

Covenant News



February 2023

Pastor's Spin



Siblings in Christ of Covenant, Greetings! On Wednesday, February 22, we will begin our journey of Lent with Ash Wednesday. It also happens to be that on February 22, will be the anniversary of one of the greatest upsets in the history of sports. It was a few years before I came around, but amidst the tensions of the Cold War between Americans and Soviets, an Olympic hockey game was about to be played between the two teams representing the political

enemy countries. That made it more than interesting enough, not just for the respective national audiences, but throughout the world. Beyond that, the stage was also set for the ultimate athletic version of David vs. Goliath: the Soviets with their professional-grade and utmost experienced and talented players against comparatively amateur boys. The ones from the other side of the Pacific had not lost a World Championship or Olympic tournament since 1954. They had soundly defeated the Americans in an exhibition match just before the 1980 Olympics began. And yet, somehow, somehow, it happened: "The Miracle on Ice," it's so called, now. To the over 34 million people who watched, many who did so on tape delay, now-famed broadcaster Al Michaels shouted the question, "Do you believe in miracles?"

It's safe to say sports reaches an obsession-like level for many throughout this country and beyond (I probably have my moments) to the point we crave for the miraculous victory for our respective team more so than the kind of miracles Jesus pulled off in first century Galilee. We also may not be on the same page in terms of what we think about miracles happening outside the sports arena. Can miracles happen only when God directly intercedes? Can it be a miracle when a bunch of college students, in their own way, defeat the mighty Soviet empire on the ice? Or, can it be a miracle when another college student studies hard to get into med school to end up

being a surgeon that saves someone's life? Can it be a miracle when another goes into teaching and helps a child struggling at home? Are miracles happening in a variety of ways that may not quite be on the same level of water-walking and bread-multiplying?

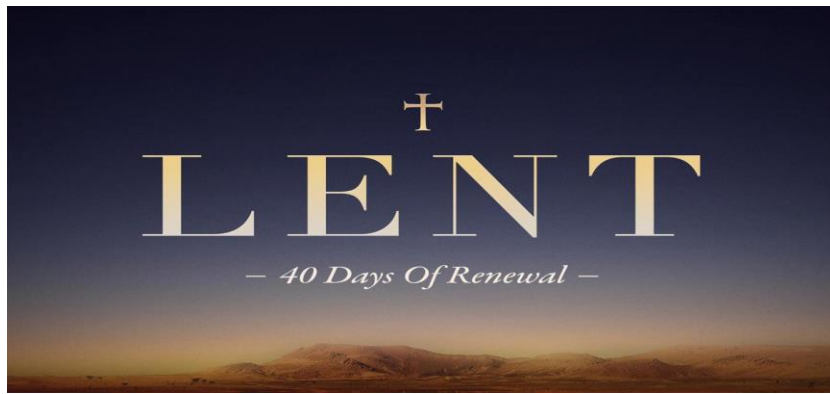
Of course, how much you want to say that such various miracles are God/Holy Spirit-directed or more so influenced or whatever else with good 'ole free will thrown in there, is up to each child of God to decide. But when it comes to Ash Wednesday, it's fair to say that God is the One pulling off the miracle for us, and not just in the sense that human life can somehow form from the very dust of the earth. There's a miracle that in spite of our mortality, in spite of us having our moments of wanting to give up against the Goliath of evil and hatred and greed, God will insist on responding with wondrous hope, with passionate fervor, with a relentless love.

Ash Wednesday will begin our journey of Lent, one we often call a journey to the cross. And although it does lead up to Good Friday, the day when we remember our Lord's death through such horrible means from an empire that lusted for power; the truth is the cross is always with us. The God who is with us in our sufferings is a constant. No matter how much we may feel like even a fraction of a David in comparison to whatever Goliath of pain and unfortunate events, there's always going to be more of a miraculous Christ within us to guide us through each and every day. And sometimes the miracle may not appear with a water-walking or a bread-multiplying, but it may emerge in simple ashes placed on a forehead before a wafer and a few drops of wine. It may emerge in a family member or a neighbor or a complete stranger, where our Lord is just as present as in the body and blood of Christ. There is a miracle that happens each and every day with the Greatest News that nothing can happen in this life that will ever separate us from Jesus Christ our crucified and risen Lord. Thanks be to God, indeed!

In Christ,
Pastor Brad

We will gather at 7pm on Wednesday, February 22, at the Lutheran Church of the Master, to begin the journey of Lent together. There will be a time for confession while also hearing God's steadfast mercy. We will also give the opportunity to have ashes placed on our foreheads before receiving the ultimate gift of new life in Communion, remembering that God can still create a masterpiece even from dust.





