

# From the Interim Pastor's Desk . .



Pastor Rebecca will begin to briefly answer the submitted questions "Ask me anything....about the Bible!" Some of the questions may require months of newsletters articles and a 250 page essay to answer, but she will do her best to answer them in two pages or less. If you would like to discuss a question in person, please visit her at during office hours. Please remember some of the topics covered may be sensitive to some individuals and you may have a different perspective on it, but this forum is to get the Pastor's reflection on the question.

One of the questions in the box was very long. It went to the issue of estrangement; namely, why is there so much of it out there, even and especially within families? And why has it gotten so much worse in recent years?

The Bible offers Cain as the archetypal representation of estrangement. Cain made a slipshod offering to God. His brother Abel made an adequate offering. Cain brooded. He fanned the flames of his jealousy and resentment until they grew into murderous hatred. We all know what happened next.

Cain then represents an enduring and pervasive manifestation of human nature. Rather than admire and emulate the meritorious and successful, present-day Cains despise them because it casts themselves in a dim light. They blame life for their own inadequacies. Of course, the Bible offers Cain as a model to avoid precisely because it gives rise to estrangement.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expressly forbids his followers to harbor anger. Paul warns not to let the sun set on it. We can't change the Cains around us, but we can change the Cains within us.

And why has estrangement become so much worse in recent years? In my own opinion, it has to do with Karl Marx and his acolytes. Do you really think that Marx had compassion for the working man? He who abused and betrayed his wife, who caused his own children to die from squalor, who was a virulent racist, and who called for the eradication of Judaism? Compassion was hardly his middle name.

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And do you really think that the temporary exploitation of the working man as industrialization unfolded (Legislation like the Factory Act and child labor laws were soon introduced to address that exploitation, not to mention the formation of unions) was sufficient to call for the working man to execute all those above him and to overthrow western society in a violent, merciless, and anarchical revolution? Karl Marx was Cain writ large. His thought has failed politically but has infiltrated nearly all of our institutions. It's in the air we breathe, and gives justification and license for not just estrangement, but vengeance -- but "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." Lent is on the horizon. I will say more about Cain in a Lenten sermon.

# What about children whose parents do not have them baptized or brought up in faith? What about people of other religions? I don't believe that God would abandon them. Neither do I.

I love Jonathan Edwards as much as the next man, but philosophers and theologians have a penchant for following a train of thought to its logical conclusion. Doing so, he came up with this doozy – "The road to hell is paved with the skulls of unbaptized babies."

The Bible does not address itself directly the fate of unbaptized babies and followers of other religions. Yes, Jesus declares that he is the way, the truth, and the life, but the Bible was written by and for the early Christians; in other words, it was written for the people of God. Jesus is their way, their truth, and their life. Followers of other religions are not in view.

In Jesus' immortal parable *The Good Samaritan*, the Samaritan is a follower of another religion. He was the good guy. He was the example to follow. He was the corrective. The religious authorities were cast as hard-hearted hypocrites. According to the parable, the Samaritan is in, and the religious authorities are out.

This is the theme of the book of Ruth as well. Ruth was follower of another religion as well. She was the heroine.

Extrapolating, being an insider is no ticket in, and being an outsider is no ticket out. Paul alludes to a general revelation, a kind of Jeffersonian natural law, by which all can practice righteousness. This is true to my own experience as well. I have friends, colleagues, and family members who practice different faiths and are some of the most virtuous people I know. Finally, Jesus' followers who are preoccupied to exclude others from God's love and grace may find themselves surprised on Judgment Day. Perhaps the greatest American theologian of the twentieth century, William Stringfellow, wrote that it would be a day of upsets.

Pastor Rebecca Clancy

## HIGHLIGHTS



Cabin Fever Relievers—Belgium Canals Photo Left—Jon Urness' presentation.

Photo Right—Had almost 30 people there that enjoyed



## NEWS (continued)

### CABIN FEVER RELIEVERS

### Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Immersion

7 - 8 PM, Sunday, February 25th AT THE VERMONT CHURCH GATHERING PLACE

All are welcome to join seminarian Jill Dybdahl as she shares her experience at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota, in January 2024.



What is life like today for American Native Indians living on the reservation?

Jill will share photographs, stories, and observations from her recent trip as a part of Wartburg Theological Seminary's cultural immersion program. And Pastor Dan Johnson, Director of Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, will join us via Zoom to tell us his story, and talk about his programs and the many challenges he faces serving God's people in need on the reservation.

Recommended readings prior to event, but not required:

They Called Me Uncivilized by Walter Littlemoon

The Four Vision Quests of Jesus by Steven Charleston

All are welcome to hear the whole story with a complete slide-show in the second of this year's <u>*Cabin Fever*</u> *Reliever* series. Popcorn and light refreshments will be available for your enjoyment.

