

*THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT*  
*MARCH 23, 2025*  
*8:30 AM*



Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Reinholds, Pennsylvania

## WELCOME TO WORSHIP AT SWAMP LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Visitors** are welcome and invited to make themselves at home. If you're interested in learning more about Swamp Lutheran, have questions, or are looking for a church home, speak with Pastor Scott or church members. Please complete a visitor card and place it in the offering plate or sign guest register in narthex.

**Restrooms** are located off the narthex (lobby) by the coat rack.

The worship service is printed in this bulletin. **Hymns** are found in the red hymnal Evangelical Lutheran Worship. **Children's** active presence is welcomed in our worship. There are special kids bulletins available in the narthex and at the side entrance.

**Offering plates** are passed. Additionally, there is an offering drop box in the narthex. Online giving via cell phone is easy and secure. Just use this QR code from your phone's camera app.



**Our worship** is rooted in the ancient pattern of the church—gathering, word, meal, sending. The shape of this liturgy and much of the actual words/prayers come directly from scripture. Though we make seasonal shifts, the constancy of our worship reflects God's constant love and promises through forgiveness, scripture, and the sacraments of baptism and communion. Following this liturgical pattern, as well as the Revised Common Lectionary, a three-year cycle of scripture readings, connects us through our worship with Christians around the world and throughout time.

All baptized Christians are welcome to receive **Holy Communion**. We believe "Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us to eat and drink." (Small Catechism, Martin Luther) Children who do not yet receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.

**Website** – Be sure and check our website [www.swamplutheran.org](http://www.swamplutheran.org) regularly for updates and schedules of ongoing activities of the church. Full prayer list is in the newsletter each month.

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## GATHERING

### *The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God*

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The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

#### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PRELUDE** AS RAIN FROM THE CLOUDS ARR. KAREN BUCKWALTER

*congregational responses are in bold type.*

*Stand*

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who forgives all our sin,  
whose mercy endures forever.

**Amen.**

Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

Compassionate One,  
**you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,  
but our lives do not always reflect you  
and your love for the world.**

**We do not show others the tender compassion  
you have shown to us.**

**We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality  
you grant to all people.**

**We oppress others,  
even though you have set us free again and again.**

**We squander the abundant gifts of the earth.**

**Transform our lives  
and guide us again in the way of the cross.**

**Amen.**

Beloved in Christ,  
God's arms are always stretched open wide  
to welcome the wandering ones home.  
In † Christ your sins are forgiven.  
You have a place in God's house forever.  
**Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN**      ETERNAL FATHER, STRONG TO SAVE      ELW 756

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.  
Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

*Sit*

**ANTHEM**      BE THOU MY VISION      ARR. SANDRA EITHUN

*Children leave for Children's Church*

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## WORD

***God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song***

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**Psalm 63:1-8** *read responsively*

<sup>1</sup> O God, you are my God; eager-ly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.

<sup>2</sup> **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,  
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

<sup>3</sup> For your steadfast love is better than life itself;  
my lips shall give you praise.

**<sup>4</sup> So will I bless you as long | as I live  
and lift up my hands | in your name.**

**<sup>5</sup> My spirit is content, as with the rich- | est of foods,  
and my mouth praises you with | joyful lips,**

**<sup>6</sup> when I remember you up- | on my bed,  
and meditate on you in | the night watches.**

**<sup>7</sup> For you have | been my helper,  
and under the shadow of your wings | I will rejoice.**

**<sup>8</sup> My whole being | clings to you;  
your right hand | holds me fast.**

**READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

*Paul uses images from Hebrew Scriptures and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.*

<sup>1</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. <sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. <sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## HOLY GOSPEL: **Luke 13:1-9**

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.*

<sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?”<sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Sit*

SERMON

*CHILDREN RETURN FROM CHILDREN'S CHURCH*

CHILDREN'S SERMON

*Stand*

APOSTLES' CREED

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**

**was crucified, died, and was buried;**

**he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;**

**he ascended into heaven,**

**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**

**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic\* church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*\*that is, the true, universal Christian church of all times and places*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*After each petition:*

Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Please share the peace.*

*Sit*

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**MEAL**  
***God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ***

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**OFFERTORY** WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS ARR. TERRY OSMAN  
CAMERYN NYE, PIANO AND SUE KREITZ, ORGAN

**OFFERING** *In addition to the plate, online giving via cell phone is safe and secure. See QR code on the inside cover of this bulletin.*

*As the offering is brought to the table, the congregation stands and sings.*

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right  
spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take  
not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of  
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

**OFFERING PRAYER**

Gracious Provider,  
**you set your immense treasures among us,  
opening your heart to the world.**  
**As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love,  
deepen our commitment to sharing those  
treasures with others,  
through our Savior, Jesus Christ.**  
**Amen.**



## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,  
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,  
who preached good news to the poor,  
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,  
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,  
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,  
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be all honor and glory, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

All who are hungry, come!  
The feast of grace is spread.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## LAMB OF GOD *remain standing*



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Following the direction of the ushers, form a circle to receive communion. The bread, cup, and wine will be brought to you. Grape juice and gluten free options are available—tell the usher. After being communed, please return to your seat.*

*After all have communed, stand*

## POST-COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**Amen.**

Let us pray.

Generous Host,

you have shared your feast with us and made us new.

Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities,

that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom,

in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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## SENDING

***God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world***

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## BLESSING

God our tender parent,

God the crucified one,

God the reconciling Spirit,

✠ bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN**    OH, THAT THE LORD WOULD GUIDE MY WAYS    ELW 772

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

**Thanks be to God!**

**POSTLUDE**    GOD OF GRACE AND GOD OF GLORY    J.WAYNE KERR

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CIRCLE OF PRAYER** - Hunter Leisey, John Frantz, Ed Miller, John Wesner, Michael Wargo, Jeff Kappenstein, Nettie Kriener, Clair Sweigart, Faith Moyer, Michael A. Crowther, Reba Ranck, Grace Ranck, Ray Fox, Gene Miller, Jean Wolf, Bobby Hershey, Marilyn Gelsing, Edith Snyder, Teresa Sweigart, Mel and Troy Ulrich, Earl Myers, Elizabeth Sherman, Judy Habecker, Anna Rose Schannauer, David Metzger, Linda Mohn, Pauline Wassmer, Jerry Landis, Mary Beth Jenkins, Evelyn Gehman, Joan Leed, Ron Adams, Kevin Williams, Karen Laudenslager, Susan Levan, Larry Eberly, Anson Kauffman, Janet Bingaman, Dwayne Dimitris, Gladys Eckenroad, Bonnie Koehle-Koon, Ross Houck, Chris Zander, Kathleen Troutman, Sally Bergman, Keith Reimert, Larry Hagy, Lamar Eberly, Ed Blatt, Lori Gockley, Ryan Brown, Ray Weitzel, Pam Heisey, Cathy Stine, Hayden Cole, family of Dan Nauman (Grace Ranck's father) family of Russ Allen "Butch" Schannauer, family of Terry Kappenstein, family of Donna Hill, family of J. Ray Ranck (Ryan Ranck's Father), family of the Rev. Dr. Darryl Dech.

**ALTAR FLOWERS** are given in memory of loved ones by the congregation.

**SANCTUARY CANDLE** is given in memory of loved ones by a friend.

**ALTAR FLOWER/CANDLE UPDATE:** Thank you to everyone who donated to the Altar Flower and Sanctuary Candle ministry. The 2025 Flower Calendar is posted in the Narthex. The Sanctuary Candle cost will remain at \$5.00 and the cost of the Altar Flowers remains at \$40.00 (subject to change).

**OFFERING ENVELOPES** – If you give via the online option, let us know by email ([secretary@swamplutheran.org](mailto:secretary@swamplutheran.org)) or by phone to the office so that you will no longer receive offering envelopes for 2024.

**FOOD BANK** – Needs of the food bank are ongoing and need replenished monthly. There is a need for paper towels, toilet paper, cereal, spaghetti, pasta, and mac & cheese. Thank you for helping as you are able. We distribute on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday each month. Please check for a current expiration date.

