



Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

1187 C.R. 128 & U.S. Rt. 20

Fremont, Ohio 43420

Pastor Tim Miller

93.1FM

Church: 419-332-6820

faithchurch@amplex.net

www.faithfremont.org

Third Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2025

Setting 3 with Holy Communion

*Congregation please stand as you are able.

Introduction

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

(8:00) Prelude: *When You Prayed Beneath the Trees* **L. Larson**

(10:30) Prelude: *Just a Closer Walk with Thee* **Carlos Staszkeski**

Welcome & Announcements: Joys and Concerns

Signing of the Pew Register by all present.

***Invitation to Worship**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

P: Jesus, you did everything to show us both your love and your Father's love. You became a small dependent child to show us yourself in your weakness. You worked for many years as a simple carpenter to show us that you wanted to be with us in our daily work. You were tempted in the desert to show us how to resist the forces of evil around us.

C: What sacrifice the Son of God has given for me.

P: You surrounded yourself with disciples to show us how to share our vision with others and to work together in ministry. You preached the word of God to show us truth and how to become ourselves, witnesses to truth.

C: What sacrifice the Son of God has given for me.

P: You healed the sick and raised the dead to show us that you have power over death. You were transfigured to show us your divine splendor. You went the long road of suffering and death to show us that you love us and that you have redeemed us.

C: What sacrifice the Son of God has given for me. Amen.

***(8:00) Gathering Song:**

Lamb of God

TBOB 139

***(10:30) Gathering Song:**

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

ELW 756

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

***Confession and Forgiveness**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

C: Amen.

P: Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Compassionate One,

**C: you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,
but our lives do not always reflect you
and your love for the world.**

**We do not show others the tender compassion
you have shown to us.**

**We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality
you grant to all people.**

**We oppress others,
even though you have set us free again and again.**

We squander the abundant gifts of the earth.

Transform our lives

and guide us again in the way of the cross.

Amen.

P: Beloved in Christ,
God's arms are always stretched open wide
to welcome the wandering ones home.
In ✠ Christ your sins are forgiven.
You have a place in God's house forever.

C: Amen.

***Prayer of the Day**

P: Let us pray.

C: **Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

First Reading:

Isaiah 55:1-9

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

R: A reading from Isaiah, the 55th chapter.

¹ Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Responsive Reading:

Psalm 63:1-8

¹ O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and
weary land where there is no water.

² **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

³ For your steadfast love is better than life itself;
my lips shall give you praise.

⁴ **So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your name.**

⁵ My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

⁶ **when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.**

⁷ For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

⁸ **My whole being clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.**

Second Reading:**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

Paul uses images from Hebrew Scriptures and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.

R: A reading from 1 Corinthians, the 10th chapter.

¹ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. ¹⁰ And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. ¹³ No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation:**Open Our Eyes***

**Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch Him, and say that we love Him.
Open our ears, Lord, Help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.**

Gospel*Luke 13:1-9**

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 13th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: ¹ At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.² [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴ Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(8:00) Children’s Choir:

A Child’s Prayer

Teresa Jennings

Children’s Sermon

Sermon

***Sermon Hymn:**

As the Deer Runs to the River

ELW 331

***Apostles' Creed**

**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.**

***Prayers of Intercession**

R: Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world,
and all those in need.

A brief silence.

R: We pray for the church, called to be a witness to all peoples. Grant
humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils,
and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions.
God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: We pray for the earth, called to provide abundantly. Teach your people
the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been
given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God,
in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: We pray for the nations, called to protect their inhabitants and
collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of
compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries,
that all the world may have enough to live. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: We pray for those in need, called to receive your compassion,
especially those we name at this time (Pause for people to be named).
Comfort those whose lives have been disrupted through natural
disasters and human conflict. Aid communities in coming together to
mourn, heal, and rebuild. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: We pray for this assembly, called to welcome its neighbors to the table
of your grace. Bless food pantries, community gardens and kitchens,
clean water projects, and all ministries that address human hunger and
thirst. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: We give thanks for the faithful lives of those who proclaimed your
gospel in times of challenge and strife, and for all those whose lives of
love and service have ended. May their witness inspire our own. God,
in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your
love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

C: Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

***Sharing of the Peace**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

(10:30) Sr. Choir: *I Sing Redeeming Love* Mozart, arr. S. Pethel

***Offertory** *The Greatest Thing*

The greatest thing in all my life is serving you.

