



Inside this issue:

ELCA Draft Policy Statements	2
Holy Week Worship Schedule	3
Service Commission	3
Prayer Ventures	4-5
Calendar	6

The Epistle

March 2018

“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

“I tell you, whatever you set your heart on and rely on is really your god.” (*from The Large Catechism by Martin Luther, the explanation of the first commandment*)

In the days leading up to Ash Wednesday it was pointed out by many that this Ash Wednesday would fall on Valentine’s Day. Many people bemoaned this circumstance. How could a person properly celebrate romantic love with their beloved on this solemn day when we remember our mortality? “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

Some of the theologians I read to prepare my sermon that day connected the two, speaking of the cross as an expression of God’s love to us; God’s valentine to us, if you will. That’s fine, but as we look back on that day two weeks later, we also remember it as the day of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Ash Wednesday, indeed.

I listened to “The Daily” podcast for Tuesday, February 27, in which they played two 911 calls from November that came in after the shooter had an altercation at a friend’s home where he was staying. The first call was from the woman who took him, taking pity on him after his mother had just died. The second call was from an obviously troubled and distraught Nikolas Cruz. The podcast focused on how alarming the behavior of this young man was, and these 911 calls were just two signs of his potential for violence. They demonstrated how this mass murder could have been foreseen and yet how there were essentially no legal grounds to keep the shooter from having dangerous weapons and buying more. He had committed no crime.

What caught my attention from the 911 calls was something slightly different. The woman told the dispatcher, “All he cares about is his gun.” I am struck by that obser-

vation. As people search for answers after yet one more mass shooting, I wonder if part of the answer is right there: “All he cares about is his gun.” And I remember Luther’s words, “I tell you, whatever you set your heart on and rely on is really your god.” If your god is a weapon designed to kill people, how do you suppose your god would lead you to live? With peace and love to others? Or with fear, rage, and violence?

Wayne LaPierre, the NRA’s executive vice-president, also suggested this when he recently claimed that the right to bear arms “is not bestowed by man, but granted by God to all Americans as our American birthright.” This statement makes sense if your god is a gun, and I realize for many Americans that is exactly where they set their hearts and what they rely on. Am I speaking of all gun owners? Definitely not but perhaps 3-5% of Americans own 25 or more guns. A small minority and yet in a nation of 350 million people, that is a lot of people who seem to be gun-lovers. My hard and cold guess is that we can expect many mass-shootings to come.

I suppose I agree with the idea that firearms are not the problem but I think we have failed to recognize how many people in our country are obsessed with guns, who have truly made this their god. I believe we have failed to see how many people have a greater love for their weapon(s) than they do for their classmates, spouses, parents, neighbors, co-workers, or, even, their valentines. Lutherans often point out how we humans have so many false gods that twist us and deform our hearts: money, power, sex, food, media that surrounds every moment of our lives. How faithless we are! How sad it is that we set our hearts on anything but our God of grace! All of these gods exact their cost.

(cont. on page 2)

ST. TIMOTHY LUTHERAN CHURCH FINANCES

(cont. from page 1)

January 2018	Actual	Budgeted	Diff
Income			
Offerings	\$8,636	\$10,032	(\$1,396)
Building Use	\$3,785	\$3,608	\$177
Faith Giving	\$420	\$708	(\$288)
Misc Income	\$631	\$500	\$131
Total Income	\$13,472	\$14,848	(\$1,376)
Expenses			
Loan Principal	\$596	\$596	\$0
January Net	(\$1,006)	\$1,420	\$414

But this most recent shooting, the ones before it, and the ones to come remind us that the cost is not just to the gun-worshippers, but to all of us who live in community with them. (Lord, have mercy.)

We are called to intervene with the gospel, the good news of God's grace. The gospel calls us to action: to expand our own connections, increase them, and share God's love. We need to draw in those people who have cut themselves off and made their god their gun, or their TV, or their money, or any other god of destruction. We are called to work for a more loving society where even the most troubled children can learn that they belong and are loved; where everyone is lifted up in their greatest times of need. The church, our congregation, can be one of God's seeds of new life in these ashes of despair. Our God of love who made holy the dust of the earth and made us God's own beloved people, calls us to this mission.

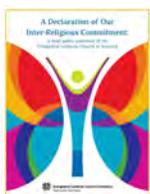
Christ, have mercy.

Pastor Clark

PS: I realize almost anything I say on this subject may be construed as "political." I am convinced that Christianity at its very core is against violence and it is wrong for me to not speak to this pressing issue. Thanks for sharing your viewpoints if you like.

I was inspired not only by "The Daily" podcast, but also by an Op-ed written by Valparaiso professor Fred Niedner, published in the Chicago Tribune on February 15, 2018.

See <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-ptb-niedner-column-st-0218-20180215-story.html>



Draft ELCA Policy Statements

The ELCA currently is asking for comment on these two policy statements. If you are interested in discussing one or both of these, please contact the church office or let Pastor Clark know.

Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment

This draft policy statement presents a common, theological basis and practical framework taking into consideration our varied ministry contexts, challenges and opportunities. You can download the draft policy statement and participate in the [online survey](#).



Social Statement on Women and Justice

This document was prepared by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice. As such, it is an invitation to discern what this church should teach about contemporary issues related to sexism and patriarchy in our society. [Click here to learn more](#).

Taize

A journey from Palm Sunday to Holy Week



A joint service of our community churches

Sunday - March 25th
7:30 PM

Epiphany Lutheran & Epiphany Church
425 Carmel Ave
Marina

(Corner of Carmel Ave. & California Ave.)
www.epiphanymarina.org



**LENT &
HOLY WEEK
WORSHIP
SCHEDULE**

Wednesdays 2/21-3/21	Lenten Services	5:30pm Soup 6:15pm Holden Evening Prayer
Thursday 3/29	Maundy Thursday	7:30pm Service Epiphany Lutheran and Episcopal 425 Carmel Avenue Marina, CA 93933 Clark Brown, Preaching
Friday 3/30	Good Friday	7:30pm St. Timothy Lutheran Church 52 Soledad Drive Monterey, CA 93940 Jeff Kohn, Preaching
Saturday 3/31	Vigil of Easter	7:30pm St. James Episcopal 381 High Street Monterey, CA 93940 Jon Perez, Preaching
Sunday 4/1	Easter	9:00am Breakfast 10:00am-Service

Service Commission

We were able to donate \$1,062 to Dorothy's Place after our spaghetti dinner.

Thanks to all of you who bought and/or sold tickets and
special thanks to Dorothy Kirk for helping with the sauce,

Carolyn Hawes for posters and publicity, Jeff Nagel for set-up, and Cheryl Plaskett, our gate-keeper.

We also received thanks from the Monterey County Food Bank for the barrel donations and from the
Thos. Carman Food Pantry for our \$234 Souper Bowl donation.

Remember your Wednesday evening Lenten service envelopes will go to ELCA's 40 Days of Giving fund.

I-HELP for Women is taken care of for March 7.

The next opportunity to serve is on April 4. Sign-up in the narthex, please.

Your Service Commission



- 1** Pray for the work, advocacy and networks of ELCA Disability Ministry and that our congregations and ministries work together to invite, embrace and include people living with disabilities in the life of the church – without hesitation or preconceptions.
- 2** Remember in prayer our 65 synod bishops, ELCA presiding bishop and secretary gathered for the Conference of Bishops in Chicago. Give thanks for their service to the church and pray their times of worship, study, sharing and business strengthen their faith and leadership and guide the mission of our church.
- 3** Give thanks for music in our lives and worship, a gift that lifts our spirits, draws people together, gives expression to our emotions and thoughts, helps us reflect on our faith and Scripture, and expresses our praise and thanksgiving to God.
- 4** The church is not immune from the temptations of commercialization, profit and consumption. Pray we keep Jesus Christ at the center of all we do, strive to be and witness to; ask God to help us be mindful of the teachings of Jesus commending generosity, simplicity and attentiveness to the needs and circumstances of our neighbor and the world.
- 5** Remember in prayer communities nervously anticipating potential spring storms and severe weather. Pray their preparations, if needed, help preserve life and property, and give thanks for Lutheran Disaster Response, first responders, volunteers and members of the military who stand ready to assist.
- 6** Pray our personal reflections during Lent, as discomfoting and disheartening as they may be, do not lose sight of the promise that we are not worthless, lost or alone – God knows us, loves us, draws us close and graciously claims us.
- 7** In a time when we bicker over power, superiority and influence, give thanks that through the humility, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus we experience a different understanding and use of power and authority – God’s unrivaled power and sacrificial love for the sake of the world, especially our neighbors who are oppressed, hungry, poor, ignored, suffering and long for hope.
- 8** Pray for farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers preparing for planting crops, managing animals and livestock, and the hard work that comes with every spring, that the world may be fed and nourished through their bountiful harvests and endeavors.
- 9** Give thanks for our ELCA seminaries and lay schools for ministry. Ask God to bless their work and efforts in identifying, inviting, preparing, renewing and encouraging women and men for ministry in diverse contexts and communities.
- 10** Remember in prayer the service and witness of the 10 young adults serving in the Young Adults in Global Mission program in Madagascar; the Rev. Kirsten Laderach, YAGM country coordinator; and the Rev. Lancelot Themba and Kwena Mkhabela, regional representatives for Madagascar, West and Central Africa.
- 11** We ask God to help us be thoughtful and articulate in our witness and interactions with others, that we are comfortable in using our own words and imagery to respond to questions about our faith, describe God’s love and activity in the world, and talk about Jesus.
- 12** We remember in prayer Lutheran Men in Mission and Women of the ELCA, ministries that strengthen the faith [of Lutheran men and women](#) of all ages, encourage bold lives of faith and service, cultivate leaders, and attend to needs of men and women.
- 13** [Give thanks for the rich partnership and relationship we have with the Presbyterian Church \(USA\), a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997. Pray for their church and ask God to further our respect for one another and work together sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.](#)
- 14** “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.” In every danger, illness, uncertainty and difficult circumstance, turn to God in prayer asking for God’s loving attention, mercy, direction and healing.
- 15** Pray the Spirit will help us focus on the cross throughout Lent, seeing with greater clarity and richness its symbolism and meaning for the world as a daily reminder of the gift we have in Jesus Christ, a gift that gives newness, hope, purpose and di-

rection for daily life.

