

February, 2016

REFLECTIONS

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For the Records. . .

Our office is still attempting to update all the information in our system so that people do not get missed for mailings, anniversaries, birthdays, baptisms and every other event that is important to you, our members. If you will kindly make sure that we have your important dates (Birthdays, Confirmation dates, wedding dates) and maiden names (for those to whom it pertains), and also email addresses and updated phone numbers, we would appreciate it!



Ascension Lutheran Church – 3801 Oakwood Avenue – Huntsville, AL 35810

What Is the Significance of Ashes for Ash Wednesday?

Ashes Today? A contemporary Lutheran appropriation of the Imposition of Ashes should begin with the two-fold biblical understanding of ashes: as a sign of our mortality and as a sign of our repentance. Likewise, the traditional formula, “Remember, you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” is most appropriate, since it paraphrases the words of God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:19). By receiving the ashes, the worshipper acknowledges that God’s judgment against our sin is right and just. But the ashes are also made in the sign of the cross—the very instrument by which our Lord took upon himself the punishment for our sin, in our place. Thus, the cross of ashes serves to remind us that we are sinners, and that Christ died for us sinners. This is exactly what the rite in Lutheran Service Book calls for.

So what happens after you leave Ash Wednesday with those ashes on your forehead? The first thing that happens is that you go out into the world where others will see that cross on your forehead. Although reactions may vary, your silent witness has been given: you have been marked as one redeemed by Christ the crucified!

But the other thing that happens is that you will eventually go home and wash those dirty ashes off your face once and for all. And doesn’t that water also become a concrete, tactile reminder of the water of your baptism, where your sins were washed away forever? God’s grace abounds!

Original Source: Commission on Worship Reporter Insert, 2/2005 & 9/ 2005



The Latest in Collectibles

Our Sunday School teachers are requesting donations of any old magazines that you might have lying around your house and aren’t reading, anymore. If you have some with lots of pictures (chess magazines don’t quite cut it), please bring them to the office and we’ll collect them.



- ALSO -

If you have any empty 2-liter soda bottles, we are collecting those for a short period of time. Again, just bring them to the office and we’ll take it from there.

Thank you!

www.ascensionlutheranhuntsville.com

REFLECTIONS

From the Southwest Corner

Places of the Passion of Our Lord

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent - 2016 is early this year, February 10. Will you join Vicar Alex and me in weekly Lenten services that will culminate with Holy Week and Easter? This year we will follow the Gospel of St. Luke in these evening services.

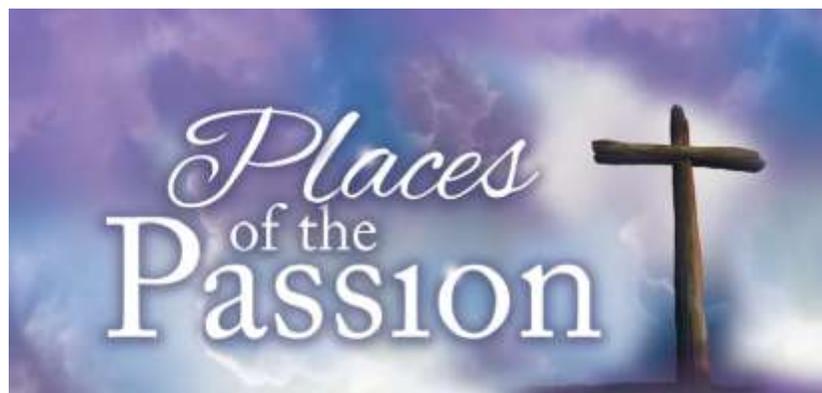
As Luke leads us through the Passion Story of Jesus, he takes us on a journey of the mind to the cross and tomb of our Savior. On this brief tour, we will make brief stops at several places to see Christ's Passion unfold. These are familiar places: the Upper Room; the Garden of Gethsemane; the Courtyard of the High Priest's house; and other stops on the way to Mt. Calvary and the Tomb.

These places of the passion are not just physical places, however. We intend these messages to focus on the needs of our spirits that we will identify each week as we relate to the physical places in the narrative and the spiritual blessings our Savior gives us there. At each stop Jesus Stands ready to impart His strength into the weak areas of our lives.

"When Jesus enters a place, He never leaves it as He found it. The most troubling places of our lives become the most amazing places of God's grace when Jesus visit them." (Rev. Dr. David R. Schmitt, in his Lenten study *Places of the Passion*.) Each week when we visit these places, we will discover that our Lord is already there, waiting to share with us His love and grace.