The greatest thing in all my life is serving you.

I want to serve you more, I want to serve you more.

The greatest thing in all my life is serving you.

***Offering Prayer**

P: Gracious Provider,
you set your immense treasures among us,
opening your heart to the world.
As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love,
deepen our commitment to sharing those
treasures with others,
through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

***The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.
You call your people to cleanse their hearts
and prepare with joy for the paschal feast,
that, renewed in the gift of baptism,
we may come to the fullness of your grace.

***Thanksgiving at the Table**

P: Blessed are you, O God of the universe.

Your mercy is everlasting
and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.

Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.

Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.

Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness
to the land of milk and honey.

Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.

Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.

Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

P: In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: With this bread and cup
we remember our Lord's passover from death to life
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

P: O God of resurrection and new life:
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Bless this feast.
Grace our table with your presence.

C: Come, Holy Spirit.

P: Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.
Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.
Breathe new life into us.
Send us forth,
burning with justice, peace, and love.

C: Come, Holy Spirit.

P: With your holy ones of all times and places,
with the earth and all its creatures,
with sun and moon and stars,
we praise you, O God,
blessed and holy Trinity,
now and forever.

C: Amen.

***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.**

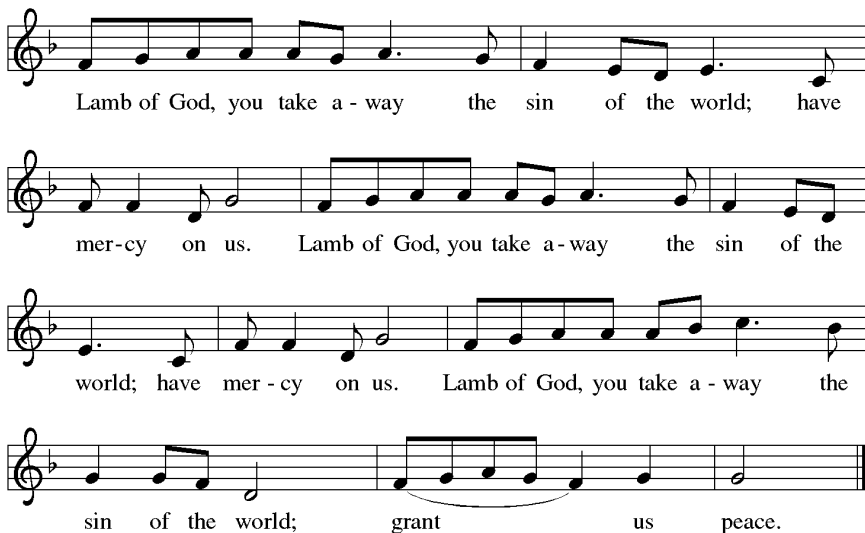
**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

P: All who are hungry, come!

The feast of grace is spread.

Lamb of God



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

Distribution of Communion

Communion will be continuous. The ushers will invite you to come forward by the center aisle. You will be handed the bread with the words, "The Body of Christ given for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!". Step to the Communion Assistant and take the cup. They will speak the words, "The Blood of Christ shed for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be

to God!" Empty cups may be placed in the basket as you return to your seat by the side aisle.

If you prefer gluten-free bread, please let the Pastor know. If you prefer grape juice, please let the Communion Assistant know. If you prefer not to receive or have children who have not yet received, please let the Pastor know and he will offer a blessing.

