

Friendly Messenger

March 2026

Beloved Sardis,

We have entered the season of Lent—a sacred journey that draws us closer to the heart of Christ. Lent is not simply a season on the church calendar where we give something up, like a New Year's resolution 2.0; it is an invitation. An invitation to pause. To look within. To remember who we are and whose we are.

In a world that feels increasingly loud, reactive, and deeply polarized, Lent calls us into something radically different. It calls us into stillness. Into repentance. Into self-reflection, examination, shaped not by fear or anger, but by the Grace and Mercy of Jesus.

Self-reflection is not about shame. It is about coming honestly before God. It is about asking:
Where has my heart grown hardened?
Where have I spoken more than I have listened?
Where have I loved conditionally instead of sacrificially?
Where have I looked the other way choosing silence over justice and solidarity?

The ashes that marked our foreheads remind us that we are dust—and that every person we encounter is dust, too. Mortal. Fragile. Valuable. Beloveds of God. Lent strips away our illusions of control and superiority and returns us to humility at the feet of Christ.

In such a divided time, acts of faith become powerful witnesses. Prayer becomes resistance against despair. Fasting becomes a reordering of our desires. Generosity becomes a declaration that the lie of scarcity does not hold us—Christ does. Forgiveness becomes a radical act of courage the we pick up and carry following Jesus.

The world teaches us to win arguments. Jesus teaches us to carry crosses (our forgiveness). The world urges us to defend my tribe. Jesus commands us to love all our neighbors. The world thrives on outrage. Christ calls us to mercy. “Be merciful as your father in heaven is merciful.”

Lent is where we practice that mercy. Practice Christ.

Perhaps this season is less about “giving something up” and more about “taking Christ more deeply in.” Taking in His patience when we are frustrated. His compassion when we are tempted to judge or react. His gentleness when conversations grow tense. His steadfast love when hope feels thin and hard to find.

May this Lenten journey soften our hearts.
May it strengthen our spirit.
May it form us into people whose proclaim Christ more clearly than any opinion ever could.

Remembering, 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 March on the 4th at Ebenezer. All are invited to join us for fun, food, and fellowship.



WELCA'S Lenten Food Drive Underway

The annual WELCA Lenten food drive is off and running – with a twist for those who want to try something new. For 2026, members can donate nonperishable items as usual or gather the ingredients for a complete meal. For the first Sunday in Lent, February 22nd, Chicken and Dumplings, Taco Soup and Birthday Cake shelf stable recipes were shared, For the second Sunday in Lent, March 1, recipes for Creamy Corn Chowder and Chicken Alfredo recipes are available.

Chicken Alfredo

Ingredients:

- 1 can chicken
- 1 jar alfredo sauce
- Pasta
- Italian seasoning
- 1 can veggies for the side

Directions:

1. **Boil pasta 8–12 minutes, drain.**
2. **Brown chicken in pot, then add alfredo and seasoning. Stir in pasta and heat through.**

Optional: Add peas to make it a one-pot meal.

Creamy Corn Chowder

Ingredients:

- 1 can whole kernel corn (partially drained)
- 1 can cream-style corn
- 1 can diced potatoes (drained)
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can evaporated milk
- 1–2 bouillon cubes

Directions:

1. **Combine everything in a large pot and simmer.**
2. **Season with salt and pepper.**

Serve with biscuits (store-bought or baked from mix).

Add-ons: Toss in canned chicken or ham for extra protein.

Recipes to come are:

March 8 - Minestrone Soup, Teriyaki Rice, March 15 - Shepherd's Pie, Pasta with Meatballs, and March 22 - Easy Dump Chile and Tuna Casserole. The Women of the church will check the recipe bags and if a unique item like bouillon cubes is missing, they will drop one in the bag.

Of course, donations of any nonperishables are welcomed and needed. Thanks to all who are participating to help fight hunger in our community. Donations will be split between Sardis's Blessing Box and Assure.

Something to think about...

Red dresses: Statement of more than style By Susan Harris, Gathering/ Planning Committee of NC WELCA.

