

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 21, 2021 - 10:00 AM

Living Springs Lutheran Church
4224 Hard Scrabble Road, Columbia, SC 29223
www.livingspringscolumbia.org

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.



Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen... since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus... (Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:1-2)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

We stand as able

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer.

People: **Amen.**

Pastor: God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

(Silence for reflection - we kneel as able)

Pastor: Fountain of living water,

People: **pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.**

Pastor: Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus.

People: **Amen.**

We focus on the cross as it enters the sanctuary.

GATHERING SONG

"O Lord, throughout These Forty Days"



1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you
2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your
3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and
4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and



prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance
faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your
fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -
all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal



for our sin, and free us from our past.
skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.
ny our - selves that we may know God's love.
Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

*O Lord, throughout These Forty Days; Text: Claudia F. Hernaman/Gilbert E. Doan, Jr.; Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davisson, Kentucky Harmony
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KYRIE & PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

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



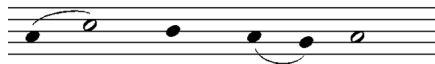
Lord, have mer - cy.

Pastor: 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.



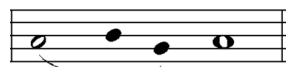
Lord, have mer - cy.

Pastor: For this community of faith,
and all who offer their worship and praise,
let us pray to the Lord.



Lord have mer - cy.

Pastor: Help, save, comfort, and defend us Gracious Lord.



A - men.

Pastor: Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

People: **And also with you.**

We are seated

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Adam Woodruff

Children, youth, and young at heart are invited for a special message. You may collect your coins or dollars at home for the bucket collection and bring them to Sanctuary worship, to the Parking Lot Worship, or drop them off at the church office. Current collection is for the World Hunger 40 Days of Giving.

*For-ward in faith! (clap-clap-clap)
For-ward in faith! (clap-clap-clap)
Witnesses all a'round ...
(God's movin' us) For-ward in faith!*

*Forward in faith (clap, clap, clap)
Forward in faith (clap, clap, clap)
Keepin' our eyes on Jesus,
We're runnin' the race!*

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

"10,000 Reasons"

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are: Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul; Wor-ship His Ho-ly name Sing like ne-ver be-fore, O my soul, I'll wor-ship your ho-ly name.

Verse 1: *The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;
It's time to sing Your song again.
Whatever may pass, and whatever comes before me,
let me be singing when the evening comes (to Chorus)*

Verse 2: *You're rich in love and you're slow to anger,
Your name is great and Your heart is kind.
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find (to Chorus)*

Verse 3: *And on that day, when my strength is failing,
the end draws near, and my time has come;
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending;
ten thousand years and then forevermore! (Repeat Chorus 2x)*

FIRST READING

Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.

Lector: A reading from Genesis.

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." (Genesis 9:8-17)

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

People: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 25:1-10

Lector: To you, O LORD,
I lift up my soul.

**People: My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

Lector: Let none who look to you be put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

**People: Show me your ways, O LORD,
and teach me your paths.**

Lector: Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

**People: Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.**

Lector: Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

**People: You are gracious and upright, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

Lector: You lead the lowly in justice
and teach the lowly your way.

**People: All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.**



SECOND READING

As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.

Lector: A reading from 1 Peter.

Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him. (1 Peter 3:18-22)

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

People: Thanks be to God.

We stand for the reading of the Gospel

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.

GOSPEL LESSON

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

People: Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:9-15)

Pastor: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ.

We are seated

MESSAGE

Rev. Eric Fink



HYMN OF THE DAY

"Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word"



1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in your word; curb those who
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, your pow'r make known, for you are
3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, send peace and



by de - ceit or sword would wrest the king - dom from your Son
Lord of lords a - lone; de - fend your ho - ly church, that we
u - ni - ty on earth; sup - port us in our fi - nal strife



and bring to naught all he has done.
may sing your praise e - ter - nal - ly.
and lead us out of death to life.

