



Reminder – Joint Council

Joint Council Reminder: the parish’s Joint Council will meet on Tuesday, March 3rd at 7pm @Messiah.



Your Pastor's Ponderings

“Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let us go out to the field.’ And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel...” -- Genesis 4:8

Lenten greetings to all. Amazingly, the season of Lent is upon us again. Lent is the great forty days before Easter (not counting Sundays) that represent the time [Jesus](#) spent in the desert, where according to the [Bible](#) he [endured temptation](#) by [Satan](#). During this time, we the faithful are preparing for the annual commemoration of Jesus Passion (his denial, betrayal, and crucifixion) and his Resurrection. Traditionally, this time of preparation is to be spent practicing three disciplines of the church: [prayer](#) ([justice](#) towards God), fasting (justice towards self), and [almsgiving](#) (justice towards neighbor). We do this as sign and remembrance of Jesus life of justice.

Fittingly as we recall Jesus life that ended in part because of betrayal by his friends/family, it seems appropriate as I continue my series on important stories/characters in the Bible that this month we focus on one of the first acts of betrayal in scripture. I say one of the first because I can’t decide whether or not Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit was an act of betrayal (which in some sense it was a betrayal of God’s trust) or an act of disobedience. Regardless, our focus is on Cain and Abel.

Cain and Abel were the first children in the Bible. Cain was the first born. In that culture, the first born was usually the favored one because he would receive the larger share of the inheritance. Abel was the second child. We aren’t told much about their childhood or what kind of relationship the two had prior to the events in Genesis. The

two are born, they are assigned professions (Cain becomes a farmer, Abel a shepherd), and the next thing in the story they are presenting their offerings to God.

For some reason, God is displeased with Cain’s offering and finds pleasures with Abel. We aren’t really told why or what the difference is between their offerings. The best guess scholars can suggest is that God’s displeasure with Cain is because he simply offers God some of his fruits from his garden (rather than the best) while Abel offers God the “first” fruits (the best animals) of his flock. As a result of God’s favoritism toward Abel, Cain becomes jealous of his younger brother.

Cain's envy rises and he turns against his brother Abel. And God warns Cain, "sin is crouching at the door, its desire is for you and you must master it." (This is kind of our call during Lent and why some give up things for Lent – so that God may help us master our desires and temptations.) Sadly Cain is unable to master it and kills Abel (thus causing the Bible’s first murder), and "the very ground cries out" in response to the shedding of innocent blood.

The hard part of the story is that God does not prevent Cain from killing Abel (just as God does not prevent Jesus from being crucified). Rather God's work in the story is to call us to choose good and to renew the blessing that has been broken.

In the end, Cain survives although he is cast out of the land and away from God. His punishment is to be wanderer – to have no home. But just as Adam and Eve received the blessing of clothing even as they were cast out of the garden, Cain receives a blessing of sorts, the mark on his forehead to be seen as a sign of God’s mercy – he will have God’s protection that will prevent others from killing him as he wanders.

The ending to the story shows that God doesn't give up on anyone. As Rev. Nancy Rockwell said, “Even in the midst of evil, God is working to bring about good; and in the midst of despair, to bring about hope; in the midst of death, to bring about life. Wherever the intersection of evil and good are that's the cross”.

And that’s Lent – the intersection of Cain and Abel, of hurt and hope, of temptation and triumph, of gall and glory, of sin and salvation, of death and life. Of course, that’s what I think.

Pastor Will

Coming In March – CTIM: Congregations Together in Ministry

Topic: Open the Word -- Open the Book of Faith

On Saturday, March 28th, the Allegheny Synod is hosting a CTIM event at Mt. Calvary Lutheran in Johnstown. The event will feature a guest speaker – Brooks Schamm, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Gettysburg Seminary.

There will also be various workshops like: Open the Word; Discipleship Begins with the Heart; Real People, Real Stories; Health & Wholeness, etc. The cost is \$20 per person or \$15 per person with a group of five or more. Please see Pastor Will if you are interested in going. **The deadline to register is March 9th.**



Our Mid-week Lenten schedule is as follows:

- March 4th** – Mid-week: 6pm – Soup; 7pm – Worship @Mt. Calvary, Lavansville
- March 11th** – Mid-week: 6pm-Soup; 7pm – Worship @St. Luke's, Rockwood
- March 18th** – Mid-week: 6pm-Soup; 7pm – Worship @Messiah
- March 25th** – Mid-week: 6pm-Soup; 7pm – Worship @Mt. Zion, Bakersville
- April 1st** – Mid-week: 6pm-Soup; 7pm – Worship @ St. Paul's

Our theme for this mid-week time of Lenten observance will be **OVERHEARD: Conversations by the Cross**. This six-part Lenten worship series asks, "Did various people who were involved in our Lord's Passion ever have an opportunity to talk with one another about it?" People such as Malchus & Mark, Barabbas and Caiaphas, Pilate and his wife, Simon of Cyrene and the centurion, Mary and John, and the two thieves. If you could have listened to their conversations, what might you have **Overheard**



Rise N Shine with the Risen Lord

MESSIAH – Following Easter Sunrise Service @Messiah, we invite all early risers to attend our annual Easter Breakfast. All may come and partake of a feast of Ham N Eggs. Anyone who can stick around and help clean up after the meal (and before heading home to Easter Dinner), your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

SAMUEL'S—In the same glow of Easter's early morning, Samuel's invites everyone to their annual Easter Breakfast before worship (April 12) from 8AM to 9:30AM. Come and enjoy great food and good fellowship.



