

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/17/2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

A couple of things beginning this week. First, the Sunday prerecorded service will discontinue as we are now offering a live-streamed worship service from our parking lot beginning at 9:30am on Sundays for those who can't or aren't comfortable coming to the parking lot. If you are unable to watch the real-time version, you can watch a recording of that service any time after 9:30. Simply go to the St. Andrew website (standrewlutheranchurch.org), scroll down until you see the Facebook logo (it is a blue rounded square with a white "f" inside), and click on that. It will take you to our Facebook page. You don't need a Facebook account to visit it. Near the top of the page, after 9:30am on Sunday, you will find the worship service. Click on that and enjoy that live service.

Second, we start our midweek services this evening at 7:00pm by Zoom with Ash Wednesday worship. If you have not received the Zoom link, call the church office or check with another member of the church for that information. And since we have worship each Wednesday now for six weeks, I will not be writing a Wednesday "Staying Connected" during this time.

It's a good thing to have a Lenten discipline during this season. For many people, that means giving something up for Lent. It's sort of an action during this time to make ourselves a bit more like God wants us to be. Often it is done so that we feel a little more "holy" or to avoid something we feel we really should give up anyway. But this sacrifice is only done during Lent, and then as soon as we get to Easter, the sacrifices is abandoned and it's back to business as usual.

The real purpose of giving something up is to make us more aware of how difficult it would be to give up sinning. For a time in the early church, baptism only happened on Easter, and Lent was the season of preparing for baptism. Part of that preparation was fasting everyday except

Sunday (because Sundays are “in Lent” but not “of Lent” and we celebrate the resurrection every Sunday, so on Sundays you could eat). Many felt this was too difficult so it was modified to be avoiding all meat during Lent. When this, also, was felt too challenging, it changed to no meat on Friday, and then finally, no meat except fish on Friday. (That’s why restaurants offer fish specials on Friday for Roman Catholics who still follow this practice. Don’t worry, though. The restaurants offer coffee every day for Lutherans.)

Jesus, however, makes us worthy by dying for our sins. And because Jesus took on that burden of the cross, I think it is a better practice during Lent to take on something extra ourselves. So, let me suggest this Lenten activity beginning today.

Write a letter to God that begins this way: “Dear God, the life I want most for myself is...” and complete that statement (or prayer). Wrestle with it. Feel free to dream big. Tell God your greatest expectations for yourself.

Keep your letter in a place where you will see it every day during Lent. Think about it and allow the events of this season to cause you to refine it. If something comes to mind, you can edit your letter. Do this each day. Some days, nothing may differ from what you already have written. But on some days, you may think of something you want to add or change. Always do it in the presence of God seeking God’s guidance as you write. Go ahead and do that and see where it ends up at the end of the Lenten season.

Taking on this activity for Lent may be a process that leads you to discover something new about yourself or that God wants for you. You may be surprised to find out where God is leading you. Let this be your daily discipline for the season of Lent.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey