CLARION

FFBRUARY 2023

FROM PASTOR'S DESK



DYING WELL

"6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:6-8)

I realize that may seem like a surprising headline. It's not church-season specific, and doesn't have anything to do with upcoming worship services or anything like that. Rather, it's inspired by a friend of mine, a fellow LCMS pastor in lowa, who has exhausted all possible treatment options for his cancer and will likely die in the relatively near future. He's in his mid 30's. Married. And it's astonishing to watch this all play out through the Facebook messages that he and his wife have been posting. And I felt like we all needed to experience this...to hear his strong faith as it comes out during some serious testing.

I don't have the space to reproduce everything that Andrew and Tiffany have posted, but some highlights will suffice to demonstrate what it looks like to face death in the context of our faith and the promises that Jesus has made to us.

In his first announcement, Pr. Johnson wrote that "we learned today that I have weeks to months to live. New trials do not look promising, and if I have little time with Tiffany – I wish to feel as well as possible for those moments. I do not embrace death. It is an enemy in God's world. But the Bible also describes those connected to Christ and away as sleeping. After 10+ years of dealing with cancer, surgeries, and depression – I embrace the rest of Jesus." He closed that post with the words, "I love you very much, but more importantly, Jesus loves you more!"

From there, his thoughts get much deeper, much more thoughtful, and (if you can believe it) even more faith-filled. He wrote about how strange it is that the resurrected Jesus appears to His disciples with his wounds intact, holes in His hands and a gash in His side. That seems odd, but in fact those wounds are important. They are not evidence of defeat, but of victory. Jesus' scars tell a story; they are the

evidence that He "faced an unfair trial for undeserving twerps like myself ... He faced a cross to unleash forgiveness to sinners including a repentant thief hanging right next to Jesus; the scars demonstrate that Jesus' God possesses the power to make dead bodies alive again. The scars tell a story, and it's a 'perfect' story."

Pr. Johnson related the fact that he has two scars near his shoulders from four different ports installed for chemotherapy. He has scars in his abdomen from multiple surgeries, and four new holes made to remove a tumor in August. "Call me weird, but I hope God retains my scars. My weaknesses celebrate Jesus. Suffering isn't ignored or hated by God; He incorporates it – makes it beautiful somehow."

(continued on page 2)

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He posted about prayer, with an encouragement to his congregation and friends to pray not just for the miracle but also "pray for steadfastness and faithfulness. Or put another way, pray that I would die well – that I would remain true to the confirmation promises I made over a decade ago to God to remain faithful even when death gets chummy." He said, "A prayer for dying well helps me to deal squarely with death. No fleeing, no retreat; just dealing with reality with how it has been presented to me. But I know that the One who faced a far more excruciating death that I will and did so well, He will remain standing in order to end death's occupation of my body."

Here's the post that really hit home for me. Rather than try to summarize, I'll just let you read his words and soak in the Gospel message that he's communicating. Folks, you have a God who loves you through everything; through the hard times, through your screwups, through your victories and celebrations, and most of all through the very personal and challenging time of dying. He's always there, always holding on to you, always walking with you. I hope and pray you find comfort and peace in that.

The why. As I've talked to people, the piece that is fermenting in many hearts and minds is the why. Why kill off a pastor during a pastoral shortage? Why kill off somebody in their 30's? We see miracle catches in football – "so why not perform a meaningful miracle of healing, God?" Jesus healed hundreds if not thousands of people way back when – so why not pull off a miracle now?

I've scoured my emails, but I've yet to receive a message from the Divine providing a thorough explanation to the why. I think if we're being honest with ourselves, the truest answer to the why is, "I don't know." Any other answer falls flat. Am I on the receiving end of Divine judgement – did I do something wrong – am I being punished? Maybe, but who knows? Is there some sort of silver lining to this experience? Maybe, but who knows? God doesn't waste suffering, but that doesn't mean death is a good thing. Trying to find answers to the why is like forcing a bowling ball through the eye of needle. It really doesn't fit.