(8:00) Praise Choir:

Be Merciful to Me

S. Wilson

(10:30) Communion Hymns:

ELW 659 *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*

ELW 336 *Lamb of God*

***Post Communion Blessing**

P: May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

***Prayer After Communion**

P: Generous Host,

you have shared your feast with us and made us new.

Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities,
that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom,
in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***Blessing**

P: God our tender parent,

God the crucified one,

God the reconciling Spirit,

✠ bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

***(8:00) Sending Song:**

Prayer of St. Francis

See insert

***(10:30) Sending Song:**

O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts

ELW 658

***Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

C: Thanks be to God.

***(8:00) Postlude:**

Prayer of St. Francis

S. Temple

***(10:30) Postlude:**

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

James Konkell

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LORD, PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP. Still our souls. Ground us in your grace. “O God, you are my God; I seek you. ... Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you” (Psalm 63:1, 3, NRSV).

ALTAR FLOWERS today are given in honor of Lillian Harder’s 13th Birthday, Love, Dad, Mom and Mason.

ALTAR FLOWERS today are given in memory of Aaron Micah Tackett by Mike and Toni Cooper.

SPRING CLEAN-UP will be **Saturday, April 5th at 9 a.m.** with a rain date of Saturday the 12th. Sign-up sheet will be on the bulletin board in the coat room area.

THE YOUTH & GROWTH COMMITTEE is in need of a Sunday School Teacher for the 1st thru 3rd grade class. Thank you.

TERRA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONCERT CHOIR & STRING ENSEMBLE will present a free community concert at Grace Lutheran Church, 705 W. State St., Fremont, on **Sunday, March 23**. Doors open at 2:30 & concert is at 3:00 pm.

EASTERN CONFERENCE – WOMEN’S SPRING GATHERING

Our spring gathering of the Women of the ELCA will be held Saturday, April 26, 2025 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 902 E. State St., Fremont. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with In-Kind Gifts of bed pillows for *Let’s Build Beds* project. Registration fee is \$10.00 payable at the door. Please RSVP by April 19th to Annette Moore at 419-680-4381 or j88a62m60@aol.com.

OHIO SUMMER YOUTH RETREAT – Save the date: **June 29th-July 2nd, 2025**. This year, there is going to be a statewide youth summer retreat at **Hopewood Pines**, in Marengo, OH, which is about 1 1/2 hours south of us. This will include youth from all three synods. If you have a child that will be entering 6th grade through 12th grade next school year, they are eligible to attend.

The retreat will be from Sunday June 29 to Wednesday July 2. Check in is June 29 from 2:30-4:30 and check out is Wednesday July 2 at 1pm. There will be programming, worship, and campfires. And the youth will be able to sign up for activities like kayaking, low ropes, archery, climbing wall, hiking, ziplining, etc.

We would need at least 1 adult per every 10 kids, and it would be great to have 1 male and 1 female leader, but that's not an absolute. Each adult will need to have an updated background check done. The kids will be grouped together in cabins. I'm guessing by age but I do not have that information yet. **The deadline to register is tentatively set for May 31** but since the camp can only accommodate so many people at a time, the sooner we can register, the better. The cost is \$150 per youth and will be paid for by Faith Lutheran Church. Adult chaperones are free. If this is something your child would be interested in doing, or if you would be interested in being an adult chaperone for this, please let Pastor Tim know as soon as possible.

THE CHOSEN, SEASON 3

- The viewing of *The Chosen, Season 3* will begin in the Faith Lutheran Church **Sanctuary Wednesday, March 12th at 5 p.m.** and will continue Wednesdays at 5 p.m. through Lent (March 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9, 16, 23rd (after Easter)).
- These episodes are longer therefore, there will not be time for a discussion.
- If you are interested in *The Chosen, 40 days with Jesus, Book Three* devotion, sign up on the bulletin board by Sunday, March 2nd. If you are interested in covering the cost, \$8.04 (as of 2/18/25) on your offering envelope line item to Christian Education.
- You can find *The Chosen* at a library or stream through Chromecast, Amazon Firestick, Apple TV, and Roku or TheChosen.tv/app for more information.
- Questions should be directed to Cheryl Paeth at 419-205-3659.

