

# Friendly Messenger

May 2026

Beloved Church,

At the campus that once was of Lutheran theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina there is a stained glass window in the chapel called the “Pentecost window.”

It depicts the Holy Spirit like fire descending to earth. The Holy Spirit is often something we don’t focus a lot on as Lutherans. Much like mystery, angels, or miracles? It seems hard for us to wrap our head around, to get a firm grasp on.

But so is Love—the Image—(freely given)we bear of God. The God, WHO. IS. LOVE.

Pentecost meets us in that very tension: between what we can explain and what we can only experience. Tongues of fire. A rushing wind. Voices speaking across every barrier humanity has built. It is not neat. It is not easily defined. And yet—it is unmistakably God.

We may be tempted to keep the Holy Spirit at a distance, to treat the Spirit as something abstract or symbolic. But Pentecost refuses that distance. The Spirit comes close—closer than comfortable, closer than certainty, closer even than our own breath. The Spirit does not simply visit; the Spirit abides.

Jesus calls this Spirit the Advocate—the one who walks alongside, who intercedes, who strengthens, who sustains, who reminds us who and whose we are. Not just individually, but together. The miracle of Pentecost is not just that people heard in their own many languages, but that they were gathered into one Body without losing the beauty of their difference. Unity without erasure. Diversity without division. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

And this Spirit is not earned. Not achieved. Not reserved for the “especially holy” or “especially certain.” This advocate, this gift, this companion is freely given to us and abides closer than the air we breathe—to sustain us and carry us in hope, faith, and love. For life, and life abundant.

So perhaps Pentecost is less about fully understanding the Spirit, and more about being open to where the Spirit is moving. In a word spoken at the right time. In courage we didn’t know we had. In reconciliation where there was once distance. In love that refuses to give up.



Cont. Pastor's Message

The same fire that descended upon the early church still burns—not to consume, but to ignite. Not to destroy, but to renew. Not to overwhelm, but to send.

And send us it does—into our homes, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, and our world. Not alone, but filled. Not empty, but empowered. Not fearful, but alive in Christ.

May we trust the Spirit who is already at work within us.  
May we listen for the voice that calls us forward.  
May we live as people set aflame with the love of God.

Come, Holy Spirit. Come.

God loves you and so do I,  
Pastor Oscar Shepherd

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## KRISTIN TEAGUE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

You are warmly invited to join us for a special service of commissioning as we set apart and bless Kristin Teague to serve as a Lay Minister in our congregation and community.

This meaningful occasion is a time of celebration and commitment, as Kristin responded to God's call to serve with faith, compassion, and dedication. Through prayer, we will affirm her ministry and support her calling.

**Date:** May 30, 2026

**Time:** 1:45 pm

**Location:** Lenior-Rhyne University

All are welcome to attend and share in this joyful moment in the life of our church.



Please keep Kristin in your prayers as she prepares for this important step in her journey of faith.

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace." – 1 Peter 4:10*

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 May on the 6th at Plateau. All are invited to join us for fun, food, and fellowship.



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## **NIGHT OUT FOR FELLOWSHIP...PLEASE COME**

Mark your calendar for DINNER AND A MOVIE NIGHT at Sardis on Saturday May 2nd, 2026. Come at 5:30 pm for grilled hotdogs, deserts and drinks followed at 6:30pm for the movie.

The movie will be a surprise but some of you saw this movie recently in the theater and you will not be disappointed. Invite your friends and neighbors to come with you.

The event is free and all are welcome. Dinner and a Movie night is sponsored by the Sardis Men's Group and the Evangelism Committee.

