

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

PH# (979) 732-2423 Fax (979) 733-0489

E-mail: admin@splctx.org www.splctx.com **Pastor:** pastor.akethan@gmail.com

March 10, 2024 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Fourth 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			Kevin Page
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			Tomasa 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

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

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.)

* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P As we enter into worship, we drop and leave behind that which clings to us that keeps us from fully seeing the light. As we have ourselves sinned, we also hold onto the sin that others have done unto us. As we come into the light today, the presence of Christ, we humbly ask God to forgive us our sins and help us carry the light of Christ into a world that at times is very dark.

(Silence for private confession.)

P If you are truly sorry and asking God for help, here is the promise he commanded the leaders in his church to proclaim, "You are forgiven." May this forgiveness free you and help you to live; to live in Jesus' name.

C Amen.

GOSPEL SONG: COME TO US

**Scattered and broken, bent in our way. We are Your people, gathered to praise You.
A vineyard up-rooted, narrow in sight, Come, Lord of Glory! Come, Lord of Light!**

CHORUS:

Come to us, oh Lord of Glory and shine in our hearts.

Come to us, oh Lord of Glory and make us anew.

We adore You! We adore You! We adore You, sweet Lord of Glory!

**Come, Lord, our Dayspring, come from on high. As we Your people, gather to praise You.
Unworthy to taste from Your heavenly vine, But Your word will heal us. Come, light divine!**

CHORUS

**Come Root of Jesse, come David's Son, Come, Star of Morning. We come to praise You!
Hope of Creation, of all humankind. Reign over body, spirit, and mind!**

CHORUS TWICE

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GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.

A The holy gospel according to St. John, chapter 3, verses 14-21.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁴“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

* SERMON SONG: YOU ARE THE LIGHT
We are the people of God. The sons and the daughters of love.
Forgiven, restored and redeemed. Living our lives to the praise of our King!
We are the ones who will shine His light in the darkness of night.
The hopeless, the broken, the poor; they will be hopeless and broken no more.

CHORUS:
You are the light, the light of the world and we shine You, Lord!
You are the light, the light of the world and we shine You, Lord!

BRIDGE: (Sing twice)
We shine like stars in the universe, proclaiming the hope of our God
To the sons and the daughters in all the earth, WE SHINE YOU, LORD!

CHORUS

To the lost and the broken, the hurting and hopeless, we shine You, Lord!
To the ones who are weary, the burdened and suffering, we shine You, Lord!
We shine like stars in the universe; we shine, we shine!
To the sons and the daughters in all the earth, we shine You, Lord, YEAH...

CHORUS
CCLI Song #4939849 Words and Music by Steve Fee ©2007 Sixsteps Songs | Worship Together Music. CCLI Lic #1729377

* APOSTLES' CREED
A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
C I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

(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 Gracious God, your love unites. Give vision to the global church and foster cooperation in mission. Increase inter-religious understanding and ecumenical dialog.

A brief silence.
A Incarnate God, your love enlightens. Open our hearts and minds to fresh understandings of our faith. Deepen our love for you and for one another. Teach us to pray for our enemies.

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 all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Nelma & Glen Strey; Annabelle Shrader; Wanda Yancey; Heidi Shrader; 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 and especially for:
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; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Laura Walla; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; and Bob Loy that they may know comfort and strength.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:
Jamee Albert; Abegail Gatzke; Chelsea Gilstrap; Calli Guthmann; Dhara Comans; Rosalinda Rosales; Kelsey Page Bakken; Hailey Johnson; and Holly Fristch 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.)*
Madelyn Braden; Nelda Moore; Clemons Venghaus; Joey Denby; 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; Jan Willette; 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 thank you for the privilege of walking alongside our brothers and sisters in Peru and the Central African Republic. Bless their leaders and congregations as they show your light in the midst of darkness. Bless our Missionary Dina and her family.

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 offering 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.

