

# Friendly Messenger

April 2026

Beloveds in Christ,

Grace and Peace to you in this Holy season of Easter!

Let us not forget, we began this journey not at the empty tomb, but on the road that leads us there (at Holy Week)— at Palm Sunday. It is a scene filled with tension, hope, and profound meaning.

From the east, through the mercy gate, Jesus enters the city—not on a war horse, but on a humble young donkey. He is greeted by shouts of “Hosanna!” (Save us) and waving palm branches, not symbols of domination, but of longing—deep longing—for salvation, for healing, for peace. Shalom!

At the very same time, from the west, another procession unfolds. Pontius Pilate enters Jerusalem with the full spectacle of imperial Rome—soldiers, banners, armor, and the visible force of power. This is the embodiment of the Pax Romana—the “peace” of Rome—peace maintained through control, fear, and the sword.

Two processions. Two kingdoms. Two visions of peace.

Jesus knew -exactly- what He was doing and why!

His entry was not accidental. It was a deliberate, visible, and loving proclamation: that the Kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of this world. Where Rome asserts dominance, Christ embodies humility. Where Rome enforces peace through violence, Christ brings peace through sacrificial self-giving love and service. Where Rome elevates the powerful, Christ lifts up the lowly, the forgotten, and the weary.

This is the peace of Christ—a peace that does not come by crushing enemies, but by loving them. A peace that does not silence voices, but hears the cries of the brokenhearted. A peace that does not preserve power, but exposes it, transforms it, redeems it, and transfigures it’s fear into loving community.

This, is where Easter meets us.

Because the same Jesus who entered Jerusalem in humility walks all the way to the cross—and beyond it. In the resurrection, we see that the way of Christ is not weakness, but the very power of God. Love is stronger than death. Mercy is deeper than sin. Light cannot be overcome by darkness.

Pastor cont.

So, beloveds, in this Easter season, we are invited not just to remember this story—but to live it. We are invited into the full life of Christ’s love—a love that reshapes our hearts, reorients our priorities, and calls us outward into the world. A love that gives us courage to name injustice, to stand with the vulnerable, and to embody grace in places where fear would otherwise reign.

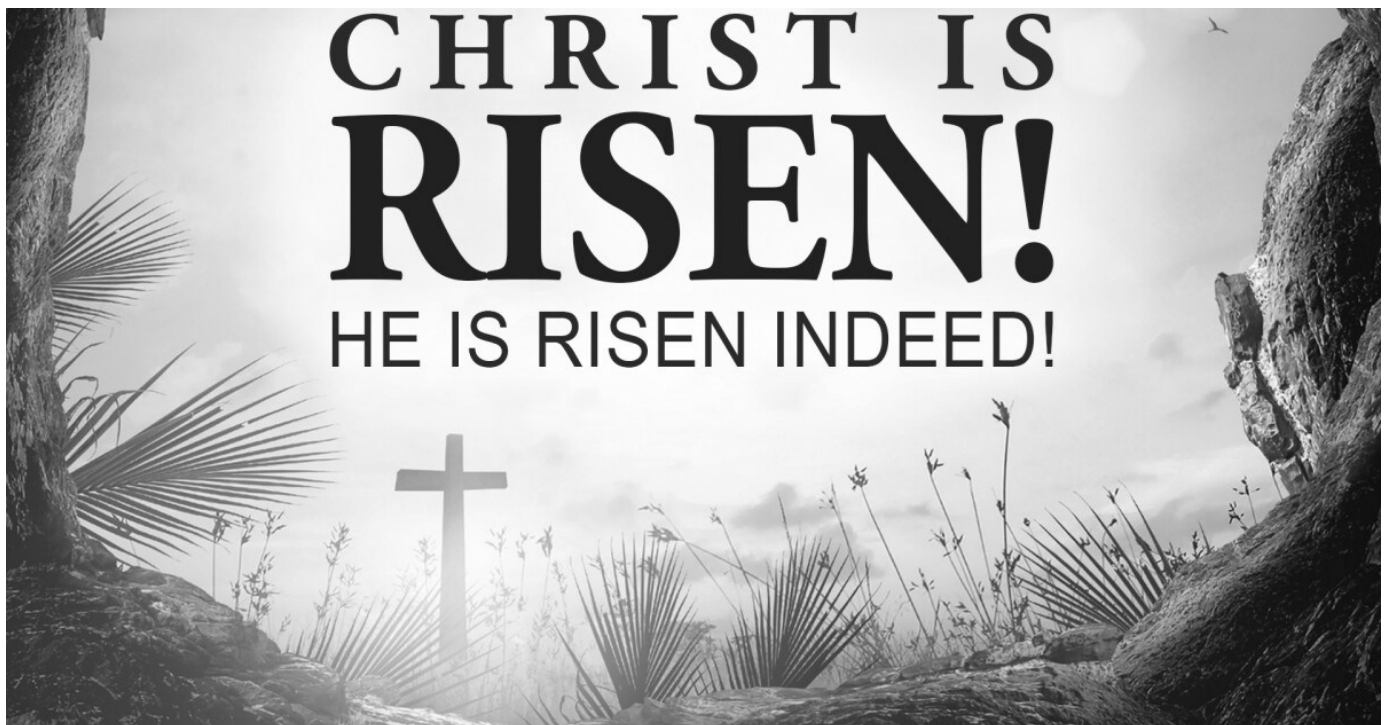
Let us be bold, then.  
Bold in compassion.  
Bold in mercy.  
Bold in truth.  
And even more BOLD in our LOVE.

