

February 2024

Vol. 37 No. 2

Peace Lutheran Church



THE LIFE OF CHRIST: LENT

"The Life of Christ" is the theme of the first "half" of the Church Year. It begins with the beginning of the Church Year, with the Season of Advent, and concludes with the Season of Easter. All of the Lessons celebrate the Life of Christ, the Head of the Church.

Over my many years of ministry as a pastor, I have relished our liturgical calendar and its related practices. Though a man-made tool, it guides us on a journey that is both purposeful and meaningful. It serves as an outline for the sake of celebration and instruction.

Last month, we looked at the season of Epiphany. This month, we look at the Season of Lent.

From my grade school days, the Lenten season made a major impact on me. Midweek Lenten services were very special for me. Not for the reason you may think. Especially impressed on me was COOKIES! There were always two services on Wednesday night. In between the services was COOKIES! We also were able to goof around in the gym, but all play needed to come to an end at 6:55 P.M. Because the noise would travel into the sanctuary, we were barred from any play.

As I grew older, the worship services and sermon series became more important to me. But there was still COOKIES! Over my many years of serving in the pastoral ministry, I have observed not only the decline of COOKIES, being replaced by fellowship meals, and the saddest, fewer families and, worse yet, fewer children in worship. This will have a major impact in the future, and I fear that Midweek Lenten services may simply just disappear. Children learn patterns in their formative years and carry them through as they grow older.

So much for an editorial.

Lent is a 40-day season and does not include Sundays. It is a somber season, and until most recent of times, the Hymn of Praise and Alleluia were omitted in the Sunday services.

Three major themes are a part of this season. Remembrance, Repentance, and Renewal. Each service incorporates these themes. We are called to ponder on the Lord's Passion as we remember the purpose for which Jesus came. The angels announced to the shepherds.. "Born to you this day in the City of David is the Savior, Christ the Lord."

The Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which sets the mood for the season. Being reminded of the fact that from "dust we came, and to dust we shall return." The balance of the season continues with lessons that address the reality of the need for Jesus' ministry and obedience.

The Lenten Season comes to an end with Palm Sunday, which is then followed by the shortest season – the Season of Holy Week.

The Lenten Season, for me, is no longer about COOKIES. It is about Jesus and His redemptive work that was lived out as a substitute for me. It is about being rescued from the wilderness of sin. It is about God's love and His plan of salvation being played out.

Consider attending the Midweek Lenten services, as well as the Sundays in Lent. Most importantly, bring the whole family! Finally, consider joining in the fellowship suppers. Most of the time, there are even COOKIES!

Next month - "The Life of Christ: The Season of Holy Week.

To God be the Glory!

Pastor Schroeder



WHY Do We Exist?

Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us to: *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."*

Tradition, for tradition's sake, is worthless. "Progress" for the sake of progress is madness. Everybody wants to have a healthy church, and virtually no one is walking around saying, *"I hope my church dies a long, slow death due to inaction and ineffectiveness!"* Yet, many churches today find themselves in decline. They see their numbers dwindling, and they hope that this exciting new thing, or that new program or _____, will be just what they need to get them going again. But then you ask people to serve or about the work of their Boards, and you hear crickets. You ask them about the last time any of them has invited someone to church, and you hear crickets.

So how do so many churches find themselves in a position that none of them wants to be in? When is "who we are" as a church healthy, or when is "what we do" as a church healthy? What do you think is the #1 cause of healthy churches becoming unhealthy churches? (*I'll give you a hint: it's not a lack of programs or church signs or screens or a praise band.*) It's when there is a disconnect/separation between the "why?" of who we are and the "why?" of what we do.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5: *"And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."*

The fact of the matter is the issues we face today are not so different from those of Luther's day, of St. Paul's Day, or of King Solomon's day. The issue of Christian complacency is *still* at large in the church, and ministry gets messy & tangled up when we pull away from one another rather than moving together in unity. Yet, we have no reason to worry or fear. We must look to Christ for our way forward.

WHY does Peace Lutheran exist? Who are we? For the sake of the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! We at Peace Lutheran Church are to be focused primarily on spreading the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ here in Neenah, WI. If you look at our website (*or our entry sign, bulletin cover, business cards, etc...*) under the "About Us" section – "Mission and Vision," you would see that the mission of Peace Lutheran Church is 3-fold: **"Reaching Out, Serving Jesus, Celebrating His Love."** We **'Reach Out'** as our Lord has called each and every one of us to do in our Lord's Great Commission given in Matthew 28:19-20. We **'Serve Jesus'** as we provide opportunities for members and visitors to study God's eternal Word and grow spiritually in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and we **'Celebrate His Love'** as we come together for the fellowship and care of one another and our neighbor.