The German pastor Martin Luther wrote that Christians should not focus on the things we cannot answer. In this case, we shouldn't be overly concerned with the why. Rather, Christians view life through the suffering of Jesus and His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In other words, Luther wasn't overly interested in the why as much as he was with the where. Instead of WHY God – the better question is WHERE is God? There's actually an answer to that second question. He's on a cross. He's rising from the dead. He's ascending to the place of power and authority.

The where reveals that Jesus devalued Himself in order to enter the suffering you and I experience. He's not aloof; He's not dismissive. He's wildly involved. St. Paul put it this way: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" [Romans 8:32 – by the way, if you haven't read Romans 8 lately, please do so].

The fact that Jesus died does not legitimate the death of infants or thirty-year-olds or octogenarians. But the life of Jesus does demonstrate that God is pro-you — whether you're seven, seventeen, or seventy. The cross makes God's intentions with sin clear; He takes sin on Himself. The (empty) tomb reveals that God will curb stomp death (soon). The ascended Jesus will return to transform this world for the better, because what goes up must come down. That's where God is. The where is far more concrete than the why. It's not that the why is necessarily bad, but the God of history and the Scriptures is willing to answer a question for us — where are you God in the midst of our suffering? A cross, an empty grave, a throne.

In HIS service,

Pastor Eric Longman

From the opice...



Once again we are collecting winter coats, jackets, hats, gloves, scarves, and blankets for those in need. As it gets colder we see a great need from those who come in for food and shelter at our pantry. If you have any gently used items of this sort, please consider donating them to the church office and we will see to it that they get into the hands of those in need. Thank y'all for your help and support!

FOOD PANTRY



Tuesday-Friday 2 pm-4 pm



PASTOR'S CARE FUND

Hours

Thursday & Friday 2 pm-4 pm

4 Friendly Reminder

Any information you need put into our weekly **NEWS & NOTES** needs to be submitted to the office by **NOON** on **WEDNESDAY** of each week.

Any information you'd like put into the **CLARION** is due to the office by **NOON** on the **15th** of every month.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

2023 EDITION



BAPTISM

We welcomed Lawson Thomas Frederick, son of Matthew & Rachel Frederick, to God's Holy family through baptism on Sunday, January 8th at 10:45!



CHURCH BUS

We offer rides to our Sunday services in the church van. The van does **NOT** have wheelchair access so riders will need to be able to get in and out with a hand from the driver. We are looking for drivers to help with this ministry as well. If you could help even one or two Sundays a year it would be greatly appreciated! If you are interested call or text Ted Reinker at (409) 750-9633.



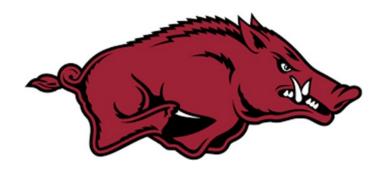
PINOCHLE

Friday, February 10th will be our next date for playing cards. Hopefully you have your calendar marked and will be ready to help set up at 6:00 pm and get cards in your hand for play at 6:30. Don't forget to bring a little something to share for a snack. Looking forward to seeing everyone and perhaps a few new faces!



CRAFTY CREW

Enjoy some relaxing fellowship time **the last Thursday** of each month from **4-8 pm**. We have people who scrapbook, crochet, embroider, make ornaments, and other various crafty goodness. Come check us out!



Join us to root for the Lady Razorbacks as they play Mizzou on Sunday, February 12th at 2pm in Bud Walton Arena.

The Journeymen are sponsoring the cost of tickets and the church van is available if you need a ride. We plan on leaving the church parking lot at 12:30pm and should return around 4:30pm.

Sign up in the Narthex for Lady Razorback tickets and please indicate if you need a ride in the van.



Parents Day Out

We have been enjoying our time together at Holy Trinity PDO and thought you'd like to know what we've been up to! Leading up to Christmas, we discussed Advent, looking at a love so great that God would come to us as a little baby. In January—during the season of Epiphany—we talked about Magi following a star to find baby Jesus, and about how Christ is the guiding star in our lives.