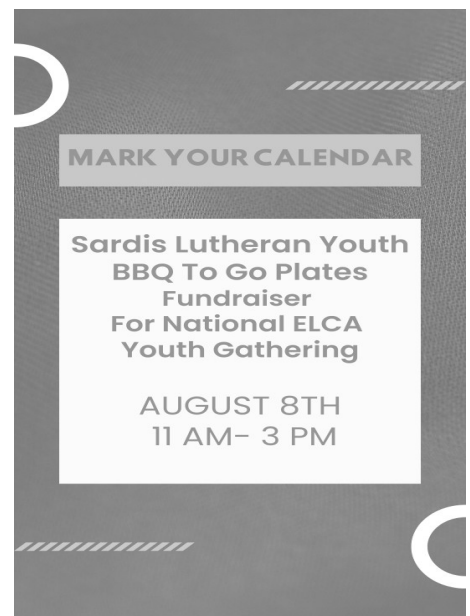
Ray

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## **YOUTH NEWS**

- Youth Hike - May 17th at 3 pm at Bakers Mtn Park. Everyone is invited. Meal afterwards, more details to follow.
- Youth Tubing Trip- Mark your calendar for tubing trip, everyone is invited. June 27th at Catawba River Outdoors in Marion NC. Cost includes tube rental and shuttle, cash only, \$25 per person. Plan to arrive at 10 AM for float and then we will stop for lunch afterwards.
- Youth BBQ Fundraiser- August 8 11AM to 3PM. Proceeds will go toward 2027 Youth Gathering.

April



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please fill out and put in Jane's Office. The June NL will acknowledge any Institute ages Infant to.....



NAME OF GRADUATE:

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YOUR NAME:

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INSTITUTION GRADUATING FROM:

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HONORS RECEIVED AND A COMMENT ABOUT THE GRADUATE:

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## SUSAN JONES CRAFT CLASS

Craft Class May 27th at 1PM. Make 2, 1 butterfly key chain and 1 magnet \$3.00

### 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.)

## Lenten Food Drive -a Huge Success

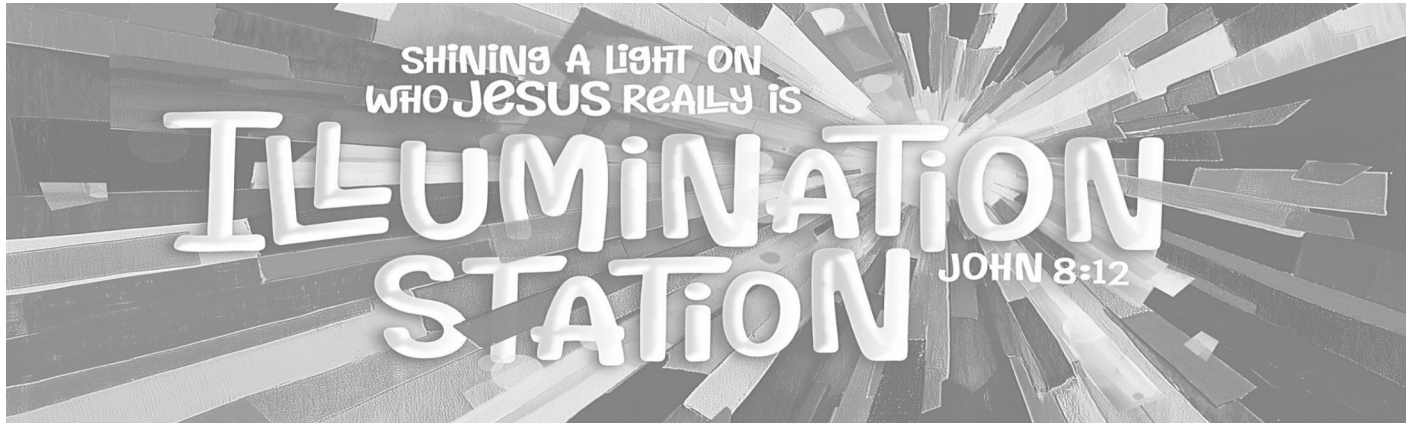
Just a quick update on the Lenten Food Drive. After the Ashure food was delivered, the Sardis Blessing Box inventory was increased with many cans of beans, corn, tomatoes, pasta, etc. In addition, over thirty shelf stable meals were donated. WELCA volunteers' double bag the various recipe ingredients stapled the recipe on the bags and put them in the "Backpack and Blessings Box" room. Members of the assigned weekly teams can place them one at a time in the Blessings Box for families needing help with putting food on the table. Individual cans will be placed in the box also. It will be interesting to see if people take the complete meals or the individual cans.

