



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

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 30, 2025

Setting 3 with Holy Communion

*Congregation please stand as you are able.

Introduction

The psalm sets the tone this day: “Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!” Happy are those who have “become the righteousness of God” in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has “rolled away . . . the disgrace” of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Rejoice!

Prelude:

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Larry Harris

Welcome & Announcements: Joys and Concerns

Signing of the Pew Register by all present.

***Opening Hymn:** *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* ELW 807

GATHERING

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

***Greeting**

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

C: **And also with you.**

***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,

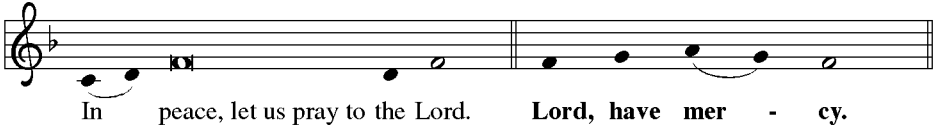
God's arms are always stretched open wide
to welcome the wandering ones home.

In † Christ your sins are forgiven.

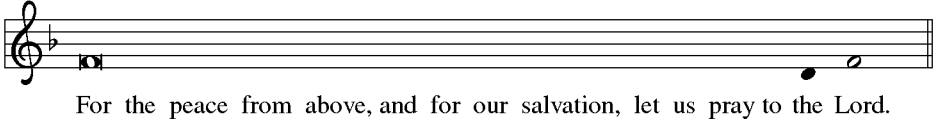
You have a place in God's house forever.

C: Amen.

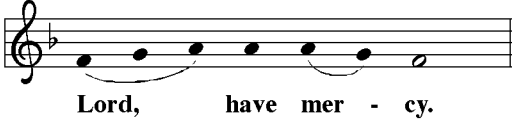
***Kyrie**



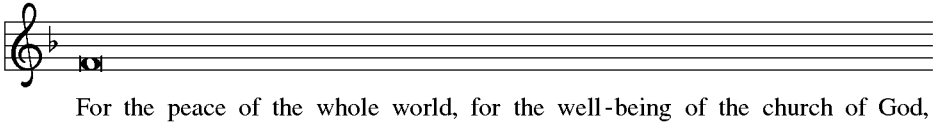
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



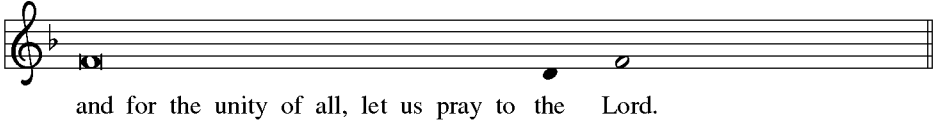
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



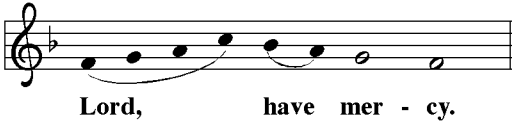
Lord, have mer - cy.



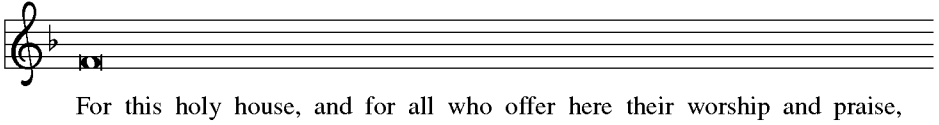
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,




and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.




Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. **A - men.**

***Prayer of the Day**

P: Let us pray.

C: God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, 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: **Joshua 5:9-12**

By celebrating the Passover and eating the produce of the promised land instead of the miraculous manna that had sustained them in the desert, the Israelites symbolically bring their forty years of wilderness wandering to an end at Gilgal.

R: A reading from Joshua, the fifth chapter.

⁹ The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

¹⁰ While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹² The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year. The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Responsive Reading: **Psalm 32**

¹ Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,
and whose sin is put away!

² **Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

³ While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,
because of my groaning all day long.

⁴ **For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

- ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.” Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.
- ⁶ **Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble; when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**
- ⁷ You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- ⁸ **“I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye.**
- ⁹ Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding; who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you.”
- ¹⁰ **Great are the tribulations of the wicked; but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**
- ¹¹ Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

Second Reading:

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

One way to describe the gospel is the promise that in Christ everything is transformed into newness. All mistakes, all deliberate sins, all old history is reconciled with Christ's resurrection. This is Paul's strong message to the congregation in the city of Corinth.