Let us not shine the light of Christ timidly, but intentionally and courageously—trusting that even the smallest acts of love participate in the great unfolding of God’s Kingdom come.

For the King who entered through the eastern gate still comes to us—gently, faithfully, and with a love that refuses to let us or the world remain unchanged.

Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed.  
Hallelujah!

God loves you and so do I,  
Pastor Oscar Shepherd



The Fred T. Foard Senior Citizens group meet on the first Wednesday of each month for lunch and a program. The seniors will meet in April on the 1st at Sardis. All are invited to join us for fun, food, and fellowship. (Sardis furnishes drinks)



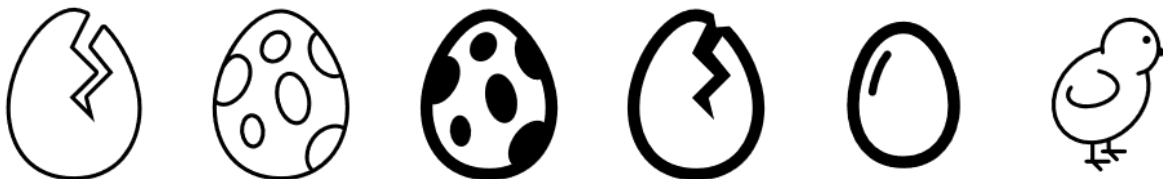
### ***From the Social Ministry Committee...***

**Each year the Social Ministry Committee collects items for Personal Care Kits. These kits go to Lutheran World Relief for distribution to people experiencing natural or human disasters. Lutheran World Relief reports the kits are the *most useful and the most requested* of all their efforts. Items that we take for granted show God's love to people who are in traumatic situations.**

**In 2026 the committee is putting an Easter spin on the collection. Our Youth will be handing out Easter Eggs on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday to Congregation members. Each egg will have a slip of paper listing one item that goes in the Personal Care Kits. Those items include: toothbrush, nail clippers, bars of soap, wide tooth comb, and dark colored, light weight towel (20 x 50 up to 27 x 32) – lightweight so it can dry quickly.**

**During the month of April members of the congregation are asked to stop by the Dollar Store or Walmart and pick up one or more of the item that was listed in their egg. Of course, you can donate items for the kits that were not in your egg. (We welcome all donations 😊) There will be a bin in the narthex for you to place your items during April.**

**The Youth will assemble the kits in May.**



## START MAKING PLANS TO ATTEND VBS THIS YEAR

### **VBS planning meetings**

- Mon, 3/30 - VBS Planning Meeting at 5:30pm
- Mon, 4/20 - VBS Planning Meeting at 5:30pm
- Mon, 5/11 - VBS Planning Meeting at 5:30pm
- Sat, 5/30 - VBS Work Day (Decorate and Set-up)
- Sun, 5/31 - First Day of VBS!

#### **Upcoming Dates:**

**Registration is live at <https://www.zionhickory.org/vbs-2026>.** Go ahead and register. Registration is for adults, volunteers, and children. There will be adult and teen classes as well.

