

Reflections

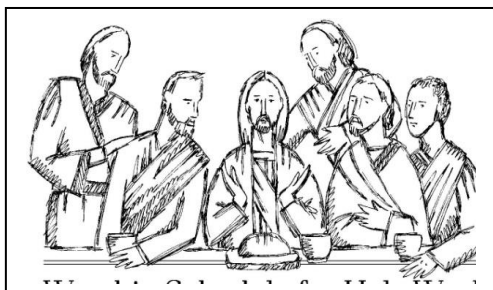
A PUBLICATION OF ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

3801 Oakwood Avenue NW | Huntsville, AL 35810 | (256) 536-9987



WORSHIP SCHEDULE for LENT

March 1 – 6:30 PM – Worship
March 8 – 6:30 PM – Worship
March 15 – 6:30 PM – Worship
March 22 – 6:30 PM – Worship
March 29 – 6:30 PM – Worship



April 6 – Maundy Thursday
April 7 – Good Friday
April 9 – Easter Sunday

Easter Morning Service 8:45 AM

Easter Service – 10:45 AM

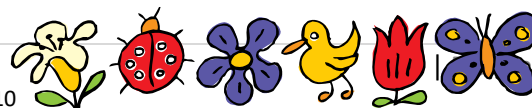


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Time Change	March 12



We have a cook over in the CDC!! Mr. Mark Boles has signed on. Again, I want to express my appreciation to all the volunteers who kept the kitchen up and running during the time of vacancy. We couldn't have done it without you!!

- We are up for relicensing the end of May. Every two years our license must be renewed.
- Currently, we are awaiting plans for Easter for the Sunday school. Please stay tuned if/when you will be asked to bring candy to fill eggs. Thanks, in advance!

+++++

As we deal with waiting..... for a pastor for Ascension, for Christ's second coming, this Lenten devotion by Amy Dunham helps put words to our feelings....

Patience in action

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7, NIV

This passage from Peter's first epistle, written to comfort persecuted believers and encourage them to stay strong, highlights an element of humility that I suspect we struggle with more mightily in the 21st century than people did even in the first century: patience.

We have access to inconceivable amounts of information via a device in our pockets; one social media post can feel like the whole world is weighing in. We can watch global financial markets, natural disasters and wars in real time. Nearly every signal we receive on Earth says, "Act now, don't delay — respond, react!" And it never stops.

Patience can be the hardest aspect of humility to live into for organizations, for leaders, for each of us. We are taught — and learn throughout our careers through painful, public experience — that often the right thing to do is to wait. This waiting is not passive, though; it is a time to listen, to reflect, to pray, to let emotions cool, to step back and see the bigger picture.

Each of these is an *action*. In this Lenten season, let us remember that God calls us to these actions as Christians, and

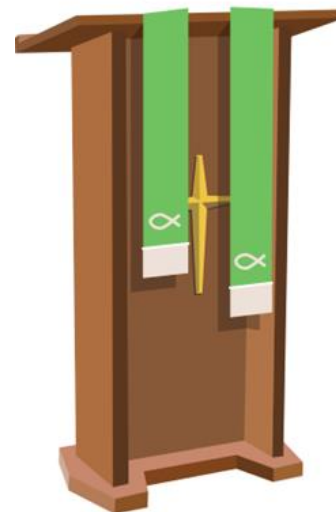
He understands that they don't feel like actions to us. This is why patience is among the lessons Jesus taught us. And here in the 21st century, His teachings are among the things we can access from the device in our pockets — and act upon.

Prayer

Lord, help us live into the virtue of patience that Jesus modeled for us as we seek to put Your love into action. In a world where everything has become instantaneous, it's almost impossible not to feel frustrated when things don't get accomplished immediately. With Your unfathomable view of time, remind us that You will lift us up in due time, and that prayer, reflection and listening are all actions that help us do Your work here on Earth. Thank You for being the only one who can truly take away our urge to do life by ourselves.



