

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
753 N. CALUMET AVE.  
VALPARAISO, IN 46383

(219) 462-7684

WWW.FAITHVALPO.ORG

*Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing  
within and throughout our community*



## Loving Lent

**Lk. 11:23-28** <sup>23</sup> *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.* <sup>24</sup> *"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'* <sup>25</sup> *And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order.* <sup>26</sup> *Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."* <sup>27</sup> *As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!"* <sup>28</sup> *But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*

Well, well it's about a month into the new year and Lent is almost here. How are those New Year's resolutions coming? Are you considering giving something up for Lent? Even if you normally engage in this practice, perhaps you feel like you have already given up enough during 2020, and plan to take this year off. Giving up things is hard, isn't it? I wonder if that is why several people I know don't particularly love the season of Lent. All that talk about sin and discipline and the need for change. Don't do this. Don't do that. It's kind of a downer!

However, is this all there is to Lent? Certainly not. Sure, there are things worth giving up for Lent. Most of these are the kind of sinful behaviors that are worth giving up year round. Other things, like those we might give up for a period of fasting, like a certain food, can help to remind us to be thankful for the gifts that God regularly provides. Having been forced to take a break from some of the things I love this past year, like some of my group hobbies and spending time with people in the way I am accustomed, has certainly made me more thankful for them. Yet regardless of whether you need, choose, or are forced to give something up, it is also important to consider what is going to fill a particular void.

There are several old sayings including one by Benjamin Franklin, which suggest that, "Idol hands are the Devil's playground." I would suggest, based on Luke 11, that this goes for empty places in our hearts and lives as well. Most of us know that to kick a bad habit we need to replace it with a new healthy one. For example, to replace part of an unhealthy work schedule, we may need put in place an intentional practice of restorative rest. Otherwise, we usually go back to our old habits or replace them with something worse.

This can also go for other things as well. If something changes in our lives and we are forced to give up something helpful or meaningful to us, even for a time, it is often important that this space is not left or filled with an idol. We might need to replace a favorite exercise activity that we can no longer do with a new one. We might have to find a new way, person, or group in which to receive support or engage in God's Word, when a former one is no longer available to us. We may also need to work through any grief or guilt that can be associated with such changes, giving thanks for what went before and for what the future may also hold for everyone going forward.

You might notice that when Jesus gave up His life and so much more for us, He did not leave things there. Stepping out of heaven to take on flesh, there were differences in His relationship with the Father, but it wasn't left behind. Prayer and other practices became part of Jesus's current normal. Moreover, His disciples gained the benefit of a more direct relationship with God. Later, Jesus did not lay down his life for no reason, He did so according to the Father's will and with the loving plan to take up again not just His own life, but ours as well! Jesus leaves no void behind without eventually filling it with something better.

Jesus loves you so much that the same is true for you. Whatever season it is in your life, be it Lent, 2021, motherhood (see scripture above) or some other one, blessed is the one who takes that season of life and applies the word of God to it. Look at the different places in your life, the voids, the ones you think are in order, or the ones you just started sweeping, and ask God, "what is your will for this part of my life?" What do you desire, not just to remove, but to put in its place? Then continue to engage with God going forward. Whether it is your daily life, this post-election season, or as the COVID vaccine is distributed, there will be changes, but rather than disengaging, going back to old habits, or avoiding change in the first place, engage with God's guidance going forward. Moreover, when you look at those places of change, let one thing fill every part of your life. Love! God's love and patience with yourself; God's love and care for others; God's love and passion for the people of God as we seek to grow together and share with the world our risen Savior, during this loving Lenten season. After all, God is love! His Grace has replaced our sin. So have a loving and blessed Lent.

In Christ,

*Pastor Eric Schoech*  
Pastor Eric Schoech

## A NOTE FROM YOUR THRIVENT ADVOCATE

Frances Marton

Thanks to all the Thrivent members who designated Choice Dollars to Faith Lutheran in 2020. If you forgot, there is still time to direct those Dollars! Choice dollars designated in 2020 can still be directed until March 31, 2021. By directing Choice Dollars, members recommend where Thrivent distributes a portion of its charitable funding. A member's eligibility to direct Choice Dollars is based on one of the following:

Having \$750 or more in annual life and health insurance products.

Having \$20,000 or more in life insurance and annuity products.

In January, \$166 has been directed to the church. You can help this amount grow; we can make a bigger impact together!

### ***Direct Choice Dollars Online***

Visit [thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://thrivent.com/thriventchoice).  
Click Direct Choice Dollars.  
Log in with user ID and password.  
Chose Faith Memorial Lutheran Church.  
Click Direct Now and Follow prompts.



### ***Direct Choice Dollars by Phone***

Call 800-847-4836, when prompted say Thrivent Choice.  
Press 1 to direct Choice Dollars. (if prompted say your phone number and birth date.)



