

The Zion Flame

April 2022



Zion Lutheran Church
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Pastor Becky Langholz

Dear family in Christ,

Less than a week before Ash Wednesday this year, Russia invaded Ukraine. The conflict has been with us throughout this season of Lent. We have seen horrific images of civilian casualties, and as we settle down warm in our beds at night, we imagine how it would feel to be trapped, cold and hungry, in a bomb shelter. We've been praying for the millions of refugees that have fled their homes and donating money to support them. If we had been lured into thinking that humanity had gotten past waging war in this brutal way, we have learned we were mistaken. This invasion has reminded us of the sad truth of who we often are as humans: violent, greedy and easily able to disregard God's great gift of life. We have been reminded that leaders are more often focused on wealth, power and control at any cost than on the common good.

Lent is a time to be honest about ourselves and our shortcomings and about the volatile nature of life on this earth. In this way, watching the awful events in Ukraine and reflecting on what they can teach us about humanity have been unasked-for Lenten spiritual practices. But being forced to this is not all bad. Confessing our sins helps our hearts to change. Honestly accepting where we are helps God move us into a better future. Acknowledging our morality helps us to live with purpose and dignity in the days that we have.

And, of course, for us as Christians, Good Friday is not the end of the story. Much like watching a war through heart-breaking cell phone videos, meditating on Jesus' crucifixion offers an intimate portrait of human suffering. It is hard to look at, but it is not the end. The courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people has been inspiring. They have taught us how hard times can bring out the best of humanity and clarify values we forgot we held dear. For however much sin and evil still have a hold on our world, the hope and love of God are stronger. This is the heart of the Easter Good News: that even through the valley of the shadow of death, God is victorious. Christ's resurrection allows us to face hard times with hope. Christ's resurrection allows us to see beyond the horror of modern-day crucifixions and work together for a brighter future.

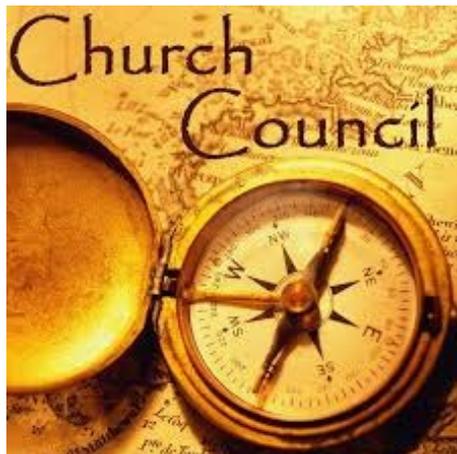
Lent concludes this month, and we have an opportunity to walk with Jesus through Holy Week once again. Palm Sunday is April 10th, and we will read together the story of Jesus' arrest, trial and death. On both Maundy Thursday (April 14th) and Good Friday (April 15th), we will worship in the sanctuary at 6:30pm. On Easter Sunday, we gather to celebrate the wonder of the resurrection at 10am. We'll also have a potluck breakfast together that day starting at 8:30am. Mark your calendars and plan to observe this most holy time in community together.

May the peace of Christ be upon our world,

Pr. Becky Langholz

Pr. Becky is regularly in the office on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9am-12pm.
She can also be reached by cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or by email: pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org

Pr. Becky is in the church office Mondays & Thursdays from 9am-12pm. She is also working from home and can be reached on her cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or via email at pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org Fridays are her day off; only emergency or prayer chain calls/texts on Fridays, please.



The Church Council will not meet in April, as the meeting falls during Holy Week. It will meet again on May 12th at 4:30pm. Reports or agenda items for the meeting are due by Weds., May 4th. Continue to hold our leaders in prayer and thank them for their time and effort.

At the Church Council's March meeting, we decided to follow the governor's recommendation and make masking optional at Sunday worship and church events. We also agreed to offer some more opportunities for food and fellowship together. We know that some will still choose to wear masks; we will treat one another with kindness and respect in this time of transition.

We are looking ahead to a summer painting project on the parsonage and south-facing chimney on the sanctuary. The Council reviewed a great bid in March, and we anticipate spending 4-5K on this project. If you would like to contribute, you can put a check in the offering plate and indicate "painting project" in the memo line. Thank you for your generous giving!



Financial Information (through February 2022):

General Fund Balance: \$27,616.06

Special Fund Balance: \$6,382.24

Thrivent Mutual Fund Balance: \$22,548.36

For the year 2022:

Receipts: \$16,967.02

Expenses: \$17,807.94

Net: -840.92

Did you know you can now give to our church online? You can even set up automatic withdrawals or give to specific special funds. Check out our church website: www.zionlutheranwhatcom.org and the "Give" tab for more information.

