**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**

**February 2016**

**Lent and Fasting**

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* – Romans 5:1 ESV

The month of February is well-known mainly for three reasons. First, there is the date of February 2, Groundhog Day. This is when the famous groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania crawls out of his hole in order to let the world know whether or not he sees his shadow, which supposedly determines whether or not we will have six more weeks of winter. Second, there is February 14, St. Valentine’s Day, which celebrates the joys of romantic love and the joys of giving and receiving greeting cards. Third, February is the shortest month of the year, having 28 days most of the time and 29 days during leap years.

But there is another event that takes place in February of this year. Just a few days before Valentine’s Day (February 10th this year), the church observes what is known as Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent. It is a time when we remember our mortality and acknowledge our sin before God in a very intentional way. Some churches have the custom of applying ashes to their foreheads as the pastor speaks the words that God spoke to Adam in Genesis chapter three: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” When we hear those words, we remember all of the ways that we have behaved as though we were God rather than understanding ourselves as children and servants of God.

Lent is a time when many people engage in what are called “spiritual disciplines,” which may include extra prayer and fasting, meaning they abstain from certain enjoyments. Some people find great value in these things, as they help people be focused on God during this time. The idea behind it is that whenever you feel a desire for the thing that you have chosen to abstain from, it is meant to remind you of the sacrifice that Christ made on your behalf.

Some find great value in “giving something up for Lent.” I have no interest in stopping them from doing so. In fact, Martin Luther himself acknowledged that fasting can serve a good purpose when you understand it in the right way. In his Small Catechism, he tells people that fasting from food can be a helpful way for Christians to prepare to receive Holy Communion, leading them to focus more on what God is providing for them.

However, I caution people against understanding fasting as something that will make you right with God or make God love you more. No “spiritual discipline” that you engage in can make God love you more. As our verse for the month of February says, peace with God comes through being put right with God through trust in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. This is not only true for the month of February or even only in the season of Lent. It is true for every moment of our lives. I wish you a good and warm February of 2016 AD!

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

As you probably know, Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present. We should never assume that we cannot learn something from them. So, each month, I will highlight the life and witness of a significant Christian person from the past.

For February of 2016, the person is a man named Ansgar. He is often commemorated on February 3.

Ansgar was born in 801 AD near Amiens, France. He was the first Christian missionary to northwestern Europe, first going to Denmark in 826 but meeting with little success. In 829 he went to Sweden and in Birka built the first church in Scandinavia. In 831 he was named Archbishop of Hamburg, with a view to making this a base for his missionary operations. When the Danes destroyed Hamburg in 845, Ansgar was made Archbishop of Bremen and Hamburg. He returned to Sweden and Denmark and labored hard, but shortly after his death in 865, the work he had begun came to a halt; it was not resumed for two centuries. Scandinavia would not become Christian until the tenth and eleventh centuries. Ansgar is held in respect by Scandinavian Lutherans today, especially by the Danes. Numerous churches, societies, and educational institutions are named for him. In American Lutheran history, the monthly publication of one of the Danish ethnic Lutheran denominations was entitled “The Ansgar Lutheran.”

The efforts that Ansgar put forth to bring the message of Jesus Christ to those who had never heard about him remain relevant for Christians living in a society that is increasingly indifferent and even hostile to the Christian faith.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Featured Hymn for February**

***In the Cross of Christ I Glory***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 138*

1. In the cross of Christ I glory, towering over the wrecks of time. All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.
2. When the woes of life overtake me, hopes deceive and fears annoy, never shall the cross forsake me; lo, it glows with peace and joy.
3. When the sun of bliss is beaming light and love upon my way, from the cross the radiance streaming adds more luster to the day.
4. Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, by the cross are sanctified; peace is there the knows no measure, joys that through all time abide.
* John Bowring, 1792-1872

*Note: A favorite Lenten hymn, this was supposedly written after Conkey (the author of the tune) saw a cross in a ruined cathedral in Macau, China.*

**Monthly Watchword for February**

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” – Mark 11:25 ESV

**What is a “Watchword”?**

The Moravian Church (a close cousin to Lutherans) began the practice in 1731 of selecting daily texts (Bible verses) for prayer and reflection, which continues to this day. Many Christians around the world use these Daily Texts as a part of their prayer life. They are included each year in a book available from Mount Carmel Ministries near Alexandria, Minnesota.

In addition to this, they began to select a theme verse for each week, called a “watchword.” You will notice in the bulletins for worship on Sunday mornings that I include that watchword for each week and begin worship by speaking that verse out loud, setting the tone for worship with that word from God.

The Moravian Church also selects theme verses for each month as well as for each year. Lutherans and other Christians in Germany are much more familiar with using these “watchwords,” and I am glad to have learned of them from my time spent there. For your own reflection, I will include the monthly watchword in the newsletter each month.