C Amen.

*** REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS**

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

- P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

- P Come and receive the light of Christ.

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.
C **Amen.**

* **CLOSING SONG: ALL THE PEOPLE SAID, “AMEN!”**
You are not alone if you are lonely. When you feel afraid you're not the only.
We are all the same in need of mercy... to be forgiven and be free.
It's all you got to lean on but thank God it's all you need!

CHORUS:
*And all the people said Amen! Whoa – oh – oh;
And all the people said Amen!
Give thanks to the Lord for His love never ends.
And all the people said Amen!*

If you're rich or poor it doesn't matter. Weak or strong you know love's what we're after.
We're all broken but we're all in this together... God knows we stumble and fall.
And He so loved the world, He sent His Son to save us all.

CHORUS:
*And all the people said Amen! Whoa – oh – oh;
And all the people said Amen!
Give thanks to the Lord for His love never ends.
And all the people said Amen!*

BRIDGE:
Blessed are the poor in spirit who are torn apart.
Blessed are the persecuted and the pure in heart.
Blessed are the people hungry for another start.
For theirs is the kingdom, the kingdom of God.

CHORUS TWICE

TAG END
And all the people said, “Amen!”

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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. Shine with light. **C Thanks be to God, and we will.**

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USHERS: John, Terri & Chase Brasher
LAY READER: Debbie Kethan
STREAMING: Chase Brasher
SOUND: Stephanie Polasek
ACOLYTE: Dylan Glueck
POWER POINT: Peggy Geisler
ALTAR GUILD: Marilyn Yearwood

WELCOME: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16). May you sense that divine love through this time of worship.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Ruth Bedford to the glory and honor of God and in honor of late husband Victor's birthday on March 14.

*** Notice!!* Pastor Alan and Debbie will taking some time off during Spring Break this next week, March 11-15, 2024. In case of a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor John Hunsicker at 979-733-4519. **

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: March 2 & 3, 2024 – 208
Power of One: March 2 & 3, 2024 – \$44.00
Contributions: March 2 & 3 – \$11,355.80
Building Fund: March 2 & 3 – \$5,458.23

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., March 6 – **88 Total**
BLAST/Confirmation: 71 **Support Staff:** 17

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.

• **Neighbor-to-Neighbor:** The Neighbor-to-Neighbor volunteers will be having another workday this month – **Wednesday, March 13, 2024**. The group will meet at 1:30 PM in the church library. If you have questions about the group, please contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350. We will be happy to have you join us!

PERU TEAM FUNDRAISER: The Peru Team is having their next drive-thru fundraiser on **Tuesday, March 19, 2024 from 5:00-7:00 PM** at the Lighthouse. Werner's will be catering a meal of chicken parmesan with linguini, glazed carrots, green salad and a roll. The cost is **\$13 per ticket**. Tickets may be purchased from any Peru Team member or in the church office. The deadline to purchase tickets is Wednesday, March 13, 2024.

Columbus Food Pantry: It is time for our church to help at the Columbus Food Pantry! The dates are March 14 & 15, 2024. The Food Pantry is located at the First United Methodist Church Family Life Center, 419 Washington Street. On **Thursday, March 14** the food delivery truck will arrive and grocery bags will be prepared; please arrive at 8:30 AM to help. On **Friday, March 15** the food will be distributed 9:00 AM-1:00 PM. Please arrive at 8:30 AM to help with the food distribution. Please mark your calendars to help with this important community service! If you have any questions, please call 979-500-4292 or 979-732-2643.

► The **Boys and Girls Clubs of Champion Valley** (Columbus, Schulenburg and Weimar) are holding a **BINGO fundraiser** on **Sunday, March 17, 2024** at The Oaks at High Hill, Schulenburg, Texas. Doors open at 2:00 PM; Bingo from 3:00-7:00 PM. **Presale tickets are \$25** for one Bingo card – additional cards can be purchased for \$5 each at the event. Day of event tickets are \$30.