Pastoral Assignments for March



March 5 – Rev. James Garnett

March 12 – Rev. Christopher Clark

March 19 – Rev. Doug DeWitt

March 26 – Rev. Gary Nagy

Elders will lead the worship services through the Midweek Wednesdays of Lent. Services will begin at 6:30 PM.

THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE

A fast is intended to have an actual effect on you that lasts longer than 40 days. Its purpose is to bring about a real change in you, your relationships with others, and your relationship with God. A fast is more than abstaining from certain foods, drinks, or activities. No, a fast is much more than these things.

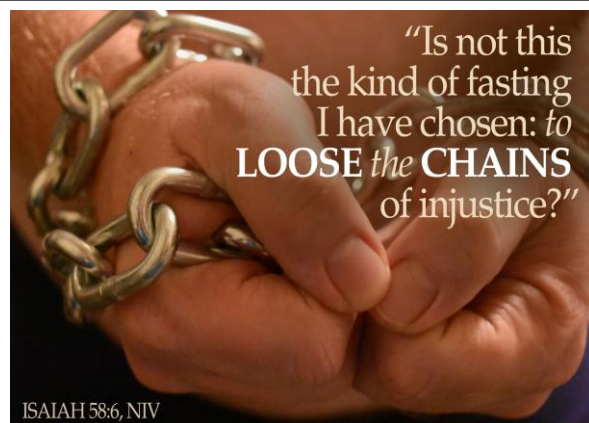
A person who fasts seeks to draw near to God by denying pleasures of the flesh for various reasons. Reasons such as strengthening prayer (Ezra 8:23), repentance before God (Jonah 3:5, 10), and expressing love for God (Luke 2:37) are several examples. The idea is that by denying themselves certain pleasures they will have more time, and be reminded, to focus on God.

Although fasting can be done at any time, there are certain periods of the year where fasting is traditionally undertaken by the Church. To state the obvious, this current season of Lent is one such period of fasting. Lenten fasting is aimed at helping us remember and commemorate our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. Traditionally, we deny ourselves for 40 days of certain pleasures—coffee, alcohol, meat, candy, etc.—to do this.

And quite honestly, that is a pathetic fast.

The Almighty Author of Life and Death, the Creator of the universe, King of kings, Lord of lords, the Prince of peace, the great I AM who is from everlasting to everlasting, who wears galaxies for rings and light for raiment, came down to us 2000 years ago and conquered sin, death, and the devil by suffering, dying, and rising from the dead, thereby redeeming mankind from certain death.

And you are going to remember and commemorate such a thing by *trying* to refrain from...coffee? Candy? Watching the television?



"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).

It is evident that a fast is no trifling matter: loosing bonds of wickedness, untying straps of yokes, setting the oppressed free, and breaking yokes are all much more than abstinence from food and drink. These are all much more unpleasant, painful, and difficult to do. Yet that is what God has taught us what a true fast is, and if we decide to fast, then we ought to do so as He has taught. And loosing the bonds of wickedness is not limited to social justice issues. In fact, this fast of breaking yokes and letting the oppressed go free can be done within the six inches between your ears.



Yes, contained within those six inches are bonds of wickedness so tightly wound together none of us can undo them. Within

FROM THE PEW (Continued)

those six inches is a yoke that could crush a team of oxen. Between your ears is a soul that is oppressed with untold shame and trauma.

