

MISSION FRONTIERS

Mission Lutheran Church, Las Cruces, NM

Pastor's Pen

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret.

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Important Dates:

- March 1: Pastors’ Winkel Meeting in El Paso
- March 2: Ash Wednesday
- March 13: Daylight Savings Time Begins
- March 14: Staff Professional Development Day
- March 17: St. Patrick’s Day
- March 21: MLS Spring Break Begins



And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21).

March 2nd marks the beginning of the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. "Lent" comes from the Latin word for "Spring," and is a forty-day season of preparation leading up to the celebration of the greatest day in the Church Year: The Resurrection of Our Lord. (Interestingly, if you count the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter, you would count forty-six days. The Sundays in this season are Sundays *in* Lent but not *of* Lent. They are not technically part of the forty-day season of preparation.) Historically, the disciplines of Lent have included repentance, alms-giving, and fasting. Repentance is something that Christians should do every day, and we corporately confess our sins and receive the words of Holy Absolution every Divine Service. Yet the Lenten season especially is a good time to reflect on our utter sinfulness and our need for a Savior. Giving alms, helping the poor, is also something that all Christians should do as often as they have opportunity and as far as they are able. Yet the Lenten season is a good time to increase our generosity as we remember how much Jesus Christ gave for us.

But what about fasting? Jesus talks about fasting in the appointed Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday from the Gospel of Matthew. We don't often talk about fasting. Neither Jesus nor the apostles gave any specific command about how or when to fast. But Jesus' words here in the Sermon on the Mount seem to assume that it will happen. While Jesus doesn't command what to fast from or how frequently to fast, He does say, "When you fast..."

What is fasting, and how can we think about fasting as Christians? Simply put, fasting is to refrain from some or all food for a specific period of time. That's simple enough, but how should we as Christians do this? Jesus' words here, as well as other Scriptures, can shed light on this and offer some guidance.

First, Jesus' primary concern about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount is for fasting to not become a spectacle for others. He warns about those who disfigure their faces, making it obvious for all to see that they are fasting. By practicing their righteousness in front of others, these people were trying to draw attention to themselves so that others would see them and think highly of them for their religious devotion. Jesus calls such people hypocrites, and He says that they have received their reward. In other words, there is no heavenly reward for making a show of righteousness.

In addition to this, the Lord spoke to the people of Israel through the prophet, Isaiah, "Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:5-6). In other words, the outward acts of fasting are not acceptable to the Lord if your heart is far from Him. If we fast today, even going so far as to put on sackcloth and ashes, yet then go on to live in sin tomorrow (in Israel's case, they were oppressing the poor), then such a fast is not pleasing to the Lord.

Finally, we can consider the appointed Old Testament reading for Ash Wednesday from Joel: "'Yet even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster" (Joel 2:12-13).

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For the people of Israel to whom Joel was writing, fasting was to be a part of repentance, but the call to “rend your hearts and not your garments” is the Lord calling the people to truly repent from the heart, to truly be sorry for their sins. Then the outward acts would not be outward hypocrisy, but rather would correspond to their inner being.

So what can we conclude from this about fasting during Lent? We can conclude that any practice of fasting is only pleasing to the Lord if the heart is right with the Lord. If one has the intent of living in sin, giving sin free reign in their life, then any abstaining from food is a useless gesture. True fasting is inextricably linked to repentance. We can also conclude that God is not interested in outward shows. While we don’t often see people disfiguring their faces, even in our day we can be tempted to do fasting only for show. This can happen, for example, when we declare that we are fasting from “meat” on Fridays during Lent but stuff ourselves at an all-you-can-eat fish fry! Loopholes and technicalities turn fasting into nothing but an outward show.

