



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

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www.hopelutheranstl.org



✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

Vol. 101, No. 1

Share life and hope in our Savior Jesus.

February 2024

"Be My Valentine" ...with Ashes?

Each year, February 14 brings dreams, thoughts, and plans for romance. "Valentine's Day" is often celebrated with cards expressing love and devotion, romantic dinners, and chocolate goodies. Our cultural Valentine's Day certainly generates good business for greeting card companies and candy stores. I still remember how Valentine's Day was celebrated in my elementary school days. Each student in the class would prepare little Valentine cards for everyone else in the room. The platonic sentiments included: "Thinking of you," or "Thank you for being a friend," or "Be my valentine." And how about those little heart-shaped candies in various pastel colors and with tiny, printed messages on them?

How did such practices become associated with Valentine's Day?

On the Church's calendar, February 14 remembers a saint named Valentine. But the celebration is not so romantic. As on other days through the year, we remember the martyrdom of one of God's redeemed children. William Weedon gives this explanation of the day's remembrance:

The story of the man commemorated this day is in

large part unknown. Some centuries after Valentine's death, Pope Gelasius would write that Valentine is among those "whose names are justly revered among men, but whose acts are known only to God." What is known is that Valentine ended life confessing Christ to the last, dying a martyr's death in Rome under Emperor Claudius II around AD 270.

Although we cannot know with any kind of certainty, later tradition has suggested that he was both a doctor and priest. He was thus a man marked by his kindness and tender care of others in body and in soul. In this, he mirrored our Lord Jesus Christ, who healed the ailments of the body and yet more wondrously brought peace to the soul with His words of promise and hope.

LOVE

CALLING ALL MEN AND BOYS OF HOPE:

You are cordially invited to join Elders and Pastor for a time of warm Christian fellowship, devotion, planning and LUNCH here at church on Saturday, February 3, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm.

Our simple aim is to do some informal brainstorming on potential future men's events at Hope. Single or married, father or son – please mark your calendars now and send an RSVP email to our Elders Chairman, Kevin Robson, at kevindrobson@gmail.com with names and number attending.

The very day that Valentine was to face his martyrdom, he is said to have brought consolation to the daughter of his jailer by writing to her a small note of encouragement. The young girl had reportedly come to love this godly man and was grieved at the thought of his death. But Valentine knew that death was a defeated enemy because of Christ's death and resurrection. So he comforted the young lady. Hence, the custom of St. Valentine's day notes arose, which has spread far and wide.¹



Him. We do remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return (Genesis 3:19). At the same time, with St. Valentine, we know that death is a defeated enemy. We certainly return to God with humility and repentance, and we also take encouragement from our Lord's death and resurrection.

In the Bible, ashes are repeatedly associated with humility, sorrow, and repentance. (See, for example, Genesis 18:27 and Jonah 3:6). Yet

they are also linked with cleansing and purification. In Numbers 19:1-9, ashes of a heifer were combined with water for purification. The book of Hebrews connects this cleansing with our Lord Jesus Christ:

Almighty and everlasting God, You kindled the flame of Your love in the heart of Your holy martyr Valentine. Grant to us, Your humble servants, a like faith and the power of love, that we who rejoice in Christ's triumph may embody His love in our lives; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

"For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:13-14).

This year, Valentine's Day nicely coincides with Ash Wednesday. It's a blessed coincidence! (The only better coincidence is when Good Friday sometimes falls on April 1. See 1 Corinthians 1:21-25.)

While Valentine's Day leads us to celebrate and practice love for others, Ash Wednesday brings to us the greater love of our heavenly Father. *"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins" (1 John 4:10).*

St. Valentine is remembered for his kindness and tender care. Ash Wednesday, with its somber repentance, directs us to the kindness and tender care of our heavenly Father. Indeed, God calls us to return to Him *"with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."* He invites us to *"rend [our] hearts and not [our] garments"* (Joel 2:12-13). While such things may feel rather uncomfortable (and hardly "romantic"), they are rooted in receiving our Lord's love and care. *"Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster"* (Joel 2:13).

Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Since God Himself summons us to return to Him, we may also receive the ashes, applied in the shape of a cross, as a note of encouragement from

✠ Pastor Randy Asburry

email: rasburry@hopelutheranstl.org

Hope's Website: <http://www.hopelutheranstl.org>

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/hopelutheranstl

¹ William Weedon, *Celebrating the Saints* (CPH, 2016).

Basement Renovation Update

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42).

The Hope Lutheran Church basement renovation effort is grounded in the words of Acts 2:42 as we seek to renovate the church basement for the primary purposes of providing a space that enables and encourages Christian education for both children and adults and provides an attractive and comfortable place to gather for meetings, meals, and activities.

The aim is a modernized, up-to-code space that is both flexible and functional for gathering in large and small groups for a variety of uses that will serve the congregation's needs for decades to come.

From the start, the above "program statement" has guided the work of the committee. To date, we have surveyed the congregation and used that feedback to provide guidance to the architects and general contractor. When initial rounds of proposed design had been completed, we presented these to the congregation and held several opportunities for members to ask questions, provide feedback, and express concerns. That feedback was most useful as we worked with the architects to refine the proposed plan.

During our work we determined the need for an MEP (Mechanical, Engineering and Plumbing) analysis of our existing spaces to determine what engineering and infrastructure matters need to be addressed. That analysis is complete and a recommended approach to these matters has been provided with a cost estimate. Additionally, the committee was concerned about the ongoing

water seepage/leaks in the Sunday School room and asked the Church Council to address the water issues before we proceeded with renovations. We have been assured this matter has been addressed.

In the later part of the summer, we met again with the architects and contractor to provide feedback from the congregational meetings and reactions to the initial proposed plans and asked that they review the drawings to include the feedback with a goal to have these drawings by early fall. That did not happen. In November, our contractor broke his leg and has been homebound recovering ever since. This has slowed down our progress.

We are happy to report that we held a meeting with the architects in the second week of January and expect updated drawings, cost estimates and possible timelines for the Voters Assembly to consider. The goal is to have all this information available for a special Voters Assembly that has yet to be scheduled.

The committee continues to welcome and seek input, ideas, and feedback from the congregation as we refine the plans and prepare to present them to the congregation for approval.

- Pamela Nielsen Renovation Committee Chair – pamjniel@aol.com – 314-440-5151
- Committee members: Julie Vigil, Julie Day, Kay Shoemaker

The Chief Stewards of Humanity: Mom and Dad

St. Paul tells the Ephesians that the first commandment with a specific promise attached to it is, “Honor your father and mother so that it may go well with you, and you may live long in the land” (Eph. 6:2). This promise is one indication of the importance of this commandment. The other thing that highlights the special nature of this commandment is its placement within the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are clearly organized in two big categories. The first three commandments deal with our relationship with God. This category is called the First Table of the Law. The last seven commandments, the Second Table of the Law, tell us how we should relate to other people. These two tables correspond to what Jesus calls the two greatest commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-39).

The order of the Second Table of the Law is also important. Murder is a greater sin than adultery, which is a greater sin than stealing, or lying, or coveting. But why is the Fourth Commandment first in the Second Table, ahead of “you shall not murder”? Is disobeying your parents really worse

than murder? Or maybe we should give up on thinking these commandments are ordered?

The overall effect of this order is to get us to see our parents as a connection point between our neighbors and our God. Throughout our upbringing our father and mother stand between us and God and deliver His gifts to us: God clothes us, feeds us, protects us, and teaches His Word to us through our parents.

So, parents have a very high calling from God. They are called to be stewards of the greatest gift: the gift of life.

Parenting thus gives us a keen insight into all our stewardship. Parents know that they have been given a great treasure in their children, a treasure that does not belong to them, yet for which they feel a great deal of responsibility. Truth be told, every gift we have been given is like this, because everything we have — whether our own personal skills and powers or our wealth and time — is all from God. He entrusts it all to us so that we can use it all and take care of it all for His great purposes.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry
lcms.org/stewardship

LCMS Stewardship Ministry
Newsletter article – February 2024

Caring for My Neighbor

If any of the Ten Commandments might tempt us to think that keeping the Law is easy, it would be the Fifth Commandment. After all, how hard is it to get through life without murdering somebody? The vast majority of people can handle that!

But Jesus famously blows up this notion by pointing out that the command, “you shall not murder,” goes much deeper – down to the heart.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, “You fool!” will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matt. 5:21–22)

Hatred and disdain come from the same sort of crookedness of heart as murder. With both murder and hatred, you look down on another person and think them of little worth.