# FEBRUARY'S JIGSAW PUZZLE LIBRARY NEWS

The Puzzle Library grew to 100 different puzzles, thanks to donors of all ages. We know who some of you are and many puzzles just appeared!

WE THANK YOU ALL!

February is best described by the word "LOVE"

# We suggest that you Choose your February puzzle with the theme of

Love in mind!

Perhaps it's love for a painting or an animal that you adore.

Perhaps its about people doing things you like or a movie you once saw.

And, remember, it's fun to do a puzzle with someone you LOVE!

February brings with it the Lenten season where we as Christians are reminded that God so loved us that he sent us Jesus, his Son!



### NEWS (continued)

### FULL SNOW MOON DINNER—Friday, February 23rd

Please join us for this intimate free will dinner. You will be able see the full moon while you nosh on delights and drinks.

- 4:53 pm Moonrise The names of the full moons coincide with what's happening seasonally, and according to the farmer's almanac, February's full moon is called the Snow Moon. Because of the snow that is still present.
- 6 pm Arrival
- 6:30 pm Dinner Hot Chicken Salad, rice, tossed salad and Tres Leche Cake
- 6:30am, Saturday, but the moon will still appear full the night before and after its peak to the casual stargazer.

This unique event offers space to enjoy the outdoors, slow down, and witness nature. It's an opportunity to take a hike, view the stars and delight in nature around us. We will have seating available for 54 people. Please make your reservation by contacting, the church office at (608) 767-3312 or vermont\_church@tds.net

### BOOK CLUB—THERE IS STILL TIME TO READ THIS MONTH'S BOOK

Looking for something to do this winter season. Let's read a book! The first selection will be *Who Is This Man?: The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus*. Pick up your book at a local bookstore and if you finish it early, pass it onto another member to read. Have it read by our zoom meeting on **February 13, 6:30pm-7:30pm—CHANGE OF DATE!** 

The day after Jesus' death, whatever small mark he made on the world seemed destined to disappear. Instead, his impact on human history has been unparalleled, leading believers and nonbelievers alike to ask, *Who Is This Man?* 

In Who Is This Man, bestselling author John Ortberg explores the paradox of Jesus, history's most familiar figure while simultaneously the man no one knows. Who Is This Man traces Jesus' incredible life and legacy from his days on Earth to the present moment, showing us:

- How his vision of life continues to haunt and challenge humanity
- The ways his influence has inspired movements in art, science, government, medicine, and education
- How his lessons about dignity, compassion, forgiveness, and hope continue to influence humanity

Join John Ortberg as he shares how Jesus' influence has swept over history and how his vision of life continues to impact us today.

### TRAILS ARE OPEN FOR WINTER FUN!

Two courses have been groomed around the property. One, for hiking and the second for cross country skiing and snow shoeing. Bring a friend and come out and enjoy this winter wonderland

### LECTURE SERIES RESUMES

Pastor Rebecca Clancy will resume her lecture series on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month after church. All are welcome

# **NEWS**—Missions

### **CONFIRMATION MISSION PROJECT CONTINUES**

In 2023, the confirmation students collected \$818.89 towards their \$1,000 goal to purchase a milk menagerie. Keep the change coming. They will continue to collect throughout the school year.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL MISSION PROJECT

What's a birthday without cake? Did you know that cake mixes and frosting are one of the most requested items at our food pantries, but they rarely have any. The Sunday School has made it their mission for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter to collect cake mixes and frosting for our two food pantries. Can you help? Bring items to the collection box in the entryway. If you prefer, Joanie Haugen or Krystal Lonsdale will shop for you - write CAKE on your check.

### **MISSION TEAM NEEDS YOUR HELP!**

Vermont Lutheran Mission Team will be asking questions of the Congregation for 4 weeks. Your answers are important for us to understand how we move forward with any new ideas for additional mission ministries. We ask that you take time before you leave worship this morning to fill out the Week 2's Questionnaire and hand it in as you leave the sanctuary. We will have a basket available for you to drop them off and we will be available to answer any questions you might have. We will update you to the results we receive. If you have not filled out Week 1's questions, please look for a gold colored Questionnaire or ask one of the team members. Thank you for your very important Participation!

Team Members include Joanie Haugen, Ellie Boebel, Jeff Dickinson, Klover Schafer & Pastor Rebecca!



### **MEN'S MEATBALL DINNER**

**Mark your calendar!** Everyone is invited to attend the Men's Meatball Dinner, Sunday February 18, 2024. This is a free-will donation fund raiser for the ongoing ministry of the congregation. There is one seating, at 11:30 AM, for 100 diners. Enjoy a dinner of Norwegian meatballs, lefse, potatoes, beans, dessert and plenty of hospitality. Reservations should be made by calling Peter Antonie (608 767-2641) or sign up at church.