The Red Dress logo is usually associated with American Heart Month. In fact, February 6 is observed as “National Wear Red Day” by the American Heart Association to raise awareness about women’s heart health. The “red dress” became the symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002.

But the red dress has also become symbolic among native Americans to raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, or MMIW. First conceived in 2010 by artist Jaime Black, the REDress Project has become a symbol of remembrance and justice. Empty red dresses hanging in public space are a tangible way to express grief, demand accountability, and stand in solidarity.

Christian Allaire in Vogue magazine, writes *“In the U.S., homicide is the third-leading cause of death among Native women ages 10 to 24, according to the Urban Indian Health Institute, and Native women are victims of murder more than 10 times the national average, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.”*

The REDress display helps to give a voice to these women and girls who are missing or have been murdered. The color red has become the official MMIW campaign

color and May 5th is observed as Red Dress Day.

Prairie Rose Seminole, the former Program Director of the American Indian Alaska Native Ministries with the ELCA, wrote, “The red dress has become a powerful symbol of remembrance, resilience, and justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR). Across North America, Indigenous communities and allies gather to wear red, hang red dresses in public spaces, and speak the names of those who have been taken. This act of remembrance is more than symbolic; it is a call to action, a way to honor the lives lost, and a means to amplify the voices of those fighting for justice.”

More information and the article, “The Power of the Red Dress: Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR),” can be found on the Women of the ELCA Churchwide website (www.welca.org).

This year, during our Annual Gathering, we would like to display red dresses as a reminder; and you can be a part of this project. If you have red dress in your closet, whether it still fits or not, we would love for you to bring it to the Annual Gathering. Bring your red dress on a hanger when you come to Lenoir-Rhyne June 12-13 for the display.

Sardis WELCA NEWS

BE SURE TO pick up a brochure for the Spring Beach Retreat! April 10-12 at Coastal Retreat Center in Isle of Palms, SC. Ask Robin Stuart about the fun and learning!

Starting in 2026 the pennies campaign will be known as “Change for Change.” This is a statewide collection that is used to support worthy causes. Recipients will be Robeson County Church and Community Center in Lumberton, NC and the Fuller Center for Housing/ Disaster Rebuilders. Total offerings will be equally split between the two organizations. **Sardis** will be collecting money on the fifth Sundays for **Change for Change**.

The Robeson County Church and Community Center is the oldest and largest faith based non-profit emergency social assistance organization in Robeson County. They operate a large food pantry with three food assistance programs, provide emergency assistance with utilities, rent, and medicine, and build handicap ramps, perform small home repairs and install grab bars and other safety for equipment for seniors. In addition, they operate a thrift shop to assist those who cannot afford typical retail necessities, are burned out of their homes or are moving out of the

Southeastern Family Violence Center facilities.

Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders is a 501(c)(3) Christian organization dedicated to serving the victims of major disasters in the United States. Organized in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we have supported rebuilding in most major hurricane disaster people We serve uninsured, low-income homeowners using volunteer labor to make our rebuilding effort more affordable. The program is financed from donations and grants. Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders is currently operating in eastern North Carolina (Hurricane Florence), Dawson Springs, Kentucky (EF-4 tornado), and western NC (Hurricane Helene). This is the organization that Sardis members worked with on their 2025 mission trip to Black Mountain/Swannanoa.

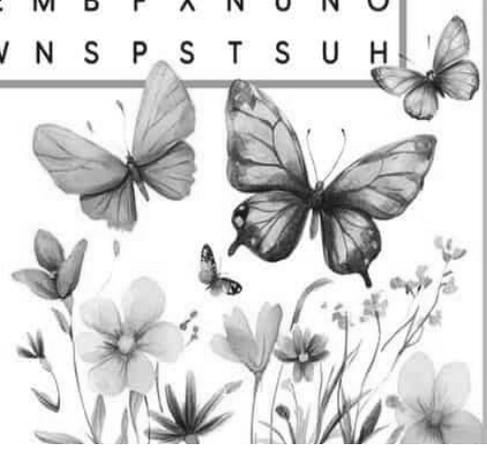




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| BLOSSOM | LADYBUG | SEEDLING |
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| BUNNY | MEADOW | SPROUT |
| BUTTERFLY | NEST | SUNSHINE |
| CHIRPING | PICNIC | THAW |
| DAFFODIL | PUDDLE | TULIP |
| DUCKLING | RAINBOW | UMBRELLA |



Sardis Lutheran Church
Council Meeting
January 11, 2026

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

Gene brought the meeting to order at 7pm with 11 council members and Pastor Oscar in attendance.