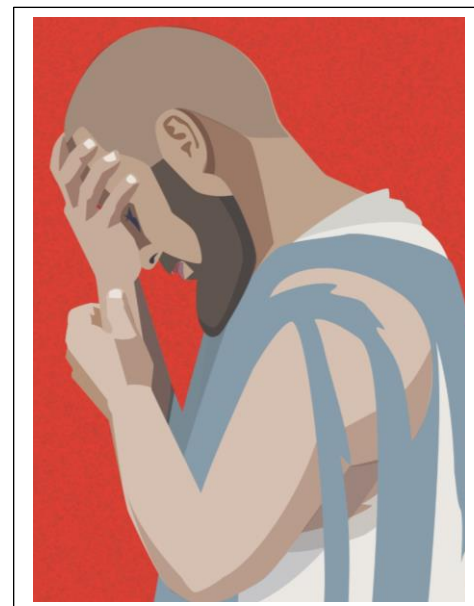
Shame is a wicked bond the devil uses to ensnare a soul to a life of misery and ungodliness. Shame says, “I’m inherently flawed. I’m a bad person. I can’t change. I don’t deserve help.” It allows us to rationalize sinful behaviors or point fingers and blame someone else for our failures. Shame focuses our attention on our immediate feelings and overcomes our moral brakes, creating fear and the need to calm ourselves by any means necessary. Shame repeats the message that we are worthless, hopeless, and powerless over and over again in myriad variations, leading us to isolate and disconnect from others. It tells us we are unlovable and can only expect abandonment from others. Shame is a thoroughly wicked bondage that oppresses the soul and keeps us from believing the Word of God.

Trauma is another deceptive tool the devil uses to oppress a soul to a life of bleakness. The trauma itself is not the main issue, but the messages from the trauma that we believe about ourselves are what oppress us. “I’m a failure,” we believe because our father told us we weren’t good enough. “I only cause bad things to happen,” we believe because our mother blamed us for our father’s alcoholism. “There’s something wrong with me,” we believe because we were sexually abused. “I’m only hated and can’t be loved,” we believe because we were bullied, assaulted, and ostracized. Over and over these lies are said and we are convinced that because an event happened to us, that it now defines us permanently. And this bondage of wickedness keeps us believing what the lies of trauma say about ourselves rather than what God’s Word testifies about us.

Is not this the fast that God has chosen: to confront the hurts of the past that keep you enslaved in the present, to be free from the siren call of sin that keeps you oppressed, to destroy the lies you believe and be healed by God’s Word?

How is such a fast done? By denying yourself this pleasure: the belief that you can control your life; that you do not need help; that you are unaffected by past hurts; that you cannot change.

In denying this pleasure of the flesh we come to recognize our fruitless attempts to work and make up for our mistakes. We feel the depth of our pain that we have carried all our lives while denying it existed despite it crippling us. We realize the behaviors and activities we do are nothing more than bushes we try to hide behind to cover our shame and trauma. Perhaps for the very first time we see our true condition and need for help. What else is this but drawing nearer to God?

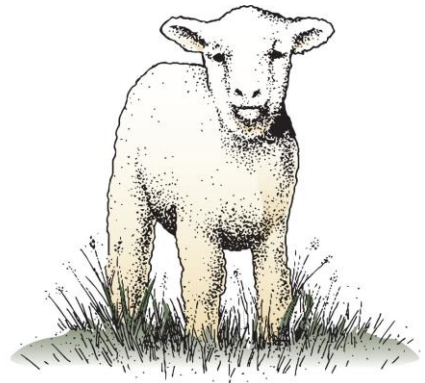
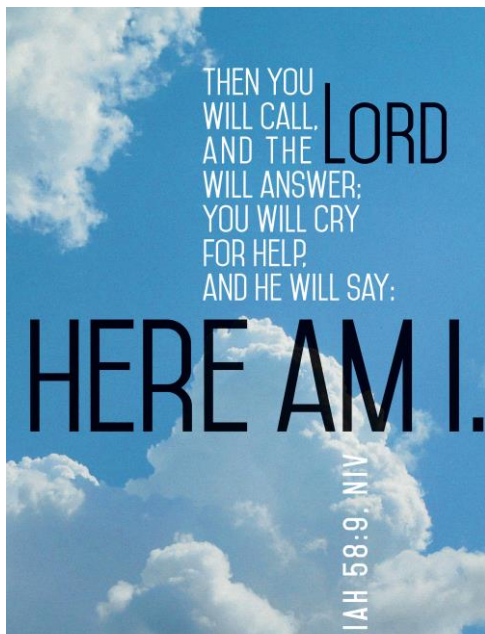


What else is this but remembering what Jesus Christ has come to free us from in His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection? For the blood of Christ has indeed loosed the bonds of wickedness, unstrapped the yoke, set us free, and destroyed the very yoke that burdened us. For the blood of Christ says to our shame, “You are

worthy. For I have given my life for you, to save you, because I love you.” The blood of Christ says to our trauma, “You are worthy. For I have borne all sufferings, to save you, because I love you.” The blood of Christ says to us, “You are forgiven. You are redeemed. You are my child.”