## April was Personal Care Kit Month

After Easter, the youth distributed Easter Eggs containing a "surprise" to congregation members. The surprise was the name of a hygiene item needed to make Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief to distribute to people experiencing disasters throughout the world. Members were asked to donate their "surprise" item (soap, towels, toothbrushes, nail clippers, and combs) during the month of April. The youth will assemble the kits according to the LWR requirements and tie them in a towel. The completed kits are then taken to Zion Lutheran's gymnasium where they are combined with the kits from ELCA churches from our region. The Synod arranges for a truck to pick up the kits and then the Synod ships them to the designated point.



*LWR emphasizes that Personal Care Kits restore dignity, cleanliness, and health for people displaced by disaster or conflict. Simple items like soap, towels, and combs help families maintain hygiene when they have had to flee with almost nothing.*



## 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)**



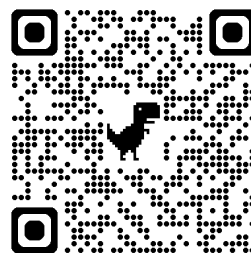
**Date & Time:**

**Sunday, 5/31 – Thursday, 6/4**

**5:30pm – 8:30pm**

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

**Register Here:**



## **Together, We Have Enough** 2025 Mission Support



to the members of  
Sardis Evangelical Lutheran Church

of the North Carolina Synod  
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
in grateful appreciation for giving  
\$20,606.76

for Mission Support beyond the congregation  
for synod and churchwide ministries of the ELCA.

Bishop, North Carolina Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



**2026 National Week of Action for MMWIR is May 4-8, 2026**

**MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS,  
AND RELATIVES (MMIWGR)**

## **THE CRISIS**

THE CRISIS OF MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN IS NOT NEW. IT IS MORE THAN AN EPIDEMIC – INSTEAD IS PART OF THE SPECTRUM OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY NATIVE WOMEN. THIS CRISIS OF MMIW HAS DEEP ROOTS IN COLONIZATION AND GENOCIDE, AND CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE LACK OF LEGAL PROTECTIONS AS A RESULT OF THE SYSTEMATIC EROSION OF TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY STRETCHING BACK MORE THAN 500 YEARS.” – NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S RESOURCE CENTER

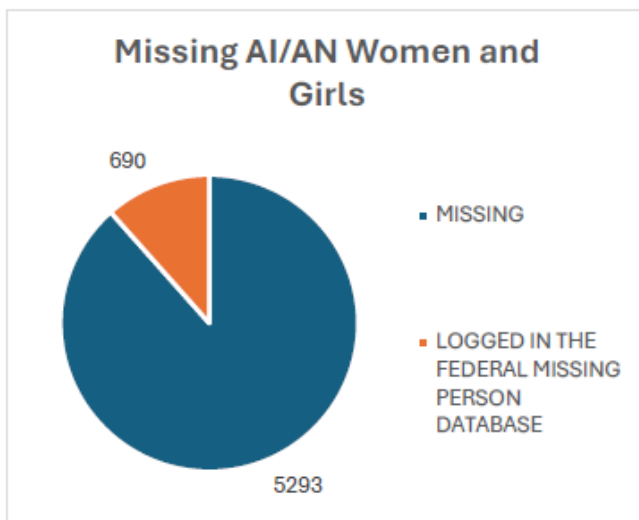
## **THE MOVEMENT**

**MMIWGR IS A MOVEMENT THAT WORKS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THIS CRISIS, SEEKS TO OFFER SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES WITH MISSING AND MURDERED INDIVIDUALS AND ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THIS CRISIS.**