With February comes more winter weather and Lent. We will turn our attention to the birds and other creatures native to Arkansas, wondering what they do in these cold months. We will also talk about how we can prepare our hearts for Jesus in anticipation of Easter.

Here are some pictures of us forming friendships, playing and creating!



HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH - ROGERS



Parents' Day Out

Faith-based education and care for children 0-5

Emergent play-based curriculum
Fun & engaging Biblical lessons
Experienced teaching staff
Art experiences
Songs & stories

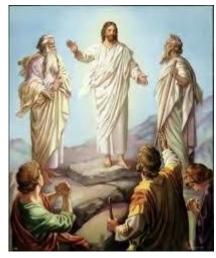


Tyesdays & Thyrsdays 9 am - 2 pm \$60 per week

> For more information: holytrin.org/pdo pdo@holytrin.org







The Feast of Transfiguration

The Father uses this last festival of Epiphany, the Transfiguration, to announce one more time to us just who Jesus is: His beloved Son, the Chosen one.

Sitting in my office is a painting called The Two Crowns. In this painting, a king rides through the streets in full regalia, seated on an elegant, white horse. The crowd goes wild for him. The women swoon. The king,

however, is distracted. He stares at the upper corner of the painting, at a dark, almost imperceptible crucifix, at the true King, his sovereign Lord, crowned with thorns. There are two crowns in the painting. One represents glory, one suffering.

The Transfiguration texts are a lot like that picture (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). On the feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord, we have the opportunity to celebrate our Lord's glory. Our joy is bittersweet, however. The season on Epiphany ends this coming Wednesday. Our attention turns from our Savior's glory to His suffering. We begin our Lenten journey with the day of ashes, a symbol or our sorrow over sin.

Unlike the unbelieving world, however, we Christians can bear our suffering with hope. Our Lord has suffered too. He has suffered for us in every way. And by His suffering, He has won us glory. We get a glimpse of that glory this Sunday, Transfiguration Sunday. The veil is removed, and we see Christ as He was before Christmas and Christ as He is after Easter – we see Christ in His resplendent, divine glory. What was once veiled in the Old Testament promises, God now reveals for all to see in Christ. Here is the long-promised Savior: clothed in radiant flesh, who will soon be stripped, beaten, mocked, and crucified. Cherish this glimpse of Christ's glory. It reveals who Christ is. It reveals why Christ was chosen.

Peter, James, and John were three men in desperate need of a coffee addiction. These same three men also went with Jesus to Gethsemane. They were with Jesus at His most glorious moment and His darkest hour. Both times they fell asleep. On this occasion, however, God woke them up in a major way.

Imagine opening your eyes to this scene. There is Jesus, normally an average man in average clothes among average people, now radiant with all His divine glory, shining like the Sun. There He is, talking to two of the most important men in the history of God's plan of salvation: Moses (whose burial site only God know, the giver of the Law fulfilled in Christ) and Elijah (who was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, the man to whom many compared John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner). In excitement, Peter yelled out before he even knew what he was saying, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Luke 9:33). Peter was quickly interrupted, however, and I am sure he wasn't offended.

"This is My Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him," the Father thundered from heaven (Luke 9:35). A few weeks ago, we heard the Father say a similar thing at Christ's baptism. It is interesting that both these events fall in the Epiphany season of the church year, the season we leave behind this Sunday. As we prepare to embark on the Lenten path, the Father uses this last festival of Epiphany, the Transfiguration, to announce one more time to us just who Jesus is: His beloved Son, the Chosen One.

(continued on page 6)

Why was His beloved Son here? Why was the Chosen One standing on a remote mountain in an insignificant country in an unsophisticated time in the world's history? Why wasn't He in heaven, where He always shone with transfigured glory and knew no suffering? Elijah and Moses give us the answer.