**ACTION FUND** – Donations are sought for Swamp Action Fund to help the needy in our community. Write "Action Fund" in the comment line of your check payable to Swamp Lutheran Church.



**US FLAGS** When a US flag becomes worn, faded, torn or soiled, it should be retired and replaced with a new flag. For those of you interested in retiring your worn US flags, please bring them to the church. We will collect them in the church library and deliver them to the Reinholds VFW who will arrange for them to be retired in proper fashion. Thank you for your consideration.



**Gently Used Sneakers Needed.** SLY is collecting sneakers as a fundraiser. Used sneakers (pairs only; athletic shoes only) may be deposited in the bins located in the Narthex and the social hall lobby. SLY is **not** able to accept any non-athletic footwear including

but not limited to dress shoes, heels, rain boots, sandals, slip-ons, water socks, wedges, and work boots of any kind. Questions may be addressed to Pastor Scott Brubaker at 717-336-2849 or email [pastor@swamplutheran.org](mailto:pastor@swamplutheran.org)

**ATTENTION THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBERS.** The Thrivent “Action Teams” program is an opportunity for Thrivent members to lead projects that provide service and outreach to the community. Thrivent Financial will provide funds of \$250 for each project to get started and pay for associated expenses. You may request two grants per year. Swamp Lutheran has many needs that qualify under this program. If you wish to direct your grant request to help with Swamp Lutheran’s activities, please reach out to Lori Gockley who will assist you with the process. Email: [lgockley2@gmail.com](mailto:lgockley2@gmail.com) or call 717-203-8551.



**Knitters and Crocheters:** We have been asked to provide baby blankets for Veteran Families. Please use SOFT yarn with not too loose of a pattern and no more than 32" X 32 , " but not less than 27" square or rectangular. There are some copies of baby blanket patterns in the library at church where the shawls/blankets are being collected. We need more boy colors than girl colors.

2025 North Lancaster Lenten Cluster Services

7 PM

Theme: *Perfect Love Casts Out Fear*

Date	Location	Preacher
Wed. Mar. 26, 7 pm	Muddy Creek, Denver	Pastor Sandy Gideon
Wed. Apr. 2, 7 pm	Mellingers, Schoeneck	Pastor Jim Goodyear
Wed. Apr. 9, 7 pm	St. Paul, Adamstown	Pastor Tim Craven
Thurs, May 29, 7pm Ascension	Swamp, Reinholds	Pastor Marissa Becklin

**GIFT CARDS FOR EASTER** Order deadline is April 6, 2025. Orders will be delivered on April 13, 2025 (Palm Sunday). Order forms available on the Narthex table and in social hall lobby. Any questions, please see Missy Ragan 717-314-5658.

**SERVICE COMMITTEE** LWR Personal Care Kits.

During the months of March and April we will be collecting items for personal care kits. The following items are included in each kit, you may donate a complete kit or individual items.

- 1 light-weight bath size towel (maximum 52”X27”), dark color recommended
- 2 bath size bars (4 or 5 oz) of soap in original wrapping
- 1 adult size toothbrush in its original packaging
- 1 sturdy comb, remove packaging
- 1 metal nail clippers, remove packaging

Do not add other items than those that are listed. All items should be new. All kits, soap, and quilts can be collected for LWR until Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup>. Thank you for your support of Lutheran World Relief’s worldwide mission! Jane Lesher 717-471-2974.



# 2025 Pick Six Lenten Offering

This year, Swamp Lutheran will again offer a special giving opportunity for Lent: **Pick Six**. For the six weeks of Lent, we are encouraging you to give a special, weekly offering in addition to your regular giving. The benevolence giving options listed below are opportunities to give to ministries operating in or through our church.

Envelopes with these options listed on them are available on the table in the narthex or rear lobby. Please grab a pack of six envelopes (one for each week of Lent). Call the office if you need them mailed to you. Online Giving is an option too via our website. Giving to multiple options each week is encouraged.