Lenten Observances – Some Notes about Worship

During Lent, we practice liturgical restraint and limit our decorations as reminders of our Lenten spiritual disciplines and Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Therefore, you may notice a few changes in our liturgy and in our worship space for Lent. These changes have been made to provide a more meaningful worship and Lenten season.

COMMUNION: Throughout Lent @Messiah & Samuel's, we will be using a set of pottery communion ware as a reflection of the simplicity of Lent and because it more closely resembles the table ware that might have been used in Jesus' day.

Please note because this set does not have a pouring chalice, when using this communion ware we will take communion by intinction. This means taking the bread and dipping it into the wine before eating.

A note about intinction: While intinction is not a highly common practice in the Lutheran church, it is an accepted method of distribution. And regardless of method, God's concern is that we receive Holy Communion in remembrance of him – the one of whose body and blood we partake and in whom we receive grace and forgiveness.

PS -- (If you should accidentally eat the bread before dipping, the pastor will provide you with an additional piece. Also, grape juice will continue to be available for those who prefer.)

THE SILENCE: Lent is a time of quiet reflection, a time to focus on the meaning of our baptism and our faith. Throughout our worship order, you will find times of silence for quiet reflection (before the worship, after the sermon, during communion, etc.) In this silence, may we be still and listen to the God who calms our anxiety and with whom we walk to Calvary.

THE ABSENCE OF CROSSES/BANNERS: Lent is a time of starkness and simplicity – where we take the focus away from the ornate trappings of worship and look upon the plain symbols of our faith. For this reason, we have removed all banners from the sanctuary as well as the processional and altar crosses. In their place, we focus on the rough and bare wooden cross such as it might have been in Jesus' day. It serves both as a reminder of Christ's cruel passion to come and of our Easter promise.

THE FONT: Lent is a time of reflecting on our human limitations and remembering that God, the fountain of living water, can replenish us. To remind us of this, the baptismal font has been filled with reflective river rock and water.

In addition, since Lent is a seasoning of turning around, of turning back to God as we repent and see ourselves differently, the font has been moved to the rear of the nave. During the confession and forgiveness, we will be asked to turn around and face the font as a physical reminder of this season of turning around.



There's Wisdom in the Word – Parish Bible Study

All are invited to come, pray, and study scripture as we continue to explore the Book of Faith. Our topic will be Devotional Bible Reading. Our session will include a video presentation by Dr. Mark Allan Powell.

Bible study meets on Tuesday, March 24th at 7pm or Wednesday, March 25th at 10:30am in the lounge at Messiah.

Confirmation Class **Confirmation**

***!!CHANGE IN SCHEDULE!!**

Due to some events that have changed since we made up the schedule last fall, we are switching the schedule for March 8 and March 15. On **March 8** we will be taking a **SABBATH** (no class), and on **March 15** we **WILL** be having **class**. Please make a note of it on your calendars! We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Thank you for your flexibility

A. Calendar

March 1 – 5pm: Class @MC

March 8 – TAKE A SABBATH – No Class*

March 15 – 5pm: Class @MC*

March 22 – 5pm: Class @MC

March 29 – 2pm: Lenten Food Collection, Meet at MESSIAH!

B. REMINDERS TO 3RD YEAR CONFIRMANDS

1) Day of Confirmation is: MAY 31ST

2) How are you coming on your service project?

Talk to Pastor Will if questions

3) Don't forget to select a Bible verse to read at your Confirmation

4) Don't forget to Turn in your Affirmation of Faith Report **by May 15th**

PS – Info about your Affirmation of Faith Report may be found in the material you received at the beginning of the year. If you need a refresher, please call Pastor Will at 926-2215.



Preview of Holy Week Worship –

April 5 – Sunday of the Passion and Palm Sunday
Regular Worship Times

April 8 – 6pm -- Passover Meal @Messiah

April 9 – 6:30pm – Maundy Thursday (Holy Communion/Handwashing)

@Samuel's – Combined Soup Supper and Worship
April 10 -- Good Friday (Tenebrae)@SP

@SP – 7pm

April 12 – The Resurrection of our Lord: Easter Sunday

6:30am – Sunrise Service of Holy Communion
@Messiah

8:30am – Service of Holy Communion @SP

10am – Service of Holy Communion @Samuel's



A Passover Celebration –

On **Wednesday of Holy Week, April 8**, all members of the parish are invited to attend a Passover observance and meal. Our meal and program begins at 6pm in the fellowship hall at Messiah. The meal takes place during the program about halfway through.