Lentenly Yours,
Pastor Bernie

Upcoming Schedule of Services



Lenten Services

February 10 - Ash Wednesday Worship - 6:30 PM
February 17 - Lenten Meal - 5:30 PM; Lenten Worship - 6:30 PM
February 24 - Lenten Meal - 5:30 PM; Lenten Worship - 6:30 PM
March 2 - Lenten Meal - 5:30 PM; Lenten Worship - 6:30 PM
March 9 - Lenten Meal - 5:30 PM; Lenten Worship - 6:30 PM
March 16 - Lenten Meal - 5:30 PM; Lenten Worship - 6:30 PM

Holy Week

March 24 - Maundy Thursday - Worship Service - 7:30 PM
March 25 - Good Friday - Tenebrae Service - 7:30 PM
March 26 - Easter Vigil - 7:30 PM

Easter Sunday

March 27 - Sunrise Service - 6:30 AM
March 27 - Easter Service - 8:45 AM
March 27 - Resurrection Service - 10:45 AM

Breakfast will be served after the 6:30 AM and 8:45 AM Services. You are welcome and encouraged to join us this entire Season.

Regular Worship

Sunday Mornings - 8:00 and 10:45 AM
Meet and Greet Fellowship - 9:00 AM

Monday Evenings - 6:00 PM

Bible Study

9:30 AM Sundays

Notes from the Vicar

Greetings! A blessed February to all of you. No doubt the events of the past month have been difficult. A lot has changed here in just the short time since I arrived a little over two months ago. We all have gone through hard times. There is no doubt that life has not been a picnic for all of us.

So far, the most difficult time in my life came in the fall of 2011. I lost my grandfather in September of that year. Now my grandfather helped raise me when we moved back to Pittsburgh. He taught me how to fish, he taught me how to properly show respect, and he was instrumental in my upbringing as a Lutheran. Needless to say, he was a very important part of my life. In 2010, he was diagnosed with a rare type of melanoma and by the fall of 2011 he was gone. It was a dark time for me.

Yet, the darkness did not recede. Instead, it got darker still. You see, in 2011, I began my junior year at Penn State. It just so happened that in November of that year, we became national news when the findings of a grand jury indicted my university's president, athletic director, and VP of finance for covering up the actions of Jerry Sandusky. Not a week after those allegations were made, the man who won more games and graduated more players, the football coach whose name graces Penn State's library, the man I had grown to admire for his dedication to excellence on the field and in the classroom, was fired from his job for his alleged role in this debacle. It was bad. There were many people that I had known as friends that said things like, "If you can still support that school after what has been brought to light, you might as well be indicted with them." It was hard. It was hard to hear that people thought my school should be burned to the ground - a school that was a major part of my life before I even decided to attend there. It was hard turning on the TV to hear that Penn State didn't deserve to have a football program because of this scandal. It was even harder to go to class, being stopped every 100 feet by reporters from all over the country asking for my candid, unedited thoughts on the matter. There was no doubt in my mind that I had hit rock bottom.

I can honestly say that in this time of struggle and strife, my prayer life was resurrected. Yet, I didn't know what to pray for. I didn't know who to pray for. If only I knew then what I knew now. You see, this was before I had really begun to study scripture. It wasn't until I got to Seminary that I discovered that Jesus was the answer. Jesus lays it all out in Matthew 11:25-30, *"At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Here Jesus encourages us to lean on him. He encourages us to do this because our worries and our anxieties have all been done away with. The sufferings of this world are not to last. They will not endure. But the love of Jesus, the love of the Father, and the faith of the Holy Spirit, those are eternal, those endure, and they are what we should lean on.

Whenever we are sad, lonely, or just down, we should lean on those who care for us. We should lean on those who have proven their love for us, by dedicating their mission to save us from sin, death and the power of the devil. In the words of 1 Peter 5:6-7, *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."*

May God bless you and keep you all steadfast in His word.

With Love,

Vicar Alex



Notes from Glen Huling - Stewardship



Luke 18:35 “As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.”

Who is not a beggar? All that we have is a gift of God. We are all beggars before Him. Knowing this can leave us with nothing but thankfulness in our hearts. And this thankful acknowledgment of all the Lord's gifts is also what forms the basis of our generous giving.

We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves us is never alone. That is because faith is a living, busy, and active thing. It inhales all of God's riches in Christ and exhales this in love and service to the neighbor.

But who is my neighbor? God in His mercy has placed us into three distinct communities: society, family, and the church. That means we have a duty to those around us in each of these communities. We pray for the people in these three communities daily. We rejoice with them in times of joy and suffer with them in times of sadness. And we give to them from the income that God provides as we are able and as they have need.

So we pay taxes to our governments so that they may do the work that is needed for our neighbors in society. We give to our families so that they have food and clothing, house and home, even educations. And we give to our church—our local congregations—so that the gospel may be preached and the sacraments administered for us and others.