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word; Text: Martin Luther, tr. Catherine Winkworth; Music: ERHALT UNS, HERR, J. Klug

APOSTLES' CREED

People: 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

Assist: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

+ A brief silence +

Assist: In Jesus your realm has come near to us in every place and time. Give your church throughout the world a spirit of humility and repentance; teach us to trust always in the good news of your salvation. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: You have made a covenant of mercy with every living creature. Protect all the earth's creatures from destruction. Empower the work of biologists, conservationists, and science educators. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: All your paths are steadfast love and faithfulness. Direct the words and actions of leaders in our community and throughout the world, that they may maintain justice for the lowly. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: Even in the wilderness you are with us. Walk alongside migrants and refugees crossing dangerous lands. Tend to those whose lives feel desolate. Give healing and strength to all who suffer. We pray especially for: *Ed Brennan; Lois Mattson; Katrina Shannon; Walker Flores; Jim Grimmer; Jeff Tenhover; Ann Lynn Caughman; Dolores Harmon; Inge Lowery; the Mooney family; the Bradham family; Helen Bradham; Rhea Pye; Wendy McKenzie; Karl Schmidt; Margaret Blank; Charles Kauffman; Bunie Talbert; Ashley Deselem; Kathy Nelson; Bob Holmstrom; Kelly Koziol; Lila Bell; Wilma Bracey; the Goldfinch family; the Carter family; the Anderson family; the Payne family; Nancy Todd; and those we name before you now, either silently or aloud...*, Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: In the covenant of baptism you claim us as beloved children. Nurture us in our baptismal identity and teach us to live within it for the sake of others. Strengthen this congregation's ministries of care and concern. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: In baptism you join us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise you for all those who have died trusting in your faithfulness. Bring us with them to the fullness of your reign. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Pastor: In these days of ongoing pandemic, we continue to pray for ..., let us pray.

People: Your mercy is great.

Pastor: Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

People: Amen.

SHARING OF PEACE

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you always.

People: And also with you.

We greet one another, with the words that the risen Jesus spoke to his disciples: "Peace be with you."

OFFERINGS ARE GIVEN

Offering may be dropped off at the office during the week or sent through the mail. For those who wish to give electronically, you may use the secure Givelify app.

Google Play



App Store



OFFERING PRAYER

Pastor: Let us pray.

People: Faithful God, you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor: We have been made one as the body of Christ through the waters of baptism. In our journey of faith & life, we are fed with Christ's own body and blood. Even though we do not celebrate Holy Communion in this virtual gathering, we pause to give thanks for the gift of Holy Communion — as we anticipate, with joy, those times when we are fed at your table.

Pastor: O God most mighty, O God most merciful, O God our rock and our salvation, hear us as we offer our praise and give you thanks. When the earth was a formless void, you formed order and beauty. When Abraham and Sarah were barren, you sent them a child. When the Israelites were enslaved, you led them to freedom. Ruth faced starvation; David fought Goliath; the psalmists cried out for healing, and full of compassion, you granted the people your life. You entered our sorrows in Jesus our brother. He was born among the poor, he lived under oppression, he wept over the city. With infinite love, he conquered death and granted the people your life.

We give you thanks and praise for the gift of Holy Communion and for the blessing it brings to your people. Even though we abstain from your meal in this moment of worship, for reasons you understand, we still sense the power of your forgiveness and grace offered to us and the world through your Son. Awaiting those times when we share in this meal, we still cherish in our hearts the words which Jesus gave us:

People: 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."

We take time for prayer and reflection as we sing together, giving thanks to God for all the times we have been fed with our Lord's body & blood—and look forward to the time when we gather with others around the Lord's Table.

COMMUNION REFLECTION

"Praise and Thanks and Adoration"



1 Praise and thanks and ad - o - ra - tion, Son of God, to you we give,
2 Hold me ev - er in your keep - ing, com - fort me in pain and strife;



for you chose to serve cre - a - tion, died that sin - ers all might live.
through my laugh - ter and my weep - ing, lift me to a no - bler life.