• **Need at least 6 more "Group Leaders"** to help guide the groups through their rotations during VBS. Please complete registration link if you are interested in helping or let April Fulbright know.

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We welcome our newest member, Daniel Rueff, to our Sardis Family. May God strengthen him and give him encouragement to participate with us.

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#### **THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

On behalf of Thrivent Financial and Sardis WELCA, I want to thank you who have helped our Blessing Box food grow this Lenten season. The food you contributed is estimated to be around 425 pounds. We received a \$250 gift card to spend on food from Thrivent to supplement what you have contributed. Instead of sharing half the food that you contributed with Ashure. We have determined to share \$125 from the card with them. They are able to purchase more food than we can at our grocery stores. Ashure was able to purchase 714 lbs of food with the \$125 remaining on the Thrivent gift card. We are so blessed to be able to use our members' Thrivent Action Teams to help us with numerous projects at Sardis throughout the year.

If you didn't get a chance to donate food during our Lenten season, feel free to share some grocery items anytime during the year as the Blessing Box is well used and it takes a lot of food to keep it stocked each day. Ashure really appreciates our helping them with donations too. Thank you for sharing your bounty with others.

Sylvia King

#### **Information for NL's and Bulletins**

**Committee meetings or events by the congregation should be communicated to Jane directly. This needs to be done in time for newsletters (Wednesday before the last Sunday in the month), or the bulletin (by Wednesday evening each week.)**



## COMMUNITY FAITH LEADERS APPRECIATION

# Brunch

*We are honored to invite you to a special luncheon  
in appreciation of the care, comfort,  
and guidance you provide to our community.*

**FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026**

10:30 AM – The Celebration Center  
at Jenkins Funeral Home

4081 Startown Road  
Newton, NC 28658

Special Guest Speaker  
Rev. Dave Kistler and  
Pastor Fred Thompson

Your leadership makes a lasting difference  
in the lives of so many families.  
Please join us for food, fellowship,  
and a time of gratitude.  
We look forward to spending time  
together, strengthening relationships,  
and simply saying thank you.

**RSVP BY  
APRIL 10**



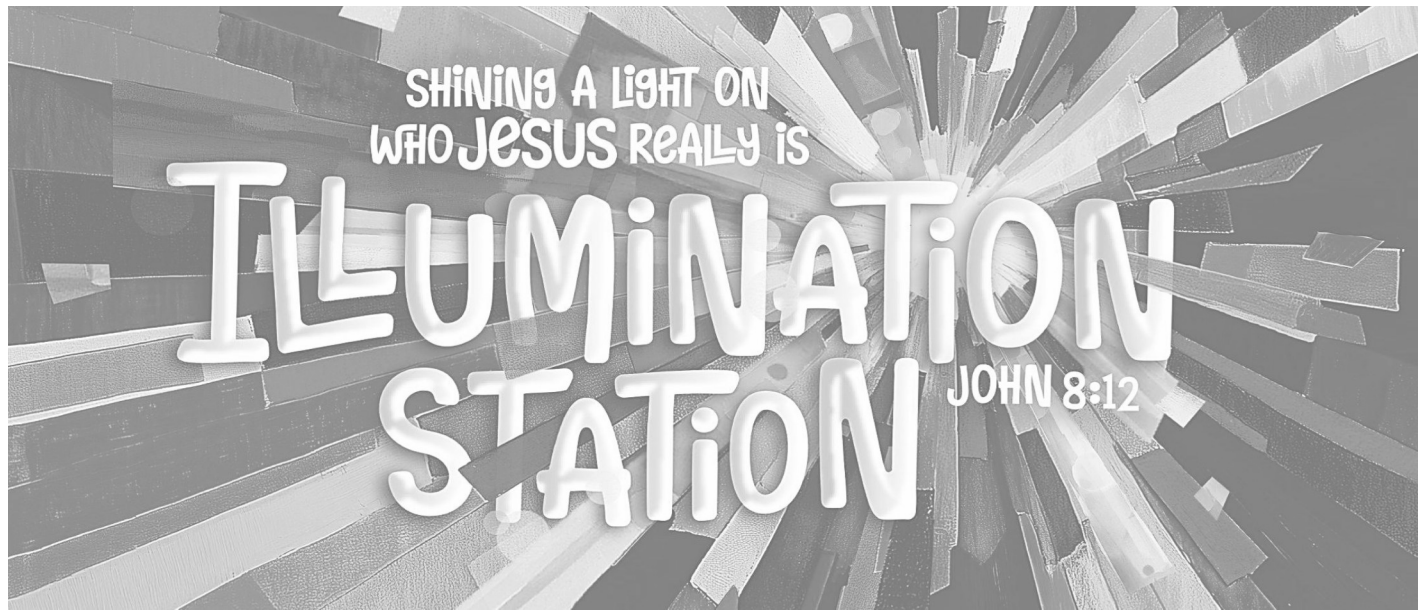
828-464-1555

[aaron@jenkinsfuneralhome.net](mailto:aaron@jenkinsfuneralhome.net)

