



from the
Pastor

- In the days immediately preceding the start of his ministry Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tried and tested. He fasted there for forty days. (Fasting)
- After Moses had led the people out of Egypt, he went up on the mountain for forty days to be in the presence of God before bringing down the Law. (Being in the presence of God.)
- Jonah was instructed to give the wicked people of Nineveh forty days to repent. And they believed God, sat in ashes and repented. (Repentance)

Ash Wednesday will soon be upon us and with it the season of Lent. How many days are there in Lent? Forty, of course (not counting Sundays.) So what is the significance of this number forty that keeps popping all over the Bible?

We should note that there is no such thing as “Lent” in the Bible. It is a Christian season that only slowly developed over the centuries. In early times, Christians fasted for forty hours before the Easter celebration. Forty days as the period for fasting was accepted by the church in the 7th century, some 600 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. From this, we should note that observing Lent is a decision that Christians make, not a command from God. So then, in observing Lent, we should ask ourselves to what purpose we are doing it.

And that’s where that number forty can help us a lot. It appears 146 times in the Bible and often its presence highlights certain theological ideas like

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fasting, a particular focus on God’s presence, and repentance. These are all themes that can be helpful to us for observing Lent in a way that is spiritually meaningful.

Take fasting, for example. Fasting is a way to deepen your faith. Not because it’s a challenge, (God certainly doesn’t need to see us doing that, nor does anyone else,) but because it’s a way to seek greater understanding from God. Hunger forces us to experience reality differently. It provides an opportunity to speak to God, and listen to him, differently than we normally do. If you decide to fast for Lent, keep in mind that the most important thing is to pray and read scripture. The lack of food isn’t the point, it’s just a means to make prayer and scripture more fruitful. Perhaps you could pray this, “Lord I am hungry. I can hardly stop listening to my belly. Work in me so that I am as hungry to hear you speak to me as I am for food. Work in me so that I can’t stop listening to your words. Amen.”

Focusing on being in God’s presence is another worthy Lenten practice. We’ve just seen above how this can be related to fasting. But you could do it in other ways. Take a daily walk by yourself and listen. Quietly hum to yourself some familiar hymns or songs that praise God. As scripture says, “God inhabits the praises of his people.” Then perhaps you could pray this, “Lord, I want you to be near to me. I want to know, really know, that you are right here and not far away. And so I will praise you. Amen.”

Repenting is a word that means “turning around” in Hebrew or “changing your mind” in Greek. Using one or both of these images might be a fruitful Lenten practice. We confess our sins in worship every Sunday. But do we turn our backs on them? Do we change our mind about them? Sometimes our sins can be dear to us. Perhaps you might pray, “God, there is a sin that I have confessed to

you before. Many times. I don't want to let go of it. Help me to turn my back on it today. Amen." Do this day by day, praying just for that day, trusting that God can change your mind in time.

In all of these things, we must bear in mind that they are not meant to be for Lent only. We can use Lenten observances to exercise our faith for a particular period of time so that we might know God better all of the time and follow him.

I hope that you will take the opportunity this Lent to exercise your faith and to seek a closer relationship with the God who has chosen to love you and be merciful to you through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Rev. Ben Worley

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We begin our Lenten journey this year on Ash Wednesday, February 14th at 7 p.m. with a Holy Communion Service. Please join us each Wednesday evening during Lent as Pastor Ben leads us in worship. Ladies of the congregation will be serving soup at 6 p.m. before each Lenten Service.



Emanuel-St John Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes January 10, 2024

President Doug Bartels called the meeting to order. Present were Cindy Souder, Rhonda Johnson, Dar Lake, Pastor Ben, LeRoy Johnson, Faith Worley, Randy Souder, Dennis Hinrichs, Jeff Ellerbrock, and Candace Booth. Pastor Ben gave opening devotions. Motion by Randy Souder, second by Jeff Ellerbrock to approve the agenda. Motion

passed. Motion by Dar Lake, second by Candace Booth to approve the December minutes with date change. Motion passed. Motion by Jeff Ellerbrock, second by Dar Lake to approve the Treasurer's Report with a balance of \$27,171.82. Motion Passed.

Old Business: Jeff Ellerbrock reported that the shed at parsonage has been removed, phones have been switched to NW Communications, he contacted Brotherhood Mutual Insurance about the church policy. The premium may change.

President's Report: None

Pastor's Report: Pastor reported on the recording of hymns being played on the organ. He did find some CDs with hymns already on them which were donated by the Baskerville family. He will continue to work on this project with organists. Summer church camp information will be coming out soon.

Worship and Music Committee: Candace Booth reported that Cory Waller and Kari Musselman will replace members going off the committee. Pastor Pfannkuch will preach in absence of Pastor on Sunday. Canceling of church because of bad weather was discussed.

Parish Education Committee: Faith Worley present, no report.

Outreach Committee: Cindy Souder reported that the committee was working on upcoming soup dinner.

Property and Management Committee: LeRoy Johnson, Randy Souder, and Dennis Hinrichs present. The electronic lock for front door will not work. Committee is working on other options.