When you really think about it, these 3-focal points are outward reaching, yet if we look around today, we seem to be reaching more inward than outward. Does this mean that our Mission statement is in need of change? By No Means! Our mission as a church is in this 3-fold Ministry focus. What we seem to get hung up on is the fact that we do not begin with the question of 'why.' Instead, we easily get stuck on the 'What' of ministry, doing the same things but expecting different results.

There is one of two possible drivers for any given congregation: Vision or Structure. Vision is clear goals for the future, whereby we become intentional in our ministry by being reminded of 'why' we exist, with a plan for moving forward. Structure is not the church building but the bodies that oversee the ministry and programs within the church. When Vision is the driver, intentionality and relationships give purpose to the work of the church, and we become proactive in ministry. When Structure is the driver, we become preoccupied with programming and the question of 'what' we do, becoming reactive and slow to move forward as we await *the next crisis* to happen, and in turn, slow the movement of the church.

There are 3-questions every organization **must** answer to be able to grow dedicated members: **Why do we**

exist? How will we accomplish our mission?; What will we do to accomplish our mission? In this order, we focus on what is most important 1st and then how we accomplish our mission, rather than just doing what we've always done because I like it that way. Because in the '**Why**' is the Gospel. **In the 'Why' is Jesus.** To not ask the question of 'Why' is to lose the very reason we exist in the 1st place, Jesus! This also leads to disunity, decreased effectiveness, undermines discipleship, and did I mention we lose Jesus! When the 'why?' of Jesus and His mission here at Peace is always at the center, we, in turn, become Christ-centered! This leads to increased unity, increased effectiveness, decreased fear, increased intentionality, increased coherence, and less individually driven.

So, we intentionally ask the question of 'why?' so that together, as a church family we move toward a deeper relationship with Jesus! But we must always be clear about *where* you & I encounter Jesus in a very real way: God's Word & Sacraments. Worship is to be the center, the 'hub' of who we are & what we do. Everything we do together in ministry flows from the sanctuary outward to the rest of the church, continuing into the community surrounding us.

To revitalize our congregation, we must be intentional about "who we are" & "what we do" as the hands & feet, as the very body of Christ. Let us walk together as a congregation that looks to Christ in all things, and let Him lead us to love one another as we seek the lost outside our walls, with Mission & Ministry as our focus. We are here to reach people with the Gospel, inviting and providing members and visitors alike with opportunities to grow in their relationship with their Savior. We, as the body of Christ, are focused on sharing His Word, Worshiping Him together, teaching the Faith through catechesis and Bible Study, and being good Stewards of the talents & treasures our Lord has given us. This is who Christ has created us to be! In Jesus' Holy Name. Amen.

Pastor Josiah J. Fitch

December 2023 YTD Income & Expense for the February Newsletter

Prepared by Karmen Haldiman, Treasurer, January 13, 2024.

\$40,222 December Budget (anticipated expenses)

\$55,158 Actual December Income

\$49,850 Actual December Expenses

\$ 5,308

\$482,663 YTD Budget (anticipated expenses)

\$471,516 Actual YTD Income

\$461,546 Actual YTD Expenses

\$ 9,970

Summary:

I'm happy to report that we ended the year in the positive! As a congregation we should strive to increase our cash reserves; ideally, we want to have enough to cover 3 months of expenses, and we have enough to cover just over one month of expenses (\$49k) right now. Please consider increasing your giving amount for 2024.





February is full of activities you can participate in!

February 2-3 is the **Winter Getaway**, "Growing Together" Mentoring Workshop, at Marriott-West in Waukesha. (<https://www.lwml-swd.org/upld/resource/98f95c92-10e8-4b49-ba7e-88c693885a05.pdf>)

The **Peace Mission Guild monthly meeting** will be held on Saturday, February 10, at 1:00 pm. This month's Bible Study, led by Paulette Stecker, will be Abiding in Christ.