From this fast *“then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness”* (Isaiah 58:8-9).

A fast is intended to have an actual effect on you that lasts beyond 40 days. A Lenten fast is intended to remember what Jesus Christ has done for us, and what He has done for us is beyond human imagination or hope: forgiveness of sins, eternal life, reconciliation with God; love, hope, and joy eternally. If we fast, then let us fast in earnest and not irreverently. If we fast, then let us fast from that which we find actual pleasure in: belief we are in control; belief we are hopeless; belief we are unforgiveable; in a word, belief in lies.



“Behold,
THE LAMB OF GOD,
who takes away
THE SIN
OF THE WORLD!”

JOHN 1:29, ESV

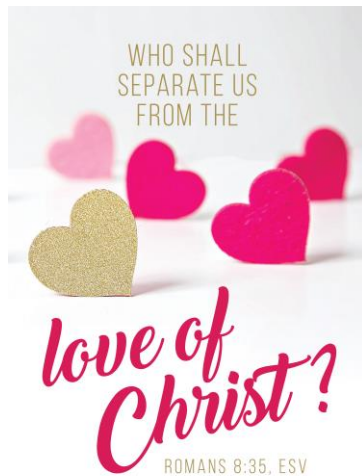
LAMB OF GOD, PURE AND HOLY

Lamb of God, pure and holy,
 Who on the cross didst suffer,
 Ever patient and lowly,
 Thyself to scorn didst offer.
 All sins Thou borest for us,
 Else had despair reigned o’er us:
 Thy peace be with us, O Jesus! O
 Jesus!

Text: tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546 Text: Public domain

IF GOD IS FOR US...

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (Romans 8:31-34)



Sometimes, it seems like the whole world is against us, that the whole world has turned against Christians, that the whole world has decided that Christians are the problem. To many, our traditional views on marriage are

seen as close-minded, judgmental and cruel, and our teaching that homosexuality is a sin, that sin without repentance leads to eternal damnation, that Christianity without repentance is not Christianity at all, and that all people are miserable sinners deserving of eternal punishment, are viewpoints that should be censored, silenced, and removed from any and all public forums. Evangelism of any sort is perceived as misguided and is to be prevented even if it requires the offender to lose his job, to be blocked from social media, to go to prison. In many countries persecution of Christians is rising dramatically; even

in “western” countries Christians are being attacked for simply stating what the Bible clearly teaches.

When it seems like everyone is against you, it’s easy to get discouraged, it’s easy to decide to remain quiet, it’s easy to hide your Christian beliefs. However, this is not what God calls us to do. We are to be His ambassadors to a fallen world, to share the Good News of Salvation with family, friends, and neighbors, to teach all nations. We have been given a Spirit of boldness and have been instructed to overcome our fears, to take up our cross and follow Jesus. Nowhere does the Bible say that this will be easy; indeed, the Bible declares that the world will hate us, just as it hated Jesus. However, that we will encounter difficulty is not to deter us from what God calls us to do.

If God is for us, who can be against us? It has been said that “God plus one is a majority.” If God is for us, then what does it matter that the whole world is against us? It is much, much better to have God’s support than the world’s backing. It is much, much better to receive God’s forgiveness than the world’s acceptance. It is much, much better to die in faith, even to die because of our faith, than it is to live a comfortable, peaceful life after accepting the world’s ideology.

God gave us His Son, who took on our punishment by dying on the cross. God gave us His Holy Spirit, who has sealed us until the day of judgement and has guaranteed a place for us in

God's eternal kingdom. God has adopted us as His sons and daughters and has promised us an eternal heritage as His children. God has basically given us everything, way, way, way more than we could possibly expect or even hope for. To this day Jesus is still interceding for us, still representing us before the Father, still seeing to our needs. We are so incredibly blessed!