April 2022

From the Bishop



One of the things I love about living in the Pacific Northwest is the abundance of life. In January, the grass is green. In February, plants are blooming. In March, little flowers are pushing through soil. In April, color bursts out everywhere. To me, these signs of life are miracles.

And don't we need some of these signs right now? I mean, there are so many places where it feels like ongoing winter - the discord and acrimony amongst families, churches, peoples, and nations. As I write this article Russia is invading Ukraine. Perhaps when you read this article, things will be different but at this

moment there is bombing and shooting and fear and death. And entrenched crises continue: homelessness, racism, ableism, unjust governments, and so much more. Individually, many are experiencing physical and mental illness, fatigue, and exclusion. I remember a quote from C.S. Lewis' book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* where one of the characters says, "It is winter in Narnia, and has been for ever so long ... always winter, but never Christmas." It has been a long winter ... perhaps even two years of winter. Pain and sorrow and death feel very close. There is grief, there is anger, there is exhaustion, and there is sadness.

And yet ... And yet ...

Gardens are full of seeds. Farmers are tilling the soil. Tulips are blooming. Rhododendrons are on their way. We see signs around us that winter is ending and the Bringer of Spring is coming. As I travel through this synod, I see signs of new life and new hope. I see resolve and new partnerships. While there are challenges that we are all facing, while there is much work to do individually and together, I sense new possibilities.

When I meet with councils and other leaders in congregations, I am delighted that we are having good, strong, sometimes difficult conversations about things that matter. In our best moments, we are not as concerned about smaller difficulties but instead, as people of faith, we are leaning into what it means to love God and love neighbor in this time and in this place. I thank God for the opportunity for conversation, listening, and moving on the Breath of God's Spirit.

The truth is, alone - we cannot create life, alone - we cannot change systems, alone - we cannot move winter into spring. But *through Christ*, through the One who died for this world and who is raised into new life, we can.

And so, as it is written in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

We do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 16-18

We are promised that through this time, through world events, through whatever is next, Jesus is with us. And even more than that, we are promised that there is something amazing beyond all measure - more than we can know or even imagine. It is difficult to sometimes comprehend this promise - especially when we look at the destruction and pain and devastation in this world - and yet ... and yet ... we cling to the promise. As people of faith, we pray and whisper and shout it out - that through Christ's death and resurrection all things that create death will be gone. Period. Full. Stop.

And because of knowing and trusting this promise, we are then called, as beloved children of God, to see, appreciate, and tend to the small plants entrusted to us - knowing that we also are plants, also seeds, also soil, called to live into and share this new life with and for others. May this Easter spring forth with new life for you. May you feel the hope given through Jesus. And may together we shout, "Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!"

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

bishop@lutheransnw.org



Your prayers make a difference! If you have a person or situation that needs prayer, please call Pr. Becky and let her know. She can alert Zion's prayer chain and/or add the item to our congregational list.



Our prayers as a congregation continue:

- ◆ For all in need of healing, especially Bethany, Mark, Nina, Donna, Julie, Carol, Jim, Amy, Quinn, Rowan, Norma, Laurel and Kristi.
- ◆ For all battling cancer especially Tammy, Brayden, Kinsley and Marijo.
- ◆ For these ministries: Lutino Adunu in Gulu, Uganda, Sol de Justicia church in Grecia, Costa Rica, Hogar Irekani in Michoacán, México, African S.M.I.L.E in Tanzania, Family Promise of Whatcom County, World Relief of Whatcom County and Blaine CAP program.
- ◆ For peace in our world, especially in Ukraine.
That God's calming Spirit might bring an end to violence and war.

April Birthdays

- 4 Mary Holm
- 5 Shannon Halme
- 6 Gordy Bay and Rob Tennyson
- 7 Gary Cordrey
- 11 Alec Langholz
- 12 Anne Hansen
- 15 Matt Keller
- 25 Harry Yasayko
- 28 Carol Sauer
- 30 Lothar Titel and Paloma Jose Day





April Outreach and Missions

Zion's on-going collections:

- Non-perishable food items
- Household items and toiletries
- Bottled water

We partner with local non-profits to get these items to community members in need.

Thank you for your generous contributions!



As the war in Ukraine continues, please consider offering your financial support to those who are suffering. **Lutheran World Relief** www.lwr.org, or **Lutheran Disaster Response** (gifts designated to "Eastern Europe Crisis" will be used in full (100%) for direct response to assist those affected) are trustworthy recipients of your donations.