THERE ARE SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENT BODIES NOW WORKING TO ADDRESS THIS CRISIS:

- THE PASSING OF THE “NOT INVISIBLE ACT OF 2020” CREATED THE MISSING AND MURDERED UNIT OF THE BUREAU OF AFFAIRS (BIA). THERE ARE CURRENTLY 15 BIA OFFICES AROUND THE COUNTRY WITH MISSING AND MURDERED UNITS.
- MAY 5 WAS DESIGNATED AS THE NATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN 2019.
- THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S RESOURCE CENTER, NATIVE HOPE, AND NATIVE WOMEN’S WILDERNESS ARE JUST A FEW ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TO ADDRESS THE CRISIS BY RAISING AWARENESS, EDUCATING, AND OFFERING SUPPORT.

- **Indigenous Women** are 2.5 times as likely to **experience violent crimes** and 2 times more likely to experience **rape or sexual assault crimes**.
- **Homicide** is the #3 leading cause of death for Indigenous women 10-24 years old, and the #5 leading cause of death for Indigenous women 25-34 years old.
- **40% of victims of sex trafficking are identified as Indigenous women.**
- Unlike other racial groups, violence against Indigenous women is **MORE** likely to be perpetrated by someone **OUTSIDE** their racial group.
- **MORE than 80% of Indigenous women** have experienced violence in their lifetime.



In the Urban Indian Health Institute's 2016 study, **more than 95%** of the MMIWGR cases in the study were **NEVER** covered by national or international media. In the same study, **31% of the media outlets** who covered MMIWGR cases used **violent language to describe the victims**.

WE INCLUDE "RELATIVES" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT INDIGENOUS MEN, CHILDREN, ELDERS, AND TWO SPIRIT (LGBTQ+IA) INDIVIDUALS ARE ALSO AT A GREAT RISK OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE IN THEIR LIFETIMES.

A red hand covering the mouth is the symbol of this movement. "It stands for all the missing sisters whose voices are not heard. It stands for the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis. It stands for the oppression and subjugation of Native women who are now rising up to say #NoMoreStolenSisters." – Native Hope



## MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ALARMING FACTS

**9575** entries were made for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) in the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Persons File in 2020.

**71.0%** of all cases were AI/AN people **under the age of 21**.

**43.1%** of all cases were **females under 18**.

**15.6%** of those cases remained active at the end of 2020. Cases are reported as closed when the individual is located by law enforcement, returns home, or the case is determined to be invalid.

\*\*It is required of law enforcement to report cases of missing people under the age of 21 to NCIC Missing Person file, but NOT the same as adults. That is why there is MORE data available on missing AI/AN children compared to adults.

From 2009-2018 there were 1,909 Native American children missing with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). **68% were missing from foster care or group homes**. NOTE that not all NA children that are missing or abducted are reported to NCMEC. *(from National Council of Urban Indian Health)*

Each year, NIWRC and partners organize the **National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives**, a time to stand together and take action to demand justice. Join us by:

- Sharing educational materials, attending virtual or in-person events, and using social media to elevate the voices of impacted families.
- Contacting lawmakers and demand increased funding, stronger legal protections, and accountability for missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives.
- You can donate to organizations that work directly with families, participate in community events, or volunteer to assist with advocacy efforts.