This life is nothing more than a journey, a temporary existence within an evil, fallen world. Our home is in Heaven, our Father is the almighty God, our family is the set of fellow believers. This world is a battleground, a war between the forces of evil and the forces of good, in which we are the foot soldiers for the good guys. Like the song says, let's march onward, letting the cross of Jesus lead us. Like Paul, let's fight the good fight, let's run the good race, let's give it our best. Let's truly be God's ambassadors, His royal priests bringing salvation to a world that desperately needs what we can offer!

If the world condemns us, who cares? If the forces of evil keep a list of all our failures, who cares? We are saved not by our actions, but by the justification that Jesus attained for us on the cross. If the whole world is against us, who cares? If our earthly family, our earthly friends, our earthly neighbors judge us, who cares? There is only One who matters. The opinions of the rest of them put together simply don't.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father and Second Person of the Holy Trinity, became man, suffered and died on the cross so that He could exchange our wicked sinfulness for His righteousness, His perfection, so that all who trust in Him will be saved. This is wonderful news that the world, which is groping in darkness, desperately needs to hear. However, the devil, with all the demonic host, the world, with its vile ideologies, and our sinful flesh are all conspiring against us, trying to keep us silent, trying to stifle our testimony.

Don't let them do it. Don't let them quiet you.

What Is the World to Me

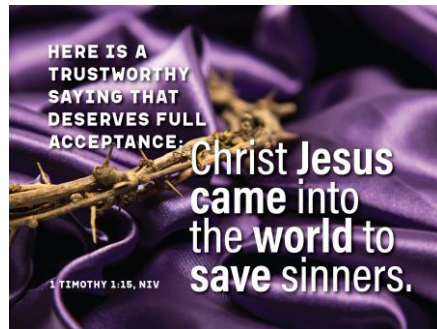
What is the world to me
With all its vaunted pleasure
When You, and You alone,
Lord Jesus, are my treasure!
You only, dearest Lord,
My soul's delight shall be;
You are my peace, my rest.
What is the world to me!

The world seeks to be praised
And honored by the mighty
Yet never once reflects
That they are frail and flighty.
But what I truly prize
Above all things is He,
My Jesus, He alone.
What is the world to me!

The world seeks after wealth
And all that mammon offers
Yet never is content
Though gold should fill its
coffers.
I have a higher good,
Content with it I'll be:
My Jesus is my wealth.
What is the world to me!

What is the world to me!
My Jesus is my treasure,
My life, my health, my wealth,
My friend, my love, my
pleasure,
My joy, my crown, my all,
My bliss eternally.
Once more, then, I declare:
What is the world to me!

Text: Georg Michael Pfeifferkorn, 1645–1732; tr. August Crull, 1845–1925, alt. Text: Public domain



GOD VALUES LIFE - ABUNDANTLY

Bobbie Scroggins

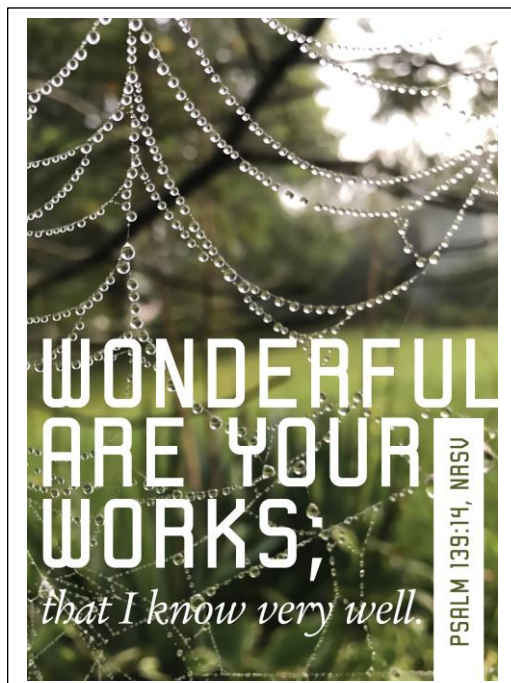
*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

John 10:10

In contrast to the thief who takes life, Jesus gives life. The life He gives right now is abundantly richer and fuller. It is eternal, yet it begins immediately. Life in Christ is lived on a higher plane because of His overflowing forgiveness, love and guidance. Have you taken Christ's offer of life?

