

The St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church Newsletter

March/April 2010

“The Witness”

Issue 2

Schedule of Events at a Glance

Sunday, March 28

Palm/Passion Sunday

Worship 8:00 am & 10:45 am

Passover Seder 9:15 am

Thursday, April 1

Maundy Thursday

Worship 7:30 pm

Friday, April 2

Good Friday

Tenebrae Worship 7:30pm

Easter Sunday

Holy Communion

Worship 6:30 & 10:45 m

No Sunday School

Sunday, April 11

Worship 8:00 am & 10:45 am

Sunday School 9:15 am

Pastor's Words

Dear Friends in Christ;

A favorite Easter hymn, “Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain” (LBW #132), includes these words in the second verse: *“’Tis the spring of souls today; Christ has burst his prison, and from three days’ sleep in death as a sun has risen; All the winter of our sins, long and dark, is flying from his light, to whom is giv’n laud and praise undying.”*

The “spring of souls!” What an excellent image for Easter and this wonderful celebration of life! How appropriate it is that Easter arrives with the coming of spring. There are many parallels.

We have just come through a

particularly difficult winter. The month of February was especially harsh, with record snowfall amounts and very few days of sunshine. In addition to waging the daily battle against the elements just to carry out our normal routines, we have also had to cope with the isolation and mental depression that the dark days of winter always bring. For weeks we have been longing for relief.

Likewise, we have been in the midst of Lent, the time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. In many ways, it is a time of darkness. Our worship services and worship spaces are marked by simplicity, and might even be termed “austere.” As a penitential season, Lent calls us to reflect on our sin, and our need for God’s saving grace. In these days, we yearn for that which is bright, and for the coming of warmth and joy.

As I write these words, it is the first full day of spring. During the past week the weather has broken, the piles of snow have melted away, and the forecast is calling for normal springtime weather. Everyone is certainly ready for the arrival of the season! We know that with each passing day the hours of daylight will grow longer and the sunlight stronger. We can expect warmer days, the blooming of early flowers, and the budding of the trees. Generations of experience have taught us that we can count on these things to happen.

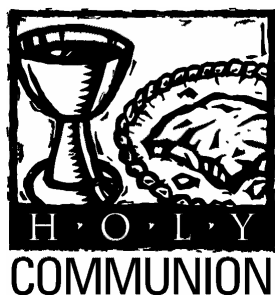
Trusting that they will, we can face the occasional cold and dark days with confidence that with the passing of each one, the season of growth and new life is one day closer.

Now, with the approach of Easter and the coming of the “spring of souls,” our spirits are restless with the anticipation. It is the time when we look forward with spiritual hope and longing for the word of new life that Easter brings to us. We yearn for the return of the joyful Alleluia. And, as we anticipate the arrival of spring, and the reawakening of the Earth, so we look toward the coming of the Church’s celebration of the Resurrection, when darkness is transformed into light, death into life, and sadness into joy!

Please join with our St. James family for worship in the coming weeks. This newsletter includes information on the variety of opportunities that we have scheduled to contemplate the death and resurrection of Christ, and celebrate these most holy days. Come, and hear the story of the Passion of Our Lord. Come, and be fed at the Lord’s Table. In Word and Sacrament we experience the presence of Christ. Gathered as the Church, the community of God’s people, we share the Good News of salvation, the joy of Easter, the message of newness that we all seek! Blessings,

Pastor Paul Poerschke

All are invited to participate in the Seder Meal on Sunday, March 28 at 9:15 am. The Seder gives us time to pause and reflect on God's promises to us. Sign up lists are posted on the back bulletin board. We do ask that all those participating to call the office by Friday, March 26, so we can plan the food.



First Holy Communion

For a number of years it has been a tradition that the youth of our congregation to prepare for their First Holy Communion during the Lenten season, and receive the sacrament for the first time at the Maundy Thursday service. Five children have been having classes with Pastor Paul during these weeks. They are N. Brickner, D. Huskey, N. Huskey, C. Miller, and D. Miller. A special dinner will be held for their families prior to the Maundy Thursday liturgy on April 1, and then they will partake of the Lord's Supper on that very special evening. Welcome to the Lord's Table!

Improving Lives, One Chocolate Bar At A Time

Cocoa is big business. Americans consume more than \$14 billion worth of chocolate every year. Yet many cocoa farmers live without clean water or enough food to eat, because so few chocolate consumers know how little cocoa farmers are paid. Divine Chocolate is different: it's owned by 45,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana. They earn a fair price for their cocoa. They are working their way out of poverty, one cocoa bean at a time, and building their communities. Divine Chocolate is made available through SERRV. The Lutheran World Relief is partnered with SERRV to sell Divine Chocolate in ELCA congregations. On Sunday chocolate bars will be available for purchase. They are dark, milk and white chocolate with some variations - dark chocolate with raspberries and white chocolate with strawberries. The Social Ministries Committee will also special order any other offering that is available. Each purchase will support the chocolate growers of Ghana, provide 4% return for LWR projects and also support St. James' Relay for Life Team. Please consider buying your holiday chocolate in support of all these good efforts. . Or visit lwr.org/chocolate online.



