



**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**MONMOUTH, IL**

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**Gathered by God, We Live Our Faith With:**  
**Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy.**

**Our Church—This Week :: March 16, 2026**

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**Congregation Council**

President: Pam Van Kirk  
Vice President: Chip Algren  
Secretary: Pam Best  
  
Adam Sanberg  
Kurt Volz  
Dee Dee Yez

Dear Friends and Family,

As our Lenten journey continues, we are reminded of what dust to dust looks like. The state of Nebraska and the state of South Dakota are experiencing huge wildfires that are forcing some communities to consider evacuation orders. Please pray for all communities impacted. On Thursday of last week, my wife was driving across Nebraska to the panhandle area for upcoming meetings, and she drove through a sandstorm that was in part related to these wildfires. She said the conditions were comparable to driving in a white-out style blizzard, only it was sand, not snow. She did arrive safely to her destination, and where she is at for this upcoming week is not in the immediate danger area, though some of the congregations she may be visiting might be impacted.

We continue in this Lenten journey also to confess that our world is not as it should be, and prayers for peace in the Middle East remain of utmost concern; but also prayers for the Jewish community in Detroit where a synagogue was attacked in an apparent hate crime. We lament at the brokenness of the world. We lament that our best intentions are not lived up to. We lament the hurt and pain we humans cause one another. And we seek God's forgiveness to shape our lives into the full image of Christ as we advocate for peace and changing national policy to avoid war, and also as we recognize the dangers of our own biases and work toward a more fair and just society.

We continue in this Lenten journey finally with the need to be with one another in a community of love and trust and faithfulness, coming together on Wednesdays evenings to slow ourselves into the presence of God and worshipping together on Sunday mornings.

**Sunday Schedule**

**9:30 AM Coffee**

**10:00 AM Worship**

**Sunday School**

**March 22; April 12 & 26**

**9:45 AM**

**Future Bible Study  
Opportunities will be  
announced soon**

**Holy Week and Easter Celebrations**

We Gather because of our Faith in Jesus...

April 2nd, Maundy Thursday, 7 PM, worship in our chapel

April 3rd, Good Friday, 7 PM, worship in our chapel

April 5th, Easter Sunday, 9 AM breakfast and Easter egg hunt for all

10 AM Easter Worship

## A brief word on Anti-Semitism

Last week, a vehicle drove into a synagogue in Detroit. Fortunately none of the students or staff working in the synagogue were hurt. A security person was able to stop, with deadly force, the driver of the vehicle. The act of this driver has already been labeled a hate crime, as it appears he intentionally drove his vehicle into the synagogue specifically because it was a Jewish house of worship.

Anti-Semitism includes hate crimes against people solely on the basis of their Jewish identity. And this is not something that went away because World War 2 ended with the Allies defeating the Axis powers and Hitler's death camps being liberated. Anti-Semitism continues to be a major problem in our world today. The roots of Anti-Semitism are in Christian movements believing God's plan is for all the world to be Christian. This notion does not allow for others to be of different religions. And this notion also has a more narrow definition of what it means to be Christian, which often means one of northern-European descent, of a patriarchal hierarchy, and a hetero-normative gender/sex society. Which means there is a lot to unpack, but we will stay with just the Anti-Semitism topic for this brief article.

It is sad that our faith tradition has roots in excluding from God's world any who differ from our understanding. This is something we must confess as wrong, and misguides our faith tradition when we assume God has a plan for all the world to be the same. The ELCA has long denounced the writings of Martin Luther that are very Anti-Semitic. The ELCA has long lamented the continued abuse of Scripture and God's name as the source for Anti-Semitism in our world today.

What can you do if you hear someone speaking negatively towards someone who is Jewish? You can name it for what it is—Anti-Semitic. (this is separate from speaking against the policies of the modern nation of Israel, which is an entirely different column topic). You can invite that person to reflect on why they have attitudes against people who are Jewish. You can share on your social media statements of support and prayer for our Jewish neighbors when this happens. And you can lift up the biblical teaching that God created everyone—Jewish people are beautiful and blessed children of God equal in God's kingdom as we are. Yes, our faith traditions are different. Yes, we have a different way of worshipping and knowing God. But God's world includes all. It is hard to unpack this entirely in a brief column. But it is important to start the conversation that we recognize and stop Anti-Semitism wherever we see it happening.

## Core Values

As our Council and Pathways Team prepares to review the feedback from our congregation feedback forum in February, we are taking a moment to explore the draft core statements. Our third statement is "We engage in open, honest, respectful conversation for faith growth."

This core value is possibly our toughest statement to grapple with. We live in a time when our culture is very divided over every issue. Almost any simple statement can be turned on its head and interpreted as either aligning with our political view or against our political views. Sources of information are categorized again as either something we agree with or something we disagree with. Long held teachings of the church and long held values of our faith are questioned again in light of does this go with who I choose to vote for or against who I choose to vote for.

And this kind of culture means having open, honest, respectful conversation is difficult. But if we in the church cannot be a safe place for open, honest, respectful conversation, then we are not being a good space for church. Jesus demonstrates many open, honest, respectful conversations with people from his disciples, to Pharisees, to women who in his day and age were not supposed to speak with him, to people from other ethnicities, again in that day a big taboo.

We are called to reflect Jesus in our conversations. To allow for disagreements, but also to allow for our conversations to help grow us in our faith. To have open, honest, respectful conversations does not mean we have to end in agreement, either. But it does mean we give one another the opportunity to share their thoughts, to hear one another fairly, to give one another a space of grace as we attempt to explain ourselves, and to find a way forward together.

When we model our conversations in this way, we have a space where gossip is minimized, where misinformation is reduced, and where assumptions about how someone feels is lessened. We may not always be comfortable with open, honest, respectful conversation, because it is hard to have these kinds of conversations. But the more we follow Jesus, the more we practice conversations as Jesus did with the people he encountered, the more we will see the growth in our personal and community faith.



## LENT

**February 18 to April 4**

### The Absence of Alleluia

It is the season of Lent, and you might have noticed that once again, we have not been using the word Alleluia/Hallelujah in worship. This is a long-standing liturgical practice to avoid using the word, which translates as "Praise the Lord."

Lent is a season of penitential reflection, it is a season of mortality, and it is a season of confession. Shouting out Praise the Lord seems counter to the more somber tones of the season. So for this season, we put away the word Alleluia/Hallelujah. And the spelling difference just comes from which ancient language the word is derived from—Alleluia (Greek) or Hallelujah (Hebrew).

In our modern day, the season of Lent is much more about preparing for resurrection, the reason we do cry out Alleluia/Praise the Lord. But the historical nature of the season continues to guide our liturgical practices and habits. So for now, Alleluia/Hallelujah is on a hiatus that will end on Easter morning.

### Mid Week Re-Center Devotions Continue

We have two more Lent Re-Center Devotions this season. Join us Wednesdays at 7 PM. This is a time to slow down, breathe in the Holy Spirit, reflect quietly on thoughts written by and about Martin Luther.

Join us in the chapel this week and next week and Re-Center your faith life in the midst of the chaos happening all around us.

### Worship Guild Members

#### March 15— 4th Sunday in Lent

Usher: Ray Golden  
Reader: Doug Cruce  
Com Asst: Julie Blaesing  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Carolyn Kellert

#### March 22— 5th Sunday in Lent

Usher: Diane Carlson  
Reader: Trace Gallagher  
Com Asst: Gary Sanberg  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Carolyn Kellert

#### March 29— Palm Sunday

Usher: Pam Van Kirk  
Reader: Kurt Volz, Judy Sanberg, Maddie Blaesing, Trace Gallagher  
Com Asst: Kurt Volz  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Carolyn Kellert

#### April 2 — Maundy Thursday

Usher: Kurt Volz  
Reader: Steve Erlandson  
Com Asst: Diane Carlson  
Musician: Janice Algren



### Strom Center Lent Worship Schedule

Strom Center (211 South A Street) is again hosting breakfast and devotions on the Fridays during Lent. Breakfast begins at 6:30 AM, and the devotion begins at 7:15 AM.

- March 20: High Point Church
- March 27: Heritage Bible Church
- April 3: Immaculate Conception Church



**Every Sunday**  
**9:30 AM Fellowship Gathering**  
**10:00 AM Worship**



*For corrections and updates, please call the Church office.*

Sunday, March 15th—4th Sunday in Lent

Man, Mar 16, 6:30 PM Pathways Zoom meeting

Wed Mar 18—7 PM Lent Devotion—Chapel

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Sunday, March 22nd—5th Sunday in Lent

Sun, Mar 22—9:45 AM Sunday School

Wed, Mar 25—7 PM Lent Devotions—Chapel

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Sunday, March 29th—Palm Sunday

Thurs, Apr 2—7 PM Maundy Thursday Worship

Fri, Apr 3—7 PM Good Friday Worship

Both Maundy Thursday and Good Friday  
 Worship will be in the Chapel

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Sunday, April 5th – Easter Sunday

Sun, Apr 5—9 AM Easter Breakfast

Mon, Apr 6—7 PM Building/Grounds Meeting

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Sunday, April 12th—Easter 2nd Sunday

Tues, Apr 14—6 PM Council Meeting

*Notice something missing from the calendar? Please contact the church office, and we will add it to next week's newsletter.*