LIGHT SUPPERS FOR LENT 2025: Light suppers will be provided prior to the Lenten services on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m., between Mar. 12th-Apr. 9th. **THANK YOU** to the following groups that have volunteered to provide a meal before the Wednesday Lenten services in the Fellowship Hall!

| | |
|----------|-----------------------------|
| March 26 | Faith Fellowship Group |
| April 2 | Faith Women of the ELCA |
| April 9 | Christian Worship Committee |

Many hands make light work. **Please join us and consider bringing a dish to share!** A sign-up sheet to assist these groups with additional salads, sides, and desserts will be posted on the bulletin board in the central gathering area for anyone who wishes to share their culinary talents.

Thank you for sharing with others your bountiful blessings from God!

REMINDER... *When Sandusky County is under a Level 3 Snow Advisory the church will be closed. This includes Sunday services as well as all weekday events, meetings and activities for that day. If we are under a level 1 or 2 snow emergency, the church will be open and if it's on a day of worship, we will have worship.*

ON TUESDAY, MAY 6 AT 6PM, you are invited to come and learn about important **end-of-life planning** and things that you can do now, to ensure your family doesn't have to make those difficult decisions on one of the hardest days of their lives. Information will be shared by **Kari Arnold with Herman Funeral Homes** on several important subjects with a question-and-answer session to follow. You will learn about advanced funeral planning and why it is so necessary for creating a healing and meaningful celebration of life. With the knowledge gained, you can make a decision you will feel good about today, and your family will be comforted in the future. **Please sign-up** on the sheet in the coatroom if you plan to attend.

FAITH'S MISSION AND OUTREACH PROJECT FOR ATKINSON SCHOOL TESTING WEEKS - We are continuing our partnership with Atkinson Elementary this year as the students in grades 3-5 approach state testing. The testing begins the last week in March and extends through the first week of May. The Faith Mission and Outreach Committee is again asking our congregation to help by purchasing snacks for the students during those testing weeks. During the school day, many students eat their lunches earlier in the day and then require a snack later in the afternoon. Mr. Ward, the principal, said that the teachers often provide a small snack for the students to eat. Some of the snacks may include **PRETZELS, LANCE PEANUT BUTTER CRACKERS, GOLDFISH CRACKERS, FRUIT SNACKS, CHEEZ IT CRACKERS, and GRANOLA BARS**. These treats need to be in **single prepackaged units** for sanitary reasons.

A display will be set up in the narthex of our church showing the variety of items needed. A basket for monetary donations is also available if you would like us to do the shopping. Our committee is hoping to make its first delivery of items near the middle week of March.

I hope you will prayerfully consider joining us in this endeavor to support the staff and students of Atkinson Elementary. Thank you.

In Christian Love,

Randy J. Brown/ Project Coordinator

ASSISTING TODAY

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Parm Boyer **Pianist:** Becky Fox
Sr. Choir Director: Darla Brown **Flautist:** Marilyn Ring
Children's Choir Dir.: Jackie Seibert **Praise Choir Dir.:** Becky Fox

8:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m.

Greeter: Den & Deb Fahle Minnie Weber
Lector: Robert Fought Amy Wagner
Acolyte: Greyson Tooman
Communion: D. Fahle/K. Smith A. Wagner & P. Antesberger
Counters: Ann Waggoner* & Anne Gerner
Fellowship Time Host:
Altar Guild: Brianne Harder & Ginger Walker

ASSISTING NEXT WEEK

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Parm Boyer
Sr. Choir Director: Darla Brown
8:00 a.m. **10:30 a.m.**
Greeter: Roy & Shelli Burgoon Randy & Peggy Koch
Lector: Jackie Seibert Toni Cooper
Acolyte: Evan McBride
Communion: J. Seibert/B. Fox C. Trick & R. Koch
Counters: Dave Kocsis* & Judi Neill
Fellowship Time Host:
Altar Guild: Brianne Harder & Ginger Walker

PRAYING DAILY



For healing and hope: Pat Copley, Connie Diekman, Mary Ann Diekman, Della Humbarger, Denny Krumnow, Bill Leutenegger, Kathy McClain, Stan Moyer, Nancy Mylander, Betty Nielsen, Gary Overmyer, Letty Rusch, Bob Schneider, Bill Seibert, Janet Tressler, Carnetta Weber, Willis Weber, Linda Woessner. Lucas Boltz, Allen Gazdecki, Doug Weber.

