

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
246 South Main Street
Greensburg, Pennsylvania 15601-3183
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felchurch.org

PASTOR.....Chris Combs
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC.....Marvin Huls
CHURCH TREASURER..... Patti Sias
OFFICE MANAGER.....Patricia Pluck
OFFICE SECRETARY.....Gretchen Fischer
CUSTODIAN..... Jaison Smith

CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Debra Black
Rebecca Brunetta Vice President
Brian Erdman
Tom Flory
Linda Griffith
Charlie Kaylor
Dan Krack Secretary
Bobbie Laciak
Leon (Bud) Nusselt
Cheryl Pfeifer
Holly Rowe President
Cullen Shuster

WORSHIP WITH US

Sunday Church School 9:30 A.M.
SCS does not meet in June, July or August

Sunday Worship 8:15 A.M. & 10:45 A.M.
Summer Schedule 8:15 A.M. & 10:00 A.M.

Elevator and Hearing Assistance Available

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
246 SOUTH MAIN STREET
GREENSBURG, PA 15601-3183

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GREENSBURG, PA

PHONE 724-834-1457
FAX 724-834-1469

office@felchurch.org

February 2024



Pastor's Note

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

(Genesis 3:19, NRSV)

Dear Friends in Christ,

This year something happens that hasn't happened in 79 years. The last time that Ash Wednesday and Valentine's day fell on the same day was in 1945. These two days typically stand in stark contrast to one another. As we gather together for worship on Ash Wednesday, we are reminded of our mortality as we hear those words God spoke to Adam, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This day is often focused on self-sacrifice as we enter into the season of Lent. It is also a time of reflection as we move from that reminder of our mortality toward the beautiful promise of Easter Morning, that Christ has conquered death for the sake of the world.

On the other hand, Valentine's day, while focused on love, particularly for our "Valentine," has also woven itself into the consumer culture. Today it is a multi-billion industry, with Americans spending almost \$24 billion on Valentine's day gifts and celebrations in 2022.

Continued on page 2...

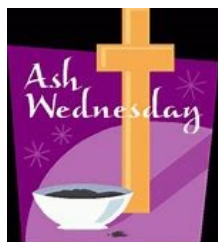
With such a contrast between Ash Wednesday and Valentine's day, it might be worth considering St. Valentine himself. There are some questions regarding the historical Valentine, but most accounts indicate he was a Roman priest and physician who was martyred in the 3rd century when Claudius II was emperor. Valentine was imprisoned for marrying Christian couples and aiding Christians being persecuted in Rome.

Valentine was sentenced to death as he refused to renounce his faith. Approaching his execution, he reportedly left a note for his jailer's daughter, whom he had befriended and healed from blindness, signing the note, "your Valentine."

Considering the sacrifice of St. Valentine, perhaps the contrast between Ash Wednesday and Valentine's day isn't so stark after all. Our commercialized version of Valentine's day does stand out in contrast. Maybe this year, as Ash Wednesday and Valentine's day coincide, we might remember the sacrifice of those who have gone before us in the faith.

I hope to see you all here at First on the 14th as we remember together that we, like St. Valentine, are dust, and to dust we will return.

Together in Christ,
Pastor Chris



Ash Wednesday Worship February 14 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM

**Worship in Word and Sacrament with the
Imposition of Ashes.**

FIRLU HAS HEARD...



-that as of December 25th, our offering receipts were 196,056. Last year they were 191,790.

-that **Noisy Offering** will be collected the first Sunday of February to benefit Lutheran Summer Music.

-that assistance is greatly needed on Thursday, **February 15** at 8:00 AM to unload the truck and sort groceries for Food Pantry.

-that Angel Food cakes (home baked or purchased) are needed the first Sunday of every month for Meals on Wheels. Bring your cake to the church office. Thanks!

- that council retreat is February 9 at 9 AM.

-that the deadline for the March newsletter is Monday, February 12. Please be prompt. You may submit your articles to office@felchurch.org.

-that Ash Wednesday services are 11 AM & 6 PM February 14.

See you at worship,
FIRLU

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SERVE AT FIRST?

We are in need of volunteers to serve as lectors, particularly at the 8:15 service. We are also in need of Worship Assistants and members to serve on Altar Guild. Please consider if this is a way you can use your gifts at First. If you have any questions about what is involved, please get in touch with Pastor Chris.