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**Sardis Lutheran Youth  
BBQ To Go Plates  
Fundraiser  
For National ELCA  
Youth Gathering**

**AUGUST 8TH  
11 AM- 3 PM**



## Vacation Bible School 2026

Join us for the brightest week of the summer! At Illumination Station, you will explore how light brightens, illuminates, reflects, and reveals while discovering that Jesus is the Light of the World. Through Bible study, music, crafts, and recreation, you will learn that Jesus is the perfect, proven, and powerful Son of God.

*Light up your summer and shine a light on Jesus!*

**For All Ages: Preschoolers, Kids, Teenagers & Adults!**

**[zionhickory.org/vbs-2026](https://zionhickory.org/vbs-2026)**



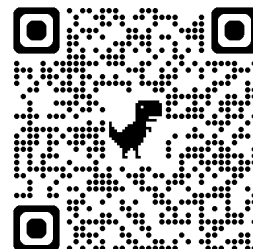
**Date & Time:**

**Sunday, 5/31 – Thursday, 6/4 5:30pm**

**– 8:30pm**

(Dinner from 5:30-6:00pm)

**Register Here:**



Sardis Lutheran Church  
Council Meeting  
February 15, 2026

In Attendance: Gene B., Darrell J., Jon G., Zach S., Joe B., Rick J., Kristin T., Robin S., Amy J., Jennifer W., Pastor Oscar

Gene brought the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with 10 council members and Pastor Oscar in attendance.

Gene Biggerstaff provided devotions and opening prayer.

Gene asked if there were any corrections or additions needed to the minutes from the January meeting. Kristin asked about the \$5000 allotted to the LTSS Scholarship fund, \$5000 allotted to the Home Mission Foundation, and \$5000 earmarked for use by Kristin Teague for the Lay Minister program. Kristin asked if that was a typo or if the numbers were correct. Gene verified the numbers were accurate per Scholarship Committee. With no changes or additions noted, Joe motioned to accept the minutes and Jennifer provided a second. The motion carried.

Next order of business was the financial report. Jennifer questioned the budget as there is \$2600 discrepancy noted. Jennifer thinks it was just an error as it appears to be the organist money because they were not listed on the printout we received. This discrepancy is under the office staff payroll section of the report. Gene is going to discuss this with Jane and Dwayne. Financial report was left pending until next meeting.

Pastor Oscar provided a written report noting:

This January has been colder than normal with ice and snow. Two services were canceled due to weather; however, the Pastor Oscar still had a service that he videotaped which gave us access to watch it at home. Pastor Oscar said it was really weird doing it with a camera and no one in the congregation. He stressed more than once how he missed all of us and that services would have been much better if we could have attended.

Several people in the congregation fell during the ice and snow and had to go to the hospital. He stated the individuals did not want their names mentioned but did want him to be at the hospital when they were there. Pastor Oscar went to the hospital to be with the ones that fell.

He also reports when he was holding the door open for Buster, Buster fell "hard" onto the ground. Pastor admits it scared him tremendously. He was able to get him up off the ground and he was not injured.

This month he spent time catching up on his visits. He was able to bring the shut-ins Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Kenan is in Asheville getting help to overcome his addictions. He will be there approximately 3-6 weeks based on doctor's recommendations. He is doing well so far. He was sent to Phase 2 of the program on Friday, February 13, 2026. We need to continue to pray for him, care about him, give him some grace, and encouragement.

Celebrated Bold Women's Sunday on February 8, 2026. Bishop Emily Hartner was present.

She did a Temple Talk and assisted with Holy Communion. Kristin did the sermon to obtain credit for the Lay Minister Program. Bishop informed Pastor Oscar that she thoroughly enjoyed our service and getting to meet everyone.