Dear Lord Je - sus, guide my way; faith - ful let me day by day
Draw my fer - vent love to you; con - stant hope and faith re - new



fol - low where your steps are lead - ing, find ad - ven - ture, joys ex - ceed - ing!
in your birth, your life and pas - sion, in your death and res - ur - rec - tion.

*Praise and Thanks and Adoration; Text: Thomas H. Kingo; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship ;
Music: FREU DICH SEHR, Trente quatre pseumes de David
Text © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress.
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LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

People: **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.**

BENEDICTION

Pastor: You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

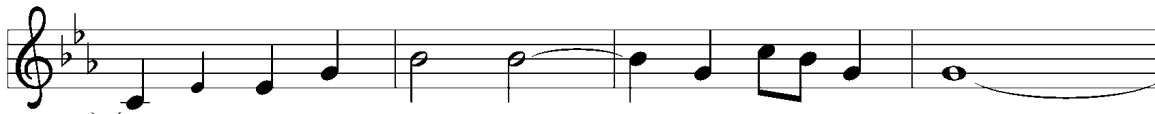
People: Amen

SENDING SONG

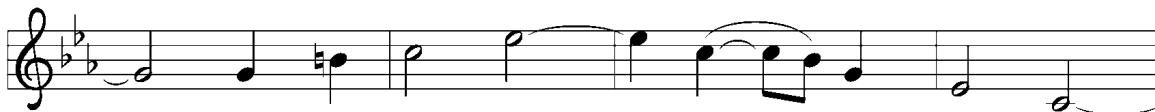
"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"



1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;
2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



I want Je - sus to walk with me;
in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,
when my heart is al - most break - ing,
when my head is bowed in sor - row,



Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

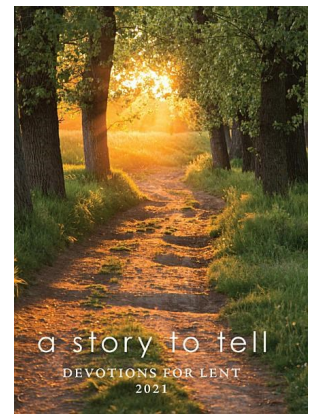
*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me; Text: African American spiritual;
Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual*

DISMISSAL

Assist: Go in peace. You have a story to tell - God is love!

People: Thanks be to God.

LENT 2021... A Story to Tell: God Is Love!



MID-DAY LENTEN WORSHIP
Tuesdays @ 12:00, Feb. 23 - Mar. 23

LENTEN DRAMA WORSHIP
Wednesdays @ 6:00, Feb. 24 - Mar. 24

SPECIAL LENTEN DISCIPLE GROUPS
(meet virtually)
& ONGOING BIBLE STUDIES

"A Story to Tell"
Daily Lenten Devotions
"God Is Love"
Pocket/Bag Medallions
+++

5:19 Daily Prayer Alerts
(Mark 5:19 — "...tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy the Lord has shown you!")





Additional
Lenten Devotional Resources:
Families - "With Your Whole Heart"
Children - "Were You There?"
Teens - "Lent-stagram"



FRIDAY FOOD TRUCK "FISH FRY" - FISHIN' FELLAS
LS Parking Lot, 5:00-7:00
February 19, 26; March 5, 12, 19, 26
\$2000 goal for USC Campus Ministry

40 X 40

Give ~~Up~~ Something = 1600!

Lap Blankets/
Shawls

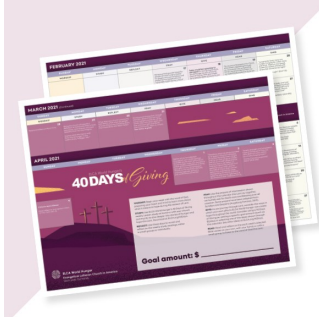
Paper Products

Cereal
Apple Sauce
Fruit Cups
Juice



40 Days of Giving Hunger Calendars

We invite you to **study, pray, reflect** and **give** with us during ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving — for our families, our neighbors and communities around the world.