Questions or want to purchase tickets, please contact Tina Robinson at 254-715-6206 or Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. Thank you!!



Easter Lilies: If you are interested in either placing Easter lilies in church for Easter Sunday services or donating money for the flowers for the Easter cross, please fill out the enclosed form! **Turn in your completed form to the church office no later than Monday, March 18, 2024!!** If you purchase your own lily, please bring it to the church Maundy Thursday, March 28, 2024 by 4:00 PM. Please pick up your lily after all Easter services on Easter Sunday.

♦ **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.

☀ **EASTER BREAKFAST!** Easter Sunday, **March 31, 2024** the **Men In Mission** will be serving their **delicious breakfast** of pancakes, fruit, etc. in the St. Paul Lutheran Lighthouse after the 7:00 AM Sunrise Service. **Please sign the sign-up sheet in the narthex if you plan to attend.** If you have any questions, please contact Danny Kautz at 979-732-7897.


Children Activity Bags: Our St. Paul Activity Bag Team could use some volunteer reinforcements! While Mary, Elizabeth and I get it done, we would love to have more back-up. It is easy and can be done any time the church office is open Monday-Friday. If you are willing, give me a call at 281-797-7152 for details. Thank you! – *Patsy Kopecky*



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: 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*

♪♪♪ **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.splc@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., March 11 –	6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (old choir room)
Tues., March 12 –	9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (Lighthouse) 10:30 AM – TLC Worship Service 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library) 5:30 PM – Stewardship Team (library)
Wed., March 13 –	9:30 AM-2:00 PM – Garden Club (Lighthouse) 10:00 AM – Nursing Home Team to Columbus Oaks 1:30 PM – Neighbor-to-Neighbor Work Day (library) 2:00 PM – Nursing Home Team to The Oaks 4:30 PM – Lenten Worship Service 5:00 PM – Soup & Sandwiches (Lighthouse)
Thurs., March 14 –	8:30 AM – Work at Columbus Food Pantry (FUMC Life Center) 10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)
Fri., March 15 –	8:30 AM – Work at Columbus Food Pantry (FUMC Life Center)
Sat., March 16 –	7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., March 17 –	9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, March 10, 2024 **Harriet Tubman, died 1913; Sojourner Truth, died 1883; renewers of society**

Harriet Tubman, born into slavery, helped about 300 others to escape slavery until the institution was abolished. Sojourner Truth, whose birth name was Isabella, was freed after slavery was abolished, and discerned a call to be a preacher. Taking the name Sojourner Truth, she set out on an evangelistic journey, where people found her testimony to be deeply moving.

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 **Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, died 604**

Born into wealth and power, Gregory was for a time the chief administrator of the city of Rome. Giving this up for a life in the church, he was elected pope in 590. He influenced public worship through the establishment of a lectionary and prayers to correlate with the readings. Gregorian chant is named in his honor.

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OTHER READINGS: Numbers 21:4-9

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

The reading begins:

⁴From Mount Hor [the Israelites] set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and

against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” ⁶Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

PSALM: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good, for God’s mercy endures forever. ²Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe, ³gathering them in from the lands; from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. ¹⁷Some were fools and took rebellious paths; through their sins they were afflicted. ¹⁸They loathed all manner of food and drew near to death’s door. ¹⁹Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD and you delivered them from their distress. ²⁰You sent forth your word and healed them and rescued them from the grave. ²¹Let them give thanks to you, LORD, for your steadfast love and your wonderful works for all people. ²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of your deeds with shouts of joy.

OTHER READINGS: Ephesians 2:1-10

While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God’s grace at work in our lives.