But a heart that seeks the Lord will recognize our sinfulness and will not fast for a show or fast thinking that it will gain the Lord’s favor. Rather, to fast is simply an act of discipline to remind us of our total dependence on the Lord for all things. In our day of drive-thru meals and next-day shipping, it can be easy to forget just how fragile our lives are and how totally dependent upon the Lord we are for everything. When we fast, we may be surprised at how quickly we begin to feel hungry. This hunger then drives us to prayer as we recognize how much we need the Lord and His care and provision every moment of our lives.

On a practical level, we may ask what are some good ways for a Christian to practice fasting? There is no command given in Scripture, but throughout the centuries the Church has offered some guidance. Some people choose to give up something particular during Lent, often a luxury like desserts or alcohol. This does not normally affect one’s health negatively, but the desires for these luxuries can serve as a reminder for prayer and repentance. Some people may choose to give up one meal in a day. One common and historic method is to give up the mid-day meal, refraining from eating from sunrise to sunset. And certainly, the Church has always recommended that anyone for whom such practices would be problematic should not fast. The intent of a proper fast for a Christian is not to cause physical harm, but only to serve as a tangible reminder of our ever-present need for the Lord.

And that’s really what fasting is all about; it’s about driving us to the Lord. Many Christians have practiced fasting as a preparation for receiving the Lord’s Supper. Luther’s Small Catechism states, “Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training,” so such practices are commended by Luther. But let us not forget that he adds, “But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’” When done in faith, fasting can and will drive us to receive the gifts that the Lord has for us. However you chose to fast, I pray that it will be a blessing to you and that you are strengthened by the grace of our Lord. Amen.

Pastor Andrew Cave



Mission Lutheran Church and School Prayer Ministry

The Lent "Reset Button"

Last month, we talked about how Luther's morning and evening prayers can help us to "reset" from the trials of the day and get our prayer lives in sync with our Lord. The season of Lent offers a powerful "reset" button in which we remember and grow in our faith and in our prayer lives. For me the reset begins with my personal prayer life and our corporate prayer lives as we pray and worship together during our services and finally leads to prayer within our faith community, namely the Mission Lutheran Church and School Prayer Ministry. Of course, all aspects of our prayer lives are rooted in Scripture.

I am listing a few passages at the end of this article to get you started, if you wish to pray through some Bible verses to help with your personal "reset." There are an endless number throughout the Bible and you probably have some favorites already. Or—if you're like me you read beyond the passage you look up and find more treasures! The important part is to get started and persist throughout Lent and beyond.

Perhaps Lent is a time you want to pray with us in the prayer ministry? If so, we invite you to join us in the nursery on Monday Mornings at 10am. We have a routine prayer schedule to cover all we do at Mission in prayer and add to those prayers by praying for needs within those in our church family and for other friends and family members needing prayer. Some prayer warriors pray aloud and others pray along silently. Another opportunity is with our Thursday Morning "Praise and Prayer Hour" It happens on Zoom at 6:45am and follows the morning prayer in our Lutheran Service Book. There are 2 or 3 readings and 3 (muted) hymns along with prayers for congregational and beyond needs. If you want the Zoom link, please let me (alma.lorenz@gmail.com or text 505-402-6622) or let Carol Moore or Shirley Miller know and we will e-mail the link.

We also continue to reset the prayer ministry activities as Covid restrictions loosen and we anticipate more activities as we approach Holy Week and beyond, so please stay tuned and pray about your role(s) in the prayer ministry.

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Ash Wednesday: Ecclesiastes 3:20, Genesis 2:7