On Saturday, February 17, you are invited to the annual **Prayer Service** being held at Divine Savior in North Fond du Lac at 10:00 am. Refreshments will be served before and after the service. Carpooling can be arranged. Please let Barb Kaun know by February 9 if you are interested in attending.

The **Women's Retreat at Peace**, "God's Quilt of Comfort, Wrapping Up in Psalms," will be held on Saturday, February 24 (previously scheduled for February 17) from 9 am to 3 pm. Details will be in the bulletin.

LWML mission moment -

Upheld by God's Hand, Mental Health Outreach — LCMS Life Ministry - \$96,500

Millions of people in the United States are suffering with mental illness and disorders. The LCMS Task Force for Mental Illness, Health, and Wellness is coordinating with LCMS Life Ministry to develop and publish materials and resources to provide training for church workers and lay leaders related to mental health outreach and spiritual care. This grant will support the development of these materials.

Thank you to the congregation for your tremendous generosity. The Mites collection January 6-7 was \$809.08. Glory be to God.

Birthdays for the month:

Bridget Tervola 2/18
Jeanne Ralston 2/24



Pre-Lenten Prayer Service

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Service will begin at 10:00 AM

Light Refreshments will be available before and after the service.

***Divine Savior Lutheran Church
1081 Prospect Ave
North Fond du Lac, WI 54937***

Led by Pastor Allen Bramstadt LWML SWD Zone 11 Counselor

Contact Kay Kemme

Email: Tigerbullet41@charter.net

Cell Phone: Call or Text to 920-266-5996

(Home Phone: 920-923-5765)

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord
(1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2).*

Odds 'n' Ends

***REMINDER* If You Become Hospitalized:**
Please contact the church office! Hospitals no longer automatically call on your behalf (and sometimes even if you request contact be made). Your pastors want to be able to come, minister, pray for & visit you.

Re:VITALITY BIBLE STUDY This study began on Sunday, January 7. This is the topic for the Sunday morning, Thursday morning, and Thursday evening Bible studies to be completed by the end of February. This allows the members the flexibility to attend any of the three offerings that best fit their schedules. This study explores the Biblical basis of strategic planning. The Task Force felt that this was a good foundation to build off of as they entered their work early on.

You can find our live stream service on YouTube, just go to the YouTube page, put in **Peace Neenah** in the search bar, click on Peace Neenah, then live and you will see the service. You can also click the subscribe button and you will be notified when there are new services on our page. Another option is to open up the attached bulletin news and click on there it says Youtube: Peace Neenah and that will take you right to the page.



Membership Statistics



Death:

December 27, 2023
Jim Dennee

December 31, 2023
Annabelle Edinger

Total Baptized members:	399
Total Confirmed members:	344
Households:	241
Men:	184
Women:	217



Fellow Workers on God's Team

Our stewardship emphasis for this year is **Fellow Workers on God's Team**, which will start on the weekend of February 24 & 25. The Apostle Paul wrote, "*We are God's fellow workers*" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Through Paul, God was telling the people in Corinth that they had the honor and privilege to work with Him as important participants in His mission. In the same way, God makes us His fellow workers on His team. Even though we are undeserving and have nothing to offer, God, in His sovereignty, chooses us to be His vessels through

which He will accomplish His purposes. As God's fellow workers, we become His hands, feet, and mouth to the world.

God does not schedule tryouts for those He selects to be on His team. He isn't seeking the most talented, the most powerful, or the most attractive. He invites and encourages everyone to be part of His team.

The people who become part of God's team vary in appearance, in gifts, in stations of life, and other ways. Although God's team is made up of people who are different in some ways, the one common factor is that they are all new creations with transformed hearts (2 Corinthians 5:17). Through the work of the Holy Spirit, they have become people of faith who see God as their greatest treasure. Faithfulness is a top priority as a fellow worker with God. Through faith, we commit and are energized to serve God by serving others. What we do with our time, talents, and money gives evidence to which team we belong.

In God's Word, we find examples of people who were not eager always to be fellow workers on God's team. Moses gave numerous excuses that God shouldn't use him to lead the Israelites out of the Egyptian captivity. Saul hid! David felt unqualified to be king. God caused Jonah to be swallowed by a fish in order to get him on His team. God didn't give up on these people. He chose and equipped each of them to be a fellow worker on His team.