God knew you and saw you before your mother even knew she was pregnant. Isn't that incredible? From that first moment of conception, God kept you safe and healthy. He even knew the plans for all the days ahead of you. When we think about how intricately God has made us, we rejoice with David in saying, "Wonderful are Your works."

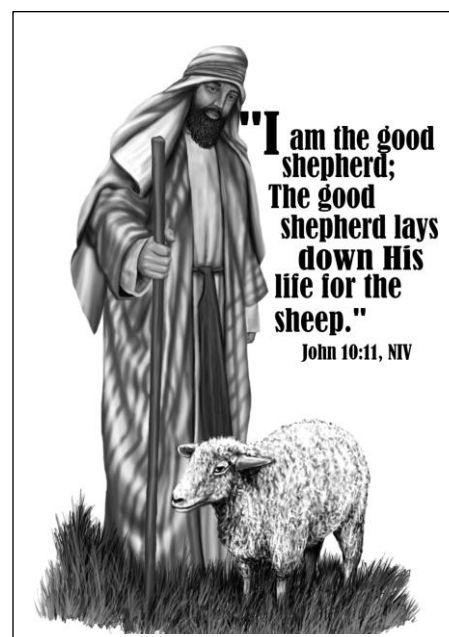
God's character goes into the creation of every person. When you feel worthless or even begin to hate yourself, remember that God's Spirit is ready and willing to work within you. We should have as much respect for ourselves as our Maker has for us.



John 10:7-9: *"Therefore Jesus said again, 'Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.'"*

In the sheep pen, the shepherd functioned as a gate, letting the sheep in and separating them. Jesus is the gate to God's salvation for us. He offers access to safety and security. Christ is our protector. Some people resent that Jesus is the Gate, the only way of access to God, but Jesus is God's Son – why would we seek any other way or want to customize a different approach to God?

John 10:11-12: *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it."*



A hired hand tends the sheep for money while the shepherd does it for love. The shepherd owns the sheep and is committed to them. Jesus is not merely doing a job, He again is committed to them and will even lay down His life for them. False teachers and false shepherd do not have this commitment.

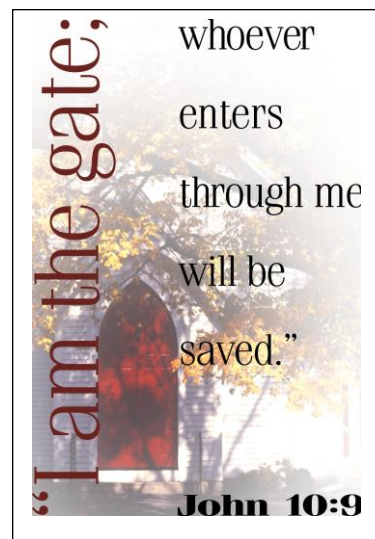
John 10:16-18: *"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They*

GOD VALUES LIFE – ABUNDANTLY (CONTINUED)

Bobbie Scroggins

too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

The world wants to rank life in order of importance, but every human being is equally worthy of life because God creates and values life. He values the life of the tiny, unborn baby; the child in foster care; and the woman who chooses abortion. He values the lives of people with disabilities and people in nursing homes who struggle to remember their own families. He even values the lives of people who seek to destroy life.



God calls us His children to speak the truth in love to others. He calls us to tell them that their lives and all human lives are precious in the sight of their Redeemer, who gave up His life to save them, forgive them and give them abundant life. Life is the best thing God has given to us. Be grateful for it. When we accept the

goodness of life, we will stop fighting against it. When we accept that life is good and God is in control, life becomes a satisfying and exciting experience.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Allow your life to be controlled by godly principles and it will become an expression of those plans. You will possess a unity with the Creator, and your life will be filled with the fullness of God.

