

Focus



SPIRIT^{of} CHRIST
Lutheran Church

February 2021

A Member of
The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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**Our Mission at Spirit of Christ Lutheran Church is to live in love
for God and one another, reaching out to all people
proclaiming and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.**

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Pastor's Message

Saints,

In February, we will move yet again into the season of Lent. You might be tempted to think we never needed the season of Lent less; after all, haven't we all endured a year of sacrificing things we care about and facing the looming threat of our mortality — that we are dust and to dust we will return? Do we really need a season to focus on the brokenness of our world when we're faced with that day after day?

It's true that the season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday (**and our worship service that will begin at 7:15 on Feb. 17th!**) during which we acknowledge that "we are dust" and that a return to dust is our destiny. It's also true that part of the Lenten story is the acknowledgment that all is not well in our world, and that God is moving the whole creation in a new direction. However, I'm encouraging you to consider a more individual focus during this season. Last year as we approached Lent, I wrote these words:

"At the heart of Lent is our acknowledgment of sin, and the repentance that proceeds from that acknowledgment. When we recognize the depth of our sin, as David did in Psalm 51 ("For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me"), we are called to repentance. To repent, though, is not simply to feel sorry or say you are sorry. Repentance means that our grief over sin leads to a change of mind and heart. This is God's work in us; The Holy Spirit is transforming you "by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). We look again to David's words after he has named his sin: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

It is certainly the case that Lent moves us toward the Easter promise that God in Christ addresses the issue of our *mortality* — that is, the threat of death that looms over us. But Lent is also moving us toward Good Friday, and the promise that God in Christ addresses the issue of our *morality* — the mess we make of living human life in relationship with our neighbors. God needs to fix our hearts, and Lent is a time when we look at that need with honest eyes. We need Jesus' resurrection, but we also need his sacrificial death. And why?

Because the death and resurrection of Jesus is our death and resurrection. It's the way he changes both our hearts and our futures.

Here are three biblical passages that describe this work of Jesus:

2 Corinthians 5:14, 17 -- You see, the controlling force in our lives is the love of the Anointed One. And our confession is this: One died for all; therefore, all have died. Therefore, if anyone is united with the Anointed

One, that person is a new creation. The old life is gone—and see—a new life has begun!

Galatians 2:19-20 -- For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 -- As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

In Lent, we acknowledge the problem, and we celebrate God's solution. God does not simply point us to the mess and tell us to clean it up. He cleanses our hearts with the blood of the Lamb and gives us new lives with the risen Jesus. This is our faith and our hope, and this is a wonderful time to be steeped in that promise.

You may have noticed in the word about Ash Wednesday that our schedule is changing a bit. **We're moving Wednesday Lenten Midweek worship to 7:15 P.M.** Join us in worship throughout the season of Lent, as we celebrate that Jesus' road to the cross and the empty tomb is the hope for a transformed morality and mortality — a new heart and an eternal life.

Pastor Jason Neel



Carrots and the Dark of the Night

By John Peterson

Mom always said, "...eat your carrots, they are good for you" then Dad would chime in and say how much better you could see at night if you eat carrots. As a child, I hated cooked carrots, but liked raw ones. Who knew that what you put in your stomach could help you see in the dark? Evidentially Mom & Dad did.

In the Dark...

Recent events in the world have led many seeking answers. And when events are massively discouraging, as they often can be, some worry, some complain, some cry, and many do not know what to do and look to place blame.

When it is dark, really dark, it does not take much light to make a difference.

In Matthew 6:22 Jesus tells us **"Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a musty cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!"** The Message.

The first light bulbs invented were exceptionally large, and very dim. Today they are exceedingly small and very bright. They have gone from exceptionally large filamented glass globes to tiny LED's (light emitting diodes). We have learned to build more efficient light sources. All since open flame.

Learning to See...

"the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God." Luke 9:11 NIV

Jesus reminds us that **"I am the world's Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in."**

John 8:12 The MTo be able to see and work in the dark, we need light. And in a world of spiritual darkness, we need the light of Jesus. How do we do this? Prayer (talking to God), being in His Word (the Bible), being in the

fellowship of believers (worship), all while being proactive and not waiting for someone else to fix the brokenness and darkness.

The Lord Almighty already has! In Jesus! Thanks be to God!

**"Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path."** Psalm 119:105 NIV

So we worship, pray, sing, read and dwell on God's Word and pray some more.

"Praise the One who breaks the darkness with a liberating light"

[Matthew 5:16](#) ESV

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[Acts 13:47](#) ESV

For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

[1 Peter 2:9](#) ESV

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[Ephesians 5:8](#) ESV

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light.

Next month.... Conspiracy theories



Worship Updates

Indoor Worship at 8:00 a.m.

Face coverings required indoors.

No nursery

No drinking fountains.

Sunday School at 9:15 a.m.

Preschool – High School Sunday School

Adult Bible Study

Outdoor Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Please stay home if you or anyone in your household is sick or has symptoms.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Elder. If you are unsure about who your Elders is, Pastor Jason can help you!

Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 7:15pm

Lenten Services:

Wednesday, February 24, at 7:15pm

Wednesday, March 3, at 7:15pm

Wednesday, March 10, at 7:15pm

Wednesday, March 17, at 7:15pm

Wednesdav. March 24. at 7:15pm

Prayer Chain

We have an active and vital prayer community at Spirit of Christ. If you would like to participate in or have prayer requests for Prayer Chain, please reach out to Sue Hurst at SD_Hurst@yahoo.com or at 763-755-8392.

Education Ministry

The Chosen- Bible Study

Sundays at 6pm via Zoom

Sunday night bible study will focus on the miniseries, *The Chosen*, a fictional history drama of the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. For 8 weeks beginning January 31 we will watch an episode from the first season over zoom from 6p-7p and then have a discussion from 7-7:30. Please see the bulletin or call the church office for the Zoom Codes.

Sunday School- Sunday School will meet at 9:15am for Preschool through High school

Sunday Morning Adult Bible study- Meets at 9:15am in the Fellowship Hall.

Meet the Elders: Terry Elhardt



²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[Ⓜ]? Matthew 6:25

Terry Elhardt and his wife Sandy, have been members at SOC since 1986. Terry has been an Elder since 2018. He has served on many boards within the congregation to include Finance, Education, and Stewardship.

What is your Favorite day of the week?

"Since I retired every day is my favorite."

What is your favorite book?

The Last of the Mohicans

What is your favorite Bible verse?

Matthew 6:25-27

Who has influenced you the most?

My Dad

Favorite Childhood Memory?

Traveling to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks with my cousins.

Board of Stewardship

By Peggy Peterson

First Fruits Giving 2020

**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.
This is how we faithfully administer God's grace. 1 Peter 4:10**

During 2020, the first 8% of our weekly offerings, totaling \$21,485 went to Missions. The MN South District of the LCMS received 3.5%, \$9403. Trinity First School received 1.75%, \$4701. NACE (North Anoka County Emergency) food shelf received 1.75%, \$4701. The remaining 1% changed monthly going to various Outreach Ministries, for a 12-month total of \$2,680.

The MN South District supports Mission Outreach in the southern half of Minnesota and sends half of the offerings received to Synod for Disaster Response and Mercy Ministry. Trinity First is a Minneapolis inner city Lutheran school, serving at risk children in a volatile neighborhood. NACE reports that at the beginning of the year, 1 in 8 children in Anoka County were experiencing hunger, now it is 1 in 5.

The monthly changing Mission ministries in 2020 were as follows: Jan/Feb- Shepherd of the Hills Children's Foundation in the Philippines. A printer and printing supplies were purchased to send home lessons to facilitate distance learning due to COVID-19. March-NACE. April/June- ACBC (Anoka County Brotherhood Council) food shelf. May/Nov- SOC Mercy Ministry, distribution of gift cards to members and community in need. July- Helping Hands, a S of C Ministry, that makes school kits and quilts for LWR (Lutheran World Relief), and Bundles of Love for at-risk newborn babies. August- Hygiene kits for Homeless thru Augsburg College. Sept- Samaritans Purse, all ages assembled shoeboxes with toys, hygiene items, and invitational Gospel booklets. Oct- S of C Youth purchased and delivered food items to NACE and toured the facility. Dec- Taiwan Missionary, Barbara Rebentisch.

Thanks be to God! Our community has taken the time, and devoted the resources, to witness to the love and grace of God in Christ. We are living out our mission statement. Thank you for your faithful and generous giving. Your Mission offerings are far reaching and are making a difference in the lives of those in need.

Youth Ministry

By Laura Marquardt

In 2019, when we arrived home from the National Youth gathering and everyone was leaving to head home, I had a quiet moment with a couple of the boys. One said to me "I'm going to miss confirmation." I was curious, so I asked him to explain and the other kiddo chimed in "We won't get to see our friends every week." Out of that simple conversation came the idea of holding space each



week for them to be together, hang out and continue to build on those friendships and connections.

There is a group chat that the kids and youth board share on Snap Chat. At the National Youth Gathering the kids preferred to use Snap Chat to communicate rather than group texts or Facebook. They decided to name this chat the God Squad. It was a great way to keep track of the

kids whereabouts, they would Snap us a picture of their chosen speaker or activity and we were sure that they were where they were supposed to be. After the NYG, we went home, and the chat stayed. We use the same group chat that we started in 2019 to check in with one another, pray for one another and stay connected. Even the college kids who are now off on their adventures can check in and feel a part of things at home. In the past few months, the kids have reached out and given back to the community by volunteering for NACE and Bundles of Love.

The spirit weaves through all of it, as he wraps them up in his love, their love for one another shines through. Especially, during the time of COVID, youth group has provided a safe place for kids to be kids, to connect with one another and to ultimately connect with God in a way that does not often happen for them on Sunday mornings sitting in church. We are a family, and all are welcome at our table.

Youth Group Upcoming Events:

Senior High Youth Group: Wednesday Night Fellowship 6p-8p- Open to all 9th -12th graders.

Ice Fishing February 28th 12p-8p



In December, the youth group handed out Christmas Baskets at NACE. They packed boxes with ham, potatoes, pie and other items for a Christmas meal.

Shopping for personal needs items for NACE. Did you know that NACE has to buy personal need items at market rate? It costs on average \$1500 per month to keep basic needs on hand at the food shelf such as toilet paper, shampoo, soap and other cleaning supplies.





**Spirit of Christ Lutheran Church
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