R: A reading from 2 Corinthians, the fifth chapter.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

*Gospel Acclamation



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and



mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in



stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

*Gospel

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Jesus tells a parable about a son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hopes. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believes it is his obedience that has earned his place in the father's home.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 15th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: ¹ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ So he told them this parable: ^{11b} "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴ When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and

before you; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” ²⁰ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷ He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ ³¹ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Children’s Sermon

Sermon

***Sermon Hymn:** *Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling* **ELW 608**

***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: God of faithful promise, make your church a new creation in Christ.
As you reconcile us to yourself, guide us also in your way of
reconciliation, that through confession, forgiveness, and repentance,
your church may bear witness to your love. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: God of new beginnings, restore balance to the earth. Send rain to
places of drought and sunshine to places of flooding, that the produce
of the land may again support life. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: God of prodigal grace, unite the nations as fellow members of the
human family. Give leaders the courage to put aside pride and ego, to
cease squandering lives and time, and to work for the well-being of all.
God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: God of boundless love, receive with open arms any in need of compassion, *especially those we name at this time (Pause for people to be named)*. Embrace all who are far from home or estranged from loved ones, and all who live with regret. Embolden your people to offer and to seek forgiveness. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: God of radical inclusion, widen human circles to welcome all who are excluded. Bless the work of disability ministries, ministries by and with neurodivergent people, and multicultural and ethnic-specific ministries; that the welcome of Jesus be extended to all. God, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

R: God of resurrection life, welcome home all who have died. We thank you for their lives and entrust them into your keeping, where true reconciliation and eternal peace are found. 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:

Amazing Grace

B. Logan

*Offertory: *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise him, all creatures here below;

Praise him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***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.

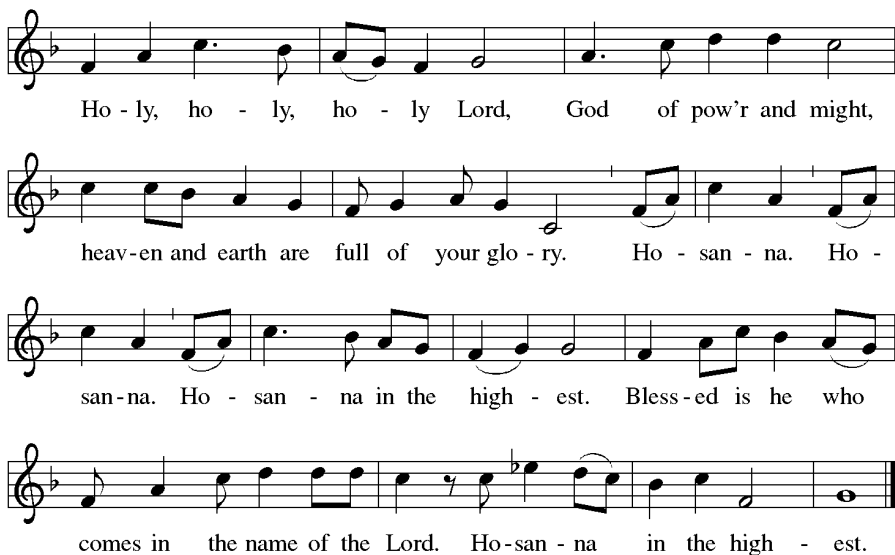
P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

***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.

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.

Communion Hymns:

ELW 767 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me

ELW 335 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

***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.

***Closing Hymn:**

Lead On, O King Eternal!

ELW 805

***Dismissal**

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

C: Thanks be to God.

***Postlude:**

There Is a Balm in Gilead

John David Peterson

From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SB150404.

New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Song *Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me*, Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Permission was gained thru One License #A-739669 for streaming and recording. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

LIKE A LOVING FATHER WELCOMING A PRODIGAL CHILD HOME and inviting the other to join the feast, God welcomes us all. Let us celebrate such amazing grace.