PRAYER: Creator God, we thank You that You have a plan for all that is filled with the fullness of You. Amen.

Lenten Tour

Lenten Evening Prayer led by the Kantorei of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

Saturday, March 4 Service time: 6:00 p.m. EST

Saint James Lutheran Church
800 Cincinnati St., Lafayette, IN 47901
stjameslaf.org

Sunday, March 5 Service time: 10:30 a.m. EST

University Lutheran Church
460 Northwestern Ave., West Lafayette, IN 47906
ulupurdue.org

Sunday, March 5 Service time: 6:00 p.m. EST

St. Peter's Lutheran Church
403 W. Bridge St., Brownstown, IN 47220
stpetersbtown.com

Monday, March 6 Service time: 6:30 p.m. CST

St. Paul Lutheran Church
211 S. 21st St., Paducah, KY 42003
stpaulpaducah.org

Tuesday, March 7 Service time: 6:00 p.m. CST

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
513 4th Ave. SE, Cullman, AL 35055
stpaulscullman.com

Wednesday, March 8 Service time: 7:00 p.m. EST

Faith Lutheran Church
2111 Lower Roswell Rd., Marietta, GA 30068
faithmarietta.com

Thursday, March 9 Service time: 7:00 p.m. EST

First Lutheran Church
2800 McCallie Ave., Chattanooga, TN 37404
first4u.org

Friday, March 10 Service time: 7:00 p.m. CST

Redeemer Lutheran Church
800 Bellevue Rd., Nashville, TN 37221
redeemernashville.org

Sunday, March 19 Service time: 4:00 p.m. EST

Kramer Chapel, CTSFW
6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46825
ctsfw.edu/Events

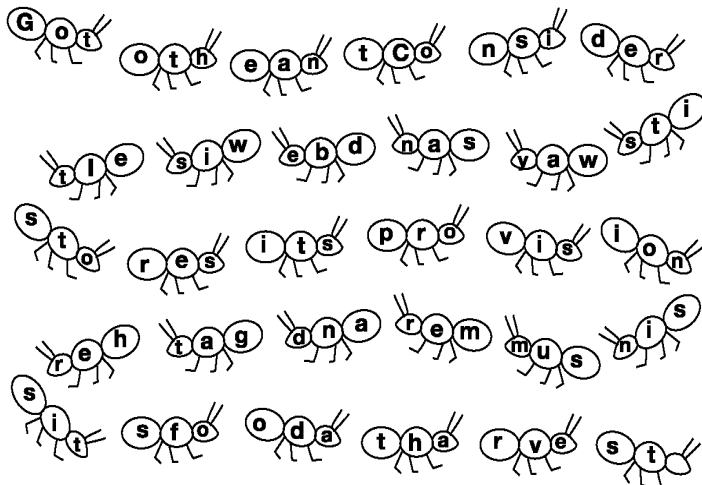
For those of you who remember our Vicar, Mark De Young (and who doesn't?), he has sent us this invitation to attend the Lenten Tour of seminarians who sing in the Kantorei, of which Mark was a part while he was at the seminary. The date that would be most convenient for us from Ascension to attend would be the Tuesday, March 7, 6:00 PM date and time. This one is being held at St. Paul's in Cullman – and since we all know the three pastors in Cullman since they've all preached here over the past two months, it would be a special event for us! We have a bus. . .Field Trip!



Do Good Works Unto the Lord!

The Bible tells us that ants are good workers and we can learn from them. Make a list of things you can do this summer to keep busy like the ants. You can help your family, your neighbors, your friends and your church. Get your friends together to think of projects you can do as a group.

Fill in the blanks below with the letters from the ants. Follow the ants back and forth, and write the letters in the order they appear.