Christ arrived here on Christmas in order to depart 33 years later on Good Friday. This departure is what Moses and Elijah discussed with Jesus. This departure is what Jesus had predicted to His disciples just before our lesson in the Gospels. This departure is what Christ would predict to them again immediately after this lesson. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it is all arranged the same. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Christ predicts His death and resurrection. Christ is transfigured. Christ heals a demon-possessed boy whom the disciples could not heal because of their weak faith. The disciples argue over who is the greatest.

Jesus did not want His disciples to lose sight of what was coming. Yes, He brought three of them with Him to get a glimpse of His glory, but before and after this event, He reminded them He came to suffer and die. He didn't want them to get so distracted by the crown of glory that they forgot the crown of suffering. In the same way, in suffering, Christ did not want them to lose sight of the crown of glory.

Peter, James, and John came to the Mount of Transfiguration tired. They left filled with excitement, but also with questions. They soon became distracted by the cares of the world and argued over who was the greatest. Christ had to keep explaining, keep correcting, keep calling them back to the big picture, keep reminding them why it was He had come to this world.

The Father says, through, "This is My Son. Listen to Him." Listen to Him now. See His glory. It is your glory because all that is His is yours through faith. As you look at His glory, however, keep an eye on the other crow- the one made of thorns. Remember His passion because His suffering is also yours. It is yours because He suffered in your place. "Who killed Jesus?" The answer is simple. You and I did. Not the nails, but our sins and His love held Him to the cross. The Father's "Listen to Him" does not end with our trip down the Mount of Transfiguration. That "Listen to Him" applies equally at His cross.

As you descend the Mount of Transfiguration, remember The Two Crowns. Carry it with you in your mind as we begin our Lenten journey. Christ's death was sandwiched between His transfiguration and resurrection for a reason. He is the Victor. Christ suffered for a reason: to win us His glory, which He shows us today. Cherish these glimpses of glory. They reveal that Christ is the beloved Son of God. They also reveal that He came to give His life for you. And so we descend this Mount of Transfiguration and make our way to Mount Calvary. And so we bear our own crosses knowing that glory awaits, precisely because of His cross. Remember who it is that suffered for you. Remember who it is for whom your suffer. And remember who and what awaits us: the One who didn't linger on this mountain but set His face on Jerusalem to bring us to lasting glory with Him.



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

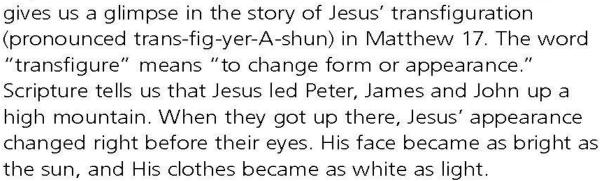
Wade Johnston has degrees from martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Central Michigan University, and Erasmus University Rotterdam. He serves as Assistant Professor of Theology at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and served for ten year in parish ministry in Saginaw, Michigan. He one of the hosts of the 1517 Podcast, "Let the Bird Fly," and has authored several books including, "A Path Strewn with Sinners" and "An Uncompromising Gospel."

Johnston, W. (2019, March 1). Wade Johnston. 1517. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from https://www.1517.org/contributors/wade-johnston



What is "The Transfiguration of our Lord"?

Have you ever wondered what Jesus might look like in His glory? The Bible



Why didn't Jesus always appear like this while He was on earth?

If Jesus would have been on earth in His state of glory, He wouldn't have been able to take our place under the Law and then they wouldn't have crucified Him. It was very important for Jesus to die on the cross as a man to pay for our sins. We too will see Jesus as He is in glory on the Last Day! Until then, we see Him: as our crucified and risen Savior revealed to us in the Word and Sacraments!