WE WELCOME THESE YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVING FIRST COMMUNION THIS MORNING:

Kendra Lee Paeth
Zade N. Zweifel
Emilia J. Haar
Aubree E. Nehls
Riley M. Nehls

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY is extended to the family of Patsy Copley. She joined the church triumphant on March 22, 2025.

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.

FIRELANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CHORALE WILL PERFORM FAURÈ REQUIEM on **Sunday, April 6, 2025** at 4 p.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Sandusky, Ohio. Michael Shirtz, Director and Conductor. For tickets call 419-621-4800 or go to FIRELANDSSYMPHONY.COM/TICKETS.

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

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.

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.

YOU’RE INVITED TO THE SPRING MEETING of the Portage Valley Federation of Lutheran Men & Pastors on **Saturday, April 12, 2025** at 9:30 a.m. at the Genesis Community Center, 4400 Woodville Rd., Northwood, OH 43469. Join us in singing hymns and learning their history – “The History of Hymns” by Dave Baker.

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.
- 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!

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!

ASSISTING TODAY

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

ASSISTING NEXT WEEK

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Parm Boyer

Sr. Choir Director: Darla Brown

8:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m.

Greeter: Jon Hetrick Gary & Mary Lou Cooper

Lector: Kim Smith Noelle Leutenegger

Acolyte: Karly Paeth Rachel Wasserman

Communion: B. Fox/K. Smith N. Leutenegger & D. Brown

Counters: Marie Reiselt* & Nicole Weiker

Fellowship Time Host: Adult II Sunday School Class

Altar Guild: Sandie Reed & Sarah Wilson

PRAYING DAILY



For healing and hope: Connie Diekman, Mary Ann Diekman, Millie Fetterman, 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, Beverly Fowler, Allen Gazdecki, Doug Weber.

For the Family of: Patsy Copley, 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 30 to April 6

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

Monday

Mar. 31-----10 a.m. Valley View Bible Bingo
 Dartball Banquet

Tuesday

Apr. 1-----7:00 p.m. Christian Worship

Wednesday

Apr. 2-----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

Apr. 3-----9-3 p.m. Fellowship & Sew Day
 3 p.m. Christ Care
 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir
 7:30 p.m. Praise Choir

Friday

Apr. 4-----

Saturday

Apr. 5-----9:15 a.m. Christ Care

Sunday

Apr. 6----- 8 & 10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School & Fellowship Time

SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 2025: ATTENDANCE: 148 – OFFERING: \$7,530.52
LENTEN SERVICE, MARCH 19, 2025: ATTENDANCE: 42 – OFFERING: \$166.00

GOSPEL MESSAGE
March 30, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Getting to the Fat Calf

Whatever you think of, however you feel about this story, don't fool yourself into believing that it is all about a party. Pie-in-the-sky piety skims the fat and squeezes the fruit out of the parable, reducing a teaching about what is wildly prodigal to a mere morality play.

Here's the bulk of the story: abandonment, longing, waste, famine, then hunger, humiliation, and dishonor, dying in pig dirt, shame unto pleading, resentment, sore bitterness . . . loss in every direction. Loss and falling—from comfort and certainty, respectability and character; from pleasure into pain, well-being into misery. Jesus told this agonizing, heartbreaking, undignified, lowdown, vanished-hope story for a reason. Jesus knew what life can be like. He recognized the deep ravines of loss and the gullies into which we fall. It doesn't look as if the story begins in those sad places, but it surely lands and sits there for a while, the kind of sedentary existence that is too much like an awful eternity.

A father, bereaved and insulted (Was he not the parent he hoped, thought, intended himself to be?), is left gazing into an empty distance. A child disappearing (Why such urgency to run from his birth home?) is left in disgrace. A child dutiful, hard at work, utterly dependable (How had he come to feel so cheated, denied of love?) is left mucking in thick refusal.

And while it is so . . . And though it is true . . .

Suddenly, or maybe it's eventually, the story becomes larger. The story collides with gospel. The late preacher and theologian Frederick Buechner observed, "The gospel is bad news before it is good news." Jesus knew how we fail the world and how the world fails us. Jesus was a truth-teller, the whole truth: rags and robes, pigpen and dance floor, defiance and embrace, but no pie-in-the-sky piety. Instead, a festive roast in the oven! That's how grace behaves.