

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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

March 17, 2024 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Fifth 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		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

God promises Jeremiah that a “new covenant” will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God’s heart through Christ and draws God’s love and truth into our hearts. We join together in

worship, sharing in word, song, and meal, and leave strengthened to share God’s love with all the 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.)

* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P We believe that the Bible contains instruction for us as followers of Jesus Christ to do what he asked of us. He taught the first disciples to help others to confess their sins and to proclaim to them the promise of forgiveness afterwards. So let us take a few brief moments in silence to open our hearts and minds to Jesus, to confess the things that weigh heavy on our hearts and the things we need help with so we might be more in line with what Jesus commands.

(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: ALL THINGS NEW

*I've heard You can take what's broken, and make it whole again.
Well, here's the pieces of my heart, what can You do with them?
'Cause I can't hold them all to-geth-er any-more.
So I let them fall, surrendered, to the floor.*

CHORUS

***You make all things new. You make all things new!
God of mercy and love, do what only You can do,
And make all things new. (2nd TIME TO BRIDGE)***

GOSPEL: John 12:20-33

Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover festival. Here Jesus’ words about seeds planted in the ground turn the disaster of his death into the promise of a harvest in which everyone will be gathered.

A The holy gospel according to St. John, chapter 12, verses 20-33.

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip

went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. ²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say — ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

GOSPEL SONG: ALL THINGS NEW
Only You can take such beauty – from the depths of all my pain.
Only You can take this shattered heart – and make it beat again.
Oh, You hold us all together in Your hands.
I surrender all I have, and all I am.

CHORUS
You make all things new. You make all things new!
God of mercy and love, do what only You can do,
And make all things new.

BRIDGE
From the ashes, from the dust I will rise up, rise up!
Out of darkness, into the light I will rise up, rise up!
From the ashes, from the dust I will rise up, rise up!
Out of darkness, into the light I will rise up, rise up!

LAST CHORUS
You make all things new. You make all things new!
God of mercy and love, do what only You can do.
And make all things, all things, You make all things new!

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: LORD, I NEED YOU**
Lord, I come. I confess. Bowing here, I find my rest.
And without You, I fall apart. You're the One that guides my heart.

CHORUS:
Lord, I need you, oh, I need You. Ev'ry hour I need You.
My one defense my righteousness. Oh, God, how I need You.

Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more. Where grace is found,
Is where You are. And where You are, Lord, I am free.
Holiness is Christ in me. **REPEAT CHORUS**

BRIDGE (twice)
So teach my song to rise to You when temptation comes my way.
When I cannot stand, I'll fall on You. Jesus, You're my hope and stay.

LAST CHORUS:
Lord, I need you, oh, I need You. Ev'ry hour I need You.
My one defense my righteousness. Oh, God, how I need You.
You're my one defense my righteousness. Oh, God, how I need You.
My one defense my righteousness. Oh, God, how I need You.

CCLI Song #5925687 Words and Music by Christy Nockels, Daniel Carson, Jesse Reeves, Kristian Stanfill, and Matt Maher.
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*** 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 God of the covenant, through the church you draw us into community. We give thanks for the means of grace around which we gather. Inspire writers, musicians, and volunteers whose creative gifts adorn our worship.

A brief silence.

A God of good will, you restore what is broken. We pray for any experiencing estrangement, conflict, or abuse in families and intimate relationships. Protect and comfort all who are vulnerable, especially those living in institutions.

A brief silence.

A God of every time and place, you are with us. Support ministries of prayer and presence in this congregation. Move us to reach out to any who are homebound, lonely, grieving, in treatment, or ill.

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:
Debra Sandell; Beverly Olsen; Troy Scarbough; 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.)*
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; 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; Abegail Gatzke; Chelsea Gilstrap; Calli Guthmann; Dhara Comans; Rosalinda Rosales; Kelsey Page Bakken; Hailey Johnson; Holly Fristch; and Whitney Werland 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; and 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 serve on Jesus' behalf. Bless our Missionary Dina and her family.

A brief silence.

A God of promise, we give thanks for the saints whose faith inspires us. Grant us faith to trust in your everlasting love.

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 offerings 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 resurrected 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. † In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

* CLOSING SONG: HOLDING NOTHING BACK

I am chosen, I am free. I am living for eternity. Free now, forever.
You pick me up, turn me around. You set my feet on solid ground.
Yours, now, forever.

PRE-CHORUS:

And nothin's gonna hold me back. Nothin's gonna hold me back.
Nothin's gonna hold me back...

CHORUS:

My chains fell off, my heart was free! I'm alive to live for You!
I'm alive to live for You! Amazing love, how can it be?
You gave everything for me. You gave everything for me – everything.
[2nd TIME TO BRIDGE]

You've washed my sin, and shame away.
The slate is clean, a brand new day. Free now, forever.
Now boldly I approach Your throne,
To claim this crown through Christ my own. Yours now, forever.