16 By grace we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ – a wonderful, undeserved gift from God. Praise God!

17 Pray the leaders of our nations are moved to heal old and new rifts, work together for justice and peace, and share resources for the well-being and prosperity of all people.

18 In baptism our old, flawed self is washed away – and dies – revealing a new life and identity we have together in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pray we each remember our baptism and the promise of God’s daily, enduring gift of forgiveness and love.

19 Make Psalm 51 a frequent prayer during Lent: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.”

20 Pray for our continuing generosity in response to *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*; give thanks for its impact, including the support of 11 Global Ministry Projects helping strengthen, support and empower our companion churches in building new congregations, outreach to youth, training pastors and evangelists, and much more.

21 The ELCA and The Episcopal Church are committed to prayer, fasting and advocacy addressing cuts to public programs that are vital to hungry people who are living in poverty. Remember to pray for these concerns, our leaders and people in need on the 21st of each month through December 2018.

22 We remember in our prayers people who travel frequently for work, spending time away from their home, family, social networks and congregation. Pray they remain connected and can find opportunities for worship and renewal when away from home.

23 God’s word and ways are written on our hearts, part of our very being and existence as baptized children of God. Ask God to help us be attentive in daily life to the spirit within us that gives our lives purpose, inspires us to be just and merciful, and helps us make decisions that please God and consider the needs of our neighbor.

24 Remembering the life, witness and advocacy of Óscar Romero (1917-1980), bishop of El Salvador, we recognize and give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ who work against oppression, defend the rights of the poor and risk their lives for peace in Central America and elsewhere in the world.

25 *Palm Sunday* Drawn into the passion story in the Gospels, we pray the vulnerability, sacrifice and love of Jesus Christ stirs our faith and instructs and emboldens us as followers, servants, leaders, citizens and bearers of the good news.

26 Ask God to strengthen us as servants who are given new life and freedom in Christ and are called and endowed with the Spirit to help bring peace, justice, hope and light to the world.

27 Pray our Holy Week and Easter traditions, worship and family activities are grounded in God’s word and the gospel and not distracted or diminished by the commercialization or popularization of this time of anticipation, reflection and celebration of Jesus Christ – our salvation and hope.

28 Whenever we gather as the people of God to celebrate Holy Communion, we come together to receive God’s grace and to be nourished and sustained for sharing our faith, serving our neighbor and growing the church. Give thanks and praise to God for the presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion through the power of the Holy Spirit.

29 *Maundy Thursday* Pray we, as modern-day disciples, are not afraid to draw close to one another and our neighbor to better understand and serve each other with humility, empathy, compassion and courage.

30 *Good Friday* At the foot of the cross and remembering the suffering and death of Jesus on our behalf, we reaffirm that, although we are not strangers to sin, darkness and death, we also live in the reality of God’s mercy, grace and new life given to us through the risen Jesus. With both humility and joy, raise up prayers of thanks and praise to God.

31 *Vigil of Easter* In the midst of the joy and thankfulness bound up in the good news of Easter and Jesus’ resurrection, we confess we sometimes have questions and skepticisms we keep to ourselves. Ask God to create in us hearts and minds receptive to the wonderful gift and mystery of our salvation, place people in our lives who encourage our faith, and help us be alert to signs of God’s redemptive presence and work in the world.

MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Christ in Our Home Noon Worship Committee 3:30pm	2	3
4 Worship Service 10:00am By Heart Class-11:30	5	6	7 I-Help 5:30am Soup Super 5:30 Holden Evening	8 Property 9:30am Christ in Our Home noon	9	10
11 Worship Service 10:00am By Heart Class-11:30	12	13 Altar Guild 1:00pm Service 3:45pm	14 Soup Super 5:30 Holden Evening Prayer-6:15pm	15 Christ in Our Home noon	16	17 Men's Breakfast 8:30am Workday 10:00am
18 Worship Service 10:00am By Heart	19	20 Food Pantry 4:00-7:00pm	21 Soup Super 5:30 Holden Evening Prayer-6:15pm	22 Christ in Our Home noon	23	24
25 Worship Service 10:00am 	26	27	28 Soup Super 5:30 Holden Evening Prayer-6:15pm	29 Christ in Our Home Noon Maundy Thursday 7:30pm Epiphany Lutheran & Episcopal	30 Good Friday 7:30pm St. Timothy Monterey	31 Vigil of Easter 7:30pm St. James Episcopal Monterey

MARCH BIRTHDAYS



Sophia Schulz 3/3
 Larry Hawkins 3/5
 James Chinn 3/24