## Resources

- National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center
- Native Hope
- Native Women’s Wilderness
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women (NM)
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition
- National Criminal Justice Training Center’s National Statistics on Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls
- “Alaska Daily” ABC television series
- “The Roundhouse” novel by Louise Erdrich
- Urban Indian Health Institute’s “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Report” • “Wind River” 2017 film



*Faith of our Mothers*

*Please join us for the Daughters of God Brunch*

*Saturday, May 9*

*10:00am – 12 :00pm*

*Cost: \$10 per person*

*Please sign up by Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup>*

Sardis Lutheran Church  
Council Meeting  
March 8, 2026

In Attendance: Gene Biggerstaff, Joe Biggerstaff, Jon Gladden, Darrell Jarrett, Rick Johnson, Amy Jones, Mike Midgett, Robin Stuart, Zachary Stuart, Kristin Teague, Jennifer Whitener, Tim Whitener and Pastor Oscar

Gene brought the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with 12 council members and Pastor Oscar in attendance.

Jon Gladden provided the devotions and opening prayer. Jon spoke of the story of the Good Samaritan and the Woman at the Well and how we should work toward peace and that peace starts with each of us.

Gene asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes from the meeting held on January 15<sup>th</sup>. No changes or additions were brought forward and Joe made a motion to accept the minutes as written and Jon provided a second. The motion carried. Gene also asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes from the meeting held on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. No changes or additions were brought forward and Darrell made a motion to accept the minutes as written and Kristin provided a second. That motion also carried.

The next order of business were the Financial reports. A discrepancy was noted in payroll expenses and Gene will discuss this with Jane and Dwayne and report back at the next meeting. Approval of the Financial reports was left pending until the next meeting.

Pastor Oscar provided the following list of his activities over the past month:

Led and taught interfaith worship with the Scouts.

Attended the trip to Skyzone with the youth and all had an enjoyable time.

He had an enjoyable and enlightening visit with Faye Hoke.

He was able to bring many shut-ins the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Stated that he may be reducing the frequency of his visits to some shut-in members at their request.

Pastor Oscar stated that he is humbled by the trust and support provided by the members of the congregation.

## OLD BUSINESS

Security Cameras: Terry Bledsoe provided an estimate of the costs required to install (5) additional Ring cameras around the perimeter of the church. (This estimate does not include the costs for installation and wiring). The council requested that the Technology and Security committees meet to discuss this project and gather more detailed information and required costs needed for this project. (Jennifer agreed to work with Ben to set this meeting up).

Personnel: Gene reported that Kenan Chronister (the former church organist) resigned in a text sent to him on 2/27/2026. The Worship and Music committee will begin the search

for a new organist. Nena Babb has agreed to fill in until a new organist is identified and hired. Pastor Oscar stated that he has a potential candidate to fill in and play at the Good Friday and Easter services during Nena's absence.

Ben presented several quotes for new LED signs to replace the current manual sign boards in the front lawn of the church. The lowest bid was for approx. \$38k. The council suggested that this item be tabled until the Technology committee could discuss this further. Jennifer agreed to take this action to the Technology committee.

## NEW BUSINESS

Gene presented a proposal from Ballard Roofing, Inc. for the replacement of the flat roof over the Narthex which leaked during the snow and ice storm in January but has not leaked since then. The quote was for \$9,040.00. After discussion, the council decided to table this project until a later date when more information and additional quotes can be acquired. Zachary stated that he knows someone who works with Integrity Roofing and will contact them to get another estimate.

The council discussed how to designate the offerings from the special services to be held during Lent. Jennifer made a motion that the funds collected during these services be used to support the youth going to the National Youth Gathering in 2027. Kristin seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Gene reminded everyone that the church council is responsible for filling the blessings box this week.

Gene requested that the following list of upcoming activities from the Evangelism committee be added to the council minutes:

Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 5pm – Shepherd's Appreciation dinner at Sardis.

Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30pm – Dinner and a Movie at Sardis.

Saturday, July 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm – Congregational and Community cookout and outdoor concert featuring WillowCreek. A freewill offering collected will benefit the youth and chaperones attending the National Youth Gathering.

Saturday, October 31<sup>st</sup> (5pm – 7pm) – Trunk or Treat at Sardis

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

Rick Johnson is the church council contact for April and will provide devotions at the April meeting.