We pray for an end to the violence and for God's peace to reign in our world.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



MEETINGS AND EDUCATION

We'll gather to clean the church on Saturday, April 2nd at 9am. Cleaning and maintaining our church are volunteer efforts, and many hands make light work. Come on out for an hour of vacuuming, dusting and generally sprucing up our beloved church building.



Monday Bible Study will meet Monday, April 4th. We will then take a break until the beginning of May. The group meets from 12-1:30pm in the basement fellowship hall. All are welcome to come learn and share our faith with one another.

We are trying something new! Come gather on the last Tuesday of the month (April 26th this month) for "JFF" ("Just For Fun"). Drop-in anytime between 10-12pm to the basement fellowship hall for coffee and conversation. Bring a snack to share, if inclined. There's no agenda to the time; just a chance to be together!



Friends, family and neighbors are also welcome. Any questions please speak to Joyce Dippold.



Photos from the first meeting of JFF held on Tuesday, March 29th.



See you for fun fellowship in April!



Mark your calendars for a "Family Dinner and Game Night" on May 4th. Pizza will be our main dish; if you would like, bring a salad or dessert to share. Also bring a favorite game to play together. It is good for us to be in fellowship with one another.

The Evangelism Committee will not meet in April but will meet again on Monday, May 9th at 2:15pm, location TBD. Your ideas and helping hands are welcome. Speak to Rosemary Meyers for more information.



WORSHIP

In this season of Lent, we have been worshipping with Holden Evening Prayer on Wednesday evenings. Our final Wednesday evening service will be April 6th at 6:30pm. We give thanks to God for this special time of reflection and renewal.



Mark your calendars for Holy Week services this month:

Palm Sunday: April 10th, 10am

Maundy Thursday: April 14th, 6:30pm (with a soup supper at 5:30pm)

Good Friday: April 15th, 6:30pm

Easter Sunday: April 17th, 10am (with Easter Breakfast starting at 8:30am)

Come and give thanks to praise to God for all that has been accomplished through Jesus!

All have an opportunity to purchase flowers for the Easter Garden. Plants are \$3.25 each and can be given in memory or in honor of loved ones. You can choose to take your flowers home or to donate them to our church flower beds. **Orders are due by Palm Sunday, April 10th.**

Our Easter Breakfast will be a potluck. Please plan to join us for this festive meal at 8:30am on Sunday, April 17th, and bring a dish, fruit or pastry to share.





POETRY CORNER

by Dawn-Marie Hanrahan

“God’s Grace is Shed Unto Thee”

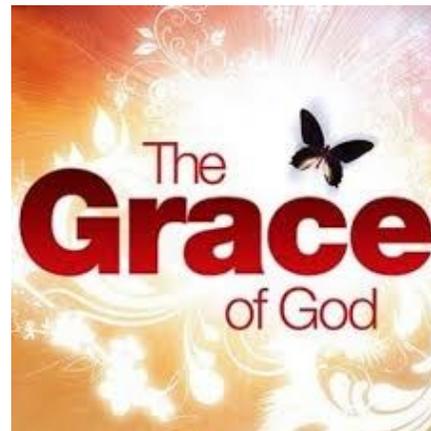
He led you to come to know Him.
“Do this in remembrance of me.”
Hold fast to that which your heart knows is True,
God’s Grace is shed unto thee.

With Body and Blood, He’ll protect you.
Whatever your fears might be,
your Father will never leave you alone.
God’s Grace is shed unto thee.

“Let not your heart be troubled.”
God grants you serenity.
Though your burdens are heavy, His yoke is Light.
God’s Grace is shed unto thee.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”
Do not brave your storms alone.
Look...be aware. He’s silently there.
Let the Light that you trust guide you home.

Remember His promise. Remember His words,
Faith, hope and love, these three.
“And all these things shall be added unto you.”
God’s Grace is shed unto thee.



Zion Lutheran Church Mission Statement



Since 1903
The beloved, forgiven people of God.
Called to spread the Good News
so as to build up the body of Christ.
Gifted to share the healing love of Jesus Christ
with our hurting world.
Empowered by the Spirit
to be a caring country congregation
for ministry to one another
and the larger community.

Zion’s Relational Covenant

In our life together, we will...

Give thanks to God for the gift of our church and each other. Honor and respect our diverse opinions, perspectives and work-styles. Take responsibility for our own feelings and deal with issues directly. Ask clarifying questions and avoid making assumptions. Speak up honestly in the proper time and place. Make decisions in a transparent manner. Support decisions made by the group.

Pray for unity in our congregation.