**Swamp Lutheran TLC:** Contributions will help give our aging building some TLC (tender loving care) with needed upgrades, repairs, and replacements of aging pipes, windows, etc.



**Community Meal:** Contributions to this ministry support the purchase of food and supplies for the two, monthly community meals, each serving 70-100 persons, that Swamp prepares and delivers.



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

Help bring God's hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the US and around the world.



**EPHRATA AREA  
SOCIAL  
SERVICES**  
SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Contributions help provide services to people in our community in the areas of food, clothing, fuel, transportation, and meals on wheels.



**Swamp Bell Choir:** Contributions will help with the refurbishing of the bells after 20+ years of playing, allowing this joyful community outreach to continue to ring for many more years.



**Swamp Food Pantry:** Contributions support Swamp's monthly ministry of food provision to those challenged by food insecurity.



**Cocalico Area Builders of Hope TL:** Contributions provide housing, mentoring, and budget coaching to participants of the transitional housing home in Adamstown.



**ELCA World Hunger**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

Contributions to this ministry support the work to eradicate hunger in the US and throughout the world.



**Jan's  
CIRCLE  
OF FRIENDS**

**Jan's Circle of Friends:** Contributions to this organization fund efforts to assist children coping with domestic violence and parental loss.



**Non-designated Gift:** Contributions will be used where needed most.

74th semi-annual  
ST. PAUL'S  
ADAMSTOWN  
FREE



COMMUNITY OUTGROWN EXCHANGE

Clothing for all ages – plus some other items see below

**DATES TO DONATE & COME SHOP**

**WEEK OF March 24-29**

Come and get items but we also will be taking donations of *clean items* on all the days except as listed below. You do not need to drop off to come get items. Donation & shopping days are as follows.

— **ONLY ACCEPTING:** Clothing (including shoes & coats), linens, toys, games, puzzles, books, purses **NO** household items, VHS, DVD's, Car Seats, Electronics

**DONATION ONLY DAYS**

Monday, March 24 — 9 am—1 pm (donation only)

Tuesday —CLOSED

Wed., March 26 & Thurs. March 27— 9 am to 1 pm (donation only)

**DONATION AND SHOPPING DAY**

Thursday, March 27 – 5 – 8 pm (donation and shopping)

**SHOPPING DAYS ONLY**

Friday, March 28 – 8 am – 1 pm (NO DONATIONS)

Saturday, March 29 – 8 am – 11 am (NO DONATIONS)

No Public bathroom usage

Left over items will be  
donated to various charities

We can limit the number of  
children's items you take

No charitable donation forms

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church**  
**80 E. Main Street**  
**Adamstown, PA 19501**  
**For more info:**  
**717-484-4885**



## Greeter Schedule March

23 Justin & Karen Blatt  
30 Pat Wenzel & Bill Knauer

## Greeter Schedule April

6 Randy & Karen Krater  
13 Guy & Sue Templin  
20 Delores D' Aiello  
27 John Frantz

## Week in the Parish (March 23 - 30)

March 24	7:00pm	Bell Choir
March 25	6:00pm	Zoom Bible Study
March 25	7:00pm	Builders of Hope
March 26	6:15pm	Choir
March 26	7:00pm	Lenten Service @ Muddy Creek Denver
March 28	OFFICE CLOSED	
March 30	8:30AM	Worship
March 30	9:45AM	Sunday School
March 30	5:00-8:00pm	SLY LDR Flood Bucket Assembly Mtg

## UPCOMING EVENTS

April 1	6:00PM	Zoom Bible Study
April 1	7:00PM	Welcome Cmte
April 2	6:15PM	Choir
April 2	7:00PM	Lenten Service @ Mellinger's Schoeneck
April 6	8:30 AM	Worship
April 6	9:45AM	Sunday School