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Apostles’ Creed: The Third Article**

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.***

*What does this mean?*

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith. In the same way, he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and preserves it in unity with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church, he daily forgives abundantly all my sins and the sins of all believers, and at the last day will raise me and all the dead, and will grant everlasting life to me and all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.*

**Ushers and Cleaners for February**

**Head Usher: Ushers:**

Lacey Barger Scott and Christine Eisenhauer

 Scott and Paula Kay Veldhouse

 Don and Bonnie Paulsen

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC**

Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lindy is now a member of two Lutheran organizations: Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and the North American Lutheran Church (the NALC). If you are interested in learning more about these groups, you can visit their websites. For LCMC, www.lcmc.net. For the NALC, www.thenalc.org. Additionally, you can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses: http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters and http://thenalc.org/newsletter/

**Bible Study:**

For those available on Wednesday mornings, please feel free to join Pr. Tom for Bible study! Typically we will hold Bible study every other Wednesday, usually the second and the fourth Wednesdays of the month. We will gather between 10:45 and 11:00 and then proceed until about noon.

**Website**

Good Shepherd now has a website! It is basic at this point, but additional things will be added to it eventually. There are already some photos that have been uploaded. The web address is as follows: www.gselclindy.weebly.com

**Scripture Readings and Watchwords for Sundays in February**

**The Transfiguration of our Lord (February 7):** “And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.” – Matthew 17:8 NRSV

*Psalm 99*

*Deuteronomy 34:1-12*

*Hebrews 3:1-6*

*Luke 9:28-36*

**First Sunday in Lent (February 14):** “No one who believes in Christ will be put to shame.” – Romans 10:11 NRSV

*Psalm 91:1-13*

*Deuteronomy 26:1-11*

*Romans 10:8b-13*

*Luke 4:1-13*

**Second Sunday in Lent (February 21):** “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” – Psalm 27:1 NRSV

*Psalm 27*

*Genesis 15:1-12; 17-18*

*Philippians 3:17-4:1*

*Luke 13:31-35*

**Third Sunday in Lent (February 28):** “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.” – Isaiah 55:6 NRSV

*Psalm 85*

*Ezekiel 33:7-20*

*1 Corinthians 10:1-13*

*Luke 13:1-9*

**Announcement about Upcoming First Communion Instruction**

As was the case last year, instruction for fifth graders of the congregation in preparation for their first Holy Communion will be offered during the season of Lent. The dates will be Wednesday February 24 and Wednesday March 9 at 5:00 PM. It is required to attend both of these classes in order to participate in First Communion on April 3 (The second Sunday of Easter). Contact Pastor Tom with any questions.

**Confirmation Class Schedule**

Confirmation class will not meet during the season of Lent (beginning February 10). However, the confirmation students will take turns assisting the pastor during the Wednesday evening Lenten services. We will work out the schedule soon. Remember that Wednesday evening Lenten services are an opportunity to complete worship notes (a part of confirmation requirements).

**Confirmation Sunday**

The rite of confirmation will be held during the worship service on Sunday, April 17. This is the fourth Sunday of Easter, which is traditionally known as the Sunday of the Good Shepherd. It is fitting, as young people make a public profession of their faith, to remember that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd throughout our entire lives, feeding us with the new and forgiven life that only he can give and drawing us back to him as we go astray in life.

**Wednesday Lenten Worship**

Evening worship will be held during the season of Lent on Wednesday nights at 7:00 PM, beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 10. As with last year, Pastor Tom and Pastor Theresa Jacobson will switch back and forth.

**A Scout is Reverent**

Scout Sunday will be on February 7, 2016 this year. This day is meant to mark the founding of the Scouts in the United States and is an opportunity for the congregation to honor Scouts and Scouters, past and present. The Scouting program in Bloomfield is more than just an activity for our youth to learn about the outdoors. Scouting provides fun, fellowship, and training to our youth as well as youth in our community. It emphasizes honesty, self-reliance, and respect. The  program affects character, citizenship, and personal fitness. If you are interested in learning more about scouting please contact  Allen Jeannoutot at 402-841-8319. The congregation will recognize Tyler Guenther on this Sunday as a member of the Boy Scouts.

**February 2016**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  | **1** | 2 | **3****Confirmation class, 5:00 PM****Membership committee, 7:00 PM** | **4** | **5** | **6** |
| **7****Sunday School, 9:30 AM****Worship 10:30 AM****Holy Communion****Color: White** | **8** | **9** | **10****Bible study, 10:45****Church council, 6:00 PM****Ash Wednesday worship, 7:00 PM** | **11** | **12** | **13** |
| **14****Sunday School, 9:30 AM****Worship, 10:30 AM****Color: Purple** | **15** | **16** | **17****WNALC/WOW meeting, 10:00 AM****Lenten evening worship, 7:00 PM** | **18** | **19** | **20** |
| **21****Sunday School, 9:30 AM****Worship 10:30 AM with Holy Communion****Color: Purple** | **22** | **23** | **24****Bible Study, 10:45 AM****First Communion class, 5:00 PM****Lenten evening worship, 7:00 PM** | **25** | **26** | **27** |
| **28****Sunday School, 9:30 AM****Worship, 10:30 AM****Color: Purple** | **29** |  |  |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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