Tim Whitener provided devotions with a reading from 1 Peter, the 5th chapter.

Gene asked if there were any corrections or additions needed to the minutes from the December meeting. Kristin provided Mike with a few corrections and the minutes were amended. With no other changes or additions noted, Joe motioned to accept them as amended and Rick provided a second. The motion carried.

Gene gave a brief overview of the financial reports from December with nothing urgent to discuss. With no other discussion, Jon made a motion that the financial documents be accepted as submitted. Rick provided a second and the motion carried.

Pastor Oscar provided a written report noting:

Much of the past month focused on visiting with shut-in members as well as multiple hospital and emergency room visits.

He was “overjoyed” when we had Teens Encounter Christ, Christmas decorating and the Scouts working on the outdoor worship space all on the same day at the church.

He was pleased to share that the outdoor worship space has been completed and will be dedicated once the weather improves.

The children’s Christmas play was a great success and well attended by both families, church members and community members.

The Celebration of Life service for Ken Propst was difficult but was a beautiful celebration of Ken’s life and a clear proclamation of the resurrection.

He discussed a deeply frightening event recently when he lost contact with his family for several hours while they were on the Appalachian Trail. He was thankful for the love, prayers, and presence of Christ which helped him through this difficult time.

OLD BUSINESS

No items were brought forward for discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

The council completed committee assignments and monthly devotional responsibilities for each council member in 2026.

The Annual Meeting will be held on the 1st Sunday of February (2/1/2026) following the service. A catered meal will be provided prior to the meeting. Joe made a motion that Norman’s be selected to provide the catered meal. Zach provided a second for the motion. Gene will work with Jane and Dwayne to arrange the meal with Norman’s. The

motion was passed unanimously. Council members are responsible for helping with set-up, serving and cleanup after the meeting.

Gene provided an update from the Scholarship Committee. The committee made the following recommendations for funding in 2026 and all were approved unanimously:

\$5,000.00 allotted to the LTSS Scholarship fund

\$5,000.00 allotted to the Home Mission Foundation

\$5,000.00 earmarked for use by Kristin Teague in her Lay Ministry program

The council discussed how offerings are collected each Sunday with many stating that they prefer one offering plate placed in the Narthex for all to use. After discussion, Darrell made a motion that we return to one collection plate placed in the Narthex.

Zach provided a second and the motion passed. This will begin on February 1st.

Kristin brought forward a concern with the temperature in the sanctuary being too cold during services. After discussion, Kristin made a motion that we increase the temperature in the sanctuary for Sunday services. Zach provided a second and the motion passed. Mike will contact Terry Bledsoe to have the temperature increased asap.

Zach brought up the need to begin planning funding for the National Youth Gathering scheduled in 2027. Funding requests will need to be brought to the church council.

Gene is attempting to contact 2nd Harvest as a possible source to purchase food for the blessings box. He will provide an update at the next meeting.

The church council is responsible for filling the blessings box during the week of 1/12/26.

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

Gene is the church council contact for February and will provide devotions at the February meeting.

