



Saint Luke Lutheran Church

1807 Field Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55116 | 651-698-9443 | saintlukechurch.org

March 2023 Newsletter



The Pastor's Perspective

A story of new life: Ezekiel and the Dry Bones

We're in the midst of the season of Lent, a time of preparation for Easter. Toward the end of Lent, on March 26, we'll get to hear a strange and memorable story from scripture: Ezekiel preaching to the valley of bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14). At first glance, it might seem this story fits better at Halloween time than it does just days before Easter. But let's give it another look and see why this is a story about life more than death.

Ezekiel was a prophet who lived in Babylon during the exile. Israel had been invaded and conquered by the Babylonian empire, and most of its population had been forcibly resettled to Babylon. Though their holy temple had been destroyed and their homeland devastated, the Israelites wanted to go back to rebuild their society. But they were not able to do so. For years and years, they remained in exile, living in a foreign land against their will. They thought maybe God had forgotten them altogether.

Then, God gave a vision to an Israelite priest named Ezekiel. The vision started with a valley full of bones. Well, Ezekiel would have known right away what that meant. The Israelites had been living in exile so long that generations had come and gone. People had died in this faraway place. It had been so long that their bones were practically dust. Ezekiel was looking at the graveyard of his people, a symbol of how painfully long the exile had been. "Can these bones live?" God asked Ezekiel in the vision.

Ezekiel, to his credit, didn't scoff. He didn't say, "Are you crazy, God? Of course not!" He said, "Only you know, Lord." Then God told him to preach a good word to all those dry bones. So Ezekiel did. And those dry bones started rattling, and then they started moving, and then they started

March Worship Volunteers

*We are grateful for
your participation!*

USHERS

In Person:

First and Second Sundays:

Judy Salaba

Third and Fourth Sundays:

Mary Jo Brandt

Carol Vigdal

Online:

1st Sunday: David Tews

2nd Sunday: Sue McNeill

3rd Sunday: Raulie Ruiz

4th Sunday: David NedreLOW

OFFERING COUNTERS

5 Katy Eggert

12 Kay Reich

19 Joyce Bluel

26 Wendy Bjorklund

SCRIPTURE READERS

5 Kay Reich

12 Ellen Weis

19 Wendy Bjorklund

26 Mike Hegdahl

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

5 Kay Reich

19 Wendy Bjorklund

ALTAR GUILD

Nancy Hegdahl

coming together bone by bone, and they were standing, a huge crowd of them, all the Israelites who had been lost in the exile. And they spoke. They said: “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost. We are cut off completely.”

Well, it wasn't only the bones who felt that way! Remember that Ezekiel and all the other Israelites were still living in Babylon, the land of their enemies, when they wanted to be living in Israel, the land God had promised them. They wanted to go home. They felt hopeless and abandoned by God.

But that's precisely why this spooky vision of skeletons coming back to life was a vision of hope for them. Through Ezekiel, God gave a promise to the Israelites that they would return to their homeland someday, and that even the people who had died in exile would never be forgotten. God promised to open their graves and bring them home, too. “O my people,” God says lovingly, “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live” (Eze. 37:13-14). At the end of the vision, God breathes life back into the bones.

The Israelites held onto the hope they found in Ezekiel's vision until they were, eventually, able to return to their homeland, just as God had promised. Might we still today hear a message of hope in this ancient story? It is a reminder that God's promises are sure, even if the timeline is longer than we'd like it to be. It is a reminder that God's love is still there for us, even when we feel abandoned and forgotten. It is a reminder that God's power is stronger than death, and even when everything seems too far gone, new life is still possible. So perhaps Lent actually is the right season for this story after all.

A prayer for the end of Lent:

Almighty God, breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pr. Bristol Reading

Lenten Art Card Themes

As you worship and pray throughout this season, notice how these themes connect to your life right now. What parts of your heart are feeling parched and in need of revival? When are times in your life that have felt like wilderness times of barrenness and dryness? And, on the other side, how do you experience the “living water” that is eternally available from God's spring? What quenches your spiritual thirst? What deep wells help nourish you in drought times?