In the Small Catechism, Luther also points out that every “do not” in the commandments also includes a “do this”: “We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor

in his body but *help and support him in every physical need*” (SC, Fifth Commandment, emphasis added).

We are not called merely to avoid evil; we must also do positive good.

So when Jesus drew near to us and became our neighbor by taking up our humanity, He came not only to avoid harming us, but He came to positively help us, bless us, and serve us.

We are now called to show the love to our neighbors that Christ showed to us. Your neighbor is yet another gift that God has given you that requires your stewardship. We are called to show mercy, to be kind, to love and serve our neighbor. One aspect of this stewardship is financial: our neighbors need us to support the church’s work so that they can hear the Gospel and come to faith. Our neighbors need the church’s alms and mercy work. Our neighbors need our faithful service in all we do in the name of Christ.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry
lcms.org/stewardship

“All ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ” (Augsburg Confession, 24:3). We have been through the Epiphany season, hearing God’s Word on how Christ is the Savior for all nations. As we go through February, we will approach Lent, the time of preparation for our Lord’s Crucifixion (Good Friday) and Resurrection (Easter Sunday). The month of February brings us to this “time of transition.” This month we continue through the time called “Pre-Lent” – the so-called narthex in which we Christians pause for three Sundays before we begin our spiritual pilgrimage to Calvary in the great 40 days of Lent:

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
February 4	Sexagesima (“About 60 Days”)	Luke 8:4-15	The Fourfold Field – The parable of the sower and the four kinds of ground on which the good seed is cast. God sows His vibrant, life-giving Word in various “soils” of people who receive it in different ways.
February 11	Quinquagesima (“50 Days”)	Luke 18:31-43	Up to Jerusalem – Christ opens our eyes to see Him as God’s Lamb on the way to Jerusalem. As the blind man begged for Jesus’ mercy, we also learn to beg for and rely on His mercy.
February 18	First Sunday in Lent	Matthew 4:1-11	Temptation – Our Lord’s temptation. Because our Lord rejects the means of “victory” that Satan offers Him (bread, miracle, power), His way leads to the cross. But by His cross Jesus conquers Satan and temptation for us.
February 25	Second Sunday in Lent	Matthew 15:21-28	The Servant of the Lord – The Canaanite woman shows us how prayer addressed to our Lord is heard. Even though Jesus “hides” behind His threefold “No” she still trusts His healing mercy.

LUTHERAN ADOPTION CONFERENCE

There will be an adoption conference in Houston, TX April 10-11. The theme is “For Such a Time as This- Esther 4:14.” The focus is to “to connect, act and impact the future of biblically based, Christian adoption.”

Adoption and Christianity go together. Because of God’s love for us, we reach out to care for the orphaned and those who need a loving home. Information in the conference literature reports that 114,000 children in the U.S. are currently waiting for an adoptive home, and 153,000,000 children worldwide live as orphans. At the Lutheran Adoption Conference, Lutheran leaders will gather to discuss how to

increase Christ-centered Lutheran adoptions.

Attendees will have the pleasure of hearing the testimony and talents of Dove Award-winning musician and adoptee Mark Schultz. He is the platinum-selling, award-winning artist with thirteen #1 hits. “Garnering accolades like Artist of the Year, Songwriter of the Year, and Album of the Year, Mark would say that all of that pales in comparison to the honor of getting to share his own story of adoption.”

For more details and how to register to attend, go to <https://lutheransforlife.org/conferences/>.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Elder: 4 – Scott Kinnaman 11 – Kevin Robson 14 – Jim Frost 18 – Scot Kinnaman 25 – Kevin Robson	Altar Guild: 4 Spyers/Truebe 11 Asburry/Bergdolt 18 Brown/Patton 25 Keller/Janssen			1 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	2	3 <i>Pastor's day off</i> 11am-1pm Men's Group
4 Sexagesima 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/Sunday School 11:30 Choir rehearsal	5	6	7 NO Kantorei Rehearsal	8 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	9	10 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
11 Quinquagesima 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Choir rehearsal	12 7:00 Board of Elders	13	14 Ash Wednesday 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal 7:00 Divine Service w/ Ashes	15 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	16	17 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
18 Lent 1 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Choir rehearsal	19	20	21 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal 7:00 pm Lent Evening Prayer	22 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	23	24 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
25 Lent 2 9:30 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Choir rehearsal	26	27	28 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal 7:00 pm Lent Evening Prayer	29 6:00 ThriVe Parent University		