

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 267, 201 Veterans Dr., Columbus, TX 78934

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February 18, 2024 Contemporary 11:05 AM

First Sunday in Lent

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Congregational Chair			Donna Maas
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			Tomas Rosales
Lighthouse Coordinator	lighthouse.splc@gmail.com		Elizabeth Smith
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor (Luke 10:27)

VISION STATEMENT: We will work to strengthen and grow closer in relationship to God and to one another.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshiping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***
- *Hearing Assist devices are available for those who need assistance in hearing worship service better. Please see a person in the Sound Room (Usher Room) to request the use of a device during worship.*

* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

INTRODUCTION

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us

through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS

(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)

INSTALLATION OF CHURCH COUNCIL AND CLA BOARD MEMBERS

* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who writes the law on our hearts, who draws all people together through Jesus.

C Amen.

P Held in God's mercy, let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another, first privately then together publicly.

Silence for reflection and private confession of personal sins, then join in with combined voices this printed confession.

P Holy God,

C we confess that we are caught in snares of sin and cannot break free. We hoard resources while our neighbors are hungry and cold. We speak in ways that silence others. We are silent when we should speak up. We keep score in our hearts. We let hurts grow into hatred. For all these things and for sins only you know, forgive us, Lord. Amen.

P Here is a flood of grace: Out of love for the whole world, God draws near to us, breaks every snare of sin, washes away our wrongs, and restores the promise of life through ☩ Jesus Christ.

C Amen.

GOSPEL SONG: BLESSED BE YOUR NAME

**Blessed be Your name, in the land that is plentiful;
Where Your streams of abundance flow, blessed be Your name.
And blessed be Your name, when I'm found in the desert place;
Though I walk through the wilderness, blessed be Your name.**

PRE-CHORUS:

**Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise!
And when the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say,**

CHORUS:
***“Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your name!
Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your glorious name!”***

GOSPEL: Mark 1:9-15
The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tested by Satan so that he might proclaim the good news of God’s reign.

A The holy gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 1, verses 9-15.

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.
¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” ¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. ¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

GOSPEL SONG: BLESSED BE YOUR NAME
Blessed be Your name, when the sun's shining down on me;
When the world's all as it should be, blessed be Your name.
And blessed be Your name, on the road marked with suffering;
Though there's pain in the offering, blessed be Your name.

PRE-CHORUS:
Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise!
And when the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say,

CHORUS:
***“Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your name!
Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your glorious name!”***

BRIDGE:
You give and take away. You give and take away.
My heart will choose to say, “Lord, blessed be Your name!” (x2)

CHORUS

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: NEW CREATION**
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

I thought I knew what I was talkin' about, when I testified of Your great love.
Well I was a soul on fire, there was no doubt.
Bible-believin', saved, and washed in the blood.
But it wasn't 'til I stumbled, and made my mistakes
That I could know in my soul how amazing is grace!

CHORUS:
You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.
You turned my old song into a symphony.
And with Your spirit living inside of me,
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

And now I know what You were talkin' about.
Went from my head into my heart.
When I was broken at the bottom I found,
You're my Healer and Redeemer, Jesus, that's who You are! CHORUS

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .
Well it wasn't 'til I stumbled, and made my mistakes
That I could know in my soul how amazing is grace!

LAST CHORUS:
You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.
You turned my old song into a symphony.
And with Your spirit living inside of me,
I'm a new creation! Oh, oh oh oh. . .

You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.
You turned my old song into a symphony.
And with Your spirit living inside of me,
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

And with Your spi-rit living inside of me,
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!
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BAPTISM OF Jack Beau Busselman See Insert

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS

- A Trusting in God’s promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for peace in all the world, especially in war-torn areas of Ukraine, Sudan, Niger Israel and the Middle East. Bring an end to wars and the destruction of lives and your creation.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for the family and friends of Larry Kneller who passed away this past week. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Kari Stokes; Tigger Bergfeld; Clemons Venghaus; James Moerbe; Bill Neisner; Joey Denby; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Abby Bankston; Debra Sandell; Noe Vela; Shirley Trahan; Kristen Downing; Ashley Roberts; Michael Yancey; Amanda Aramijo; Zachary Schulke; Herbie Kollatschny; Tom Russell, Jr.; Melda Coleman; Al Gene Canik; Larry Bookout; Mike Wostarek; Elizabeth Frisby; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Laura Walla; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; and Bob Loy.