## DAILY READINGS FOR THE COMING WEEK

<i>Monday Mar 24</i>	Psalm 39 Jeremiah 11:1-17 Romans 2:1-11
<i>Tuesday Mar 25</i>	Psalm 39 Ezekiel 17:1-10 Romans 2:12-16
<i>Wednesday Mar 26</i>	Psalm 39 Numbers 13:17-27 Luke 13:18-21
<i>Thursday Mar 27</i>	Psalm 32 Joshua 4:1-13 2 Corinthians 4:16—5:5
<i>Friday Mar 28</i>	Psalm 32 Joshua 4:14-24 2 Corinthians 5:6-15
<i>Saturday Mar 29</i>	Psalm 32 Exodus 32:7-14 Luke 15:1-10

## UPCOMING SUNDAY READINGS

*Sunday Fourth Sunday in Lent* Joshua 5:9-12 Psalm 32 2 Corinthians 5:16-21  
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

## Other Readings for this Sunday

### Isaiah 55:1-9

*To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.*

<sup>1</sup> Ho, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,

and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,

and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found,

call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way,

and the unrighteous their thoughts;

let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways

and my thoughts than your thoughts.

## GOSPEL MESSAGE

March 23, 2025

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

**We Have Choices**

We have choices, right? Obviously. There's little question about that; it's a fact. Many of these choices are piled and piling up in the lockboxes of our upbringing and experiences, of our moral certainties, religious convictions, political opinions, or economic maneuverings. We make choices about our educational endeavors, vocational callings, use of our days and years, relationship commitments, dietary habits, travel destinations, color coordination, hairstyles, sexual behaviors, EV or gas, whole or skim, movie or book. All these choices—be they monumental or minuscule, automatic or sleep-depriving, public or private, frivolous or practical, courageous or cowardly—we shuffle, sort, and seal in one envelope or another: one labeled right and one marked wrong, the good envelope and the bad envelope.

Our choices mostly happen like that until for some reason, hard telling what reason, our certainties are disturbed and our absolutes begin to rattle like loose bolts under the frame of an old truck on a potholed road. It's what happens when, by mistake or under force, good or bad luck, we discover that broccoli isn't disgusting, snakes aren't slimy, the earth isn't flat, men may love men, more might not be better, aliens need not be strangers, and God's justice surely demands mercy.

Jesus started tugging at a snag of choices with a parable about a tree, a vineyard, a gardener, a saw, and manure. The tree was a no-hoper (there could be lots of reasons). With not a fig on a limb, if it had been another variety of fruit tree you'd call it a "bad apple." The choice: saw or donkey dung. Jesus rejects the blade, chooses the excrement.

Martin Luther (liking Latin) said, "*Simul justus et peccator*," meaning we are at the same time both saint and sinner. Or as Jesus put it, love those bum branches down to their roots, put your hands in the dirt, and see what fruit they bear.

**Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church**

717-336-2849

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

[secretary@swamplutheran.org](mailto:secretary@swamplutheran.org)

Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:30AM – 12:00 noon

The Rev. Scott V. Brubaker, Pastor

Cell: 717-598-4663 Email: [pastor@swamplutheran.org](mailto:pastor@swamplutheran.org)

Terri Renninger, Church Secretary – 717-336-2849

Jonathan Gyorke, Sexton – 717-435-3091

Sue Kreitz, Organist/Choir Director – 717-336-3272

Grady Daub, Assistant Organist – 717-917-2430

Doug Kulp, Bell Choir Director – 717-336-7798

Lori Gockley, Council President – 717-733-1095

SUNDAY WORSHIP 8:30AM

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:45AM

**You are Welcome Here!**

At Swamp Lutheran Church, *Grace is Spoken Here!* We welcome with full participation and inclusion all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, imprisonment, physical or mental health, socio-economic circumstances or anything that too often divides us. Together as one in the Spirit, our unity is in Jesus Christ.

**Notice Regarding Audio/Video Recording and/or Photography of Services/Events:**

Persons participating in events or worship services sponsored by Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church are subject to being recorded by photographic, video, and/or audio devices. Your photo/recording may be used without your written permission. By attending a Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church service or event, you release our employees and officers and all persons involved from any liability connected with the taking, recording, digitizing, and/or publication of photographs, computer images, video and/or sound recordings.

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