The next Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Sunday, February 8th, at 7pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Midgett, Sardis Church Council Secretary

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
<p>1 Bring Food for WELCA 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service/Holy Communion and FB Live 6:00 Lenten Meal 7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>2 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 12:00 FTF Seniors at Ebenezer 6:00 Youth Comm. Meeting</p>	<p>5 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice</p>	<p>6 Pastor's Sabbath</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8 Bring Food for WELCA 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service/Holy Communion and FB Live 6:00 Lenten Meal 7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>9 5:30 Community VBS Planning Meeting at Zion</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11 1:00 Susan's Easter Can Craft Class</p>	<p>12 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice</p>	<p>13 Pastor's Sabbath</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15 Bring Food for WELCA 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service/Holy Communion and FB Live 6:00 Lenten Meal 7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>16 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice</p>	<p>20 Pastor's Sabbath</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22 Bring Food for WELCA 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service/Holy Communion and FB Live 3:00 Trinity Ridge 6:00 Lenten Meal 7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 5:00 Articles due for March NL</p>	<p>26 7:00 Chancel Choir Practice</p>	<p>27 Pastor's Sabbath</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29 PALM SUNDAY "Change for Change" 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service/Holy Communion and FB Live Youth handing out eggs for Social Ministry</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>		<p>Inclement Weather decisions will be announced on our Phone Tree by Saturday evening or early Sunday morning. Please make sure your phone information is up to date with the Secretary. In the event of a Tornado during service please exit Sanctuary and proceed to the hallways, (1) back of Sanctuary to the left and (1) is the Fellowship Hall to the right of the Narthex. Remain in hallways, not in rooms.</p>		

BIRTHDAYS

COUNCIL CONTACT ASSISTING MINISTER

3/2 Sheila Ramsey
Barbara J. Whitener

Zachary S./Hayden J.

3/4 Richard Covington 3/20 Sandra Roseman
Mike Midgett 3/24 Nate Johnson

3/5 David Fulbright Shuford Whitener

3/6 Lucas Richard 3/27 Shannon Hollar

Kendra M. Starkey Teresa E. Starkey

3/10 Pastor Oscar 3/30 Ron Crawley

3/11 Laythe Yousef Wesley Weaver

3/13 Robin Stuart

3/16 Patsy Johnson
Joe D. Biggerstaff
William Farnsworth

3/17 Mike Hollar

3/19 Ralph Ramsey

USHERS
Zachary S./Hayden J.

**COMMUNION PREPARATION /
CLEAN – UP**

Sharon S.

Kristin T.

Offering Counter: Dwayne W.

Anniversaries:

Wayne & Elaine Jarrett 3-3

Garry & Annette Richard 3-8

William & Lindsey Farnworth 3-26

<i>VOLUNTEER March</i>	1st	8th	15th	22nd	29th
ALTAR FLOWERS	Ralph & Sheila	Buster B.	Bruce & Sharon	Richard & Dawn	Hope G.
ACOLYTE/ CRUCIFER	Gabriel/Joe B.	Rick/Gabriel	Ray/Donna B.	Tryston/Ian	Shuford/Ray
COMM. ASSISTANT	Sandra R.	Dawn C.	Tim W.	Nena B.	Mike M.
GREETERS	Dianne/Shuford	Edna/Darrell	Nena/Marilyn	Annette/Marilyn	Kay/Roger T.
LAY READER	Dawn	Tim	Hayden	Gabriel	Gene
TECHNOLOGY	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe	Terry, Ben, Joe
SECURITY	Ralph	Bruce	Ben	Rick	Darrell
SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADER	EL Sherrie/Mike MH Kristin	EL Donna MH Nena	EL April. MH Dawn	EL Hayden MH Kristin	EL April MH Nena
BANOAK BACKPACK	5th Mildred	11th Gene & Donna	1*th Joe & Phyllis	26th Roger & Marilyn	1st Tim & Barbara
FRONT YARD SIGN	Tim	Nena	Tim	Nena	Tim
MEAL DEL.	7th Susan J.	14th No Meal	21st Phyllis B.	28th No Meal	4th Nena B.
BLESSINGS BOX	Disciples of Christ	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

START MAKING PLANS TO ATTEND VBS THIS YEAR

Community VBS Illumination Station
5/31—6/4 at Zion Lutheran, Hickory.
Please let April Fulbright know if you
are interested in volunteering

SARDIS LEADERS CONTACTS

Pastor: Rev. Matthew Oscar Shepherd (C) 828-228-3078 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 kenanmusician@gmail.com

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

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