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Christians recall Passover as the final meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples before he was betrayed, arrested, and crucified. During that last supper, Jesus was celebrating the Passover as a remembrance of the time when God, through Moses, led the Israelites out of their slavery. Our observance will help us to learn a little more about Jesus' history and our ties to the Jewish faith.

Pastor Will is making the meal. So that we may know how much food to prepare and how many places to set up, please make reservations in advance by signing up by April 5th (Palm Sunday). A sign up sheet has been placed in the narthex of each congregation.

PS – Pastor Will is in need of a few readers including some youth to help with this celebration. Please let him know if you are interested in being part of this special Holy Week celebration.

MUSICAL EVENT – Geneva College Choir Concert

On Friday, March 6, the Lavansville-Bakersville Lutheran Parish will be hosting the Geneva College Choir, who will be performing a concert at 7:00 pm. The concert will take place at Mt. Calvary in Lavansville, and it is the first stop on Geneva's spring-break choir tour. A wide variety of music will be performed, so bring

your friends! Concert is free, but we will be receiving a free-will offering for help in gas expenses, etc. Mt. Calvary's Faith Hemminger is a member of the group. We still need housing for about 12 males. If you are able to host a few students, please contact the Lavansville/Bakersville parish office at 443-3965.

Housing Needed for Choir Students

Students from the Geneva College Choir will be looking for home-stays, so if you are willing to have a pair of students stay with you overnight and serve them breakfast before leaving Saturday morning, please call the L/B Church office at 443-3965 so that we can begin a list. If you have a preference for hosting boys or girls, please indicate that as well. We will be receiving a list from the college the beginning of February. We hope that you will share this musical opportunity with us!

P.S. – We are still in need of housing for 12 males of students.

If someone can let us know if they have any extra beds, and what size and would be interested in housing a pair please call L/B Church office.



On the Horizon: Worship Happenings in March

March 1 – Remember Your Baptism Sunday

The Bow in the Clouds is a sign of God's covenant with Noah, his family, and every living creature that God's promises to protect them from the devastation of the flood. Today through Jesus baptism and temptation as well as our own baptism, we see a sign of God's unflinching commitment and love for us as well.

March 8 – Sunday of the Everlasting Covenant

In Abraham and Sarah, God promises to make them ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith. We receive the promise of resurrection life in faith as well.

March 15 – God Alone Sunday

The Ten Commandments remind us that thou shall worship no other gods before me. God alone frees us from the powers that oppress us and as such we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives.

March 22 – Sign of the Cross Sunday

Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like Moses serpent in the wilderness, so that all who look to him in faith will live. The cross we receive at baptism is the sign we can look to in faith, for healing, for restored relationship with God, and for hope in all our days.

March 29 – Sunday of the New Covenant/Pulpit Swap

God promises Jeremiah a “new covenant.” We are given a new covenant in our baptisms whose promises draws us to God’s heart through Christ and God’s light and truth into our hearts.

On this day, as a sign of the covenant and partnership that Pastor Elisa and I have with each other and with our congregations, we will be swapping pulpits. In doing this, we share the gifts of each other with you and you with us.



VBS Meeting

Pastor Will would like to hold a Vacation Bible School Meeting on Tuesday, March 31st at 7:30pm @Messiah. He would like to look over possible curriculum, select dates to hold VBS, and organize workers willing to help out with this year’s VBS. Summer will be here before we know it. If you are not able to attend but are still interested, please let Pastor Will know.



New Members Class

Pastor Will is looking to hold New Members meetings. He is aware of several people interested in doing this. If there are any others interested in joining our congregation, learning about new member requirements, and other aspects of the Lutheran faith, please let him know. He will coordinate meeting times with the interested parties.



Joint Parish Worship Reflection:

On Sunday, February 1st, our five congregations gathered together for joint worship, fellowship, and to hear a special guest relate how his family and church survived Hurricane Ike and turned it into a ministry opportunity.

Pastor Chris Lake message’s was well received by every one who braved the ice and cold to join us at Mt. Calvary for a day of joint fellowship and celebration. He spoke of the terror of experiencing a hurricane first hand and the power of God to restore us in the midst of struggle. He spoke of the comfort of the liturgy and worship during a time of chaos. He also spoke of the ways that God makes restoration happen through the church (through people like us) when we look outside our church windows and move out to help others after we have been fed by God’s word. It was an inspiring word.

Thank you to Pastor Chris for joining us and sharing your story with us. Thank you to all our congregations for helping providing soup, sandwiches, and cookies. Thank you to Mt. Calvary for hosting us. Thank you everyone for being so welcoming to Pastor Chris. It was a delicious meal and delightful day. And we topped it all off with a Steelers win. Given all that, I’d have to say it was a pretty good Sunday, in fact, it was a super Sunday. ☺