PRE-CHORUS and CHORUS

BRIDGE:

And I'm free to live, free to give. Free to be, I'm free to love You.
Free to live, free to give. Free to be, I'm free to love You.
Free to live, free to give. Free to be, I'm free to love You. Lord....

LAST CHORUS

My chains fell off, my heart was free! I'm alive to live for You!
I'm alive to live for You! Amazing love, how can it be?
I give everything for You. I give everything for You – everything.

CCLI Song #4879277 Words and Music by Tim Hughes and Martin Smith
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* DISMISSAL

P Go in peace, servant of Christ.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

USHERS: Kevin & Wendy Page; Ryan Thomas
LAY READER: Heather Thomas
STREAMING: Mike Maas
SOUND: Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs

ACOLYTE: McKayla Kahlden
POWER POINT: Peggy Geisler
ALTAR GUILD: Marilyn Yearwood

WELCOME: Dear ones, welcome to worship as we gather in Jesus’ name as one family in God’s embrace. Amen.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Bradley & Stephanie Polasek in celebration of their 15th wedding anniversary on March 21.

Congratulations! Carl and Donna Hillmer are pleased to announce the birth of their grandson **Deacon Cade Tesch**. Deacon Cade was born to Zach and Kari (Hillmer) Tesch Friday, March 8, 2024. He weighed 8 lbs. 7 oz. and was 21½ inches long. Welcoming him home was big brother Zander.

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: \$9,300.00

Attendance: Wed., March 6, 2024 – 51
Power of One: Wed., March 6, 2024 – \$8.00

Contributions: Wed., Mar, 6 – \$2,101.00
Building Fund: Wed., Mar. 6 – \$30.00

Attendance: March 9 & 10, 2024 – 159
Power of One: March 9 & 10, 2024 – \$41.00

Contributions: March 9 & 10 – \$5,709.80
Building Fund: March 9 & 10 – \$323.23

Attendance: Wed., March 13, 2024 – 40
Power of One: Wed., March 13, 2024 – \$7.00

Contributions: Wed., Mar. 13 – \$730.00
Building Fund: Wed., Mar. 13 – \$140.00

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

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.

► 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 fro \$5 each at the event. Day of event tickets ar \$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 a form! Forms can be found in the church office. **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.

PERU TEAM FUNDRAISER: The Peru Team is having their drive-thru fundraiser **Tuesday, March 19, 2024 from 5:00-7:00 PM** at the Lighthouse. Don't forget to pick up your plates!!

Habitat for Humanity: *Calling on People Who Care to Help!* It's fun to paint and very rewarding to help out! Anyone or any group can help the creation of the 30th Habitat House here. We are looking for **painting help** on upcoming **Fridays and Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM or 2:00 PM**. The following dates are needing help: March 22 & 23; April 5; April 12 & 13; April 19 & 20; and April 26 & 27. For more details or if you have questions, please contact Charmaine Katz (the contact person for Habitat) at 979-732-5677.

● **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.

◆ **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.

♪♪ **Columbus Community Choir:** Come join the Columbus Community Choir **Sunday, March 24, 2024** for their performance of “Jesus! The Resurrection of the Messiah”. The Easter cantata will be presented at **5:00 PM** at the **Columbus High School auditorium**. Support our local talented singers and musicians as they prepare us for Easter.

☀ **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.

** **God's Gals:** Due to Palm Sunday and Easter, God's Gals will not meet in March. Our next get-together will be Sunday, April 28, 2024 at 6:00 PM at Schobel's Restaurant. Questions? Please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. **

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*

♪♪♪ **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 18 –	10:00 AM-12:00 PM – Meals to Heal Cook Session (Lighthouse) 1:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor to TLC 6:00 PM – Church Council
Tues., March 19 –	10:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library) 5:00-7:00 PM – Peru Team Drive-thru Fundraiser (Lighthouse) 5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
Wed., March 20 –	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 PM – Soup & Sandwiches (Lighthouse) 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & HS Youth
Thurs., March 21 –	5:00 PM – Worship Team (library) 5:30 PM – Grief Support Group (old choir room)
March 22-24 –	Elementary Explore Retreat, Lutherhill (La Grange)
Sat., March 23 –	7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., March 24 –	9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship 6:00-8:00 PM – The Gathering

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, March 17, 2024 Patrick, bishop, missionary to Ireland, died 461

A native of Britain, Patrick was kidnapped by pirates at age sixteen and sold into slavery in Ireland. After a few years, he escaped, returned home, and entered the ministry. Returning to Ireland, he successfully served as a bishop and missionary there.

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 Joseph, Guardian of Jesus

Though the Bible tells us little about the husband of Jesus' mother Mary, we know that he was a carpenter or builder by trade. He is also shown as being devoted both to God and to Mary and Jesus. It is assumed that he died before Jesus became an adult.