The beauty of this is that God smiles upon all that giving. When you pay your taxes, God is pleased that you have served your neighbor who needs what the government provides. When you provide for your family, God is pleased. That you have helped your neighbor with the necessities of life by sharing with them what He has given to you, God is pleased. And when you give to your local congregation to support the ongoing preaching of the gospel, God is pleased. To all this giving, He says to you, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

Looking at giving in this light makes it a joy to give. The joy is multiplied. There is joy in you because you have served your neighbor in his need. There is joy in your neighbor for God has answered their prayers through you. And God rejoices and is pleased with it all. It might just make the humdrum of grocery shopping and mortgage payments a bit more joyous. It might even make April 15 tolerable (St. Paul had to have this pep talk with the Romans, also, “This is why you pay taxes....” Rom. 13:6). And it surely will make the envelope placed into the offering plate a joyful thing.

Indeed God is pleased with you. You are saved by faith alone because of Jesus Christ. And that saving faith is never alone. It is busy and active. It serves the neighbor in society, family, and church with free and cheerful giving.

From <http://blogs.lcms.org/2016/stewardship-resources-february-2016>

Notes from Rick Hilst - Elder

Without Our Lord Jesus, There Is No Hope

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
(John 3:16-18)

This past month, our Lord Jesus called home Grace Ansorge and Libby Sanders. These have been sad days for Pastor, Phillip and the rest of the Ansorge family as well as the Sanders family as they will now face a future without their dearly loved family members.

Grace and Libby are now in heaven with their Lord and Savior. Their lives are now dramatically better than they were. They are experiencing a joy beyond anything any of us have felt here on earth. They are right now celebrating the presence of God along with their fellow believers and with the host of heavenly angels.

Our Lord Jesus, the second person of the Triune God, 2000 years ago became man, lived a perfect, sinless life, died a horrible death on a cross as payment for our sins, rose again and now reigns in heaven. This is an incredible story that would be unbelievable were it not true. The almighty God, the creator of the universe and everything in it, a God completely beyond our ability to comprehend, humiliates Himself and becomes man, allows sinful, evil men to brutally torture and kill Him, all because of an unfathomable love for fallen man, knowing that this was the only way that God and man could be reconciled. That God would do this is totally beyond anything that we could possibly understand or hope for. Yet, incredibly, it is true! And we, as believers in our Lord and Savior will one day reap the rewards of what God has procured for us. Something we do not deserve. Something that is the exact opposite of what we truly deserve.

When one takes an eternal perspective our time here on earth is nothing more than a blip. Yet how important this time is! Our brief life on earth determines our eternal destination. This ever so short journey establishes whether we will spend eternity living a life beyond our wildest imagination or whether we will spend eternity living a life worse than our worst nightmare.

Our hope, our expectation, rests in the blood of Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection have opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, to all whose trust is in the Lord. Unfortunately, without faith in our Lord Jesus, the opposite is true. There is no hope. There is no expectation. There is only an inevitable judgment, one in which our thoughts and actions will dictate our fate, one in which the result will be eternal separation from God, one in which suffering for eternity in hell awaits us.

We have a brief period of time here on earth to make a difference. I have heard sermons in which the statement is made that the only reason that God does not immediately call believers home is that there is work left to do on earth. We are God's eyes, ears, mouth, legs and arms here on earth. He has called us to do His work, to be His ambassadors.

We are foreigners in a foreign world with one, and only one, true purpose; to serve God, to glorify His love to others, to reflect His love to others, to share the Good News of salvation with others.

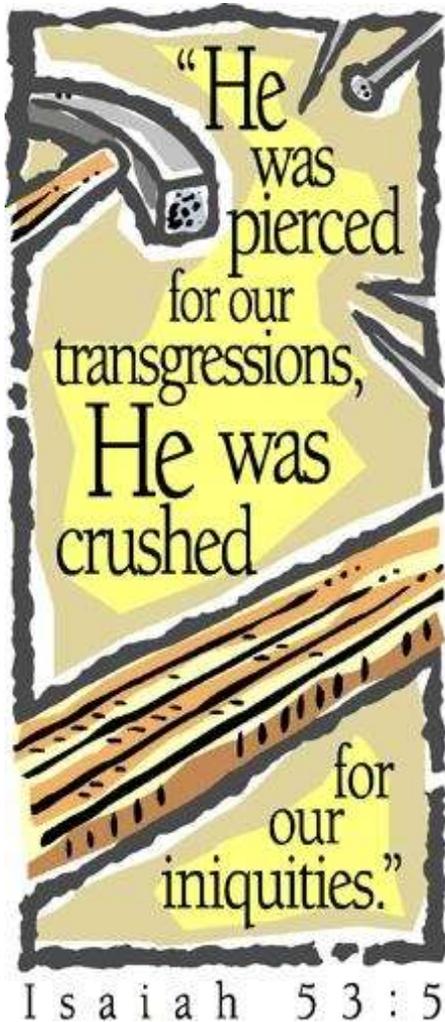
Are you doing your part? Are you contributing to the body of Christ or are you impeding it?