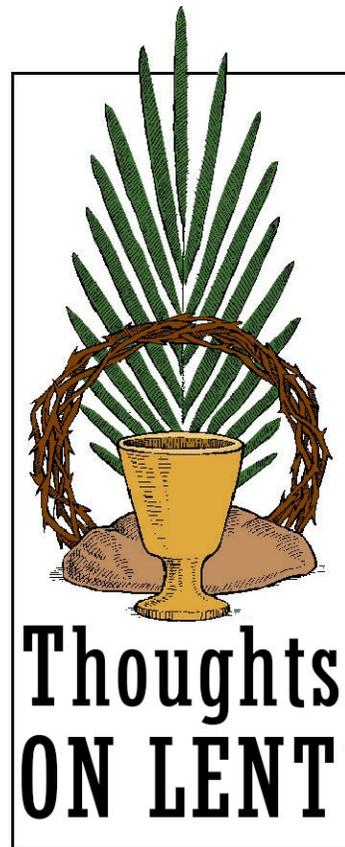
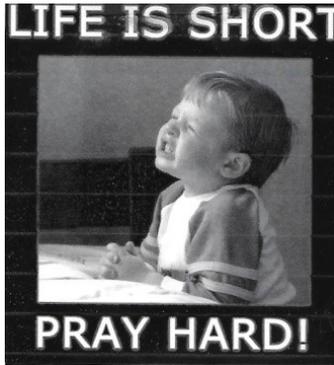
Our salvation: Genesis 49:18, 1 Samuel 2:1-10, John 3:16, Philippians 2:12-18

Repentance: Psalm 139, Matthew 3:8, Luke 24:44-49

Humility: Micah 8:8, 1 Peter 5:6-7

Our unity: John 17, Psalm 133:1

Deepening our relationship with the Lord: Psalm 90:1, Deuteronomy 6:5, James 4:8



Stewardship

God's Providential Care

Everything we have and everything we are is a gift of God's providential care. We understand that we're not islands unto ourselves, that we could not exist without those who have gone before us and are alongside us. God has given us forefathers in family, country, and faith. We are recipients of what God worked through them. We know that God provides for our well-being through these means.

He gives us farmers and ranchers of all sorts so that we can eat. But more than that God created and gave us all the things that those farmers and ranchers cultivate. He gave us the corn, the beans, the wheat, the cows for milking, the steers for grilling. He gave each of those things, properties for our nourishment and sustenance. Without God creating and instilling in those things their taste and their nutritional value, we would not exist.

He gives us doctors, surgeons, nurses, and hospitals. He gives us medicine and medical instruments. Again, he gave us all things that go into making those medicines and medical instruments. He instilled in those things the properties that can be utilized for that purpose. Without God creating and instilling those healing properties into those things, and without God creating the ability within man to find this out and press it into service of our medical needs, we would not enjoy the kind of health we do now.

But there's more. He gives us gainful employment through our employers and provides for the necessities of life through the labor of our hands: "Then Moses said to the people of Israel, 'See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan.' " (Exodus 35:30-34)

And one step back from that, He has created and given us hands. And attached to those hands are arms with strength. He created us with minds in order to make those arms and hands move to accomplish the work set before us. And He has given us reason and senses. That mind, because of the reason God has instilled in it, is able to work through difficult problems before we press those arms and hands into labor. It allows us to grapple with concepts and run through scenarios instead of having to experience every situation personally. It allows us to learn from the mistakes as well as the accomplishments of others. This can be done for our entire body, all our skills and talents, everything that makes us ... us. So that everything we have AND everything we are is a gift from Him. This is what we confess in the First Article of the Creed when we say that we believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

But that is just the First Article of the Creed. We confess two more articles that deal with God's provision for our spiritual well-being. That He sent His son to die and be raised on the third day for our justification. That He delivers that justification through the Means of Grace (Baptism, preaching, the Word of God, and the Lord's Supper). And to give you those Means of Grace, He gives pastors and teachers, etc. Again, this could be expanded and expounded upon. So that literally everything that we have and everything that we are - in this life and the next - is an inexpressible gift from God.

And it is for this, all of this, that we give thanks. And that is what stewardship is all about - giving thanks for God's provision for us. To give thanks is more than having an attitude of gratitude, more than just a feeling in our hearts. It is an action. It begins in the heart, but it doesn't stay there. It works its way out through the mouth in praise for God's gifts and in love and charity through the hands to our neighbors in family, country, and church. "For all this is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him" (*Luther's Small Catechism*, 16).

