



FEBRUARY 2025



IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
631 Grand Street, Allegan Michigan



Pr. Chris Laughlin - February 1
Emily Ottinger - February 1
Jim Horwath - February 2
Bodhi Rogers - February 4
Westen VanMelle - February 6
Laura Wathen - February 10
Karen Acosta - January 12
Emma Horwath - February 15
Jennifer Vance - February 15
George Preisler - February 22





Dick & Pat Jones – February 16



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS FOR JANUARY

February 2

Reader - Linda Havens
Assistant - Jim Horwath
Counters - Laura Compton & Linda Scott
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

February 9

Reader - Linda Scott
Assistant - Donna Preisler
Counters - Joyce Davis & Mike Aksamit
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

February 16

Reader - Michele Radke
Assistant - Mike Fusillo
Counters - Laura Compton & Linda Scott
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

February 23

Reader - Sharon Aksamit
Assistant - Mike Aksamit
Counters - Joyce Davis & Jim Combs
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS: We really appreciate everyone that serves during our worship service and *would love to have more people involved*. If you would like to serve as a reader, worship assistant, counter, or greeter, please talk to Pastor Chris or Ken Kingsbury. We can be reached in the office Monday through Thursday from 9 am to 1pm.





Pastor's Page, February 2025: Sin/sins

"... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

- Paul, Romans 3:23

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

- Psalm 51:5

This month's word is everybody's favorite topic – Sin!

An old preacher's axiom goes like this: when a parishioner says "preacher, you should preach more about sin," he means you should be preaching about other people's sins. 😊 Nope, no one gets off the hook on this one 😊 (see Romans 3 above).

Really, "sins" are the things that we do wrong; in the words of the confession from the LBW:

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Action and inaction, or, by a different set of vocabulary, commission and omission (Matthew 25:31-46). And not just what we do, but what we say and even what we think (Mark 7:1-23, especially v14-23). For Jesus (and for Luther), not preventing something bad that you could have prevented makes you just as guilty as doing that bad thing.

However, "Sin" is different. It's not what you *do*, it's who you *are*. This is what makes Lutherans (and Presbyterian/Reformed) Christians different from others. We understand Sin as a condition, not just actions or inactions. The problem wasn't just that

Adam and Eve disobeyed God's order (compare Gen 2:16-17 with Gen 3:1-6), it's that they wanted to be like God (Gen 3:5), to take God's place, to usurp God.

We put ourselves before all others: that's Sin. We put ourselves before God and before all other human beings, we love God and others only after ourselves (if at all), breaking the Greatest Commandment (Mat 22:34-40, in which Jesus quoted from Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:17-18) and Jesus' New Commandment (John 13:34). Inherently selfish, the Reformers described human beings as being "curved in upon ourselves" ("in curvatus in se"). And from Sin comes all other sins. We want to be God, we deny that others are created in God's image, and we treat God's creation as though it was ours to misuse instead of us being God's stewards. This is what we confessed every Sunday in the LBW: that we are captive to Sin and cannot free ourselves.

Sound harsh? It is. It's also true. I'll prove it:

The politician from the other party who is on television espousing a "fact" or a perspective with which you disagree: is that person wrong or is that person dangerous? For people doing something you think is wrong or with which you disagree or you don't like: are they wrong or are they animals? The person at the grocery store taking way too long in front of the dairy section, standing right where you need to be, is that person slow or have little else to do today or is that person standing there just to spite you? Have you ever described another person as "worthless" or "garbage," or thought it? In short, do we think the worst of people, acting as though we know what's going on in their heads or happening in their lives?

If you really believe this last paragraph doesn't apply to you, please come talk to me. But I suspect no one will, because we are all Sinful. We're all in the same Sinful boat. Lutherans think about Sin as an illness or addiction that we all have.

This is why we live the Life of Repentance about which I wrote in last month's newsletter. Because we sin, and because we're Sinful. Because we need to repent, not just of what we did, but who we are.

Well, that was cheery, wasn't it???

SDG,

Pr. Chris

Notes:

First, let me thank Meri and Jessie for their years of changing our sign! But, the time has come to pass that torch onto someone else, and Rick Bierlein has agreed to take on the challenge! So, if you want the sign to announce something, let Rick know. Also, know that

Rick may ask you to help him, either by changing the sign with him or by doing it for him. Please consider helping him, especially as the weather warms.

The Confirmation students and I are registered for camp this summer at Stony Lake, 6 – 11 July! We'll be attending "Challengers" (Confirmation) camp. The council and the parents have agreed with my proposal that the students will fundraise a third of the cost, a third of the cost will come from the congregation's budget (to which the congregation agreed at the annual meeting), and a third will come from the parents.

Speaking of our fundraisers, the Confirmands have already raised enough to send themselves to camp! Now, we will continue to fundraise to send them to the ELCA National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis in 2027! This seems like a long way away, but unfortunately, there is no way to know exactly how much this will cost, so we're just going to have to keep raising money until we get some idea.

And finally, our February fundraiser will be a breakfast on Saturday, 15 February. Eggs, pancakes, sausage, fruit, milk, orange juice, and coffee will again be on the menu. Invite your friends and family!

