

March
2022

St. John Lutheran Church



St. John Lutheran Church
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Mission Statement

St. John is a living witness to the love of God as shown in Jesus Christ.

*We gather faithfully in His name to **worship** and praise Him; and we go forth in peace to **share** the Good News and to **serve** the world around us.*

Beautiful Dust

By Kimberly Knowle-Zeller

"God makes beautiful things out of us, from the dust." (Gungor)



My dad knew the beauty of dust.

Even before he was sick and death could be denied, my dad knew what would happen to his dust. My father's instructions were clear. He would be cremated and had specific directions on where to scatter his dust.

A tablespoon of his ashes, to be precise.

Three locations brimmed with the holiness where he wished his ashes to rest: his hometown of Buffalo, N.Y.; Nebraska, where his ancestors lived; and my first call congregation.

In Buffalo he wanted the ashes spread at his school and his home. The places where he learned to love and be loved. The fondest memories were shared, of games outside throughout the summer months, working on cars with his dad, and telling stories with his brother late at night under the covers.

My dad knew the beauty of dust.

His father's family came from Nebraska. I heard the stories my dad shared of his father's life growing up in the flat, beautiful land of Nebraska. I knew my dad's love for the stretching skies and vast prairies.

My dad knew the beauty of dust.

And finally, the final resting place for his ashes—my first call congregation. You see, not only in his life but in his death, my dad knew the hope and beauty of dust. The instructions for his ashes were written well before I even finished seminary, let alone knew where and how God was calling me in ministry.

But my dad knew intimately that God makes beautiful things out of us, from the dust.

Today is Ash Wednesday. That tender, solemn day in the church where we gather to reflect on death. Communities gather to feel the ashen cross on their foreheads and to hear the words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

We feel the ashes.

We see them.

We fear them.

We remember the deaths of loved ones.

We reflect on our own deaths.

Ash Wednesday brings us to our knees. Humbled and vulnerable. We remember the places we’ve been and think toward the places we’ll go and all the beautiful things God will make out of each of us. On this day of ashes and dust and remembrance, the sign of the cross on our foreheads reminds us of the cross from our baptisms.

The water at our baptism washes over us with a love and grace stronger than anything we can imagine and greater than any mistake we’ve made—stronger even than death. It’s a love that claims us from the beginning, embraced by the arms of God, and doesn’t let go even when our life on earth ends.

On Ash Wednesday, when the ashes are marked on our foreheads, when we feel the ash, remember the darkness and reflect on death, we know intimately that the one on the cross was made of the same dust as us. That the one who walked to the cross and claimed us at baptism walked the same dusty, earthen land.

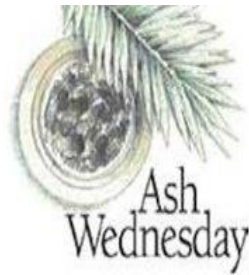
Out of the dust, beauty rises.

Out of the dust, hope emerges.

I never imagined that I’d celebrate Ash Wednesday holding the memory of my father’s ashes.

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” And from the dust, God makes beautiful things out of us.

Posted by Kimberly Knowle-Zeller an ordained ELCA pastor, mother of two and spouse of an ELCA pastor.



Dear Lord, As we enter this Solemn and Holy Season, we pray that you would send your Holy Spirit upon us that we might prepare ourselves for these coming 40 days of Lent. Even though we may no longer wear sackcloth and ashes, we do seek to humble ourselves so that we can understand the magnificence of Your Love for us as You humbled Yourself and gave Your Life on the Cross that we might receive the gift of Eternal Glory with You. AMEN.

**Ash Wednesday Worship and Imposition of Ashes
March 2nd @ 7:00 pm**

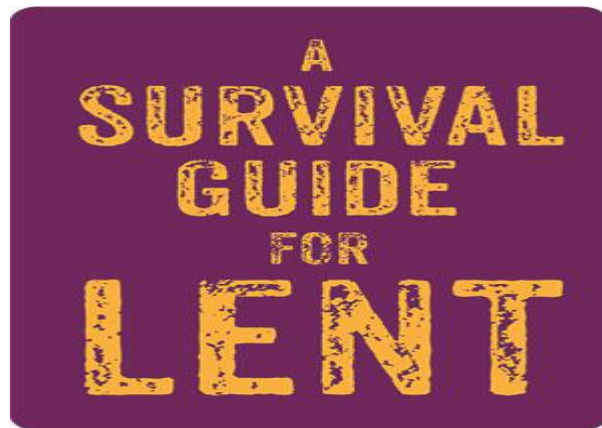
Pastor Saylor – Presiding Minister

At 7:00 pm there will be a service of Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes.



First Communion Class

For those who will be making their First Communion, we will have classes on Sunday – **March 13th and 27th from 1:00 – 2:30.**



People often think of Christmas as an emotionally tough time of year to get through, but in reality all Christian holi/holy days are difficult in the years after the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job or any other major transition.

Add to all our personal challenges the ghosts of global insecurity, political mayhem and just about the earliest Easter possible (which means that some lilies will be met with the stomping of snow boots at the narthex door), and this may be a difficult Lent for many. How are we to clean out our spiritual closets when even opening the door may be more painful than usual?

If you're feeling the weight, here are three thoughts on how you might survive Lent in 2016.

Thought One: Go poetically and prophetically

Prophets are the conscience of the people. Journalist H.L. Mencken once wrote, "Conscience: the inner voice which warns us that someone may be looking."

And this year that "someone" will be you. Certainly God too. But it is usually me who neglects to look at myself. The prophetic readings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Martin Luther King Jr. and even modern prophets speaking truth in the news should bend the ear.

