

A NEW COMMANDMENT

(I John 2:7-17)

February is a mixed month of celebrations. The nation celebrates the memory of our past Presidents. The secular world celebrates Valentine's Day making much about emotional love. The Christian Church begins the Lenten journey to the cross and tomb and Easter celebration. Yet, there is a common thread throughout these seasonal moments: God's commandment of love. John's message says this much reminding us that it is an old commandment that is new because it is rooted not in past presidents or commercialized romance, but in Jesus Christ, our Savior. This Christ love is our central guide for Lent.

Like John, we will use an old approach, but from the newness of Christ to help us on our way through Lent. It is called Luther's Catechism. Ah, yes, that scourge for some and for others a joy, but seemingly a rite of passage for Lutheran Christians. Sadly, this joyful life-long learning has for some been mentally reduced to a chore towards graduation from church life and further in-depth study of God's Word. Perhaps we can rekindle the fires by seeing the basics of our faith in a new light that Christ shines for us. Our Lenten services on Wednesdays will be simple reviews in stories or parables as Jesus taught. Bring yourself, your Bible, and a hunger for soup and salvation learning. Together we will see how we are doing in light of Scripture and how to better navigate our lives in the future by what we learn about ourselves and learn from God's Word.

Ash Wednesday is a time for confession and forgiveness. Like last year, we will have two services each Wednesday, one at 11AM and the second at 7PM. Starting on the first Wednesday of Lent after Ash Wednesday (20 Feb), we add a light meal of soup and bread at 12 noon and 6PM. No meal is served during Holy Week services.

The Wednesday of Holy Week will be a quiet time for prayer when the Irma Room will be set up special for a meditation and prayer room for all to come and go as they are able day and evening. Holy Thursday will center on communion and the stripping of the altar. A modified Lutheran version of the Stations of the Cross will center our worship on Good Friday. Folks are invited to participate in this special service by using their special gifts; photography, art, music, acting, and the like to convey each of the stations. More instructions are in this newsletter. Easter will be two services at the usual times of 8AM and 1030AM with a breakfast and Easter egg hunt sandwiched in between the services. These special service opportunities during Lent and Holy Week are a perfect time for us to use our love in inviting folks to worship and learn about Jesus, Our Savior. Instead of giving up something for Lent, may I suggest we each bring at least one guest with us to worship. Imagine what God could do with this Lenten discipline?

Not to forget, please note we install our newly selected Council members and WELCA Board Officers on 3 February with a laying on of hands. This will occur the day after they have had an all-day leadership training time together on Saturday, 2 February. All of this done in love so this congregation can continue to grow in love, that Christ love that John spoke of and we hope to learn more about and practice in the year ahead together. Blessings to all. Pastor Scottie