Easter Egg Hunt

Join us at the Coleman's on Saturday, April 3, at 1:00pm! Bring your Easter Basket and wear shoes that can get muddy! Directions: Take route 711N from Ligonier, bearing left at the Sheetz. 1½ miles past Sheetz make a left onto Ramsey Road. Follow this down the hill. On your left, you will see a paved driveway with a sign: SKOL LANE – this is the Coleman's driveway. Follow this road back to their house. If you are totally lost you can call the Coleman's.

“His Passion Forever”!

This year will mark the 35th consecutive performance of Holy Trinity Church's Lenten production of “His Passion Forever”! To celebrate this anniversary all of the people who have been part of the cast or crew for these past years are invited to a special reception. The reception will be held following the Monday, March 29th performance at Holy Trinity at 7:30 pm, from 8:45 to 9:30 pm.

“Journey To The Cross”

This middle and high school youth of St. Michael's will be hosting “Journey to the Cross,” which is a self-led; thirteen station reflection on Jesus' final week. Participants may proceed

at their own pace through each station of scripture readings, silent activities, and devotional mediations. The event will be held at St. Michaels' of the Valley Episcopal Church in Rector on Good Friday, April 2, between 5 -9 pm. Donations will be accepted of canned goods or a free will offering for the Ligonier Valley Food Pantry.

The Ligonier Valley Food Pantry

Has asked the people of St. James to collect jars of peanut butter for distribution in April. Our goal for the month is 40 jars! There is a box in the side church for your donations. Please try to have your donations to the church by Sunday, April 11.

The Reverend Michael K. Fischer To Be Installed

All are invited to the installation of Reverend Michael K. Fischer as Pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, New Florence, on Sunday April 25, at 3:00 pm. The Rev. Dr. Richard Schoenleber will serve as the preacher, and Rev. Beverly Banyay will serve as installing pastor. The color of the day is red: Commemoration of St. Mark. A fellowship meal will follow the service.



Mark Your
Calendar!

Relay For Life

Representatives of the Ligonier Valley are gearing up for this year's American Cancer Society "Relay for Life", May 7 - 8. St. James' Team Captain is J. Alexander, one of our star relay "walkers". She, and members of the social ministry committee, are looking for recruits to join her in this year's relay. To become a member of the team of walkers, sign-up on the form provided at the back of the sanctuary, or call the church office. If you wish to make a donation please make checks out to the American Cancer Society. All donations are greatly appreciated! There are also forms to purchase luminaries (this year they are \$5.00) in honor or in memory of someone who has or has had cancer. This event is always fun and inspirational, even in the rain and mud, and worthy of your participation and support.

Diamond Evening

The Ligonier Christian and Missionary Alliance Church invites you to their 4-C Diamond Evening. The choir will perform the Cantata ALIVE! Following the Cantata there will be a fellowship of cookies, coffee and conversation. Join them on Sunday, April 4th at 7:00 pm. Come celebrate Easter! The church is located on Route 711 just past Sheetz.

Coming Event: Churchwide Policy Update From Bishop Kusserow

On Sunday, April 11, 2010 at 4:00 p.m., there will be an opportunity for the members of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod to gather in prayer and to hear Bishop Kusserow address the latest updates on the policy documents related to the social statement on sexuality. This informational gathering will be open to both rostered leaders and laity and will be held at Berkeley Hills Lutheran Church, 517 Sangree Road, Pittsburgh PA 15237. The ELCA Church Council is meeting on that weekend, so the information that the bishop shares will be current. The gathering will conclude with worship at 6:00 p.m. Mark your calendars so that you do not miss this opportunity to hear what is happening in our church and in our Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod. If you do plan to attend, please RSVP to S. DeLorenze at the synod office: 412-367-8222, or e-mail: sandy.delorenze@swpasynod.org, so that the host church will know how many participants to expect. Thank you.



Join St. James' Cleanup Team!

The Fifth Annual Great Ligonier Valley Cleanup is sponsored for Saturday, May 1st, 9:00am - 12:00 pm. The Social Ministries Committee is again organizing a team to work that day. We have requested to work along Rte. 381 from Powdermill to the turnpike. Interested in joining with friends at St. James in this important work? Then, sign-up for the team on Sunday or contact C. Cardy, committee chair. It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it! And according team members, it's a lot of fun picking up trash.

"Souper Bowl Of Caring"

On Sunday, February 7, as the nation was preparing to watch the teams compete in NFL football's Super Bowl, church members across America were making their annual donations to the "Super Bowl of Caring." The people of St. James were again invited to participate in this united effort to provide for the ongoing work of community food ministry organizations. Since the snowy weather made for a low attendance on that date, we kept the soup kettles out for the entire month, and each Sunday a few more dollars were given. In the end, our members gave a total of nearly \$300.00 this year. Those funds have been forwarded on to the Ligonier Valley Association of Churches food pantry ministry. Thanks to all for the generous support!