- A We pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:
Jamee Albert; Kristen O'Leary Bridges; Abegail Gatzke; Chelsea Gilstrap; Calli Guthmann; Dhara Comans; Nelma Grace Weathers; Rosalinda Rosales; and Kelsey Page Bakken that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*

Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher; Walter Glaeser, Jr.; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb; and Lydia Rojas.

- A We pray for all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel that they are protected and kept safe. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Law Enforcement Officers: Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abbigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Zane Weido; Josh Jones; Terri Neunendorff; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Travis Neuendorff; Nathan Bookout; Brenda Henkes; and Jan Willette; and, as well as those active duty military members including Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; Kevin Gonzalez; Evelyn Rojas; Nelson Beettner; and Hugh & Katie Hajdik.

- A We pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregations Cristo Rey and their Pastor Armando Capcha and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad and their leaders Pastors Gumer and Naomi Anton in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

A brief silence.

- A Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C Amen.

*** PEACE**

- P As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the “Peace of the Lord” with your neighbors.)*

(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)

OFFERING and POWER OF ONE

“Power of One” is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their

worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These “Power of One” dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.

* OFFERING PRAYER

P Jesus, you are the bread of life and the host of this meal. Bless these gifts that we have gathered that all people may know your goodness. Feed us not only with this holy food but with hunger for justice and peace. We pray this in your name.
A Amen.

* REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS

* LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to sing.
C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

* INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Bread for the journey. A feast for hungry hearts. Come!
C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)
{Distribution will be continuous. All are welcome for communion. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor “Gluten-free, please.” Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P Generous God, at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace. As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread, now make us one loaf to feed the world; in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life.
C Amen.

* BLESSING

P Beloved, we are God’s own people, holy, washed, renewed. God bless you and keep you, shower you with mercy, fill you with courage, and give you peace. ✠ In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

* CLOSING SONG: SING WHEREVER I GO

CHORUS All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.

God is for me, He's not against me. I will hold to the plans He has for me.
When I am broken, He will fix me. I will call on the name of the Lord.

CHORUS All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.

He's my heartsong in my sorrow. He's my hope and my strength for tomorrow.
When the storms rise all around me, I will call on the name of the Lord.

CHORUS All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.

I got joy, joy, joy. . . deep in my soul!
I will sing, sing, sing. . . wherever I go!

CHORUS All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.

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* DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Share the good news. C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: Aaron & Amanda Oppermann; Loraine Gast
LAY READER: Debbie Kethan
STREAMING: Chase Brasher
SOUND: Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs

ACOLYTE: Berkley Anderson
POWER POINT: Kay Wesson
ALTAR GUILD: Donna Schindler

WELCOME: During the season of Lent, may we look to Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2), and grow in love toward God and one another. Welcome to worship.

Congratulations to Dylan and Courtney Busselman on the baptism of their son Jack Beau Busselman. Jack is being baptized during today's service. Sponsors for Jack are D. J. and Julianne Busselman.

We extend our Christian sympathy to Mike Hackfeld and family for the loss of his step-father Larry Kneller this past week. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

COLLECTION OF OFFERING: Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes “Power of One” dollars.

Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses: \$8,405.00

Attendance: February 10 & 11, 2024 – 200	Contributions: Feb. 10 & 11 – \$8,677.80
Power of One: February 10 & 11, 2024 – \$45.00	Building Fund: Feb. 10 & 11 – \$3,138.23

Attendance: Wed., February 14, 2024 – 169	Contributions: Wed., Feb. 14 – \$3,118.00
Power of One: Wed., February 14, 2024 – \$16.00	Building Fund: Wed., Feb. 14 – \$30.00

Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Feb. 7 –	98 Total
BLAST/Confirmation: 82	Support Staff: 16

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Feb. 14 –	115 Total
BLAST/Confirmation: 92	Support Staff: 23

ATTENTION: Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available for use by our young members and guests! You can find them on the coat hooks in the coat area of the narthex. After worship, **please place the used activity bags and their contents in the receptacle in the narthex.**

Thank you! ☺

+ Lenten Devotional: For Lent this year, we encourage you to pick up a Lenten Devotional written by one of our own members, Elizabeth Smith. You can buy it in the church office. If we run out, there will be a sign-up sheet in the office as well. The cost is \$5 or you can go directly to Amazon and buy one for \$6.99 under the title “Greatest Love: A Lenten Bible Study Journal” by Elizabeth Smith.