So give thanks to God for His inexpressible gift - for everything we have and everything we are. Do this not in word only but also in deed.



Birthdays of the Month

March Birthdays

		Date
Guericke	Roger	5
Monica	Josephine (Jo Jo)	5
Bachmeier	Bev	7
Quinlan	Jean	7
Lujan	Becky	11
Franz	Peter	16
Graff	Nathan	16
Smith	Shilo	18
Grothman	Darci	21
Carabotta	Rev. Robert	27
Wolf	Nick	27
Mueller	Brad	28

Happy Anniversary

March Anniversaries

		Date	# of years
Smits	Robert & Tiziana	11	29
Ryberg	Jan & Jacky	15	42
Persing	Peter & Jan Peyton	17	36
Weber	Glenn & Susan	22	52

*Happy Anniversary to all those couples married in
March.*

May God continue to bless you.

If your birth and/or anniversary date is missing or incorrect, please notify Carol Moore
in the church office.

A Fiery Sermon

A member of the church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited.



The pastor made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone and then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The pastor glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow, once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I will be back in church next Sunday."

We live in a world today which tries to say too much with too little. Consequently, few listen. Sometimes the best sermons are the ones left unspoken.

Mark Littrell

From the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education

Do you know any young man who would make a great pastor? How about someone who would be a great Lutheran school teacher, deaconess or DCE? Jesus gives His church people who work full-time in service to the Gospel. He told us to pray for such workers. The LCMS continues to pray, and has begun *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)*, an intentional effort to encourage young people to consider church work as their career. Your opinion can help improve *SAS*. Please fill out a brief survey at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve-survey by March 15, and let us know how you think *SAS* can be beneficial to your congregation. Thank you.

MISSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

Council Meeting

January 18, 2022

President Brad Springer called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Attending were Brad Springer, Wade Echtenkamp, Brad Mueller, Jacki McCurley, Carol Moore, Eric Gunderson, Shirley Miller and Pastor Perry.

Pastor Perry led us in opening prayer.

The minutes of the October 19th council meeting were approved.

President:

Jacki presented to the council a discussion on funeral/memorial meals. Currently members of the LWML have arranged the meals and money came from a budget item in LWML funds. Due to COVID, we have not been able to have members bring some of the items for the luncheon and we are operating in debt from this budget item. The end goal would be to have budgeted funds in the church budget to help cover some of the cost and find someone in the congregation who would like to lead this endeavor. Several suggestions were given as far as having donations from the congregation or put a specific monthly amount in the budget. It is recommended to have the Pastors give a note to family members with the name of the contact person to call if they would like to have a meal. We will need to make announcements trying to find someone to lead this service. More will be discussed later on this item.

An update on the approval of the amendments to our by-laws: the district was supposed to meet on January 17th and our amendments are on their agenda.

Discussion about the church website was the next item to discuss. Pastor Perry is going to check with Peter Martin and Ryan Turk to see if they might be able to set up and maintain the church website. It was also suggested that the school needs their own website.

The Pastor's pantry was emptied out when COVID hit. In the past, Carol Moore seemed to be the one that had to hand out the supplies and it should not be the church secretary doing this. There are many organizations in the city that are available for helping those in need. The item has been tabled until much later.

Two questions came up from congregation members: 1) Should the Sunday school teachers be vaccinated? Pastor Perry will talk with Pastor Cave about this situation. 2) Should we have some training for an active shooter? Wade Echtenkamp said he would talk with his neighbor to see what we need to do in the case of an active shooter.

Pastor's Report: No report at this time as Pastor Cave was still returning from his trip to Missouri.

Vice-President: Wade Echtenkamp had no report at this time. He would like to have a list of his responsibilities and the heads of the committees that report to him. Jacki McCurley will send that information out to him.

