

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear church family,

February is already here, and with it, three opportunities to help us become better Christians: Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Black History Month.

First, Ash Wednesday. When ashes are placed on our foreheads, they remind us that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. This is not meant to scare us, but to tell us the truth about our lives, namely, life is short, and we are here only for a brief moment. Psalm 90 reminds us that we usually live seventy years, or with luck, eighty, and often all we have to show for it are our days of toil, our troubles, and eventually a marker in the graveyard. That is why the psalmist prays, "Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom (v.12)."

I must agree with the Psalmist. Life is indeed brief, and as the years go by, we should grow in wisdom. Yet, as the French philosopher René Descartes once observed, people often complain about lacking money, health, and even beauty, but rarely about lacking good judgment. Most people assume we have enough "good sense" in us as is, and nobody prays for more.

This is why, on the first Sunday of this month, the prophet Micah will remind us that we are required to walk humbly with our Lord. Humility may be humanity's greatest challenge, since we cannot help but think we are capable of judging everything, convinced that our ways are always right. However, Scripture begs to differ. Proverbs 12:15 says, "Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice."

So, listen to this, my beloved.

Second, Lent. In the forty days that follow Ash Wednesday and in anticipation of Easter, let us seek to walk humbly with the Lord, making more room for prayer, repentance, generosity, and listening more closely to God's voice. This season is an open invitation for us to grow in humility. We may come as we are, trusting that the same God who meets us in ashes will also meet us in resurrection joy.

Third, Black History Month. As part of our Lenten journey, I invite you to learn with me from our African-American brothers and sisters, and from their struggles to have their dignity recognized as people created in the image of God. Let us see if the mistakes of the past can help us to create a better present and future for everyone.

As we walk through Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Black History Month, may God teach us to number our days, grow in wisdom, walk humbly, and listen more closely for God's voice in our lives and in the lives of others.

God bless you all!

Yours truly,

Rev. Syl Estevez

Designated Interim-Pastor

Faith's Happenings ...

February, 2026

Mark Your Calendars...

Sunday, February 1

- 9:00 am - Adult Sunday School
- 10:15 am - Morning Coffee
- **10:45 am - *Gottesdienst* (Divine Service)**
- ~11:45 am - Annual Congregational Meeting

Tuesday, February 3

- **7:30 am - "Men of Faith" Breakfast at Stefanos'**
- 8:30 am - "Maintaining Faith" Work Crew
- 9:00 am - "Lutheran Chicks" Workshop

Wednesday, February 4

- **3:00 pm - Bible Study**

Saturday, February 7

- **10:30 am - Healing Hearts Event with Christ Parent**

Sunday, February 8

- 9:00 am - Adult Sunday School
- 10:15 am - Morning Coffee
- **10:45 am - *Gottesdienst* (Divine Service)**

Tuesday, February 10

- 8:00 am - "Maintaining Faith" Work Crew
- 9:00 am - "Lutheran Chicks" Workshop

Wednesday, February 11

- **12:00 pm - Ladies' Luncheon at Lipinski's Tavern**
- **6:00 pm - Winter Potluck Fellowship Dinner**

Saturday, February 14

- Valentine's Day

Sunday, February 15

- 9:00 am - Adult Sunday School
- 10:15 am - Morning Coffee
- **10:45 am - *Gottesdienst* (Divine Service)**

Monday, February 16

- Presidents Day

Tuesday, February 17

- 8:00 am - "Maintaining Faith" Work Crew
- 9:00 am - "Lutheran Chicks" Workshop
- **10:00 am - Council Meeting**

Wednesday, February 18

- **5:00 pm - Ash Wednesday Worship Service**
- **3:00 pm - Bible Study**

Sunday, February 22

- 9:00 am - Adult Sunday School
- 10:15 am - Morning Coffee
- **10:45 am - *Gottesdienst* (Divine Service)**

Tuesday, February 24

- 8:00 am - "Maintaining Faith" Work Crew
- 9:00 am - "Lutheran Chicks" Workshop

Wednesday, February 25

- 5:00 pm - Soup Supper Fellowship
- 6:00 pm - Lenten Worship Service

From the Council's President Desk

I'd like to thank you for allowing me to serve as your council president for the past two years. It's definitely been a learning experience for me. I can attest to this: it's much different being in this role when you have a permanent pastor.

The church's bookkeeper, Mrs. Sandy McKitterick, resigned and left us in mid-December. Not the best time to lose your bookkeeper, however, Dave Johnsen introduced us to a friend who is a Bookkeeper with church and business experience. Fortunately, Jackie Ruiz agreed to join our church staff. I'm very excited to have her.

While Jackie didn't have experience with Church Windows (our financial system for tracking assets, receipts, expenses, and donations), she has worked on similar systems and has learned very quickly. While reviewing the year-end financials, we found a couple of Asset and Expense coding errors. While these issues had no

impact on funds, we needed to make sure the issues were corrected and made sense. This led to the delay in getting the Treasury/Budget numbers to the congregation the week prior to the annual meeting tomorrow, February 1st. Even after the packet went to print, we were discussing opportunities for next year.

At council, we talked about committees or the lack of such at Faith. Our worship and music committee does an excellent job of functioning as it should. Participation is strong. They meet on a regular basis, and they handle business. However, beyond this committee, we need improved organization and leadership. The two committees where this is a must are Property and Fellowship. We have these people in the congregation; we just need them to step forward.

Between the Men's Tuesday work crew and The Lutheran Chicks, we have a lot of people working to make things happen around here. However, some of these people have been active in these areas for a long time. They're always glad to help... but not to lead. Individual members of Council are liaisons to these committees; however, I can't tell you who the leader of the committee is or who the members are. I know many people who work in these areas. These are two very important committees to the church that need to be refined. Each committee needs a leader and sitting members who meet on a regular basis to plan what needs to be done to support the needs of the church and its mission. The committee leader, in turn, communicates with their council liaison to keep the council informed of plans and needs.

We have 110 members on the rolls of the church at the current time. We worship the Lord together for 1 hour per week. When we leave worship, that's when we're sent out to complete the work He has commanded us. What special gift has He given you? Are you following through with the plan He's laid out for you? If you're not sure what that is, your church could sure use your help. Maybe we can figure it out together, and I'm sure you can make new friends in Christ along the way.

May God bless us all,
Jeff Kamm
FLCRW Council President

Upcoming Events

Feb. 1 - Annual Congregational Meeting



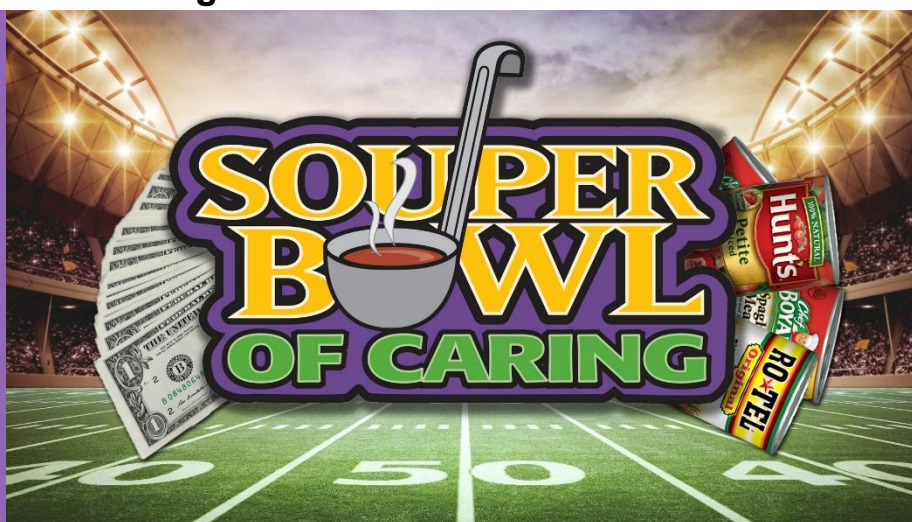
The council invites the members of our church to remain after worship on **Sunday, February 1**, for our Annual Congregational Meeting. We will pause together to reflect on the past year, to hear reports from our pastor, council, and committees, and to celebrate the ways God has been at work among us. We will also take time to approve the annual budget, elect leaders, and review our church documents. Your presence matters deeply. It is a gift to this community and a sign of our shared journey.

Feb. 7 - Healing Hearts Event



In moments of loss, the search for solace can be daunting. Join us for a presentation with Chris Parent from Empath Health, where we'll explore ways to understand and cope with grief. Remember, we don't have to navigate the path of healing alone. Grief is a shared human experience, and this session will provide valuable insights for our journey. The event will be **Saturday, Feb. 7**, at **10:30 am**.

Feb. 8 - Tackle Hunger



Score Big for feeding people in need: Tackle Hunger *Souper* Bowl of Caring. While most of the country is gearing up for Super Bowl Sunday on **February 8**, we're huddling up for a different kind of goal. Our church will support the Tackle Hunger *Souper* Bowl of Caring.