After church we had our annual meeting to hear about all the ministry work we shared over the past year. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and focus, reminding us to keep the main thing: Jesus and the work of the Gospel. Congregational meal was catered by Norman's Café.

Pastor Oscar is grateful for everyone who has stepped into various roles in the church and the community, especially those trying something new for the first time. Pastor reports the little things matter and he has realized there are a lot of people who do stuff for the church that no one knows about.

Special thank you goes out to Nena for stepping up and playing for services while Kenan is at the rehab facility

Pastor Oscar reminded us tonight that we are blessed to serve, represent, and love in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## OLD BUSINESS

The reason for the church being so cold was due to running out of propane. Concern is the tank was filled in December 2025 with the bill being over \$3,000 and within one month the tank was empty. Looked back at March 2025 and the bill then was \$3294.82, however it lasted longer than a month. Property committee will be designated to evaluate the tank to make sure no leakage is occurring.

Gene brought up 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest. He is going to discuss the policy and procedures with Laurel Hill because they use 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest. He thinks we have to have a room at the church for people to come in and get food. Amy reports they have set hours and the downfall of using 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest is that they require documentation every month on who we feed, demographics of the people, names of people, just to name a few things.

## NEW BUSINESS

The Youth Committee had some questions about raising money for the Youth Gathering Trip in 2027 which is in Minneapolis. Kristin is the Youth Committee council representative, and she discussed the fundraising ideas to help raise money for their trip. Youth Committee wants to hold a BBQ at the church as a fundraiser. They want to pre-sale tickets as well so they will know how much BBQ to make for the fundraiser. They also want to have a donation box at the door which would also go into the Youth fund. Kristin made a motion to allow the Youth to do this fundraiser, Darrell seconded the motion. The motion carried. Youth Committee also wants to sale T-shirts and Hoodies again this year like they did in years past. Council in agreement. Kristin to contact April, the Youth Committee chair, with the above information.

### Personnel Issues:

Kenan is in a rehab facility to help him overcome his addictions. Discussion was whether he should get paid while he is in recovery. Uncertain how long he will be at the facility. His 90-day probationary period ended January 21, 2026; however, a new 90-day probationary period was given to him. He is doing well at the facility. Pastor Oscar is concerned that we cannot afford to continue paying Kenan while he is out and pay Nena too. Pastor Oscar reports we can support him with grace, care, and love. Pastor Oscar reports that we need to take care of Nena because she is stepping up and playing during Kenan's absence. If Kenan is not back by Easter, Music and Worship Committee will have to find someone to play Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday as Nena will be out of town. Discussion also on Kenan's behavior when he returns. He must listen to Doctor's advice and if he doesn't, consequences will occur.

Jennifer wants boundaries written out so that everyone is on the same page. Also, it was brought to council's attention that Kenan went into QuickBooks on Jane's computer and moved his paycheck around to different banking institutions and had his money come out sooner than when he is normally paid. Gene is going to follow up with Dwayne and Jane in regards to this issue. This conversation was tabled and will be discussed at a later date.

Golf Balls: Joe found out the golf balls was coming from a house near the church that is rented by Ashley Moretz. Two adults and two teenagers live at the house. The teenagers have been hitting golf balls from their yard toward the church. Ashley is going to speak with his tenants about this matter. If they continue to hit the golf balls toward the church, Ashley will be asking them to move, and if they do not move, he is going to contact the Sheriff's Dept.

Flag: No one knows what happened to the flag along with the rope that attached the flag to the pole.

Outdoor cameras were discussed due to the issue of the golf balls and the flag.

Discussion about installing 2 more ring cameras or having a security company come in and install cameras outside. Pricing is the main concern and since only 2 cameras may be needed, going to try ring cameras first before discussing a security company. Pastor Oscar's concern is the privacy of the Blessing Box and do not want people to be in fear using the box if they are recorded on the ring camera. Blink cameras were also discussed but pricy. Zach and Darrill will be taking this concern to the security committee to get their thoughts and will discuss them in upcoming council meetings. Also mentioned getting property committee involved.