Our annual calendar is up next to the office! Want to know when the Confirmands are going to camp? Annual trip to the White Caps game? Who will preach when I'm gone? It's on the calendar! (Or just look at the earlier note. 😊) When we have dates for the church picnic, etc., they will also go on the calendar.

LE White Middle School: I got confused. Fortunately, Sharon knew what she was doing. 😊 She writes: L.E. White Middle School Parent Teacher Conference Meal: We are once again providing a meal for the teachers during their conferences in February. We did such a good job last October they asked us again! This time we are providing sandwiches and soup. There is a sign up sheet on the round table for items needed which are due back by **noon on Tuesday, February 4** at the church. The items will be delivered to the school on February 5 in the afternoon. You could also slip in a few bucks to support the middle school's fundraising efforts for a Facility Dog for "**Pawsitivity Change**"! If you have any questions, please direct them to Pastor or Sharon Aksamit. Thank you for your support.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Quilting Group meets every Tuesday in the Quilting Room at 9am.

Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday at 10am in the Study Room. We discuss the Bible Readings for the upcoming Sunday Worship Service. We will NOT meet on New Year's Day

Praise Team Practice meets every Wednesday at 4pm. Watch the Bulletin and the church web page for changes during the holidays.

Coffee for Vets meets on the second Tuesday of every month in the Fellowship Hall for coffee and fellowship. If you know of a Vet who might like to participate, please invite them.

BIBLE AND BREW will meet Monday February 10th at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton. We meet at **5:30pm** for a meal, fellowship, and a lively discussion on random questions on a wide variety of subjects. It is a lot of fun and we hope to see you there. Please note the new time!

THE MANDALA GROUP will meet at the church on Monday February 10th at 1pm. If you have an interest in this group or would like to know more about it please see Maryann Fusillo, This can be a very rewarding spiritual journey and we invite you to come.

THE CHURCH COUNCIL will meet Monday evening on February 17th.

BOOK GROUP will meet Monday February 24th at 1pm to discuss the book chosen for this month. Members of the group suggest and decide on which book they will read for the following month. Watch the Sunday Bulletin for the announcement of the monthly selection.

Zumba meets in the Fellowship Hall every Wednesday at 6pm and every Saturday at 10am.

Dinner Nite Out will take place Saturday February 15th at 5:30pm. The place and hosts are TBD. Please see the sign-up sheet on the Round Table if you would like to host and choose the restaurant.

ALL COMMITTEE MEETING will take place on Monday February 3rd. We will begin with a lite meal at 6pm and then go into our respective groups. There is a signup sheet on the Round Table. We invite everyone to come and participate in this event. It gives you a great chance to become more involved in the ongoing mission of our congregation.

PARENT - TEACHER CONFERENCES: We are once again asked to support the teachers at L.E. White Middle School by providing their lunch during their conferences in February. Apparently, we did such a great job last October that they asked us to do it again. This time we are providing sandwiches and soup. Please see the signup sheet on the Round Table and see that your items are at the church by Noon on Tuesday February 4th. We will see that they are delivered the next afternoon.

PAWSITIVE CHANGE: The students and school staff of L.E. White Middle School are working to provide a certified therapy dog for the school and are asking for donations to this project. It has been proven that these dogs can be a real asset to the students. There is a copy of the Allegan County Newspaper article providing more information on the Round Table. If you would like to help, please just write *Pawsitive Change* in the comments section of your check.

CHURCH HISTORY UPDATE: We have added the information for 2024 and printed copies of the last two pages that can easily be added to your copy of the church history. They can be found on the Round Table or contact the church office if you need the page emailed to you.

WHITE CAPS BASEBALL: By August the snow will be gone and time for Baseball. The signup sheet for the August 23rd game is on the Round Table. Be sure to get your name down for the limited number of reserved tickets.

FEBRUARY HOLIDAYS



Early on this was the Christian Festival of Candlemas celebrating the Purification of Mary 40 days after the birth of her son, Jesus. On this day she would present Him as her firstborn child (Luke 2:22-38). The day was celebrated by both Roman Catholics and Lutherans throughout Germany and was often seen as a predictor of Spring. If it was a sunny day there would be a long wait for spring. It seems that the first animal associated with the prediction was the bear and later the Badger. By 1840 in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania the custom grew to associate the Groundhog with the weather prediction for Spring. If he saw his shadow, he would return to his burrow, and we could expect six more weeks of winter before spring arrived.

VALENTINE'S DAY started as a Feast Day for Saint Valentine. He was imprisoned for ministering to Christians under the Roman Empire. According to legend he restored the sight to the daughter of his jailer. Just prior to his death he is said to have written a letter to the jailer's daughter and signed it "*Your Valentine*". By the 18th century in England, it had become customary for couples to express their love for one another by sending flowers, candy, and cards (known as Valentines).



PRESIDENTS DAY: Both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln have birthdays in February, so we celebrate both on Presidents Day (February 17th). They have their images sculpted in the Mount Rushmore memorial of South Dakota. This work was done by Gutzon Borglum and completed in 1941. Included in this memorial are the images of Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt was included because he was a champion of the National Park system. The memorial is often referred to as the *Shrine of Democracy*.