Thursday, March 21, 2024 Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, died 1556

Cranmer's lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which remains (in revised form) the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

Friday, March 22, 2024 Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, died 1758

A Puritan minister in Connecticut, Edwards is remembered as being a great preacher. Though his most famous sermon talks at length about hell, he was more concerned with God's love. He served both as missionary to the Housatonic people in Massachusetts, and as president of the future Princeton University.

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OTHER READINGS: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law, because God will write it on their hearts.

The reading begins:

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-12

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses. ²Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment. ⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother's womb. ⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within. ⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken may rejoice. ⁹Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my wickedness. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

OTHER READINGS: Hebrews 5:5-10

Using priestly imagery and references to the Old Testament, the author explains how Christ lived in trusting obedience to God, and so God has made Christ the source of our eternal salvation.

The reading begins:

⁵Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; ⁶as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” ⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE ATTRACTION OF THE REPELLENT CROSS

Two themes vie for attention in the readings: divine forgiveness (and human sinfulness that makes it necessary), and the mysterious power of the cross. The connection point for the two themes is intimate service to the other. Jeremiah tells us that God will come closer to us than a husband to a wife - directly into our hearts! Deep within this mystery we will be known, forgiven, and loved. Jesus then promises that through his life in us, we will be drawn into a similar emptying of selves as we enter richly into the lives of others so that they too will know the joy and relief of being known and loved. In this way, confession leads to mission!

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today Jesus likens himself to a grain of wheat: once it is buried in the earth it comes alive to bear much fruit. He uses the image of a dead seed coming to life as a metaphor for his own crucifixion and being “lifted up” on our behalf. Welcome to worship! Hear the word and receive the meal as God's covenant is renewed in you!

The end of Lent is near. Along with the Greeks in today's gospel reading, we too wish to see Jesus. Greek dress and culture were very different from Jewish people. Now at the turn toward Christ's passion narrative, it is Greeks (Gentiles or those who are not Jewish) who come to Jesus while the Jewish authorities are plotting his death. His indirect language foreshadowing

his death comes with a promise that he will draw all people to himself. To really see Jesus, though, we must look up. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross in order to draw everyone to God.

Do you avoid attending services during holy week? It is difficult to hear the sad and violent story of Jesus’ crucifixion, but don’t lose sight of the fact that the cross is where we encounter God’s loving, self-giving heart. The story of Christ’s passion is a story of God’s love for us as God turns a symbol of death into one of life, mercy, and love. The symbolic grain of wheat depicts God’s way of bringing life from what seems death. With the Greeks, we too wish to see Jesus. To do so we must look up, for Jesus has been lifted up on the cross in order to draw everyone to God. The “hour” of salvation is imminent and it is Christ’s death.

Understand this theological trajectory. Jesus is preparing his disciples for more than his death. The crucifixion also gives witness to what we know lies beyond - resurrection and ascension. Much more difficult is to imagine the truth of resurrection and the comfort of ascension.

KID STUDY:

Have you ever played with magnets? A magnet has great power and will draw many objects to itself. Today Jesus tells the people that when he is lifted up, he will draw everyone to himself. The drawing power of a magnet can be very strong, but that’s nothing compared to the drawing power of Jesus! When we see his great love, we are drawn to him and want to live our lives as his hands and feet loving and caring for our neighbors. We still don’t get it right and fall short, but Jesus always draws us back to him. There is no power stronger than the love of Jesus.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

You must have already heard about God’s marvels manifested in the way silk originates. The silkworms come from seeds about the size of little grains of pepper. When the warm weather comes and the leaves begin to appear on the mulberry tree, the seeds start to live, for they are dead until then. The worms nourish themselves on the mulberry leaves until, having grown to full size, they settle on some twigs. There with their little mouths they go about spinning the silk and making some very thick little cocoons in which they enclose themselves. The silkworm, which is fat and ugly, then dies, and a little white butterfly, which is very pretty, comes forth from the cocoon. Once this silkworm is grown, it begins to spin the silk and build the house wherein it will die. I would like to point out that this house is Christ, since he is our dwelling place and we ourselves can build so as to place ourselves in it. Let’s be quick to weave this little cocoon by taking away our self-love and self-will, our attachment to any earthly thing, and by performing deeds of penance, prayer, mortification, and obedience. Let this silkworm die, as it does in completing what it was created to do. And you will see how we see God, as well as ourselves placed inside God’s grandeur, as is this little silkworm within its cocoon. - Teresa of Avila [Teresa of Avila, The Interior Castle, trans. Kieran Kavanagh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (New York: Paulist, 1979), 91-93.]

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Next Week's Theme (March 23 & 24): Palm Sunday

Next Week's Scriptures (March 23 & 24):

Processional Gospel: Mark 11:1-11

“Jesus enters Jerusalem.”

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

“The servant of the LORD submits to suffering.”

Psalm: Psalm 31:9-16

“Into your hands, O LORD, I commend my spirit.” (Ps. 31:5)

Second Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

“Humbled to the point of death on a cross.”

Gospel: Mark 14:1--15:47

“The passion of the Lord.”