ELCA World Hunger's
40 DAYS of Giving

**MID-DAY WORSHIP (WITH COMMUNION)
TUESDAYS @ 12:00, FEB. 23 - MAR. 23**

**LENTEN DRAMA WORSHIP
WEDNESDAYS @ 6:00, FEB. 24 - MAR. 24**
In-Person (sanctuary) & live-streamed (YouTube & Facebook)
This Wednesday - Paralyzed Man, Mark 2:1-12

LENTEN 5:19 PRAYER ALERTS

During Lent, we are sending out daily "prayer alerts," with the prayer and scripture from each day's devotion. Alerts will be sent out at 5:19 PM, reminding us of Mark 5:19: "...tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy the Lord has shown you!"

*"A Story to Tell" Daily Devotion Books and "God is Love" Pocket/Bag Medallions are being distributed today or stop by the office during the week. Additional Lenten Devotional Resources:
Families - "With Your Whole Heart"
Children - "Were You There?"
Teens - "Lent-stagram"*



LENTEN FISH FRY

**Feb. 19 Through Mar. 26
5 pm - 7 pm.**

Because safety is our main priority and we are not able to socialize in the fellowship hall, the fish fry will be available through Fishin' Fellas, a food truck stationed in Blythewood that many of you are probably already familiar with. Of course, the fellowship, tired bodies, sore feet and entertainment will be greatly missed by all our many workers who made it possible for our success. *The price of \$10 for each adult meal at Fishin' Fellas is a choice of: Flounder & a side; 10 ct. Shrimp & a side; Shrimp Taco & a side; or Fish (Flounder) Taco and a side. Sides: Fried Okra, Hush puppies; or Fries (adult meals include a water). Kids add-on: 4 ct. Shrimp & a side (\$5). The truck will be parked on our property every Friday in Lent (order directly from your vehicle), starting Feb. 19 and ending the Friday before Easter week Mar. 26. Time will be 5 pm - 7 pm.*

LENTEN DISCIPLE GROUP GATHERINGS!

Lent is a time for reflection and preparation. It is a time for listening to God to speak to us and for contemplation. It is also a time for sharing how we hear and see the Holy Spirit at work in the Word and in our lives...how the Spirit tugs us to be disciples of Jesus.

Everyone has been assigned to your own Lenten Group that will gather virtually 1-2 times during the Lenten season. Pastor Eric led a trial group with our Discipleship Leaders last week - it was very powerful to get to know each other and reflect on our lives and our call to be followers of Jesus. We each have a story to tell! In upcoming days, you should be contacted by a Group Leader, who will let you know when your group will be gathering. If you do not receive a contact by next week (or if you have a friend who might like to be added to a group), please call the office, or contact Steve Bloss at sbloss1947@gmail.com, 803-467-8287.



40X40 LENTEN COLLECTION

Small blankets (shawls, lap blankets) for local nursing homes; paper goods (paper towels, napkins) for homeless shelter and Palmetto Place; and backpack individual food items (cereal, applesauce/fruit cups, juice). A basket is available in the admin building. Our goal is 40X40=1600 total items.

**It is with great joy
and thanksgiving to God
that we announce
the call of the Holy Spirit!**

**Carl D. Taylor
Associate Pastor
Living Springs Lutheran Church**

**We are blessed to welcome
Pastor Carl,
spouse LaTynia,
daughters Sydnie & McKenzie,
as partners in ministry
with this community of disciples!**

+++

**Saturday, Feb. 27 -
Rite of Ordination
@ St. Paul, Columbia
(participate virtually).**

**Sunday, Feb. 28 -
Service at Installation
@ Living Springs
(11am Parking Lot worship).**

BACKPACK FOOD MINISTRY

Would you like to help with packing the bags for our backpack program? Signup Genius has the schedule for the remainder of the school year. Two to three people can pack at a time or maybe you would like to do it as a family project? Contact Karen Kranz for details or questions. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e4baea92fa0f85-backpack>.