### Mission Matters – February 2024

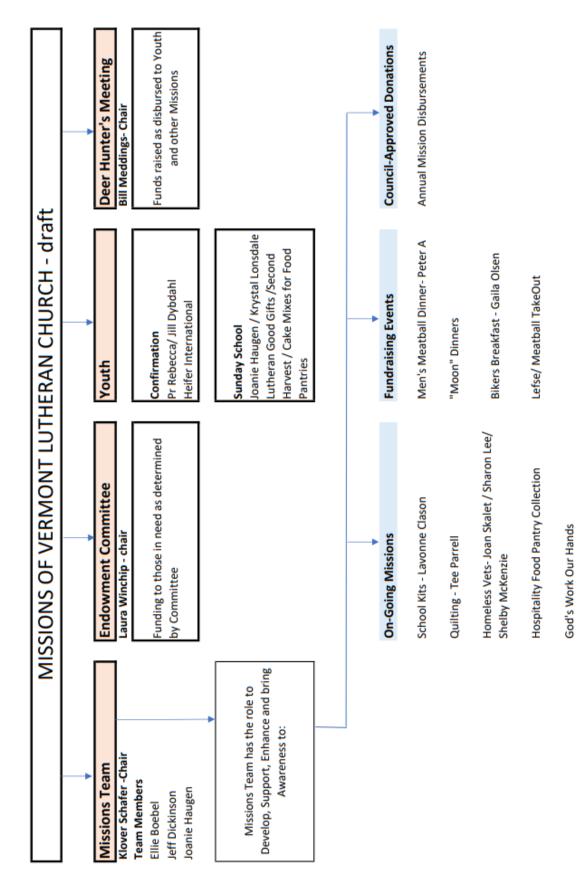
January was a busy month for the Mission Team. We created our Mission Statement and began our Four Sunday Questionnaires for the Congregation about Vermont's Missions. We have one more Sunday to go with the questions; however, we will give you extra time and opportunities to complete your answers to all 4 questions, including in this newsletter. We will share our results of the questionnaires with you as soon as you have completed them!

Some of you answered by asking "What do you mean when you say Vermont Missions?"

Our newly created Mission Statement gives a response to that question:

# Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me. As disciples of Jesus Christ, the Mission Team of Vermont Lutheran Church seeks to serve the needs of our sisters and brothers locally, nationally and globally.

Since Vermont is already involved in several Mission Projects, we created a Mission Organizational Chart to show where we are currently. You will find this chart on a separate page of the Messenger. Please take some time to look at it. We have just finished this Chart and ask for any corrections that you may find. And, we expect to be adding to it as we make our way through 2024.



### Introducing our Mission Lenten Journey Project

### "I was Thinking of You..."

This Year, for Lent, let's try to "give of our time" instead of giving up something. The Mission Team will have a "I was Thinking of You" table set up in the Fellowship Hall for you to write a brief note or sign a card for not only Vermont's homebound but to our neighbors in the local nursing and assisted living homes.

Have you ever had someone call you or send you a note saying "I was just thinking of you…"? Didn't that make you feel good? That's what this year's Lenten project journey will do for others. Please join us in the project! More Information to Follow!

**LENT SCHEDULE** 

Ash Wednesday—February 14—service at 7 pm.

## Soup Suppers with Lenten Study

Come join us for a Soup Supper each Wednesday night at 6 pm with a Lenten Service following the supper at 7pm. Hosted by:

February 21 — Council

February 28 - Sunday School / Youth

March 6 - Men's Group

March 13—Women's Group

March 20 - Choir / or another volunteer group

Maundy Thursday—March 28th—service at 7 pm Good Friday—March 29th—Community Service Easter Sunday—March 30th service 9:30 am



### LENT MENTORS NEEDED

Six volunteers are needed to mentor confirmation students during Lent. Mentoring involves meeting a student for six Wednesday Soup Suppers and then leading a short 15 minute lesson with your student. We so appreciate your time and talent in connecting with our youth! Please contact Jill Dybdahl 608-630-2443 if you'd like to volunteer!

### **CONFIRMATION STUDENTS**

Are required to attend all the Wednesday night services beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 14th. A mentor will be assigned to each confirmation student. The mentor will begin meeting with the student on the first soup supper on February 21st.