Ash Wednesday

February 22 (7pm) at Lutheran Church of the Master
860 Northfield Rd., Bedford

Midweek-Lent Soup Suppers

Every Wednesday (6pm) in March at Covenant (downstairs in our fellowship hall), concluding with a brief worship, including Holden Evening Prayer

Palm Sunday

April 2 (9am) at Covenant

Maundy Thursday

April 6 (7pm) at Lutheran Church of the Master

Good Friday

April 7 (7pm) at Covenant

Easter Sunday

April 9

Easter Vigil (7am)

Resurrection of Our Lord Eucharist (9am)





2/2 Aubree McPherson

2/23 Harrison Werner

2/4 Nel Lanese

2/25 Bryan Gaglione

2/8 Katlyn Knerem

2/27 Jen Garberich

2/23 Jody Bernardo

2/28 Deborah Dickey

2/23 Michelle Garnett



2/14 Jacquelyn & William Blogna
Happy 47th Anniversary!



On Sunday, February 19, immediately following the worship, we invite you to stay and join us as we go over our budget for 2023, as well as hear about the latest updates with ministry here at Covenant.



We would like to welcome our new organist Aaron Carter-Enyi. We are glad to have him join us as part of our ministry for Covenant and beyond. For a bit of background on Aaron:

Aaron Carter-Enyi is a musician, filmmaker, and writer. He completed a PhD at the Ohio State University in 2016 and was a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies in 2017, a Fulbright Scholar to Nigeria in 2019 and is currently a Fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities. As a Colleague of the American Guild of Organists, he has faithfully served congregations in Georgia, Ohio, and Texas. He lives with his wife, Quintina, and three children, Arinze, Uchendu and Chizaram, in Solon.

Lent: Reflect, Repent, and Connect

Lent is a time of introspection, and even penance, as we look forward with humble awe and deep gratitude to the celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

The modern practices of Lent have ancient pedigrees. The term "Lent" comes from the Old English word *lencten*, which referred to the "lengthening" of the daylight hours during spring. Christians in northwestern Europe and the British Isles appropriated this term for the spring liturgical season.

Lent was traditionally a time for preparing both longtime believers and new converts for the welcoming of new Christians into the community through their baptisms, which were celebrated during Eastertide. Lent continues to be a time of preparation of self and the community as we look forward to the expansion of God's reign and the defeat of sin and death.

Lenten practices traditionally fall into three broad categories: justice toward God, justice toward oneself and justice toward others. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to meet these goals.

The following activities can help mark this important season:

Justice toward God

- Rededicate yourself to living into your holy vocation to extend God's reign in your daily life.
- Meditate on God's faithful and sacrificial love for us to cultivate deep and abiding gratitude.

Justice toward oneself

- Remember in humility that you are created of dust and to dust you shall return.
- Take time to honestly, critically and gently evaluate how you have loved God and neighbor—or not—and how the Spirit might be calling you to do better.
- Fast from rich and delicious food to help yourself consciously break patterns of selfishness and overconsumption.
- Repent of patterns and habits that harm yourself and/or others.

Justice toward others

- Continue the traditional Lenten practice of increased giving to people experiencing poverty.
- Commit your time, energy and resources to supporting social justice causes through such organizations and programs as the Lutheran World Federation and the ELCA Good Gifts project.
- Invite acquaintances (or strangers!) to share a meal and share their stories.

- Take steps toward reconnecting with those from whom you've been estranged (if healthy for all).

One of my favorite practices during Lent is a modification of the Jewish ritual *Tashlikh*. A person will go to their closest flowing water source, such as a stream or river. I like to survey the path my local Mud Creek takes on its way to the Gulf of Mexico, which helps me remember my responsibility to be a good custodian of local waterways. Then I recite, among other prayers, Micah 7:18-19:

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency.

He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Lint (for Lent!) taken out of one's pocket—or perhaps a tiny bit of bread or a handful of soil—is cast into the stream or river to be carried away to the sea. The water carrying away the tiny bits of lint that accumulate in my pocket helps me visualize how God takes away my sins and injurious habits that also accumulate over time, so that I'm freed to serve God and neighbor once again.

On Thursdays during Lent, I try to discern patterns that harm myself or my neighbor, and when I come up with something of which I would like to repent, I take from my pocket or wallet a tiny bit of cotton or linen lint (something that will biodegrade quickly and not harm fish or amphibians). On Good Friday, I toss the small collection of natural fibers into the creek, repenting and thanking God for carrying away my sins.

However one practices Lent, it's a time of introspection and preparing to celebrate Jesus' taking away of our sins, sinfulness and embrace of death over life. It's important that we don't wallow in self-contempt. Rather, with confidence in Jesus' salvation, we should repent of negative patterns and live into Jesus' calling to love God and our neighbors. Lent continues to be a time of preparation of self and the community as we look forward to the expansion of God's reign and the defeat of sin and death.

Originally published on February 28, 2020, on LivingLutheran.org, where you will find this article and other resources for the journey of faith.



*Cory Driver is the assistant to the bishop for emerging ministers and ministries for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. His book on wilderness spirituality, *Life Unsettled*, is available from Fortress Press.*

Covenant News

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
19000 Libby Road, Maple Heights, Ohio 44137



Covenant Lutheran Women are planning on having the plant sale again this year and order forms should be available sometime in March. See Arlene Lasher for details.