Treasurer's Report: The report is attached. Brad Mueller said he is still getting his feet on the ground and working through all the spreadsheets.

Financial Secretary: Carol Moore sent out statements for 2021.

Elder's Report: Report is attached. Jim Bonse would like to step down as elder. Eric Gunderson is busy working to fill the vacancy.

Trustees: Doug Lorenz was absent but sent in a report prior to the meeting.

Outreach: No report at this time.

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School Board: Report is attached. Darci Grothman will be installed on January 23rd as school administrator. The school is going to be an integral part of the service on January 30th.

Our next council meeting is scheduled for February 15th at 6 pm.

Pastor Perry led us in closing prayer.

It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacki McCurley, Secretary

Note: Board Reports that are indicated as being attached are available from the church secretary upon request. They are not included in the newsletter in order to save space.



Meeting Minutes

TREASURER REPORT –February 2022 COUNCIL MEETING

Mission Lutheran Church and School

Report Preparation Date: February 1, 2022

<u>Budget Status:</u>	<u>Month of January, 2022</u>		<u>FY Thru Jan 31, 2022</u>	
	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual*</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual*</u>
<u>Income:</u>				
MLC General	\$24,500.00	\$25,600.00	\$151,900.00	\$138,788.03
MLS Total	\$19,365.00	\$20,157.53	\$141,480.00	\$120,439.77
Designated / Other	\$196.66	\$0.00	\$1,376.66	\$7,953.68
	\$44,061.66	\$45,757.53	\$294,756.66	\$267,181.48
<u>Expenses:</u>				
MLC Total	\$15,568.22	\$15,017.73	\$117,975.07	\$114,844.19
MLS Total	\$26,718.31	\$21,140.45	\$197,563.97	\$162,152.69
	\$42,286.53	\$36,158.18	\$315,539.04	\$276,996.88
Net Difference	\$1,775.13	\$9,599.35	-\$20,782.38	-\$9,815.40

*Note: Actual figures also include income and expenses not originally budgeted for the fiscal year.

MLC General Fund Contributions – FY 2021 (Thru January 31, 2022)

Average Weekly Contributions Needed:	\$4,900.00
Average Weekly Contributions Received:	\$4,960.74
General Fund Contributions Year-to-Date:	\$153,783.09
General Funds Budgeted Year-to-Date:	\$151,900.00
Surplus/Shortfall Year-to-Date:	\$1,883.09

Assets / Liabilities

<u>Fund Assets:</u>	Endowment (as of Jan 31, 2022)	\$114,258.01
	Strasser (as of Jan 1, 2022)	\$81,479.04
	Thrivent (as of Sep 30, 2021)	\$405,478.00
	TOTAL	\$601,215.05
<u>Current Assets:</u>	Checking (as of Jan. 31, 2022)	\$47,035.98
	LCEF Savings (as of Jan. 1, 2022)	\$146,714.19
	(minus designated funds)	
	{ School Funds	\$11,707.95
	{ Youth Activity Funds	\$3,765.57
	{ Staffeldt Scholarship	\$11,000.00
	{ Other	\$0.00
	Total LCEF Savings Available	\$120,240.67
<u>Liabilities:</u>	None	\$0.00

Comments:

1. Revenues lower due to MLS enrollment being 74.28% of needed tuition receipts.



Preparing for Easter

Lent begins on Ash
Wednesday, March 2nd.

We're on the web!

<http://missionlutheran.net>

<http://mlschool.net>

Mission Lutheran Church and School

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Officers and Board Chairpersons for 2022

President	Brad Springer	Elders, Chairman	Eric Gunderson
Vice President	Wade Echtenkamp	Elders, Vice-chairman	Richard Turk
Treasurer	Brad Mueller	Trustees	Doug Lorenz
Secretary	Jacki McCurley	Outreach	Sonya Perry
Financial Secretary	Carol Moore	Day School Education	Shirley Miller