The reading begins:

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — ⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE COSMIC LOVE OF GOD

Our world and our lives include darkness and sin, evil and brokenness. But God’s love for us and for the world is complete, passionate, and sacrificial. God is not willing to settle for part of the world, or for some of us. Instead of condemning all that is not pleasing, God gave God’s own

son, lifted up on the cross, so that all might have the possibility of eternal life. The light of God’s love shining down from the cross demonstrates the totality of God’s love and proclaims God’s desire to transform the dark places in this world into places of light, healing, and salvation.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

It is the fourth week in Lent, and we continue the focus on baptism as a key to the Christian life. The gospel describes God as choosing to save rather than to condemn. The world, which does not know God, is loved by God. Welcome to worship! Remember your own baptism. Renew your life to live more fully in the light of baptismal grace.

Being “made alive together with Christ...” opens the door for profound blessing and healing within and outside of the Christian community. Do you offer such blessing and healing to everyone? Have you ever received it from someone else? Help comes directly from God through the hands of loved ones without judgment. This is also described as being the light of the world, sharing the light of Christ, and shining your light for the world to see. There is darkness in this world, but according to John, eternal life begins now, in and among the baptized.

Do you think that to be the light of the world, to let your light so shine before men, you have to be whole, strong, and perfect? That’s impossible to do. Leonard Cohen sings: “Ring the bells that still can ring/Forget your perfect offering/There’s a crack in everything/That’s how the light gets in.” In other words, it is exactly at our points of weakness, of pain, of brokenness and of insufficiency that force us, like those who originally followed Jesus, to stand in the need of God. To stand in the need of the true light.

Those cracks are bad choices, anxiety, depression, from addiction, struggle and remorse. Those cracks are what lets the light of God’s love in but *they are also how the light gets out!* As we reflect on last week’s reading of the ten commandments, don’t miss the fact that Jesus does not say “here are the conditions you must meet to be the salt of the Earth.” He does not say, “here are the standards of wholeness you must fulfill in order to be light for the world.” He sees our pain. He sees that we have been broken open and tells us that we have God within us, the God whose light scatters the darkness.

KID STUDY:

Jesus invites us to look at his words and actions so that we can learn from him for what God’s kingdom looks like. Also, so we can learn how to live in God’s kingdom. The reason he did those actions and shared his words of teaching was because he was filled with God’s love. It’s a love that supports and gives life. When we look to Jesus and learn about God from Jesus, then we, too, will shine with God’s love and light. Just like offered God’s love, healing, and forgiveness, we, too, are to offer God’s love, healing, and forgiveness. When we shine God’s light and share God’s love with others, we are helping them better see God, just like Jesus helps us to better see God.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

When the Israelites were frustrated and disgusted and rebelling against the circumstances of their own forced march to freedom, Moses needed something to get them going again. It was a bronze serpent, raised up like a standard, an artificial symbol of whatever it was, a seraph, that had afflicted them. It became the effective agent of their healing and forgiveness, the sign that injected hope and a renewed will to keep going toward the Promised Land... So the preacher has to get Jesus up there before people’s consciousness in a call for their faith; telling all of us who share the responsibility for moving the Christian community on in life that we must proclaim the Lord as the source of hope and energy in a world of confounding circumstances and in the face of the death that defeats all our hopes. At the heart of our own faith is a conviction in God’s unfailing love; for generations of recurring cynicism, indifference, and despair have never had the last word or given the definitive comment on our human situation. The love of God is persistent, and the Word of God always finds a new voice in the most hopeless circumstances.
- John Gerlach, O.P. [John Gerlach, O.P., in *Homilies for the Christian People*, ed. Gail Ramshaw (New York: Pueblo, 1989), 244.]

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Next Week’s Theme (March 16 & 17): Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies. . .
Jesus predicts his death

Next Week’s Scriptures (March 16 & 17):

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34
“A new covenant written on the heart.”

Psalm: Psalm 51:1-12
“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” (*Ps. 51:10*)

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:5-10
“Through suffering Christ becomes the source of salvation.”

Gospel: John 12:20-33
“The grain of wheat dying in the earth.”