

Christ Is Risen

The Lord is Risen indeed.

Luke 24:34

Worship Opportunities:

Saturday	_____	5:00 pm
Sunday	_____	9:30 am
Sunday School Hour	_____	9:30 am

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PASTOR'S PONDERINGS...

Dear Faith Family,

As I write, today it is the first day of spring. Hooray! There is something powerful as the seasonal calendar and church calendar coincide this time of year. Just as the earth is beginning to renew itself after a long winter, so also the seasons of Lent and Easter are a time of spiritual renewal.

Yes, Spring is a time of anticipation. In a recent devotional I read, "We rejoice that one season always gives way to another; that our winters are not forever, nor are the days of scorching sun."

This refers not just to literal seasons, but also the seasons of our lives. If we are going through a difficult season, we can take to heart that "our winters are not forever, nor are the days of scorching sun." It is a statement of faith that God will deliver us and guide us in whatever circumstances come our way.

As we journey through Lent and anticipate Easter, nature itself reminds us of the story of Holy Week. The story of new life springing forth from death... the plants dormant in the ground spring to life again, and the grass that was once brown turns a bright shade of green. Likewise, when faith and hope and life seem dead and gone on Good Friday... on the third day there is wondrous surprise, joy, resurrected life, and hope restored!

We have certainly had a LONG winter this year, and maybe that is what makes a new season all the more glorious. After the long, grey days and biting cold and piles of snow... we are ready to welcome the sunnier days, walks in the park, planting gardens, and enjoying all that nature has to offer.

Sometimes life itself can feel like a long winter... whenever we are facing hard times or dealing with challenges. We may wonder when this chapter will be over, or if the sun will ever come out again.

As we journey through Lent, we are reminded that it is a walk to the cross. There is no Easter without the cross. We sometimes find ourselves in despair... just as Jesus and the disciples must have. No one really wished for the experience of the cross! In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." (Matt. 26:39)

Yet Jesus did not flee or turn away from suffering, but entered more deeply into it. As we face our own sufferings, we can take heart that we have a Savior who has been down that road. And while we may not yet be able to see the end of whatever we are going through, we do not lose heart because we know the story of Easter.

We know the story of the victory of our Lord. Death and decay and sorrow and pain are swallowed up in victory. And we are the recipients of new life! There is a new day coming... and much like a Spring day, we stand in anticipation of it.

Blessings on your Lenten and Easter journey!
Peace, Pastor Brian



STEWARDSHIP....

“Sharing God’s Blessings”

What’s behind the smile?

Next time you enter the welcoming doors at St. Stephen the Martyr (SSM) pause and look around at the volunteers. Busy? Yes! Engaged with purpose? Yes! Smiling? Yes! Simply, why do they volunteer? Do they have more time to spare? Probably, not! Do they have more energy? Volunteering has a way of doing that! Do they have special talents? Like you, yes!

What is it about volunteering that brings on a smile to young and old alike? Why do people volunteer? What are the benefits of volunteering? For most, it is the inner joy and peace that comes from doing what God calls us to do –to follow Jesus into a changing world by serving others.

In our mid-way Lenten journey, let’s explore some likely reasons or the *why* part of volunteering our time and talent at SSM. The time is right. The need is great. The rewards are priceless.

At SSM we believe in sharing God’s blessings and mission with others. It is our unifying “why”. Clearly, God is at work among us. For example, the usher team volunteers benefit by developing deeper spiritual friendships. That’s why they smile. The communion set-up assistants benefit by sharing the joy of uniting us with the body and blood of Jesus. That’s why they smile. The greeters benefit by extending our hand of friendship in Jesus’ name. That’s why they smile. Volunteer readers benefit by communicating the word of God. That’s why they smile. The volunteers who cook, serve and support the monthly dinners at Unity’s soup kitchen benefit by knowing they are following Jesus’ leadership. That is why they smile. The joy of sharing knows no bounds.

These are only a few of the many ways our SSM members continue to reap the benefits of volunteering. Easter is just around the corner. There is still time on your Lenten journey to follow Jesus in serving others. Please, prayerfully consider accepting the opportunity to experience the inner joy and spiritual renewal that volunteering at SSM offers.

Included in this month’s “Martyr Monthly” is a time and talent sheet to complete and return to the Easter Basket located on the sharing table in the narthex.

Thank you for accepting the opportunity to find inner joy through volunteering.

He is Risen! Thanks be to God.

Marion Walton

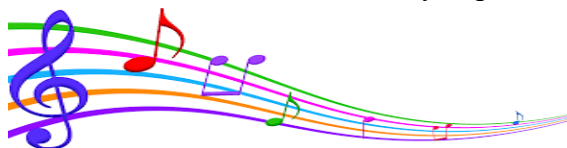
*Because of God’s
Great Mercy*



MUSIC NOTES FROM TABITHA MOLDENHAUER DIRECTOR OF MUSIC



April is a busy musical month this year! A big thank you to all the musicians: Holden Evening Prayer leaders, instrumentalists, and singers for all of your work! Handbell and choir rehearsals, along with Holden Evening Prayer at 7PM continue on Wednesdays, April 3rd and 10th. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday services the weekend of April 13th and 14th, with handbell and choir participation on Saturday and Sunday, regular handbell and choir rehearsal on Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday evening services, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday services. There will be no choir or handbell rehearsals on Wednesday, April 24th.