- Mar 20 Dee Dee Yez
- Mar 25 Heather Ide
- Mar 27 Phil Bergren
- Mar 27 Kurt Volz
- Mar 30 Anna Lovdahl
- Apr 4 Marlys Dobry
- Apr 5 Deb Manuel
- Apr 6 April Icenogle
- Apr 7 Fred Burgland
- Apr 10 Trace Gallagher
- Apr 11 Angela Bradley-Volz
- Apr 13 Elise Blaesing
- Apr 16 Nate Gallagher
- Apr 18 Chip Algren
- Apr 20 Diane Carlson
- Apr 20 Warren Dobry
- Apr 20 Rachael Nuckles
- Apr 23 Lindsay Martin
- Apr 23 Rob Ravel
- Apr 25 Deve Erlandson
- Apr 28 Sharon Edwin
- May 6 Andrew Youngquist
- May 7 Jacob Ide
- May 8 Sophie Shrader
- May 16 Shelly Golden
- May 18 Todd Champion



- Apr 2 Don & Kathy Fillman
- Apr 25 Todd & Kris Champion
- Apr 28 Ron & Deb Manuel
- May 5 Craig & Brenda Jones
- May 6 Chuck & Connie Larimer
- May 21 Ted & Sue Hanson
- Jun 4 Gary & Judy Sanberg
- Jun 7 Angela & Kathleen Bradley Volz
- Jun 7 Dennis & Becky Terpening
- Jun 8 Ben & Jenny Sanberg
- Jun 12 Neal & Jackie Heerwagen
- Jun 13 Michael & Barb Pearson
- Jun 14 Doug & Kathi Cruce
- Jun 14 Rich & Nancy Hanson
- Jun 15 Rob & Tammy Ravel
- June 19 Stan & Diane Carlson
- Jun 23 Mike & Susie Jurgens
- Jun 23 John & Pam VanKirk
- Jun 26 Dave & Kathy Erlandson
- Jun 26 Gary & Jan Martin
- Jun 30 Chip & Janice Algren

## Prayer Requests

Ila Roseberry, Kathi Cruce, Janet Lowe, Wes Lovdahl, Pat Clark, Jennie Best, Dee Dee Yez, Charlotte Volz, Richard Schlicher, Tim Greene

*Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.*



## Vision and Purpose Giving

In March, we support ELCA World Hunger with our Vision and Purpose Giving. ELCA World Hunger provides a variety of ministries both domestically and internationally.

Last year, we supported our synod campaign to reach a matching grant goal. This year, we give because it is still right to support ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for all your support of all our Vision and Purpose Giving agencies throughout the year.

January, Mosaic == \$140

February, Lutheran Disaster Response ==\$252

March, ELCA World Hunger

April, Special Olympics

May, Recharge Center

June, St. Jude Run (Wendy Anderson)

July, LWR School Kits

August, Kiwanis Club

September, Out of Darkness Walk

October, Strom Center

November, Lutheran Day Care and Pre-School

December, Jamieson Center



His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” — John 9:2

Why is it that we assume that when someone doesn’t match the mythical ideal image of what a person should look like, that it must be their fault that they are not that ideal? Also, where did we get this mythical ideal image from? What does it mean to be perfectly ideal? Does it have to include fully functioning eyes that perceive a full range of color and have 20/20 vision without the aid of glasses or contacts? Does it have to include full use of every extremity? Does ideal mean without any medical conditions? Is someone with a hidden mental image somehow not this ideal image?

John chapter 9 strikes at the heart of our perception of what is the ideal human image, and it strikes at the heart of how we blame someone for not living into that ideal. This strikes at our own self-image and our own self-doubt when we don’t fit that image. Whether it is a media-driven ideal of what a perfect human is, or whether it is long-standing religious history that drives the image, we need to stop and ask ourselves why this image.

Throughout John chapter 9, Jesus offers us the opportunity to then stop calling it sin when someone does not fit this image of idealism. It is not sin that someone does not have two fully functioning eyes. It is not sin that leads someone to live in a wheelchair or to have a chronic disease or illness. It is not sin in the sense that we mean that individual did something morally wrong and God is inflicting some kind of retributive punishment to fit that sin.

And yet, we all have ways we do this. We blame the person who is broke, homeless, always needing to borrow something and never able to repay it. We blame the diabetic for eating the wrong foods; the obese for not being on a diet or exercising. We seek to blame a premature death on some perceived wrong against God that the person must have committed.

Who sinned, the disciples (read “and us”) asked Jesus. And Jesus replied, “no one. The world is just sometimes unfair and unjust and sometimes people are just differently abled and still beloved and sometimes people just need to be seen for who they are, not what their bodies are.”

Peace, Pastor Jamie