### **January Attendance/Offerings**

(attendance includes both inside the church and in the parking lot)

**January 3** Attendance: 28  
Offering: \$1971.46

**January 10** Attendance: 42  
Offering: \$1628.00

**January 17** Attendance: 36  
Offering: \$6113.00

**January 24** Attendance: 40  
Offering: \$7088.00

## HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

Valentine's Day this year will be very different, no doubt about that. We all miss our connections with friends and family. Sometimes it helps to reach out to a friend, neighbor or family member who may be feeling isolated or alone. Phone calls, email and Facebook messages, ZOOM calls, or even an old fashioned card by mail can brighten their day (and yours too!)



## WEDNESDAY EVENING SERVICES DURING LENT

As we will still be dealing with Covid-19 and social distancing during Lent this year, the Wednesday Evening Lenten Services will be pre-recorded. They will be available to watch on line beginning February 24. Wednesday evening services will NOT be held in the church.



Regular Sunday services as well as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter services will be held in church and streamed on line as usual.

## THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

### *"Roots"*

Eighteen years ago, the choir gave me several house-warming gifts as I moved into my home. One of the gifts was an evergreen bush, about 3 feet tall. Fred came to the house with a shovel and fertilizer to assist with the planting. He dug the hole, loosened the little bush's roots, and added fertilizer. We placed it in the hole, firmly packed in the dirt, and said a blessing that it would grow strong and tall.

While I still affectionately call it "little bush", it isn't little anymore. The height almost equals that of a telephone pole, and I can't put my arms around it in a hug. The dense foliage and sturdy trunk have made it a favorite nesting place for sparrows. Obviously, the roots have sunk deep into the ground and the fertilizer gave it the boost needed to grow big and tall.

Last year, this corner of the newsletter reminded us of one of Christ's great "I Ams": he is the vine and we are the branches. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, used another gardening image to describe our lives as baptized children of God. We are rooted and grounded in love. And I will be so bold as to add to Paul – not any love, but God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just as little bush was rooted and grounded in good soil and fertilizer, I try to imagine what it means in my life to be rooted and grounded in God's love. How does that love enable me to grow in faith? How does that love strengthen me for the tasks ahead? How does that love help me love my neighbors?

In this month of Valentines and hearts and love, take a moment to consider your roots.

*"That according to the riches of God's glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19*



Alexis Brandt	February 6
Anna Price	February 7
Patsy Berndt	February 7
Deb Porter	February 12
Beth Underwood	February 13
Carroll Morris	February 15
Kenny Frank	February 22
Frank Morris	February 22

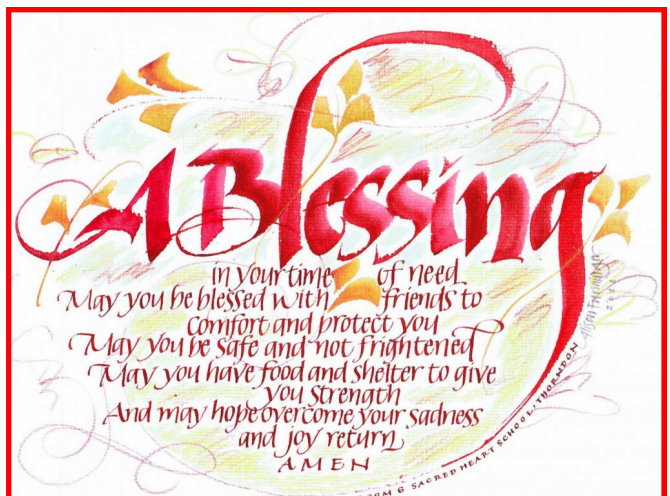
Best wishes to all of the above members celebrating birthdays this month!

**If we have left out your birthday please call the office at (219) 462-7684.**

### THANKS TO OUR CARE COMMITTEE!

Many thanks to the Care Committee for reaching out to members to say hi and see if anyone needs something we can help with, including prayer and friendship.

It is really nice to talk with family members from Faith!





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Email:  
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### Know someone who needs care?

Caring for others may look different these days, but it certainly hasn't stopped, nor has the need.

- If you know someone in need of pastoral care, including yourself, let pastor know.
- Continue to contact the prayer chain and ask for prayers from the church prayer team.
- Get creative....

1. Look for ways to help neighbors
2. Support families dealing with school challenges
3. Get a few people to sing outside a shut-in's window or
4. Visit them from a distance on a front or back porch while the weather is good.



### FAITH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*During the current covid 19 crisis, all services are held both in the church and in the parking lot. For parking lot services tune your radio to FM99.1.*

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 7, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Transfiguration of our Lord, February 14, 9:00am Morning Prayer

Ash Wednesday, February 17, 7:00pm Holy Communion

The First Sunday in Lent, February 21, 9:00am Holy Communion

The First Wednesday in Lent, February 24, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Second Sunday in Lent, February 28, 9:00am Morning Prayer

The Second Wednesday in Lent, March 3, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Third Sunday in Lent, March 7, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Third Wednesday in Lent, March 10, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 14, 9:00am Morning Prayer

The Fourth Wednesday in Lent, March 17, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 21, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Fifth Wednesday in Lent, March 24, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The above services are subject to change if Covid 19 virus regulations change again. For questions please call the office at (219) 462-7684.