For the Family of: Dorothy Swedersky
For our Military: Noah Egbert, Troy Halfhill, Jade Kayser, Daniel Linder, Tony Rozzi, Christopher Templeton, & Joshua Tooman.
For our Bishops: Bishop Christian Ndossa, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, and NWOS Bishop Daniel Beaudoin and Staff
For our partner congregation in Bumila, Tanzania
And its pastor: Pastor Peter Magasi

FAITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK OF – March 23 to March 30

Sunday

Mar. 23-----8 & 10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School & Fellowship Time
 Dartball Tournament

Monday

Mar. 24-----8 a.m. Men's Group in Fellowship Hall
 10 a.m. Valley View Tea Time with God

Tuesday

Mar. 25-----7:00 p.m. Esther Circle – Sermon on Mount #7

Wednesday

Mar. 26-----5:00 p.m. The Chosen – Season 3
 6:00 p.m. Lenten Meal & Worship in Fellowship Hall
 7:00 p.m. Sr. Choir

Thursday

Mar. 27-----3 p.m. Christ Care
 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir
 7:30 p.m. Praise Choir

Friday

Mar. 28-----

Saturday

Mar. 29-----9:15 a.m. Christ Care

Sunday

Mar. 30-----8 & 10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School & Fellowship Time
 1-4 p.m. Hall Reserved – 4-H – J. Seibert
 6:30-8 p.m. Hall Reserved – 4-H – B. Harder

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025: ATTENDANCE: 134 – OFFERING: \$3,356.52

NOISY OFFERING, SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025: \$126.02

LENTEN SERVICE, MARCH 12, 2025: ATTENDANCE: 45 – OFFERING: \$157.00

GOSPEL MESSAGE
March 23, 2025
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

We Have Choices

We have choices, right? Obviously. There's little question about that; it's a fact. Many of these choices are piled and piling up in the lockboxes of our upbringing and experiences, of our moral certainties, religious convictions, political opinions, or economic maneuverings. We make choices about our educational endeavors, vocational callings, use of our days and years, relationship commitments, dietary habits, travel destinations, color coordination, hairstyles, sexual behaviors, EV or gas, whole or skim, movie or book. All these choices—be they monumental or minuscule, automatic or sleep-depriving, public or private, frivolous or practical, courageous or cowardly—we shuffle, sort, and seal in one envelope or another: one labeled right and one marked wrong, the good envelope and the bad envelope.

Our choices mostly happen like that until for some reason, hard telling what reason, our certainties are disturbed and our absolutes begin to rattle like loose bolts under the frame of an old truck on a potholed road. It's what happens when, by mistake or under force, good or bad luck, we discover that broccoli isn't disgusting, snakes aren't slimy, the earth isn't flat, men may love men, more might not be better, aliens need not be strangers, and God's justice surely demands mercy.

Jesus started tugging at a snag of choices with a parable about a tree, a vineyard, a gardener, a saw, and manure. The tree was a no-hoper (there could be lots of reasons). With not a fig on a limb, if it had been another variety of fruit tree you'd call it a "bad apple." The choice: saw or donkey dung. Jesus rejects the blade, chooses the excrement.

Martin Luther (liking Latin) said, "*Simul justus et peccator*," meaning we are at the same time both saint and sinner. Or as Jesus put it, love those bum branches down to their roots, put your hands in the dirt, and see what fruit they bear.