NEWS—LENT (continued)



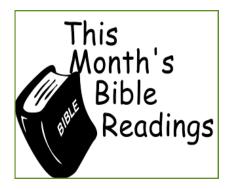
## Easter Lily Orders

Order forms are due by Sunday, March 3, 2024

Checks to Vermont Luther an Church

My Name
Telephone Number
I would like to order:
Easter Lily(ies) @ \$19.00 each = \$
Total Enclosed \$
In loving Memory of
In Honor of

Monthly Financial Report January 2024						
	Contributions			Operating Expenses		
	2024	2023	Change	2024	2023	Change
Monthly	\$ 8,166	\$ 5,806	\$2,360	\$14,220	\$13,457	\$ 763
YTD	\$ 8,166	\$ 5,806	\$2,360	\$14,220	\$13,457	\$ 763
		+		Attendance January 2024		
Joan Skalet & Debbie Krebs				7th 75		
				14th canceled		
F	EBRUARY					21st 65
Alta	R GU	ILD	9			28th 64



<u>February 4</u> Topic and Title: Baptism of Christ I Samuel 17:42-46 Romans 8:26-30 John 1:19-31

> <u>February 11</u> Topic and Title: The Transfiguration Exodus 34:29-35 II Peter 1:12-21 Matthew 17:1-8

<u>February 18</u> Topic and Title: The Temptation of Christ Genesis 2:15-17 Romans 5:12-19 Matthew 4:1-11

<u>February 25</u> Title and Topic: Nicodemus Genesis 12:1-4a Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 John 3:1-7

# 

Julie	Endres	February 01
Carolyn	Antonie	February 05
Ashley	Rickey	February 06
Joan	Haugen	February 06
Margaret	Kann	February 10
Taylor	Statz	February 11
Stuart	Dybdahl	February 13
Karen	Kehm-Hefty	February 14
Grant	Schlimgen	February 16
Julie	Schmitt	February 16
Kyle	Norslien	February 17
Jaxon	Collins	February 19
Sophie	Hurley	February 19
Arianna	Gold	February 19
Stephen	Field	February 20
Quinn	Lynch	February 21
Rhett	Thronson	February 22
Colton	Dyreson	February 24
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## SYNOD

## All About Solar Panels Zoom Webinar - January 18



Want to Go Solar in 2024?

The synod Care for God's Creation team will host a zoom meeting on Thursday, January 18, from 6:30pm to 8pm for congregations interested in installing solar panels at their church.

People from congregations who have recently installed solar systems will lead the Zoom meeting and will provide helpful information and resources.

Recently submitted Care for Creation one-page plans from a number of congregations indicate high interest in learning more about installing solar panels. **To register for the Zoom, please send your name and the congregation you serve to Care for God's Creation team chair Deacon Meg Nielsen at churchladymeg@hotmail.com.** A link for the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you. The meeting may be recorded for future use.



**Dear readers:** As *Living Lutheran* shifts to an all-digital platform (*at no cost to you and with no login required*), there are several ways to keep up with the stories we are telling! Sign up for *LL Stories*, our free email digest, at **livinglutheran.org/subscribe**, and get *Living Lutheran* stories sent right to your inbox every week. Select the categories that interest you, and opt to get the digest weekly, every other week or monthly.

You can also follow us @LivingLutheran on Facebook and Instagram to stay apprised of the stories we are telling every day.

Today we are sharing a few prompts to encourage you during your personal spiritual time. We hope this collection will inspire you to be kind to yourself and others as you move through your week.

### Scripture

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

#### Prayer

God of peace, be with us in times of stress and overwhelm. Gently remind us that, in all seasons of life, you are present. Amen.

### Journal prompt

Definition: Peace (noun): freedom from disturbance; tranquility. Write your own definition of peace and describe what or who in your life brings you a sense of peace.

#### **Practicing peace**

Short: Set a timer for five minutes and meditate. Medium: Take a 15-minute, silent walk, allowing your brain to wander or settle, as it needs. Long: Take a 20-minute nap, giving your body a chance to rest.

### Affirmation

I carry peace with me everywhere I go.



## It is our time to build a legacy

Become a member of the Legacy Fund. Members of the Legacy Fund come from all walks of life and are united by a desire to preserve our beautiful Church, Cemetery and adjoining land. Vermont Lutheran Church owns and maintains a cemetery, historic church building, Gathering Place and 115 acres of adjacent land with a hilltop viewscape. Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given us, including accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources. Therefore, we created the Legacy Fund to encourage, receive and administer these gifts.

Our goal is to generate and maintain a Legacy Fund of \$1 Million dollars, or more. Through receipt of bequests, grants and/or gifts, contributions to the Legacy Fund and investment growth will serve three very important purposes now and into the future:

- 1. Expand the cemetery and develop and maintain the adjacent land in a manner that maximizes its natural beauty and preserves its ecological importance; and,
- 2. Provide funds to pay property taxes on the portion of the adjacent land subject to taxes; and,
- 3. Provide funds for future maintenance of the cemetery and building and grounds needs of the Church.

Any legacy member whose contribution totals \$1,000 or more will be recognized with a brass plate on a prominently displayed plaque. Annual meeting reports will include all the names of those individuals who made a contribution of any amount that year.

## March Newsletter articles are due February 29th

to Elizabeth Herrling at vermont\_church@tds.net

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E-mail address: Vermont\_Church@tds.net Website: vermontlutheran.org

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