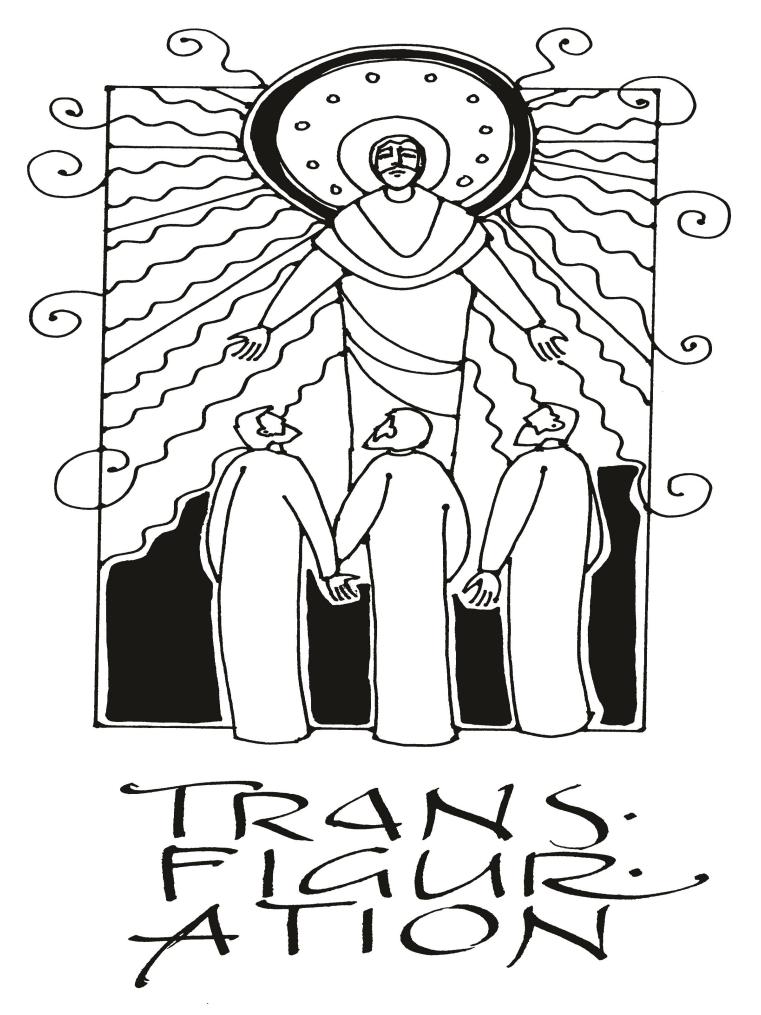


Parents: Read the story of Jesus' transfiguration in Matt. 17:1–13 with your children. Remind them that we will see Him in glory when we die just as the disciples saw Him on the mountain!



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What is Ash Wednesday all about?

You may see something strange happening in church on Ash Wednesday.
You'll see your family and friends go forward to receive the sign of the cross on their foreheads. The strange part about all of this is that it will be done with the ashes from last year's Palm Sunday palm branches.

Why do we do this?

Usually when someone gets dirty they know they need water to get clean. The ashes that are put on our foreheads remind us that in sin we are dirty and need to be cleaned. It also helps us to remember the first time the sign of the cross was made on us at our Baptism. In the waters of Baptism, we are cleaned and the dirt of sin is washed away. Ash Wednesday helps to remind us of this.

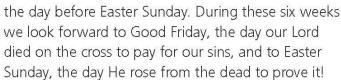
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Parents: At home after the service, when your children are washing the ashes off, remind them once again that we are washed clean of sin at our Baptism. Jesus did all of this for us through His death on the cross which we prepare for during Lent. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of this time of preparation.



What is "Lent"?

Lent is a season of the Church Year that lasts six weeks. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends







How can I remember to think about Jesus during Lent?

You can give up something you enjoy during Lent. You might see your parents give up their morning coffee. Maybe your brother or sister has decided not to eat candy during Lent. Every time you think about doing what you gave up for Lent, it will remind you of what Jesus gave up for you — His life! Blessings to you as you experience the wonderful journey of Lent!