MUSIC & WORSHIP

The first two Wednesdays in April will see the last of our midweek Lenten services, featuring the Holden Evening Prayer, with two more lessons in our series “Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple.”

Holy Week in Christianity is the week just before Easter. It is also the last week of Lent, and includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

Our **Maundy Thursday service, April 18th at 7:00 p.m.**, will commemorate Christ’s Last Supper. Maundy comes from the Latin word for “command” and is taken from Jesus’ words to the disciples: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” We will remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ during our **Good Friday service on April 19th at 7:00 p.m.**

On **Easter Sunday, April 21st**, we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, with two festive services at **7:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.** Join us for breakfast between services. The season of Easter begins at sunset on the eve of Easter and ends on Pentecost (June 9). For these 50 days, we adorn the church in white, recalling the joy of the resurrection.

Spring is a great time to start something new! We ask that you prayerfully consider how you might become more involved in your congregation. If you are interested in learning more, contact Denise Sanders at (414) 423-0608 or the.family.sanders@gmail.com.

HUMAN CONCERNS

The last meal for Tippecanoe was served March 1. They will resume again in December. However, socks, underwear, blankets and toilet paper are needed year round. Thanks to all who donated!

Here is the list of places our Special Offerings will go in 2019:
Ash Wednesday - Divine Intervention (Tippecanoe Homeless)
Lent - Outreach For Hope of the Greater Milwaukee Synod
Maundy Thursday & Good Friday - divided between Repairers of the Breach & Bread of Healing Clinic
Palm Sunday - Lutheran Social Services - Refugee Services
Easter Sunday - Mbaaseny Parish
Thanksgiving - Hunger Task Force
Christmas - 1/3 Sunday School Giving Project
 1/3 Santa Fe Church
 1/3 Unity Outreach



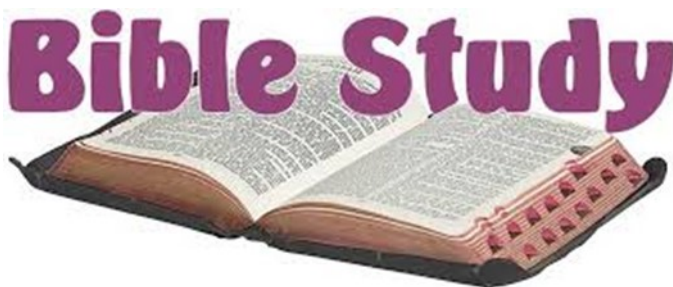
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Thank you to all of you who attended our study on Our Neighbor's Faith. Pastor Brian and I are exploring some ideas for another study in the near future.

In the mean time please join us on Wednesday nights during Lenten worship as we continue to view the Adam Hamilton series "Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple".

Other study opportunities continue – Monthly Study (the Gospel of John) the first Monday of each month at 1:00 pm, The Men's Study (the Synoptic Gospels) 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 9:00 am and the Women's Study (Luke) 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 10:15 am. See you there.

Bonnie Zimmermann



NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS!

Our Annual Easter Breakfast will be held Sunday, April 21, 2019 at 8:00 a.m.

A sign up list to enlist help with preparation, serving and clean up will be posted later in March.

An additional sign up list to attend the breakfast and to donate bakery will also be posted later in March.

The goal of this breakfast is to raise 800 dollars to be shared among four food pantries, Bayview Community Center Food Pantry, Central City Food Pantry, Unity Meal program, and the Faith/Santa Fe food pantry. Suggested donation is \$7.00 dollars for each adult (15 years or older) and a parental choice amount for younger children.

If you have any questions or concerns please call (or text) Pamela Gustafson at 414-217-0330 or email at pamelag1972@gmail.com.

Please watch the weekly bulletins in April for additional updates.



MERU PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Meru Partnership Update

Thank-you for supporting our delegates traveling to the Diocese of Meru in October of this year!

Loose offerings received Feb. 23/24 totaled just over \$500 which will be distributed to the ministries we will visit. Thank-you for the additional inquiries about supporting individual ministries! Please continue to reach out for more information.

Asante sana! (Thank-you very much!)

Julie Starks, jastarks@earthlink.net



SAVE THE DATE

Save the Date

Vacation Bible School

July 15–19, 2019



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our confirmation students have been exploring discipleship. One class topic was, “Why should I pray the Lord’s prayer when it feels like I’m just going through the motions?” As part of the class our groups wrote their own words. Here is what they wrote:

Our Creator above
We honor your name
Thy castle come
your word is the law
Give us all we need for today
Heal our wounds
And heal the wounds that we
Have caused.
Guide us the right way
As we listen to your word always
Yay God!

Our creator up in the sky
Holy be your name
We ask you to be present with us
May your spirit work → through us
May we be grateful daily, for our daily blessings.
Forgive us our wrong doings as we forgive
Those who have wronged us.
Save us from the time of shame
Protect us from evil
We hope that our prayers may be
Acceptable to you.