Each Midweek Lenten service we will be looking more in depth at some of the disciples and how the things that challenged them may be what challenges us and how Jesus addresses them. So, make plans to come and learn more about Peter, James & John, Nathaniel, Thomas and Simon the Zealot. Services are at **4:30 PM** with soup and sandwiches in the Lighthouse afterwards. The meal is a youth service project for our church, so, a goodwill offering is greatly appreciated. We look forward to having you join us for worship during this special time, and enjoy food and fellowship after the services.

**** OYSTER/FISH FRY TICKETS!!** If you are in need of tickets for the annual Columbus Volunteer Fire Department's Oyster & Fish Fry, please **see Pastor Alan** – or a fireman of your choice. The event will be **Sunday February 25, 2024 at Columbus Hall** (formerly K. of C. Hall) 11:00AM – 1:00 PM. The meal will be dine in or drive-thru. *Advance tickets are \$30 for the oyster/fish combo ticket; at the door are \$35.* (If you want only oysters, you need to purchase the combo ticket.) Advance tickets for fish only are \$20.00; at the door are \$25.00. ******

♦ **God's Gals** will be meeting **Sunday, February 25, 2024 at 6:00 PM at Blake's** in Columbus. All women of St. Paul are invited to come enjoy food, fun and fellowship! Questions? Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. ♦

Save the Date!! The **Landscape Team** will have a **work day on Saturday, March 9, 2024 at 9:00 AM**. We hope to plant trees, Pink Muhly Grass, trim trees, remove dead and unwanted shrubs and plant new shrubs in the flower beds, clean the gutters and more. Please bring your shovels! Also, a designated fund has been set up for anyone wishing to contribute money to help cover the cost of purchasing plants, tress, fertilizer, etc.. Just make sure you designate your donation for “Landscaping”. If you have any questions, please contact John Brasher at 979-253-1448. Thank you!

♦ **SR. Explorers:** *We will be seeking bluebonnets and Blue Bell Ice Cream on our March Senior Explorers trip!* On **Thursday, March 28, 2024** we will **depart from St. Paul at 10:00 AM** and travel down part of the Texas Bluebonnet Trail to Chappel Hill, where we will enjoy lunch at Bevers Kitchen. We will then head to Brenham for dessert at the Blue Bell Creamery. Our goal is to **return to St. Paul around 3:00 PM**. Please sign the sign-up sheet in the narthex by Sunday, March 24, 2024. If you have any questions, please call Kevin Page at 979-732-0845.

● **Elementary Explore Retreat at Lutherhill:** Calling all happy campers! **Students in grades 1-6** are invited to come out to the Hill to explore all that camp has to offer – from the giant swing to slingshot, arts & crafts to campfire worship. This retreat will be **March 22-24, 2024** at Lutherhill in La Grange, Texas. This is a great opportunity for anyone that is anxious to get to Lutherhill, wants to do a trial run before summer, or to simply have an adventure outside of their regular weekend routine. Seasoned and new campers alike will explore all that camp has to offer. It's always a fun weekend! Stephanie Polasek will transport our group to Lutherhill on Friday, March 22 and stay the weekend with the students. Please register your child at Lutherhill.org/explore. **Cost is \$95 per camper.** Let Stephanie know once your student is registered. For more info, visit Lutherhill.org/explore or contact Stephanie.



Bus Drivers Needed!! Our St. Paul Bus Driver Team needs some volunteer reinforcement. We can use a handful of additional drivers to occasionally chip in and transport some of our church family to and fro. **No CDL required, but a CDL doesn't hurt the possibilities!** No big strength requirements or much of anything else other than being a caring person, a responsible driver and a little free time occasionally. We can also always work in pairs. *We will train and support you all the way and only use your time and love when it fits in for you.* **Contact Kevin Page at 979-732-0845 (call or text) if interested or if you have any questions.** Thank you for considering this!