Born from a simple prayer in 1990, Tackle Hunger began with a single youth group inspired to turn Super Bowl weekend into a national time of giving. What started in one church in South Carolina has grown into a national nonprofit movement, empowering communities across the country to fight food insecurity by supporting local charities.

Many Lutheran churches across the nation, as well as churches from other denominations, participate in the annual Souper Bowl of Caring, a drive that raises millions for local food charities.

This year, we are collecting canned soup to be donated to the food pantry at our sister church, First Presbyterian in Port Charlotte. Their small Food Pantry already helped to serve over a thousand people this January alone!

You can help us support their vital mission by dropping off canned soup in the narthex basket anytime between now and February 8. If you could add a dollar bill of any amount to each can, they will be able to feed even more people. We will make the rubber bands available. Make sure to keep an eye out for BOGO's (Buy One, Get One) soup deals.

Let's tackle hunger together!

Feb. 11 - Winter Potluck Fellowship



On **Wednesday, February 11, at 6 pm**, we will be having a special potluck dinner. It will be like the Friendship Tables we've enjoyed over the past few years, but we will all meet in the church instead of our individual homes.

If you would like to participate, sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board in the narthex with your name, phone number, and the type of food you will be bringing. Food will be set up in the kitchen dining area and the dining tables in the narthex.

On the day of the event, we want to encourage you not to sit with your church buddies, but to get to know people you are not acquainted with. If you have questions or would like to help, talk to Mary Lou Fitzgerald.

Feb. 18 - Ash Wednesday



On Ash Wednesday, we receive ashes on our foreheads and hear the sobering words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” or “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” These words are not meant to shame us, but to tell the truth about our lives: we are fragile, dependent on God, and always in need of grace. Let us mark our Season of Lent with an Ash Wednesday service on **Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 5 pm.**

Church Announcements

Join our Handbell Choir



We are getting our chime choir established again this year and would love to have new members. You don't need any prior experience; we will help you learn. The date of the first meeting will be determined based on the availability of the members. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex for anyone interested.

Soup & Worship

Lenten
WORSHIP &
SOUP SUPPERS



During the season of Lent, we are invited to slow down and return to the heart of God. We do this best when we walk together. Each week, we will gather first for Soup Suppers, then continue into our Lenten worship.

We will begin around the table, sharing simple food and warm conversation. It is a time to rest, to be known, and to remember that we are not alone on this journey. From there, we will move into the sanctuary, carrying our prayers, our stories, and our hopes into worship.

These evenings are not about doing more. They are about making space. Space for reflection. Space for grace. Space for God to meet us where we are.

Come hungry for food and for light. There is a place for you at the table, and a quiet path waiting for you in worship. Every **Wednesday** during Lent, supper at **5 pm**, and service at **6 pm**. There will be no communion during these services.

Adult Sunday School is Back



Our Adult Sunday Bible School is back, thanks be to God! This is a quiet place of growth and light. It is a space where questions are welcome, where stories of faith are shared, and where we listen for God's voice together. We do not come with all the answers. We come with open hearts.

Each week, we open Scripture and walk with it, slowly and honestly. We learn from one another. We support one another. We rest in God's Word and let it shape us for the days ahead.

If you are longing for a deeper connection, gentle conversation, and time to grow in faith, this class is for you. Come as you are. There is a seat waiting for you, and a place for your story on this shared journey. **Every Sunday at 9 am.**

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Happy Birthday to...

02/07 - Nancy Smith
02/13 - Allan Thoren
02/15 - Gene Newlon
02/18 - Ruth Ash
02/26 - Adrienne Bakker

02/27 - Lester VanAllsburg
02/28 - Linda Grosvenor
02/28 - Jeff Petersen

Happy Anniversary to...

02/11 - Thomas &
Adrienne Bakker
02/24 - Sam & Susan
D'Amico

If we missed your birthday or anniversary, we're sorry. Please notify Barbra in the church office to have your special dates added.

We are Praying for

Sandy Despreaux - Health issues
Ginny Linsberg - Health Issues
Tracie Thompson - Health Issues

Kay Culver - Health issues
Debbie Porter - Health issues
Barbra Davis - Health Issues

If you would like to add your name or someone else's to the prayer list, please notify Barbra in the church office. We remove names every three months, unless individuals request to remain on the list.

Faith Online

Find us online on our webpage, YouTube channel, Facebook page, or at our pastor's Instagram page by clicking on the icons below.