HOPE MINISTRY PROJECT – CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

In support of patient’s families of children who are undergoing treatment at the Children’s Cancer & Blood Disorder unit on the 5th floor of Prisma Children’s Hospital, Living Springs is providing 24 meals on the third Thursday of each month. The meals are being delivered by our own LS members at Carolina Deli. Many of these families face the challenge of financial difficulties because of extensive medical expenses, missing work, longing to stay at the hospital with their children. To personalize this project, it will be an added comfort to include cards, pictures, poems with thoughts of comfort, words of encouragement, a handmade crochet or knitted square with an embroidered heart, etc.!! You can drop your cards or other care items off at the church on a continuing basis by the third Thursday and we will see they get delivered each month.



YEAR-END GIVING SUMMARIES

Giving Summaries and Thank-You’s are available at the check-in table (or from the office during the week). For questions or corrections, contact Bill Franck at bfranck@sc.rr.com.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Your 2021 envelopes boxes are available at the check-in table (or from the office during the week). Please pick up your box and use your envelopes throughout the year. If you do not find a box assigned to you, please contact Bill Franck and he will get you a box. Children’s offering envelopes are not assigned. However, if your children want envelopes, please take a box, record your child’s name and the box number.

God's Love Shared Through You ...



One Life Deeper !

Our prayerful goal is that God will work in every LS disciple to have an impact of faith and hope in the life of one person during the year. **What shoes might they be wearing?** It may be someone you know already—at work, at home, at school, in the neighborhood, in your daily life. It may be a stranger whom God will bring to you this year. How will the Spirit work through you to bring someone deeper? **Deeper in Christ, Deeper in Grace, Deeper in Love!**

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS: inviting, involving, mentoring, discipling relationships 1 person at a time!

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: for the work of God's kingdom in our community and world!

SHARING GOD'S LOVE: with those who are hurting, alone, marginalized, or feeling unloved!

SHARING GOD'S STORIES: so we do not remain silent about God's ongoing work in the world!

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT:

Secure Even When It's Not Safe

The world is unsafe in countless ways. It contains wilderness after wilderness, places where temptation and danger seem to reign. Struggle, pain, fear, violence, hate, death, and suffering are all part of the uncertain world that we wake to each day.

Today, the Gospel of Mark discusses Jesus' own encounter with the wilderness. After he was baptized by John the Baptist, Jesus was driven into the desert wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. What's more, when Jesus left the wilderness to re-enter society, he encountered another kind of dangerous wilderness, a world where John the Baptist had just been arrested for confronting Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias with some hard-hitting truth.

After forty days of temptation, Jesus was met by yet another temptation: to play it safe in a world that had just silenced his friend for doing exactly the kind of thing that Jesus came to do. Despite the risk posed by worldly power players like Herod, Jesus proceeded to teach, heal, and spread the good news of God's kingdom. Despite the danger, Jesus trusted in the promise that God's love was bigger than the wilderness of human wiles.

The world is not safe, and believing in Jesus does not change this fact. However, we are secure in an unsafe world because of the promises made by God in baptism. Think of children who are secure in the love of their parents. They may go to school and face bullies—a painful experience, for sure—but they are less likely to trust the lies of the bullies because they know a deeper truth about themselves, a truth instilled by the love of their parents. So it is with us. There is danger and wilderness all around, but we are secure in the truth of our baptism: we are God's beloved children, with whom God is well pleased. Grounded in this secure love, we derive courage to set out into the wild.

February Book of the Month: Psalms 1-50