The next Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Midgett (Sardis church council secretary)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
					1 Pastors Sabbath	2 5:30 Dinner and a Movie
<b>3 BRING FOOD FOR BLESSINGS BOX</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service w/Holy Communion	4 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM	5	6 12:00 FTF Seniors at Plateau	7	8 Pastors Sabbath	9
10 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service w/Holy Communion 7:00 Church Council	11	12	13	14	15 Pastors Sabbath	16
17 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service w/Holy Communion 3:00 Youth Hike Bakers Mtn. all invited	18 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM	19	20	21	22 Pastors Sabbath  SCHOOL'S OUT	23
24 <b>PENTECOST</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service w/Holy Communion 3:00 Trinity Ridge	25	26	27 1:00 Susan Craft Class  5:00 Deadline for articles for June NL	28	29 Pastors Sabbath	30
<b>31 HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service w/Holy Communion 5:30-8:30 VBS at Zion through June 4 6:30 LMM						

**BIRTHDAYS**

**COUNCIL CONTACT ASSISTING MINISTER**

5/5 Andrew Ruggles, Jr.  
 5/7 Lincoln Farnsworth  
 5/8 Gabriel Shepherd  
 5/10 Mae Whitener  
 Kallista McGinnis  
 5/11 Annette Richard  
 5/20 Brenna Wilson  
 5/21 Ben Whitener  
 5/24 Randy Speagle  
 Logan Yow  
 Avery Yow  
 5/28 Lee Whitener  
 5/29 Renee' Ramsey  
 Clay Smyre  
 5/31 Carrie Yousef

Amy Jones

Ray Whitener

**USHERS**

Roter T., Shuford W.

**COMMUNION PREPARATION /  
 CLEAN – UP**

Donna B.

Sharon S.

**Offering Counter:** Dwayne W.

**Anniversaries:  
 Rick and Patsy Johnson 5- 12  
 Osama & Carrie Yousef 5-17  
 Andy and Anita Ruggles 5- 19  
 Terry & Jill Bledsoe 5-27**

<i>VOLUNTEER</i> May	3rd	10th	17th	24th	31st
<b>ALTAR FLOWERS</b>	Zachary & Bailey	Roger & Marilyn	Greg & Kerby	Ralph & Wanda	Al & Sylkvia
<b>ACOLYTE/ CRUCIFER</b>	Graysen/Marshall	Ian/Hayden	Rick/Tryston	Tryston/Joe	Marshall/Gabriel
<b>COMM. ASSISTANT</b>	Marilyn T.	Kristin T.	Tim W.	Hayden J.	Rick J.
<b>GREETERS</b>	Bruce/Rita	Dianne/Shuford	Benny/Edna	Darrell/Marilyn	Annette/Kristin
<b>LAY READER</b>	Marilyn T.	Kristin T.	Nena B.	Paisley H.	Marshall W.
<b>TECHNOLOGY</b>	Terry,Ben, Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben, Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben, Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben, Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben, Joe,Samuel
<b>SECURITY</b>	Rick J.	Zachary S.	Roger T.	Ralph S.	Bruce S.
<b>SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADER</b>	EL Sherrie/Mike MH Nena	EL Hayden MH Kristin	EL April MH Nena	EL Donna MH Dawn	EL April MH Kristin
<b>BANOAK BACKPACK</b>	7th Gene & Donna	14th Joe & Phyllis PU	21st Roger & Marilyn	NO SCHOOL	NO SCHOOL
<b>FRONT YARD SIGN</b>	Nena	Jennifer	Tim	Nena	Jennifer
<b>MEAL DEL.</b>	9th no meal	16th Sylvia	23rd no meal	30th April	6/6 no meal
<b>BLESSINGS BOX</b>	Church Council	LMM	Jon's Class	Disciples of Christ	Church Council

## 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:** Nena Babb, (C) 828-238-5700 [nhbabb@gmail.com](mailto:nhbabb@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)