Serving At Worship In February 2024

2/4

2/11

2/18

2/25

ACOLYTES

Molly Boggs	Aaron Woodley	Molly Boggs	Aaron Woodley
Benjamin Gustafson	Addy Saraceni	Corrina Vuick	Nicholas Vuick

LECTORS

Dianna Marusko	Liz Rowe	Mark Barnhart	Sue Boggs
Dan Krack	Joan Orr	Malcolm Sias	Megan Zobb

ASSISTING MINISTERS

Dianna Marusko	Carolyn Hanzel	Rebecca Brunetta	Dianna Marusko
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ALTAR GUILD

Bev Attenberger
Sue Ross



NOISY OFFERING FOR FEBRUARY

For January and February's Noisy Offering, we will be collecting for

Lutheran Summer Music Festival

LUTHERAN SUMMER MUSIC (LSM)

is the nation's premier faith-based music academy for high school students, grades 8-12. In addition to advanced musical instruction and numerous performance opportunities, LSM students form an international community,

living together for four weeks on the campus of Valparaiso University.

Since 1981, this program has guided the lives of young musicians, who credit LSM as the starting place for their future careers and vocations. Young musicians from across the country are invited to join this joyful community to expand their musical skills, build supportive relationships and lifelong friendships, and find welcome in using their musical gifts in worship. The music program includes private lessons, large ensembles, chamber music groups, musicianship classes, concerts, and recitals.

Worship is central to daily life at LSM. The three primary worship events are MORNING PRAYER, EVENING PRAYER, and SUNDAY EUCHARIST. This service is filled with music and follows a traditional Lutheran liturgy. Since its founding, LSM has reached musicians and music appreciators of all ages and faith traditions. LSM remains rooted in Lutheran music, worship and liturgical traditions.

2023 was a milestone year for LSM in countless ways. It saw a capacity enrollment, using every bed available from the university to house the students. It was a year of extraordinary generosity. Donors, alumni, parents, families, and churches all contributed to make LSM a transforming event. The connections made are immeasurable, getting to know oneself, becoming connected to others, and feeling closer to God. Your generosity helps make all of this happen. Thank you.

BIBLES FOR LOVE PACKAGES



Do you have old Bibles that you no longer use or have inherited and don't know what to do with them? Well, we have an answer.

Beginning in January and running for several months, First Lutheran will collect used and/or new Bibles as well as Sunday School materials and other Christian materials to send to "Love Packages."

Putting the Word of God into Hungry Hands All Over the World

Love Packages collects bible donations—as well as donations of Christian books, Sunday School materials, and more—from people and publishers across the U.S. and ship it to our network of distributors all over the world. Love Packages is fueling international missions work and sending the gospel to the ends of the earth by putting donated bibles and other Christian literature into the hands of people around the world. Some of the locations shipped to include Kenya, India, Uganda, South America and others in need. They ship over 1,500 tons of recycled gospel literature to the mission field every year.

Items we are collecting are:

Bibles – new or used, any translation, New Testaments or other portions, individual gospel booklets.

Reference Material – Dictionaries, Bible dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, etc.

Books – all Christian books – adult or children, non-fiction.

Magazines and Daily Devotionals – any devotionals or magazine from a Christian publisher.

Sunday School Materials – adult quarterlies and all teacher manuals in any amount from all publishers; children's quarterlies with the teacher's manual and full student manuals.

CDs, DVDs, Blu-ray – Christian music & movies.

Puppets, Nativity Sets, etc. – bible games, biblical puzzles – anything that helps teach the gospel, especially to children.



JOIN OUR MARCH FOR PARKS TEAM!

We are organizing a First Lutheran TEAM to participate in the MARCH FOR PARKS on Saturday, March 23. The event will take place at Twin Lakes Park in Greensburg, where it all began 22 years ago. The March for Parks raises funds for the County Parks and Trails. There will be a pig roast and BBQ sandwiches, raffles, live entertainment, family friendly activities, and a "march" around Twin Lakes Park. To register, go to www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/parks. You will need to enter the **team name as "First Lutheran"** and the team captain as **Molly Maga**. As in the past, all funds raised by the First Lutheran Team will be matched by the Matching Gifts program. First Lutheran has been a strong participant ever since the March began in 2003 and has won many awards in the team competition. This year, the Parks are raising funds to renovate and add new facilities at all four regional parks (Twin Lakes, Cedar Creek, Mammoth, and Northmoreland), dredge Mammoth Park Lake, purchase land for the completion of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail middle gap from Export to Delmont, renovate the Five Star Trail, and miscellaneous upgrades at other County Parks. Please join us on March 23! You will have fun, get some exercise, and show our community that First Lutheran is an active church committed to helping make Westmoreland County a better place to live and work!