God blesses each of us with the privilege to be a fellow worker on His team. Whether we willingly join or are at first resistant, we are now participants in God's mission to help others "*to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:4). God uses ordinary people like us to do extraordinary things. We pray that this emphasis will encourage us all to be **Fellow Workers on God's Team**.

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.

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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.¹

¹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Stewardship Ministry



Sunday School - February 2024

Reaching Out, Serving Jesus and Celebrating His Love.



Sunday School students continue to be at work. Our classes meet in the Fellowship Hall at 10:30 am for an activity/music, bible study in classrooms at 11:00 am and pick up at 11:30 am.



In January, we continued our bible stories in the Preschool area, we began our study of the 10 Commandments in the younger classrooms and Apologetics in the Jr. High Class. We enjoyed the Sock Hop as our January event with fellowship, music and a few treats!

February Friendship Sunday- look out for details in the Bulletin News and note being sent home with Sunday School children about our Fabulous February Fellowship Friendship Sunday.

Keep an eye out for updates for Sunday School in the weekly Bulletin News.
Any questions? Please contact Caitlin Vanden Bloomer or Betsy Ehlert.

February Memory Verses:

Feb. 5th & 12th – Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

Feb. 19th & 26th – Proverbs 19:17: “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed.”

MIDWEEK LENTEN, HOLY WEEK, AND EASTER SERVICES 2024
OVERALL THEME: The Book of Exodus: "Let My People Go!"

This year, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14th, and so does our emphasis on the Book of Moses called Exodus. In it, Moses asks Pharaoh to let God's people go seven times (Exodus 5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3) and Pharaoh finally does it! When He does, God's salvation is so amazing that the event becomes the Gospel of the Old Testament. Israel's Scriptures mention the exodus 125 times!

Throughout the book of Exodus, God reveals who He is through His absence and His presence, through His silence and His speech, through His wrath and His mercy, and through His judgment and His amazing grace. In doing so, the book paints a beautiful portrait of *Jesus*. The Themes for each week are as follows:

ASH WEDNESDAY: Wednesday, February 14th at 7:00 P.M. * **
THEME: "Big Things with Small Stuff" Exodus 2:1-10

MIDWEEK LENT 1: Wednesday February 21st at 7:00 P.M. *
THEME: "How God Changes Us" Exodus 3:1-14

MIDWEEK LENT 2: Wednesday, February 28th at 7:00 P.M. *
THEME: "Stop Trying and Start Trusting" Exodus 14:1-29

MIDWEEK LENT 3: Wednesday, March 6th at 7:00 P.M. *
THEME: "Strike the Rock!" Exodus 17:1-7

MIDWEEK LENT 4: Wednesday, March 13th at 7:00 P.M. *
THEME: "Mine!" Exodus 20:1-17

MIDWEEK LENT 5: Wednesday, March 20th at 7:00 P.M. *
THEME: "Digging Ourselves into a Hole" Exodus 32:1-14

MAUNDY/HOLY THURSDAY: Thursday, March 28th at 7:00 P.M. **
THEME: "Access!" Exodus 24:1-11

GOOD FRIDAY: Friday, March 29th at 7:30 P.M.
THEME: "*Agnus Dei*" Exodus 12:1-13

EASTER SATURDAY – NO WORSHIP SERVICE

EASTER SUNDAY – SUNRISE: Sunday, March 31st at 6:30 A.M. **
THEME: "A New Beginning!" Exodus 34:1-8

EASTER SUNDAY – FESTIVAL: Sunday, March 31st 9 at 9:00 A.M. **
THEME: "Against All Odds!" Exodus 15:1-18



A WORD OF THANKS FROM PASTOR AND LYNNE... Thank you to all of you who have remembered Lynne during the time of her knee replacement surgery. Prayers, cards, good wishes and meals were and still are greatly appreciated. May the Lord bless you for your care! Pastor Schroeder



YEAH OWLS

YEAH! The **OWLS** have landed, and we're having a **HOOT!!!**

YEAH OWLS

Y(young) **E**(especially) **A**(at) **H**(heart) **O**(older) **W**(wiser) **L**(livelier) **S**(saints).

Our February YEAH OWLS get-together will be on Thursday, February 15, 2024. Our speaker will be Beth Roberts from the Aging and Disability Resource Center. She will provide free, unbiased information on community resources,

We begin at 11:00 AM with socializing and coffee. Lunch will be served promptly at 11:30 AM. At noon, we will have our speaker. Signup sheets will be in the Fellowship Hallway 2 weeks prior to the February 15th meeting. Make sure to sign up. We'd love to see you there, and you can even bring a friend.