Discussion about purchasing an electric sign to the front lawn which would replace our current signage. The current signage is old and starting to break. Pastor Oscar was in favor of having an electric sign. Again, money is the issue. Discussed maybe doing fundraisers, using memorial money, or doing pledges like we did when we replaced lights in the sanctuary. Rick suggested to remove the old sign, keep the brick structure, and put the electric sign in the brick structure. Looked up pricing of electric signs and they range from \$10,000-\$70,000. Ben was at the church and Jennifer asked him to come into the meeting to discuss this possibility. Ben will look into signs/pricing and get back to us as soon as he can.

Jennifer brought up children's church and the reason we are not currently have a set schedule anymore. Only one child has been in attendance for children's church for the past couple of months. Teachers will have a lesson ready if and when children attend church. Pastor Oscar will make the determination if children's church will be on Sunday's based on numbers during the children's sermon.

With no other business to discuss, Joe made a motion that the meeting be adjourned and Rick seconded the motion and the meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Jon is the church council contact for March and will provide devotions at the March meeting.

The next Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kristin Teague for Mike Midgett as he was unable to attend the meeting.

Sardis Lutheran Church  
Council Meeting held after the worship service on  
Sunday, February 22, 2026

In Attendance: Amy J, Kristin T, Robin S, Tim W, Jennifer W, Rick J, Zachary S, Joe B, Gene B, Jon G, Darrell J, Mike M, Jane M, Pastor Oscar

Gene brought the called council meeting to order at Noon with 12 council members, Jane Moretz (church secretary) and Pastor Oscar in attendance.

Gene stated that he called the meeting to discuss the status of the current church organist Kenan Chronister. He explained to the council that Kenan is currently in a rehabilitation facility receiving treatment for several issues. Gene said the meeting was to get direction on how to handle the organist duties, pay, etc. in Kenan's absence. Kenan is currently paid twice per month at a rate of \$750.00 per installment. Nena Babb has been filling in during Kenan's absence and receives \$125.00 for each service she plays. Nena has also been assisting Jane with many other tasks related to the services and has been serving as the choir director.

Kristin presented a motion that we begin paying Nena at the same rate that Kenan receives and that she be treated as the full-time choir director in his absence. She also recommended that we suspend any pay to Kenan until he returns to the position. Rick provided a 2<sup>nd</sup> to the motion and the motion was approved. Pastor Oscar asked that the council and congregation continue to offer prayer and support for Kenan during this difficult time.

The issue of covering for Nena during Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday was discussed since she has stated that she will be unable to play at those services. Pastor Oscar stated that he has an organist who has agreed to cover those services and will provide details at a later date.

The council also discussed the process/requirements for Kenan's return to the organist/Music Director position. Joe presented a motion that the Executive committee meet with Kenan prior to his return and present him with a specific list of expectations, guidelines and requirements contingent to him maintaining the role. Kenan will be required to sign a Letter of Agreement detailing these terms. Jon provided a 2<sup>nd</sup> to the motion and the motion was approved.

Jennifer presented a motion that if Kenan is able to return prior to the Easter Sunday service, he will not be allowed to start before the Sunday after Easter to provide the time necessary to prepare for the service prior to Easter Sunday. Kenan will also be required to meet with the choir one week prior to his return. Zachary provided a 2<sup>nd</sup> to the motion and the motion was approved.

The council then moved into executive session to discuss additional topics. Once the executive session was concluded, the meeting was adjourned.

The next church council meeting will be held on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Midgett, Sardis Church Council Secretary

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			1 12:00 FTF Seniors at Sar- dis bring drinks)	2 7:00 Maundy Thursday Ser- vice w/Holy Communion	3 7:00 Good Fri- day Service	4 10:00 Altar Committee meets
5 <b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> <b>Bring flowers for the Cross</b> <b>BRING FOOD FOR BLESSINGS BOX</b> 6:30 Worship Service followed with breakfast in the Fellowship Hall. Easter Egg Hunt following breakfast.	6 OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM	7	8	9 NO Chancel Choir Practice	10 Pastors Sab- bath	11
12. 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service 7:00 Church Council	13	14	15	16 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice	17 Pastors Sab- bath	18
19 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service	20 5:30 VBS Planning Meet- ing at Zion 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM	21	22 5:00 Deadline for articles for the May NL	23 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice	24 Pastors Sab- bath	25
26 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service 3:00 Trinity Ridge 6:30 LMM	27	28	29	30 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice		