With faith in Jesus there is hope. Without faith there is none. There are not many paths that lead to God. There is one. We must share this before it's too late.



Walking through Lent

Judy Burhans



The season of Lent has always been a somber time for me. Looking at the image of the crown of thorns that is hinted at in the picture above this textbox, or the visual of hammer, nails and cross that illustrates the passage from Isaiah, how can I not become somber and somewhat “down” as I think about the agony and pain that I can’t even imagine having to “handle”? The gray of the skies, the rain, the thoughts that skitter through my brain all fit the season, it seems. However, maybe there’s a purpose for all of this, though - and that would be the promise that I know is coming to fulfillment on March 27 when we get to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection. What a difference that day makes in the life of a follower of Christ! There is joy - there is excitement - there are blue skies (well, there will be!). But I am getting ahead of myself. . .

Yesterday, a delivery person from Steak-Out asked for prayers for a brother of one of his co-workers. It seems that just yesterday, 24 hours ago, his co-worker’s brother, who is a pastor in Nigeria, was taken hostage by a Muslim faction, just like that. It gave me goosebumps hearing it then; it gives me goosebumps writing about it now. Our brother in Christ, whom we don’t even know, is walking in the footsteps of Jesus into a place of the unknown. His family here in the States is living in the moment of darkness and fear, wondering if they will ever hear from their son/husband/brother/ father again, or if the next news they get will be news that takes them even deeper into the darkness and pain that can be overpowering.

Whatever the outcome of this man’s situation is, we know *for sure* that even if he dies while in the hands of his captors, just as Jesus died in the hands of His captors, then also, just like Jesus, he will rise to newness of life in the arms of His heavenly Father.

It is because of Jesus’ walk through His season of Lent that we can boldly proclaim, *“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* May God be walking with our brother in faith, giving him strength and confidence to endure and the power to witness boldly, even now. Amen.

Thank You

When Words Seem Inadequate -

I want to say “thank you” to our entire congregation and a great cloud of friends at the same time who all came together to honor our Lord Jesus and celebrate Grace’s arrival into the fullness of Life everlasting. Words cannot convey the emotions of my heart, so I pray that our God, the Holy Spirit, will enlighten you with His love - so as to reveal to you the full extent of Divine love in Christ Jesus, its height, breadth and depth - and thus to help you comprehend the fullness of my love for you all. You came from far and near. You brought yourself into my life through flowers, memorials, and your presence. You transcended the barriers that may have separated us from each other over the years.

May the love of God that is the foundation of our relationships with each other abound in you to give Him glory - and all because His love had found a home in Grace Ansorge. Let us praise His grace, an “amazing grace” indeed.

Love, Pastor Bernie and family.



1941 to 2016

February 2016						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Every Sunday 8:00/10:45 AM Worship 9:00 AM-Meet & Greet 9:30 AM Classes	1 Every Monday 6:00 PM - Worship	2 10:00 AM - Bible Study	3 4:00 PM-Conf 4:30 PM-Bells 7:00 PM-Choir	4 6:30 PM - Lutheranism 101	5 Bell Festival	6 Bell Festival
7	8	9 10:00 AM - Bible Study 6:30 PM - Board of Directors	10 Ash Wednesday 10:00 AM-HHR 4:00 PM-Conf 4:30 PM-Bells 6:30-Worship 7:30 PM-Choir	11 6:30 PM - Lutheranism 101	12	13 11:30 AM- LWML
14	15 Presidents' Day Reflections Articles Due 	16 10:00 AM - Bible Study 6:00 PM - Board of Elders	17 Lent 4:00 PM-Conf 4:30 PM-Bells 5:30 PM-Meal 6:30-Worship 7:30 PM-Choir	18	19 5:30 PM - Pizza and Movie	20 9:00AM- 3:15PM "Lands of the Bible" Seminar, Fairhope, AL
21	22	23 10:00 AM - Bible study	24 Lent 10:00 AM-HHR 4:00 PM-Conf 4:30 PM-Bells 5:30 PM-Meal 6:30-Worship 7:30 PM-Choir	25	26	27
28	29					
February 17 - Meal Prepared by Elders February 24 - Meal Prepared by All - Bring sides to go with Pulled Pork BBQ Sandwiches						