**2024 LENTEN
CONGREGATIONAL PROJECT
CAMP LUTHERLYN
“BUILDING for the FUTURE”
CAPTIAL CAMPAIGN**

Since 1948, Lutherlyn has become an influential presence in the lives of youth and adults throughout Western Pennsylvania. Borne from the conviction that youth would benefit from a faith-based leadership camp, Lutherlyn has intentionally expanded to include education opportunities that explore God’s creation. The impact of Lutherlyn lives on in generations of campers, retreaters, summer staff, and the communities of which they are a part.

This \$2.5 million campaign will add 5 new winterized cabins, repair the amphitheater, remove old cabins, improve roads, and add 5 seasonal cabins. The *Building for the Future* capital campaign will provide the funding necessary to retain Lutherlyn’s capacity for year-round programs and increase the number of youths, adults, and congregations served by this ministry for generations to come.

A MESSAGE FOR THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBERS

At the first of each year Thrivent members are given Thrivent Cash Dollars to direct to charitable organizations.

When you are considering where to spend your Cash Dollars, please consider giving your gift to the General Fund of First Lutheran Church. Thrivent Financial considers our congregation and any committee a valid recipient for Cash Dollars.

Call (800-847-4836) say Thrivent Choice or email fraternal@thrivent.com .

BIBLES FOR LOVE PACKAGES continued

Items not accepted:

VHS/Tapes/Records/8-tracks

Guideposts

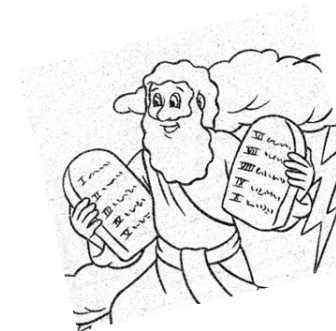
Handiwork or busy papers from Sunday School materials

Secular books (other than dictionaries)

Missions magazines

Boxes for your items will be located in the Narthex, the Education Building and the Fellowship Hall.

For more information on Love Packages check them out on lovepackages.org.



**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
BIBLE STUDY
SCHEDULE—SPRING 2024**

Two sessions each day at 1:30 & 6:00 PM.

February 26, 2024

March 18, 2024 (note: March 25 is Holy Week)

April 29, 2024

May 20, 2024

ASH WEDNESDAY WAKE-UP CALL

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

With these ancient words from Genesis 3:19 and the swipe of a dirty thumb across our foreheads, Ash Wednesday propels us into the season of Lent with the proper context to understand our lives as stewards of all that God entrusts to us.

The essential teaching of Ash Wednesday – that we are just mortals, after all – crushes our ego, dispels our pretensions and drives us deep into God’s mysteries. Why are we here? What are our lives all about? What’s *really* important? Pray over these questions and profound insights emerge.

We are dust. Yes, but we are *God’s* dust. Our body consists of trillions of atoms, each one a speck of “dust” created by of God, billions of years ago. God put us together from the very stuff of the universe.

Therefore, we are quite literally “earthy” beings, made of the same material as air, water, soil and stone. Part of creation, we work to preserve and sustain the health of God’s.

Therefore, we have reverence for our bodies, expressed through healthy.

We are breath. We are “dust,” but not *only* dust. We are “dust” into which God has “breathed the Holy breath of life” (Genesis 2:7).

Therefore, every breath we take is holy. Every breath is a prayer that reminds us of God’s life force in us.

Therefore, we look to God to align our lives and ourselves with God’s holy reality that arcs towards peace, love, joy, justice and truth.

Our time is brief. Because our “dust” will return to the earth, we live a finite number of minutes on earth.

Therefore, every hour, every second is sacred. We spend our time wisely, carefully, prayerfully.