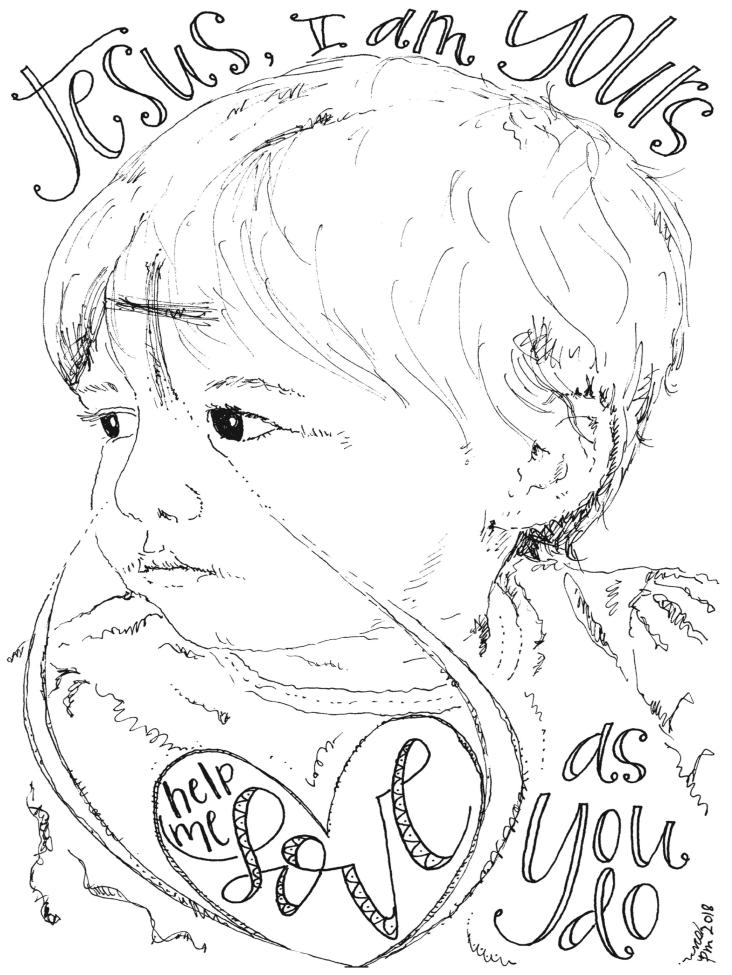


Parents:

We encourage you to help your child decide on something in their life that they can give up during Lent. Be sure to give up something too. Being their example and companion on this journey makes a big difference!



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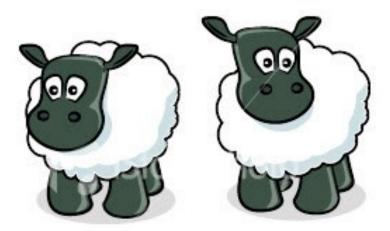
Layout/Design by LEkong

FEED MY SHEEP

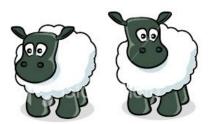
December 2022

Total Households = 46 (143 people total)

Food Pantry Statistics



Adults (18-60) = 64Children (0-17) = 59Senior Citizens (61+) = 9Other (Unknown) = 11



PASTOR'S CARE FUND

December 2022

These disbursements are from money designated for the Pastor's Care Fund. Your contributions bring a tremendous relief to your neighbors who are in difficult circumstances.



Total Households = 33 (101 people total)

Utility Help = 15 Rent/Mortgage = 3 Motel = 14 Transportation = 1



- 1 Mary Davis
- 2 Jeremy Schroeder
- **3 Jackson Littrell**
- 4 Paul Belviy
 - **Jennifer Kelly**
 - **Donna Longman**
 - **Eleanor Walker**
- 5 Lori Sij
- 6 Elaine Landauer
- 7 Madeline Dodge

- **8 Caitlan Steeby**
- 9 Bernard O'Ryan
- 10 Andrew Ockinga
- 11 Jean Womack
- 13 Libby Garner
- 15 Megan Ferguson
- 16 Deb Peterson
- 18 Bruce Pilcher
- 19 Barrett Fredrick
- 20 Margot Legge

- 20 Riley Vojdani
- 21 Matt Bolte
 - **Charly Essner**
 - **Linda Hobbs**
- **22 Tony Gregory**
 - **Scott Laemmli**
- 25 Mikah Tucker
- 26 Landen Kerr

Anniversaries

- 2 David & Melissa Blaske
- 5 Steve & Lana Moeller
- 6 Don & Reatha Bracht
- 14 Melvin & Rebecca Kvamso

- 14 John & Amilda Sporleder
- 20 Fred & Shirley Lewis
- 21 Brandon & Shelby L'Hommedieu
- 26 David & Jenny McCarthey



SERVING IN FEBRUARY 2023

KII).		W

February 5 (EPIPHANY 5)

February 12 (EPIPHANY 6)

February 19 (TRANSFIGURATION) February 26 (LENT 1)

READERS

8:00 AM 10:45 AM

GREETERS

8:00 AM

10:45 AM

MEDIA

8:00 AM 10:45 AM

STREAMING

LEAD COUNTERS

I AURIF RAFFFI SHARON DAVIS

DAVE & MARY **FREVERT**

BRENT & LIBBY GARNER

DONNA WINTERS LEVI WRIGHT

OWEN WINTERS

BILL & JEAN GREGESICH

KARFN LAUNDFRVILLE

PEGGY JONES

LB & ILA

TEETER MICHAEL & BETTYE

PLATT

BETH KIKOEN

MAC MACGOWAN

BILL & JEAN GREGESICH

JOHN JENKINS

BRENT GARNER

DAVE & WENDIE FERGUSON

LEE & ELAINE LANDAUER

DAVID HEINTZ

ZACHARY GUST

OWEN WINTERS

BILL & JEAN GREGESICH

FLAINF LAUNDFRVILLE

AMY WRIGHT

RICH RUMPF & MARIAN VENENGA

JOHN & KATHLEEN **THOMPSON**

JENA EISMA

LEVI WRIGHT

MAC MACGOWAN MAC MACGOWAN &

HT MEANS

LAWN CARE

ALTAR GUILD **ELDERS**

USHERS

LANA MOELLER & MELINDA MILLER 8:00 AM - CLAYTON STUDYVIN 10:45 AM – BRENT GARNER

8:00 AM – TEAM E

(DAVE FREVERT, DEAN EISMA, KEN RADER, TOMMY BYRD, TODD KRUEMPEL)

10:45 AM – TEAM F

(DAVE LEHENBAUER, ROBERT CARTER, LEROY MEYER, BEN MILLER, JEAN GREGESICH)

F	BRUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 12 PM—NEWS & NOTES DUE 5:30 PM-CONFIRMATION	2 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY	3 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY	4
5 EPIPHANY 5 (FEED MY SHEEP) 8 AM-COMMUNION 9:30 AM-EDUCATION/BELLS 10:45 AM-COMMUNION	6 PASTOR'S DAY OFF	7 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 6:30 PM—ELDERS	8 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 12 PM—NEWS & NOTES DUE 5:30 PM-CONFIRMATION	9 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY	10 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 6 PM—CARDS	11
12 EPIPHANY 6 8 AM-WORSHIP 9:30 AM-EDUCATION/BELLS 10:45 AM-WORSHIP 12 PM-CLARION DUE	13 PASTOR'S DAY OFF	2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 6:30 PM-COUNCIL Glappy Valentine's Oay	15 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 12 PM—NEWS & NOTES DUE 5:30 PM -CONFIRMATION	16 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY	17 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY	18
19 TRANSFIGURATION 8 AM-COMMUNION 9:30 AM-EDUCATION/BELLS 10:45 AM-COMMUNION	20 PASTOR'S DAY OFF	21 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY Mardi Gras	22 ASH WEDNESDAY 10 AM-WORSHIP 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 12 PM—NEWS & NOTES DUE 5:30 PM-CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM-SOUP SUPPER 7 PM-ASHES	23 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY 4 PM-CRAFTY CREW	24 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY	25
26 LENT 1 8 AM-WORSHIP 9:30 AM-EDUCATION/BELLS 10:45 AM-WORSHIP	27 PASTOR'S DAY OFF	28 2-4 PM FOOD PANTRY				