You might try the practice of creating art cards as you reflect on these themes. Create a decorated index card following the “dry” prompt, or the “water” prompt – or both prompts! Bring your art cards to Wednesday evening vespers (6 pm, 3/1 to 3/29) or Sunday mornings to share with others.



Loaves and Fishes

Our heartfelt thanks to our February volunteers: Christine Olson, David Tews and Larry Litzkow.

March Birthdays

1 Leo Fabbrini
3 Abigail Winecke
4 Carl Elliott
6 Mark Stadem
7 Judy Salaba
10 Lois Porter
13 David Verschoyle
16 Susan Lorenz
18 Jacob Arndt
Larry Eckstrom
22 Alex Klein
26 Sheridan Moore
31 Julie Gaarder
Robyn Rongstad
Ralph Skoe

March Anniversaries

12 Mike Amundson/Kimberly Tyl
2004
19 Sue and Dan Grzywinski
1977



All are invited to Game Day at St. Luke, the first and third Fridays of the month, March 3 and 17, at 12:30pm. Bring a snack to share and your favorite game and settle down to an afternoon of fun...join us!

Art card prompts:

- March 1: desert, refreshment
- March 8: empty, rebirth
- March 15: thirsty, deep well
- March 22: drought, overflowing
- March 29: dry bones, living water

Lent/Holy Week Schedule

Join us for worship in-person or online at the following times this Lent/Easter season:

- Midweek Vespers: March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 6 pm
- Palm Sunday: April 2, 9:30 am
- Maundy Thursday: April 6, 6 pm
- Good Friday: April 7, 6 pm
- Easter Sunday: April 9, 9:30 am
followed by a bagel brunch and Easter egg hunt



Make-Your-Own Paschal Candle Workshop

Saturday, April 1, 10:00 am
Suggested donation: \$5
Materials provided

The Paschal Candle is a beautiful Christian tradition of introducing a new decorated wax candle at Easter. It is burned throughout the season of Easter, until Pentecost, or even throughout the whole year. During this workshop, we'll decorate white pillar candles with the traditional symbols of a cross, numerals for the year, and an alpha and omega, and then we'll add clove 'nails.' Your paschal candle will enrich the celebration of Easter in your home.



Even though we were walloped with a big storm the last week of February, there are signs that Spring is approaching. Ash Wednesday on Feb. 22 marked the beginning of Lent as we anticipate the Easter season. March includes the beginning of Daylight Savings Time (March 12), St. Patrick's Day (March 17), and the Spring Equinox (March 20).

March is also Minnesota FoodShare Month, and St. Luke is getting involved with a **food drive** to benefit the local **Francis Basket Food Market** in Sibley Manor Apartments. St. Luke is collecting donations of non-perishable food and other essentials. A wish list of most-requested



The St. Mark/St. Luke Ladies Luncheon will be held on March 18 at 12:00 noon at Jimmy's, 1132 County Road E in Vadnais Heights. Please let Joyce Bluel (651-690-4614) know if you plan on attending, so we have an idea for the reservation.



Join us for online Book Club

on Sunday, April 30, 6:30pm. We will discuss "The Salt Path" by Raynor Winn: The true story of a couple who lost everything and embarked on a transformative journey walking the South West Coast Path in England. "The Salt Path is an unputdownable tale and a temple to equanimity... It will change you."—*Wall Street Journal*. The Zoom invite will be emailed to you shortly before the meeting. All are welcome!



Notes from the Music Director

Mark your calendars for Friday, April 14th at 5pm because St. Luke is having a Talent Show! All talents great or small are welcome to join in the fun. A sign-up sheet

items is being sent along with this newsletter, and printed copies are also available on the back table in the sanctuary. Cash donations are also welcomed; you can give online to the "Food Shelf" fund. Jo has generously volunteered to deliver the food donations to Neighborhood House, which sponsors Francis Basket, at the end of March.