And poetry bends eyes and hearts. Poetry infects the mind and the heart at the same time. If this is new to you, perhaps start with a modern poet like Christian Wiman ("Every Riven Thing" and "My Bright Abyss"). Join that voice to Maria Rainer Rilke, Rumi, Jan Richardson or John O'Donohue to keep you open to life as you dig into your spirit. Indeed, it will be the spade you use for the digging.

The prophets will call you to dig; poetry may be the tool.

Thought Two: Go with your body

This season is not just for the soul, beloved. "In these bodies we will live, and in these bodies we will die," the band Mumford & Sons reminds us ("Awake My Soul"). Our bodies take on special importance in these days when we're encouraged to participate in the ancient practices of fasting, kneeling and physically handing over our abundance to those without.

Focus on just one of these practices to embody Lent in these strange days where even watching the news can cause physical fatigue.

Thought Three: Go for broke

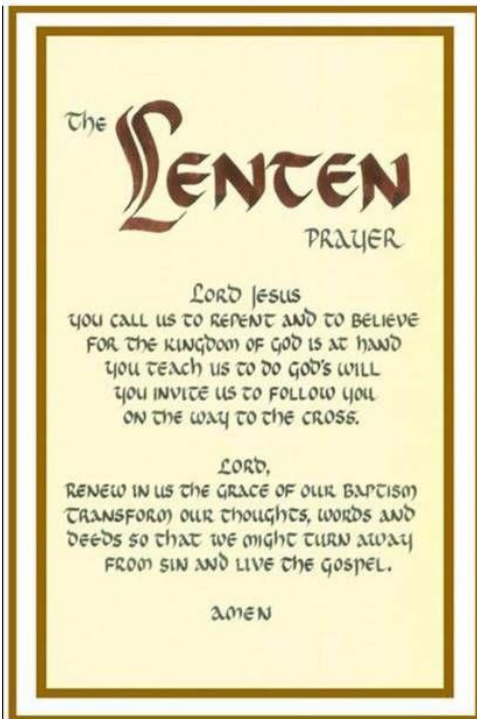
We talk about denial in Lent — of sin, of self and perhaps even of sweets or bacon. But Lent is a fool's paradise if we're just taking a vacation from these things. A vacation may give me a break from my work, but it doesn't give me a break from myself.

Instead, have God break you open a bit in Lent.

And if you feel the world has already broken you open, then Lent is the time to allow God to do it differently. We callous ourselves after loss and while away in fear — it's natural. Lent can be a season for wearing away at that shell



Tim Brown is a pastor, writer, and director of spiritual gifts for Methodist Home for Children.



Vestry Summary

* The Elders planned and sponsored a Valentines Party on 2/13 and did the same for a Baptism reception on 2/20. We also worked on increasing participation in Worship Planning with new volunteers to meet on Feb. 23rd. We are working on first communion classes scheduled for 3/13 & 3/27 and have the celebration on Palm Sunday. *



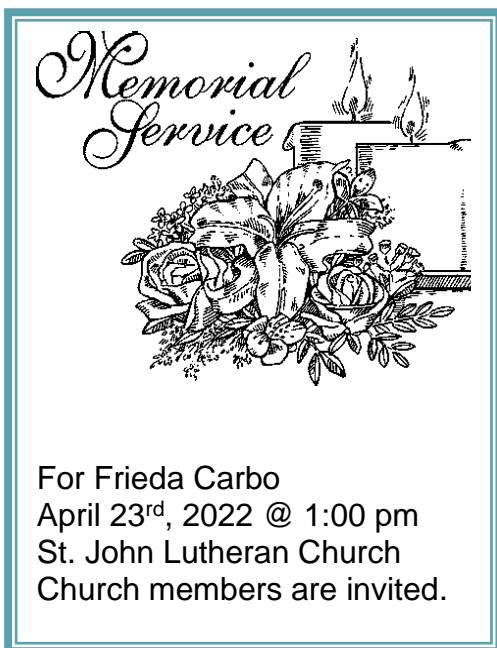
Mission Endowment and Outreach Committee

The purpose of the Mission Endowment committee is to fund projects for the work of the church beyond what the church's budget can do. This money is not to 'pay the bills' but to further the mission of the church from investments in the ELCA pooled trust and has bylaws we must follow in dispersing the interest of our investment. The principal has never been touched. We formed this committee from some large sums of money which were gifted to the church several years ago. The money is used for 4 areas defined by the bylaws and these are local, synod-wide, national and worldwide.

For the past few years, the committee has chosen a theme for the year and then chosen quarterly projects to support the theme. Some themes have been world hunger, education, especially of young girls, Lutheran Disaster Response. An example of world hunger was farm animals, crops to plant, teaching women to grow and sell food. Many of these projects are available through the ELCA Good Gifts catalog which you can find online and at the church.

The committee thought that this year perhaps members of the congregation might like to suggest a theme and following the bylaws suggest projects to support the theme. We would figure out the money. If you have questions or a suggestion please email Sally Foster at sfoster570@msn.com.

The Good Gifts catalog online is goodgifts.elca.org/congregational-resources.





03/01 William Greb
03/11 Janet Ford
03/13 Ellen Hrach

Upcoming Events
April 10 – Palm Sunday
April 15 – Good Friday
April 16 – Easter Vigil
April 17 – Easter Sunday

Counters for March
Cindy Knauff

Worship Helpers
March
Assisting Ministers
8:00 am Dave Knauff
10:30 am Keith Cardinal

Ushers
8:00 am Larry Werner
10:30 am Cardinal Family

March Newsletter

Address service requested

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