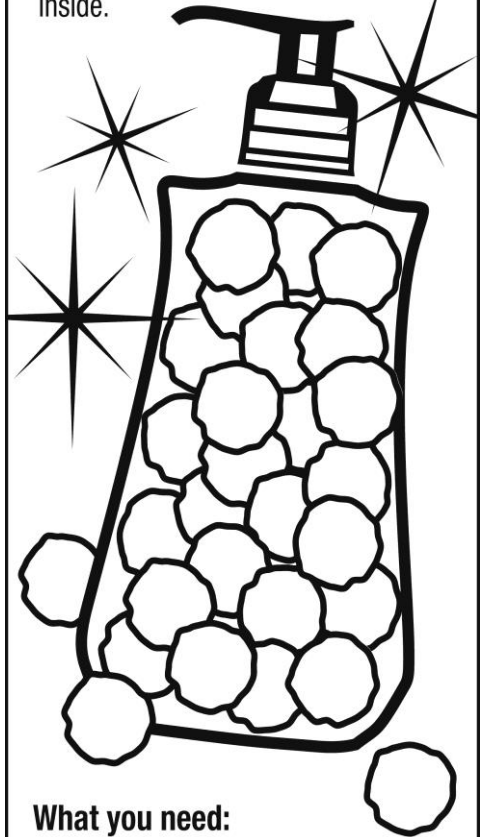
_____ !

Proverbs 6:6-8, NIV

Answer: Go to the ant ... consider its ways and be wise! It ... stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. —Proverbs 6:6-8, NIV

Washed Clean

Decorate a soap bottle as a reminder of how baptism cleans us on the inside.



What you need:

- Bottle of clear liquid hand soap
- Small craft pompoms (different colors)
- Wooden skewer

What you do:

1. Remove the bottle label and unscrew the lid.
2. Using the skewer, push pompoms down into the soap one at a time.
3. Replace the lid and put the dispenser in a bathroom or kitchen.

BIRTHDAYS

WEDDING

OUTREACH



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Phil Bridges	03/01	Kelly Aschenbrenner	03/17
Ben Hunze	03/01	Ken Leppert	03/17
James Hartwig	03/02	Sheila Fick	03/19
Ken Aschenbrenner	03/03	Anne Sims	03/20
Mary Shaffer	03/06	Mark Skrabanek	03/21
Gwen Beckles	03/08	Aiden Burhans	03/21
Judy Burhans	03/08	Janice Bradshaw	03/25
Chris Ballentine	03/08	Burneal Fick	03/25
Abby Hunze	03/10	Daniel Pate	03/30
Isaac Lee	03/13		
Isaiah Gehring	03/15		



Amanda & Cody Moen March 4, 2023 Beginning!



The Missional Outreach visits for March are as follows:

March 8 & 22

HHR at 10:15 AM

March 2, 16 & 30

Regency at 12:30 PM

The Agenda for the visits includes:

Welcome - Elder

Song 1

Song 2

Old Testament Reading

Song 3

Song 4

New Testament Reading

Song 5

Song 6

Gospel Reading

Song 7

Message

Song 8

Song 9

Time for one-on-one visits with residents.

MARCH, 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <div> Sunday, March 12, 2023 </div>			1 5:30 PM - Adult Choir 6:30 PM - Midweek Lenten Service	2 12:30 PM - Regency	3	4
5 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	6 6:00 PM - Worship	7 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 6:00 PM - Kantourei Lenten Tour at Cullman, St. Paul	8 10:15 AM - HHR 5:30 PM - Adult Choir 6:30 PM - Midweek Lenten Service	9	10	11 10:00 AM - LWML
12 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	13 6:00 PM - Worship	14 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 7:00 PM - Board of Directors	15 5:30 PM - Adult Choir 6:30 PM - Midweek Lenten Service	16 12:30 PM - Regency	17	18
19 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	20 6:00 PM - Worship	21 Elders	22 10:15 AM - HHR 5:30 PM - Adult Choir 6:30 PM - Midweek Lenten Service	23	24	25 8:30 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
26 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	27 6:00 PM - Worship	28 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	29 5:30 PM - Adult Choir 6:30 PM - Midweek Lenten Service	30 12:30 PM - Regency	31	