Stewardship and Finance: Dar Lake presented the 2024 budget information to the council. Motion by Candace Booth, second by Dennis Hinrichs to approve the 2024 Budget to be presented at the 2024 Annual Meeting on January 28, 2024.

WELCA: Candace Booth present. WELCA will be doing soup supper before Lenten Services.

New Business: Motion by Dar Lake, second by Jeff Ellerbrock to approve moving the February meeting to February 7th. Motion passed. Jeff Ellerbrock reported that the Endowment scholarship applications will be available by the first of February and due the first of April. Motion by LeRoy Johnson, second by Dar Lake to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed. Lord's Prayer

February Birthdays

Feb. 1 Donald Bailey, Darcy Adams
Feb. 3 Chad Kruckenberg, Cory Waller
Feb. 5 Sawyer Riley
Feb. 6 Kelly Linquist
Feb. 7 Noah Althiser, **Hazel Hayes**
Feb. 10 Cooper Albright, Blake Segebarth
Feb. 11 Randi Garcia
Feb. 14 Abe Clark, Joane Hinrichs,
Connor Scharn, Natalie Scharn
Feb. 16 Carla Hutchens
Feb. 18 Jacob Schultz
Feb. 20 Debra Peterson
Feb. 21 Brad Diersen, Jeff Henkelman
Feb. 22 Jonathan Ellerbrock
Feb. 23 Leland Loux, Adrian Newman,
Ann Newman, Brittany Peter
Feb. 25 Virginia Hillmer, Elijah Wheelock
Feb. 27 Lilly Picard, Remy Picard
Feb. 28 Angela Ellerbrock



Feb. 16, 2023 Glenn & Mary Helberg
Feb. 28, 2011 Michael & Shelly Baumhover

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



Sunday School perfect attendance for the month of December 2023

- **Nursery-Pre-Kindergarten** – Hazel Bartels, Austin Farley, Kaycee Betten, Nash Riley and Kacen Waller;

- **Kindergarten, Grades 1 & 2** – Bradlee Aden, Teddy Albright, Earl Bartels, and Jack Bartels;
- **Grades 3 & 4** – Myla Albright, Lily Bartels, Kylee Betten, Adelaide Worley, Baylee Ellerbrock, and Johnny Worley;
- **Grades 5 & 6** – Dillion Graeve, Chase Hejtmanek, Sawyer Riley, Abby Lankford, Elodie Mentzer, and Abby Worley

Class winner for best attendance in December was Nursery-Pre-Kindergarten taught by Julie, Adlen and Sadie Wheelock.



Marriage Celebration Retreat

February 9-11, 2024,

with speakers Pastor Jeremey and Michelle King

Whether you've been married many years or just one year, life happens. Things change. We change. Join us and take time to laugh, remember, and re-vision your marriage together. Enjoy a wonderful weekend with a banquet dinner, evening entertainment, free couples photo shoot, breakfast café, and great sessions.

Theme: Created for Connection

An Imago Dei approach to marriage

Join us for a weekend of connection as we explore God's heart for marriage and how it bears His image to the world. Using the work of Sue Johnson and Brene Brown we will grow in our Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement (A.R.E.), and practice building story stewardship.

Speakers: Pastor Jeremey and Michelle King

Michelle and Jeremey King have been in ministry together for over 20 years, hosting marriage retreats and team teaching in the area of faith and relationships. Jeremey serves as the lead pastor at Shepherd of the Valley in Afton, MN, and as a chaplain for the St Croix County Sheriff's Department. Michelle is a licensed marriage and family therapist with advanced training in Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy and Attachment-Based EMDR. Jeremey loves hunting, playing guitar, and roasting coffee. Michelle loves hiking, reading, podcasts and a discovering great coffee shops with friends on her

never-ending quest for the perfect almond milk chai latte. Together they have two children Gabriel (16), Neriya (14), and three dogs.



2024 Cost:

\$219 for the weekend per couple
\$129 commuter rate per couple (breakfast not included)
Deposit: \$50/couple (non-refundable)

Registration Begins at 7:30 pm on Feb. 9
Programming Begins at 8:00 pm
Weekend Concludes with Lunch
at 11:00 am on Feb. 11



Praying Hands

1. Your thumb is nearest to you, so begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest ones to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C.S. Lewis once said, a "sweet duty."
2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom for pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the President, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
5. And, lastly, comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all. Which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself.

By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

February 2024, LSI Bulletin/Newsletter Article and Story

Happy Valentine's Day from LSI!

"We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19

The idea behind Lutheran Services in Iowa's (LSI) mission is centered around love: responding to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service.

We give thanks to all our ministry partners, both individuals and congregations, who help share this love for Iowa children, adults, and families.

At LSI, we see this love in newly adopted children and their families, in teens who are overcoming years of trauma and building brighter futures, in Iowans with disabilities who are growing their independence and confidence, in new parents who are raising strong and healthy families, and in so many other joyous moments.

You can help carry out LSI's mission of hope and healing by giving a gift and showing love to the Iowa families we serve.

Thank you for the love you share and create through LSI. Happy Valentine's Day!

For more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI's Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org or 563-676-2065.

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at LSIowa.org and facebook.com/LSI.iowa.