**BIRTHDAYS**

4/1 April Fulbright  
 4/7 Rick Johnson  
 4/8 Isaac Hollar  
 Jane Moretz  
 Hayden Johnson  
 4/9 Cooper Carroll  
 4/11 Jon Gladden  
 Felicia Hollar  
 4/12 Alma Fulbright  
 4/14 Micah Duncan  
 4/17 Paislee Richardson  
 4/20 Elaine Jarrett  
 4/23 Greg Fulbright  
 4/25 Marilyn Teague  
 4/30 Chris Johnson  
 Cynthia Stuart

**Anniversaries:**

Jon & Becky Gladden 4-12  
 Randy & Joyce Speagle 4-13  
 Marilyn & Roger Teague 4-17  
 Jeff & Rebecca Wilson 4-17  
 Richard & Dawn Covington 4-21  
 Ethan & Heather Carroll 4-30

**COUNCIL CONTACT ASSISTING MINISTER**

Rick Johnson Rick and Hayden Rotating

**USHERS**

Roger & Marilyn

**COMMUNION PREPARATION /  
 CLEAN – UP**

Jane Moretz

Marilyn Teague

**Offering Counter:** Dwayne W.

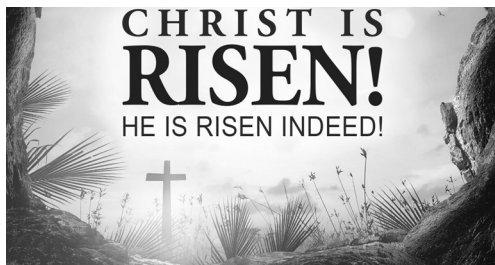
<i>VOLUNTEER April</i>	5th	12th	19th	26th
<b>ALTAR FLOWERS</b>	Joe & Phyllis B.	David & Rebecca R.	Kristin T.	Ben & Jennifer W.
<b>ACOLYTE/ CRUCIFER</b>	Marshall/Gabriel	Paisley/Graysen	Ian/Rick	Graysen/Cayden
<b>COMM. ASSISTANT</b>	Ben W.	Ray W.	Zachary S,	Jon G.
<b>GREETERS</b>	Edna/Darrell	Roger/Marilyn	Annette/ Kristin	Kay/Roger
<b>LAY READER</b>	Ray W.	Zachary S.	Joh G.	Jane M.
<b>TECHNOLOGY</b>	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe
<b>SECURITY</b>	Ralph S.	Bruce S.	Ben W.	Darrell J.
<b>SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADER</b>	NO SS	EL Donna MH Rick	EL Sherrie/Mike MH Dawn	EL April MH Kristin
<b>BANOAK BACKPACK</b>	NO SCHOOL	16th Mike & Sherrie	23rd Mildred F.	30th Dwayne & Barbara
<b>FRONT YARD SIGN</b>	Tim W.	Nena B,	Jennifer W.	Tim W.
<b>MEAL DEL.</b>	11th No Meal	18th Donna B.	25th No Meal	2nd Dawn C.
<b>BLESSINGS BOX</b>	Church Council	LMM	Jon's Class	Disciples of Christ

## OUR MISSION

**Sardis Evangelical Lutheran Church serves together as disciples of Christ, teaches the word to invite people into a life of knowing Jesus, encourages each other in faith and personal mission through reaching out to the needs of the community and individuals.**

**REMEMBER:** you can find this NL, the weekly calendar and Sunday Sermons on the website: <https://sardislutheran.com/> mark it as a favorite and check it out often.

SARDIS LUTHERAN CHURCH  
6103 W NC 10 HWY  
HICKORY NC 28602



### **SARDIS LEADERS CONTACTS**

Pastor: Rev. Matthew Oscar Shepherd (C) 828-228-3078 [pastor@sardislutheran.com](mailto:pastor@sardislutheran.com)

[Pastor Office Hours Wednesday, 11am – 3pm Remember, you can always call the Pastor anytime from 8am to 7am in case of emergency.](#)

Organist/Director of Music: Kenan Chronister (C) 828-582-3489 [kenanthemusician@gmail.com](mailto:kenanthemusician@gmail.com)

Council Chair: Gene Biggerstaff (C) 828-381-0039 [genebiggerstaff@gmail.com](mailto:genebiggerstaff@gmail.com)

Secretary/Treasurer: Jane Moretz, (C) 828-302-8458 [secretary@sardislutheran.com](mailto:secretary@sardislutheran.com)