Spring is a time when nature reawakens from its slumber, and it seems as though St. Luke is entering a period of reawakening in a larger sense as we continue to emerge from the restrictions of COVID. People in St. Luke have stepped up to give energy to some new initiatives, including these:

- Jodi Landenberger and Becca Ruiz have volunteered to host a **talent show** to be held Friday, April 14 at 5 p.m. I know we can expect some good performances, but people of all abilities are welcome to show us your stuff. There's talk we may even have a karaoke machine!
- It's been a few years, but St. Luke's **Fall Bazaar** is returning! Sue Grzywinski and Nancy Hegdahl are organizing a fall bazaar to be held Saturday, Oct. 14. Food will be available, and there will be craft vendors, a bake sale, and a rummage sale. A lot more people will need to be involved as the event approaches, but it sounds like it's off to good start.

These are some other things coming up on the calendar:

- There's a **spring flower sale** in March. Joyce Bluel is providing details on how to order through Gertens.
- We've scheduled a **spring cleanup day** on Saturday, April 29, starting at 10 a.m. The main focus will be on decluttering the room in the northeast corner of our building, but we'll probably also wash windows and give some attention to the sanctuary. If you're available, we welcome the help.

Finally, the council is looking into the possibility of organizing a **one-day retreat** later this year. Mount Olivet Lutheran's retreat center in the Farmington area is one location we are considering. I know St. Luke has had weekend retreats at Camp Onomia near Lake Mille Lacs in the past (and may again in the future) but having a one-day retreat close to St. Paul might enable more people to participate. If you have any thoughts on this, talk to Pr. Bristol, me, or one of the council members.

Thanks to all the hard-working people who make things happen at St. Luke!

Yours in Christ,
David Tews

March is Minnesota FoodShare Month!

Each March, Minnesota FoodShare directs the March Campaign, the largest food drive in the state, and restocks 300 food shelves across Minnesota. It recruits thousands of congregations, companies, schools and civic groups to run local food and fund drives to aid in the effort.

will be posted on the music bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall, you can also catch me after church or send an email, bunkamade@gmail.com

A huge thank you to Jodi Landenberger for heading up the kitchen and coming up with this idea! Check out the next newsletter for more details to come.

--Becca Ruiz

Easter Flower Fundraiser

The Gerten's fundraiser webpage is **now open!** To access the site and place an order:

1- Go to

www.gertensfundraising.com

2- Enter the St. Luke Lutheran

Church Store ID: **135**

The site will close at 10 PM on Thursday, March 2. They cannot accept orders past the deadline.

Quantities are limited on fundraiser items. If an item sells out, it will be marked sold out on the website and that item will be discontinued. You should shop directly from the site. St. Luke will receive 30% of all plant sales and 15% of all plant card sales. The flowers will be delivered to St. Luke and will be available for pickup on Saturday, April 8th from 10am to noon. If you want your flowers included in the Easter Garden, please let Joyce Bluel know. You may take them home after worship on Easter Sunday, April 9th. For questions or assistance, contact Joyce Bluel at 651-690-4614 or jbluel@comcast.net

Thrivent Financial members of St. Luke, you have until March 31st to direct your Thrivent Choice dollars from

Minnesota FoodShare actively promotes statewide food shelf donations, provides resources for food drive organizers, distributes funds to participating Minnesota food shelves, lobbies lawmakers on the behalf of those who are hungry, and educates the public about hunger in Minnesota.

So, during the month of March, we will be collecting donations of food and money for those in need. The food gathered will be donated to St. Francis Basket, which is our neighborhood's local food shelf. Checks can be made out to St. Luke with a notation of "food drive" in the memo line. Thanks for all of your help!



2022. It is a wonderful way to support your church by directing those dollars to St. Luke. It is simple to do by logging into your account online or by calling your Thrivent agent.



Don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour on March 12!

Connect, Grow and Serve.