♥ **Help Us Meet Our Neighbors!** *We need a Team Leader for our annual National Night Out in October*, coordinating the participants and carrying on this very worthy National effort to bring communities together. We have experience to share and lists of previous event participants. Lots of help and support. Please let Kevin Page (979-732-0845) or Pastor Alan know if you are interested or have questions. Thanks for considering this very worthwhile endeavor. – Kevin



God's work. Our hands. **God's Work, Our Hands: Team Leader Needed** – Our once-a-year work day has a huge impact on our community as it is a part of the yearly nation-wide effort. The nation-wide date for this event is in September. However, due to the heat, the last few years we moved our date to late October-early November for cooler weather. We need a coordinator for our service projects that day. If you feel inspired to step up and help in this role, please contact Kevin Page at 979-732-0845 or Pastor Alan. There will be much support and help available! Thank you so much for your consideration. – Kevin

► **The Mowing Team is looking for more people to help mow the interior church lawn.** Typically it takes an hour and a half, or less, to mow and edge. Please call John Brasher at 979-253-1448 if you are interested or if you have any questions.

♪♪♪ **Musicians Wanted for Praise Band!!** The St. Paul Praise Band is in need of a keyboard player. They would also like to add at least one guitarist, a bass guitarist and singers. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Tracy Baker at 713-516-8017. ♪♪♪

● **Women of JOY Bible Study:** The Women of JOY Bible Study group meets on Mondays to cook and have interesting Bible study and discussions. The **first Monday** of the month we **meet in the Lighthouse to cook** for BLAST. The **2nd and 4th Mondays** of the month we meet in the **high school room (old choir room) for Bible Study**. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Gerri Hackfeld at 979-732-4711.

♥ **Grief Support Group:** The Grief Support Group is for anyone who has lost a loved one, either recently or a few years ago. We share and support each other. Come join us and get support from others walking this journey. We meet at **5:30 PM** in the youth room (formerly the choir room) the **third Thursday of the month**. **NOTE:** You do not have to share or talk until you are ready! If you have questions, please contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

♦ **LIGHTHOUSE COORDINATOR: Elizabeth Smith** is our coordinator for the Lighthouse! If you wish to rent the Lighthouse for an event, you will need to contact her. You can email her at lighthouse.spkc@gmail.com or call or text her at (713)-799-3484. Also, ***if you are interested in opening and closing the Lighthouse whenever the Lighthouse is rented out for various events, please contact Liz.***

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Mon., Feb. 19 –	Office Closed! (Presidents' Day) 1:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor to TLC 6:00 PM – Call Team Meeting
Tues., Feb. 20 –	8:15 AM – Staff Meeting 10:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library) 5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
Wed., Feb. 21 –	Newsletter Deadline!! 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel 9:00 AM – Morning Circle (library) 10:00 AM-1:00 PM – Seniors Together (Lighthouse) 4:30 PM – Lenten Worship Service 5:00-6:00 PM – Soup & Sandwiches (Lighthouse) 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & HS Youth
Thurs., Feb. 22 –	10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)
Sat., Feb. 24 –	7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., Feb. 25 –	9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship 11:00 AM-1:00 PM – CVFD Oyster Fry (Columbus Hall) 6:00 PM – God's Gals to Blake's, Columbus 6:00-8:00 PM – The Gathering

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, February 18, 2024 Martin Luther, renewer of the church, died 1546

Though he began his adult church life as a simple Augustinian monk, Luther challenged the abuses he saw in the church, and his work eventually led to the Protestant Reformation. Luther's accomplishments included liturgical reform, translation of the Bible, and creation of the Small and Large Catechisms.

Friday, February 23, 2024 Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156

Because he is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation, as well as the important early church fathers Irenaeus and Ignatius, Polycarp serves as a vital link in church history. He was burned at the stake at age 86 for refusing to renounce his faith.

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OTHER READINGS: Genesis 9:8-17

Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.

The reading begins:

⁸God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

PSALM: Psalm 25:1-10

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. ²My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. ³Let none who look to you be put to shame; rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous. ⁴Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths. ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long. ⁶Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting. ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD. ⁸You are gracious and upright, O LORD; therefore you teach sinners in your way. ⁹You lead the lowly in justice and

teach the lowly your way. ¹⁰All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.

OTHER READINGS: 1 Peter 3:18-22

As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.