Matching Funds for Disaster Relief Gifts

Over the years, members of St. James have been generous in their response to support the work of the church in times of disaster. Lutheran Disaster Response, a cooperative effort of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, is most often the branch of the church's ministry through which our gifts have been given. To encourage and strengthen this effort on the part of our membership, the St. James Congregational Council voted to offer \$1,000 in matching funds from our annual endowment fund "payout."

Effective with the March 11 meeting of Council, when members of St. James make a gift to Lutheran Disaster Response through our congregation, individual gifts of up to \$150.00 will be matched dollar for dollar, until that \$1,000 is spent. The best news is that 100% of the monies that are given will go to direct aid, as the "overhead" expenses of personnel and administration are covered through regular Mission Support dollars that support the ELCA church wide ministries. Recovery from natural disasters takes many years, especially in underdeveloped nations. Please give generously to the ongoing disaster response ministry of our church. Be certain to indicate clearly that you wish to have your gift matched, so that our Financial Secretary, J. Miller, understands your intent! Thank you!

Someday I Will Die

We are called to responsible stewardship of all of God's gifts, including not only our material blessings, but the very gift of our lives. All of us know that one day we will die, and yet we tend to avoid speaking of or planning for that eventuality. In an effort to make that process a little less threatening, the local Lutheran Churches of the Chestnut Ridge cluster are planning a special seminar to help our members talk about those "end of life" issues. On Sunday afternoon, May 2, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, a cluster gathering will be held at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Latrobe.

Plans are being made for brief presentations by attorneys, funeral directors, pastors, hospice personnel, and Barbara Carl, local representative for Lutheran Planned Giving. Following those presentations, there will also be time for questions and sharing, and to speak individually to the presenters. Topics likely to be addressed include wills, advance directives (such as the "living will" or medical power of attorney), funeral pre-arrangements, planning for the funeral or memorial service, making gifts to family, church, and charity, and other topics that may come up.

More information will be forthcoming in the weekly Parish Notes, but meanwhile, please save the May 2 date! If you are interested in attending please contact the church office to request more information, and to help us prepare for the number of participants.

Eco-Palms Are Back!

Those members who were present for our Palm Sunday celebration last year will recall that we tried something different. The palms for our procession came from a new source, and had a new meaning. We used "Eco-Palms", purchased through a partnership program that has been offered by Lutheran World Relief, a ministry of several Lutheran church bodies, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This year, in response to the positive reaction of our members to this new venture, we have again ordered our palms through Lutheran World Relief. The palms are harvested in a more sustainable way, whereby the harvesters are paid on the quality of the palms they harvest rather than the quantity, which helps to limit the amount of palms taken from the forest. These communities have taken upon themselves to learn about harvesting practices that minimize impact on the natural forest where the palm grows, and ways to protect this wild species of palm. And, rather than sending the harvested palms off to a distant warehouse for sorting and packaging, the community members complete those tasks themselves and sell their palms directly rather than relying on middlemen-ensuring that more of the money paid for the palms actually goes to those who worked the hardest to provide them.

. It is our hope that Passion (or Palm) Sunday will be an even more meaningful celebration for us each year as we continue to participate in this effort to make a stronger

and more deliberate connection between what we do in our worship and God's call to faithfully seek social and environmental justice

Pianos, Anyone?

With the purchase of the new electronic keyboard last fall, we have a versatile instrument that will serve a number of purposes. Its "home" will be in the choir room, for rehearsal purposes. But, it can also be used in the fellowship hall to provide musical accompaniment for special events, such as dinners, Confirmation Breakfast, and the Passover Seder. Therefore, we no longer need the old upright pianos located in the choir room and the fellowship hall.

If you, or someone you know, would like to have those pianos, they are available at no cost to anyone who will move them out. While not in the greatest condition, they are still somewhat useful as practice instruments. It is possible that someone who repairs pianos might be interested in them for "parts." For anyone with the hobby of woodworking, the piano in the choir room has some beautiful oak veneer panels that could be made into tables or other furniture! Let us know if you have any interest or ideas.

Reminder: There will be no Sunday School classes on Easter Sunday.



ST. JAMES GRADUATES

Graduation Time Is Coming!

How quickly another school year is passing! Soon it will be time to honor the graduates from our St. James family. Already we are planning for Sunday, May 16 to be a time of celebrating those who make us proud. If someone in your family is graduating from high school, college, (or beyond) this spring, or if they have completed their studies during the past year, please notify the church office. We hope to include information on our graduates in the next newsletter.



Summer Camp Anyone?

Although it seems like a long way off, before you know it school will be over for another year, and summer will be upon us! It's certainly not too early to begin thinking about and planning for church camp. We have brochures from some of our local Lutheran camps available in the office – Lutherlyn, Agape, and Sequanota. Pick one up and see when and where you might like to go this summer. The Church Council has approved camperships of half the cost of a week of regular cabin camp at Sequanota for those who are interested in attending.