Excerpts from BLESSED ARE THEY (Pastor Nadia-Bolz-Weber)

Blessed are they who doubt. Those who aren’t sure, who can still be surprised.

Blessed are the preschoolers who cut in line at communion.

Blessed are they for whom death is not an abstraction.

Blessed are they who have buried their loved ones, for whom tears could fill an ocean.

Blessed are they who have loved enough to know what loss feels like.

Blessed are the mothers of the miscarried.

Blessed are they who can’t fall apart because they have to keep it together for everyone else.

Blessed are those who one else notices. The kids who sit alone at lunch tables. The laundry guys at the hospital. The night shift street sweepers.

Blessed are the forgotten.

Blessed are the unemployed, the unimpressive, the underrepresented.

Blessed are the wrongly accused, the ones who never catch a break, the ones for whom life is hard, for Jesus chose to surround himself with people like them.

Blessed are the foster kids and special needs kids and every other kid who just wants to feel safe and loved.

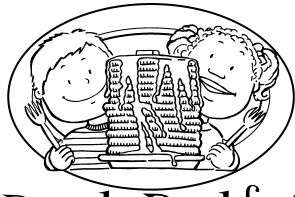
Blessed are the burned-out social workers and the overworked teachers and the pro bono case takers.

Blessed are the kids who step between the bullies and the weak.

Blessed are they who hear that they are forgiven.

Blessed is everyone who has ever forgiven me when I didn’t deserve it.

Blessed are the merciful, for they totally get it.



Pancake Breakfast

SHROVETIDE BRUNCH - SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

The First Family will gather for a “Shrovetide Brunch” the Sunday before Lent, February 11, following the 10:45 AM worship service.

The menu will include: pancakes, sausage, syrup, orange juice, coffee, and tea. Reservation forms will be included in the Sunday bulletin. A donation to defray expenses may be given if you so desire.

Shrovetide traditions of the past included using all of the flour in the house in preparation for the fasting of Lent. The days preceding Ash Wednesday became festive days with focus on increased baking, fellowship, and fun (as in the Mardi Gras tradition). We adapt this tradition with our pancake brunch for the First Lutheran family. Join us as we enjoy this time of food and fellowship.

AND



Friendship Sunday, February 11n

Friends & Family Game Afternoon

(bring your favorite game & friends)

Join us for an afternoon of FUN!!

Games following the Shrovetide Brunch

All members are encouraged to bring a friend to church.

Ash Wednesday wake-up call continued

Therefore, we do not cling to our possessions, knowing that we only hold onto them for a little while.

Therefore, we nourish our lives with world treasures of real value – friendships, trust, love, joy, service, generosity and harmony.

This Lent spend time in prayer, with openness and honesty. See how God will turn your heart and mind, transforming you into the person you were created to be. Reflect each day on Ash Wednesday. “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."
Romans 8:39



Ruth Circle will meet on Thursday, February 8th at 7:00 PM in the church parlor. All women of the congregation are invited to join us for a brief business meeting, an interesting program, fellowship, and our always delicious dessert.

February 2024

Please note that this schedule of events is subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship NOISY Offering Congregational Mtg	5	6	7 FOOD/HEART Noon 6:00 Ch. Outreach	8 6:15 Handbells 7:00 Ruth Circle	9	10 Council Retreat 9AM
11 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship JAVA Table Shrovetide Brunch Friendship Sunday	12 MAR. NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	13	14 FOOD/HEART Noon Ash Wednesday Services 11 AM & 6 PM	15 FOOD PANTRY	16	17
18 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship Lent 1	19	20	21 FOOD/HEART Noon 6:00 Vespers 6:45 Handbells	22 NEWSLETTER FOLDING	23	24
25 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship Lent 2	26 1:30 & 6:00 Ten Commandments	27 6:30 Ch. Ed./Youth	28 FOOD/HEART Noon 6:00 Vespers 6:30 PM Property 6:45 Handbells	29		

CONGREGATION DINNER / MEETING February 4

Join the First Lutheran Family for business and fellowship on February 4 immediately following the 10:45 AM service. **Lunch and fellowship will include a meal with meat, rolls, beverages, and dessert provided.** You are asked to bring a covered dish of vegetables or salad and your own place settings.



Printed copies of the annual report are available at the back of the church.