Social
Ministry



Compassionate Heart Bake Sale. The Social Ministry Board will host the bake sale weekend from 10 to 11 February. Funds raised from the bake sale will be for the purpose of assisting members of our congregation who have financial needs toward heating, utilities, etc. Requests for assistance are to be made directly to Pastor Schroeder or Pastor Fitch; all requests will be handled in strict confidence. To help make this bake sale a success, members of the congregation can assist by providing baked items for the sale.


The Family, Help for the Homeless Hygiene Drive is scheduled to begin 11 February. As in previous years, a large box will be provided for donations. All donations received will remain in this community. Specific items requested include soap (laundry, dish, shampoo, shower gel), toilet paper, paper towels, wet wipes, diapers size 3-6 pull-ups, female hygiene items (tampon & maxi-pad), large plastic/trash bags, shaving-razor blades. The box will be kept in the narthex until approximately 3 March.

Bible Quiz

Use one word (perhaps in different forms) for all the blanks to complete this Scripture passage:

“Dear friends, let us ____ one another, for ____ comes from God. Everyone who ____ has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not ____ does not know God, because God is ____.”

- A. believe
- B. help
- C. love
- D. forgive



Answer: C (See 1 John 4:7-8, NIV)



Another SCRIP-tastic Fundraising Opportunity and other news!

Kwik Trip has done it again! Fast Fund February equals 10% rebate on all **KWIK TRIP** gas cards for the month of February. Also, a 20% rebate on all **KWIK TRIP** Grocery Only cards. That is a "bonus" of 5% per card. Here is a great opportunity to stock up on your gas and grocery cards from **KWIK TRIP** and help the youth at the same time.



We have many items in stock for you to check out, and if you would like something we don't have, we can see if we can order it for you. Raiseright amends their list of retailers daily. You can find the retailers we can order at www.raiseright.com/brands ...there are too many to mention them all here.

A REMINDER: Using our Scrip cards to make your purchases - gas, groceries, retail, fast food and more ~ currently helps our Youth Group as well as contributing to our Lutheran Education Scholarships. A win - win situation. if you haven't tried it, please consider using our scrip cards for your everyday purchases as a percentage comes back to our church.

An update for 2023: The total rebates for the year equaled \$3,538.82. This means both the Youth Group and the Lutheran Education Scholarship Fund received \$1,769.41 for all purchases made in 2023.

Thank you for your continued support!



Re: VITALITY TASK FORCE: AN UPDATE

At the time of this writing, I must report that not much has had happened. We took the month of December off. Unfortunately, due to the weather, we were not able to meet on Saturday, January 13. We will be meeting again on Monday, January 29.

We will continue with the three sessions/tasks that are left to be completed. It is with great confidence that the Strategic Plan will be drafted on time. As a part of the process, an Open Forum will be held so that the congregation may review the Proposed Strategic Plan. This will allow not only for the sharing of information, but to receive input from the congregation. As has been announced, the Strategic Plan will be ready for the Voters assembly in the May Voters meeting.

Pray that the Lord will guide and give discernment for the advancement of His kingdom and the future ministry of our congregation. Pastor Schroeder



Have you ever neared the completion of a jigsaw puzzle, only to discover that a piece or two is missing? That's an apt visual for what it's like to live without God. Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century philosopher, observed: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Centuries earlier, St. Augustine proclaimed "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee." And in the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes expounded on the meaninglessness of earthly striving and material pursuits. Only God's Spirit can fill our emptiness and satisfy our eternal longings.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full," says Jesus in John 10:10 (NIV). He alone provides the solution for emptiness. What comfort to be filled with — and to find our fulfillment in — our Savior!



Peace Lutheran Church

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Rev. Ricky P. Schroeder
Pastor
Rev. Josiah Fitch
Associate Pastor



**Peace
Lutheran Church**
NEENAH, WISCONSIN—LCMS

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Reaching Out . . . Serving Jesus . . . Celebrating His Love



e-mails

pastor@peaceneenah.com
assocpastor@peaceneenah.com

Web site:

www.peaceneenah.com

Worship Services

Sat. 5:00 p.m.

Sun. 9:00 a.m.

Bible Study/Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Sundays