The reading begins:

¹⁸Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you — not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE POWER OF WATER

Water is an integral part of the created order. Water sustains and fosters life; too little or too much water can end it. A glance at the news headlines points out the destructive power of water's presence or absence: In the United States alone, 2011 saw severe droughts afflict several parts of the country. On the opposite end of the spectrum, floods ravaged the Plains states in the spring and summer, displacing from their homes many people who live near rivers and streams. For those dwelling on or near the Eastern Seaboard, hurricane season is a tense time every year. Yet we need water as much or more than we need food, shelter, or the other “staples” of human life. Since ancient times we have established our communities near sources of water. We cannot survive long without it. The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus only after his baptism by John, yet the Spirit immediately drives Jesus into the desert - a place defined by its lack of water. Through water and the word, in baptism our old, sinful self is put to death, and we are reborn as children of God. But the current that flows through these paradoxes is this: in death and life, in flood and drought, God remains faithful. God's mercy and steadfast love “are from everlasting.”

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Each year on the first week in Lent we hear about Jesus being tested in the wilderness. In this way Jesus joined with us, who are also, one way or another, tested in some wilderness. As we move through the forty days of Lent, we omit the worship days in that count. Worship days are a celebration of Christ's resurrection! Welcome to worship! Today we are both in Lent and beyond Lent.

Each year, Lent begins with an account from one of the synoptic gospels of the testing of Jesus. Jesus was truly human, suffering from the devil's temptations no less than we, and so he can stand by us when we are tested. We too are accompanied with the Spirit of God, and we can take comfort from the angels attending us.

Mark’s entire focus is the baptism, with no debate between family about its righteousness as occurs in Matthew. It is an incredible experience: the appearance of the incarnate God, the tearing of the heavens, forty days of trials, and the beginning of Jesus’ ministry all happen in seven short verses. When miraculous and transformative work takes place, we can sometimes get lost in the details. Can we follow the example of Mark’s gospel and focus on what is most true?

Lent is the oldest of Christian liturgical seasons, yet every year it is introduced anew. Children begin gaining greater understanding. People new to this church or new to church overall may question the changes in service music, language, paraments, and themes. What differences stand out to you? Does anything require explanation? Ask questions! Lent is a time of self-reflection and study designed to invite you to experience the Word with new eyes and new ears whether you are new to the church or have heard the stories many times.

In the journey of Lent, both as mirror to Christ’s temptation in the wilderness as well as doorway to our own lifelong walk with forgiveness, it is essential to remember that faithful practice does not searate the body from the mind or heart or spirit or soul. Lent does not demand severe self-discipline leading to knowledge or insight. Rather, knowledge and insight are gained by daily reconciliation. Remember, your human body is made of blessed earth and imbued with the image of God.

KID STUDY:

Imagine you are heading out on a trip. What do you pack to prepare for your time away? You’ll need to stay safe and meet your basic needs while you are away. The season of Lent lasts for 40 days and ends with Easter. During this time, remember that God alone is the one who daily gives you what you need. God’s promise, or *covenant*, provides us with much more than just the essentials! Each day God gives mercy, forgiveness, grace, and love that we do not have to earn. How might we accept these promises? How might we then share these promises with other people?

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Mystical and salutary is this number, forty. For when in the beginning human iniquity covered the face of the earth, God, dissolving the clouds of heaven for the space of this number of days, covered the whole earth with a flood. The deluge of those days must be called a mercy, in that through it iniquity was crushed and justice upheld. The deluge came through mercy as a sort of baptism, in which the face of the earth was renewed. For as Noah was saved in the ark, while human iniquity was drowned in the flood, so by the waters of baptism the church is borne close to heaven, and faith reigns on earth, as coming forth from the ark of the Savior. Just so as Noah received his children into the ark, so do we also earnestly desire to receive our children into this ark. - Maximus of Turin [Maximus, in Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers, II, 93-94.]

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Next Week's Theme (Feb. 24 & 25): Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me

Next Week's Scriptures (Feb. 24 & 25):

First Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

“God blesses Abraham and Sarah.”

Psalm: Psalm 22:23-31

“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD.” (Ps. 22:27)

Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

“The promise to those who share Abraham's faith.”

Gospel: Matthew 8:31-38

“The passion prediction.”