief Support Church office closed	17 5:00 pm Catechism 7:00 pm Healing Event	18 Ash Wednesday 10:30 am Worship Service 7:00 pm Worship Service	19 6:15 pm Joy Bells 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	20	21 8:30 am Men's Breakfast Girl Scouts Games Hall
22 1st Sunday in lent 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education	23	24 5:00 pm Catechism 5:00 PM Community Dinner	25 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Lenten Service	26 6:15 pm Joy Bells 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	27	28 Bible Study will pause during Lent, starting on February 18th and return after Easter.

FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

FELLOWSHIP

Coffee Hour Hosts for February
 Feb. 1 - Jan Valentine & Lisa Guthrie
 Feb. 8 - Rod & Sandy Garver
 Feb. 15 - Bob & Mary Lou Williams
 Feb. 22 - John & Karen Wolfe and Richard & Cindy Miller

Keep in mind the Lenten Soup Suppers begin on Wednesday, Feb 25th and will continue for the next 4 consecutive Wednesdays that follow. There will be an attendance sheet put out for sign-ups. We will also be looking for volunteers to provide soup and desserts for those evenings.

MID-WEEK EUCHARIST

Join us for a time of prayer, word and Holy Communion. The service begins at noon and lasts about twenty-five minutes.

EUCHRE AND DOMINOS

Euchre, Friday, February 6, at 7:00 PM and will continue on the first Friday of each month thereafter.

THANK YOU

Dear Pastor and Church Members,

I want to sincerely thank you for the support shown to me and my family during Fred's passing. The service delivered by Pastor Muse honored my husband in every way possible. It was personalized with a mix of humor and of sentiment. The readings, the prayers and the songs were perfectly picked. Thank you Kathy Sloan for the beautiful music that pours out of those pipes and into our hearts each time you play. St. Paul members, thank you for your hugs and love, your kind words and prayers have always been a comfort to my heart. Im blessed to have all of you in my life. Thank you Dave, Donna and Katie for helping with the service, it meant the world to me. To the ladies in fellowship Hall, Betsy Goshorn, Donna Muse, Gayle Fiegenschuh, Gail Kelly, Karen Wolfe, Cindy McClarren and Celeste Lautzenheiser who helped with coffee and cookies, thank you for the endless display of sweets for our guests. Last but not least Thank you members for remembering Fred and I at Christmas time and sending us wonderful Christmas cards, as we once again were shut-ins. They were absolutely beautiful. All my Love and Blessings to you all!

Love Angie Schuller

YOUTH GROUP

Youth meets every Wednesday at 5:30 PM. We have a meal, fellowship, lesson and games. All youth of the church 1st grade and up are invited to join. Contact Pastor Muse, Diana Cullen or Jill Mehl.

ADULT EDUCATION

Bible Study Wednesday at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM.

DEBORAH CIRCLE

The Deborah's will meet Friday, February 13 at 12:00 PM.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Men's breakfast will be Saturday, February 21 at 8:30 AM. All men of the church are welcome to join this time of fellowship and growth. We conclude at 10:00AM. Please note the date change.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The next Community Dinner we are responsible for will be held on Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at Christ United Methodist Church in downtown Alliance. We will soon determine the Outreach projects we hope to complete in 2026.

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Reverend Timothy H. Muse - Lead Pastor
The Reverend Diana Thompson - Administrative Pastor

Rhonda Ferrall - Secretary

Kathy Sloan - Organist

Gina M. Falconer - Director of Music

Gayle B. Fiegenschuh - Communion Minister and Visitation



**ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEBRUARY
18TH.**

THERE WILL BE 2 SERVICES:

10:30 AM IN THE CHAPEL

7:00 PM IN THE WORSHIP SPACE

RETURN YOUR PALMS

PLEASE RETURN YOUR PALMS FROM LAST PALM SUNDAY TO THE CHURCH BY SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH. THESE WILL BE COLLECTED AND BURNED TO CREATE THE ASHES FOR ASH WEDNESDAY.