



The

Sanctuary

You are God's Temple

...God's Spirit Lives in You. 1 Cor. 3:15

BLESSED SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH + 1205 NORTH LINCOLN AVE. + O'FALLON, IL 62269 + 618-632-0126 + WWW.MYBSLC.ORG

Upcoming Events

February 2021

Mon Feb. 1

Elders Mtg 7pm

Mon. Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22

Support Group 7 pm

Tues. Feb 2

Quilting

10-3 p.m.

Wed. Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24

Ladies Bible Study

10 am

Sat. Feb. 6

Church Council

Rolls & Goals meeting

Via Zoom 9 am

Sun. Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28

Worship 930

Jr. Confirmation 1030

Adult Bible Study via Zoom

11 am

Sun. Feb. 7 & 14

Bring food for "Souper Bowl of Caring"

Tues. Feb. 9

No Church Council

Tues. Feb. 16

Christian Ed Mtg if needed

Wed. Feb. 17

Ash Wednesday

Worship Service 7pm

Tues. Feb. 23

Evangelism Mtg if needed

Wed. Feb. 24

Lenten Midweek

Worship Service 7 pm

**Bottles for Mosaic
Pregnancy & Health
Care Center
Due back by Feb. 14**

Souper Bowl of Caring

Don't miss your chance to help conquer hunger in the O'Fallon area.

Bring your donations of nonperishable canned and boxed goods to church by Sunday, February 14. All proceeds to the O'Fallon Food Pantry to help hungry families in O'Fallon.



Bigger than the Bowl



Ash Wednesday Worship Service

**Wednesday, February 17
7:00 p.m.**



Church Council Annual

"Rolls & Goals" Council Meeting

All committee members are invited and encouraged to attend—via zoom

**Saturday, February 6
9:00 a.m.**





James, the brother of our Lord writes:

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

(James 2:14-17)

Luther addressed the faith/works issue this way:

"O, this faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing! It is impossible that it should not be ceaselessly doing that which is good. It does not even ask whether good works should be done; but before the question can be asked, it has done them, and it is constantly engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works, is a man without faith."

Properly understood, faith and good deeds work in tandem. They have an order, faith then good works, but they are also inseparable. You cannot have one without the other. All James is saying is that good works are the outcome and evidence of a living faith. Both are necessary in the Christian life!

Here's intersection of theology and practice. A good work is something done for the glory of God alone but it benefits one's neighbor. Faith is the attitude of thankful heart for God's great gift of salvation. Our faith is not a work, but a response. The response of faith is one that sees a neighbor's need and immediately jumps into action. Faith causes a person to act in goodness toward another even before he has the time to think about it. It is the Holy Spirit at work in our inner being. What follows is an example of how I have seen the theology of faith fully engaged.

For many years we have supported the O'Fallon Community Food Pantry Drive on Super Bowl Sunday. We call it "Souper Bowl Sunday." Actually it is a national food drive campaign coming from churches like ours to help their local neighbors in need. The week before I announced our participation I was asked by one of our members if we were going to have the Souper Bowl Food Drive again this year! Yes, faith is alive at Blessed Savior!

I don't think I need to tell you how the Covid-19 virus has affected our community but allow me to give you some numbers to show you the severity of this problem on the national scale. A website for a group called *Feeding America* recently posted this message: "Due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, more than 50 million people may experience food insecurity, including a potential 17 million children" <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>. 50 million people!! Food insecurity means, living "with limited or uncertain access to enough food." Is this what James was referring to in his letter when he mentions the brother or sister "lacking daily food?" Absolutely!

I'm sure you have seen the news showing endless lines of cars queued up to get groceries. Food Banks have been overwhelmed with calls for help. Obviously we can't feed the millions on our own, but we can join other O'Fallon churches to support our own O'Fallon community. I know I don't have to ask you to participate, because I can see (with the eyes of faith) some of you are already leaving this page to make yourself a note to pick up some non-perishable items on your next visit to the grocery store.

If you were in church on January 24 or worshipped with us on Facebook Live, you may have heard our announcement about the "Souper Bowl Sunday Food Drive." But for those who are reading or hearing this for the first time, you may be thinking that only gives you a few days to hit the grocery store before February 7th. So let's extend the due date for a week and make it on February 14, which also happens to be Valentine's Day. What a great way to glorify God for His steadfast love toward us by passing on a love offering of food to those who need it!

The Lord is our Quarterback and calling the play from our huddle:

"O'Fallon... 2021... Ready... Break!"

Joyfully Serving Christ with You,
Pastor Vern



"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)



Chairman Chat

So far this winter has not been bad. Of course, this is the month we find out whether or not we will have 6 more weeks of winter weather... Good luck to us that the groundhog does not see his shadow, and we do not have 6 more weeks of winter...

On Saturday, FEB 6th, the church council and committees will be having the Rolls 'n Goals meeting (includes the FEB Council meeting). In the future, we will share the

results of the meeting as far as the goals for the church. Also, during this meeting, the church council will be creating a Strategic Committee to determine the long-term goals (1, 5, and 10 year) of the church. The committee will be composed of some people from the church council as well as other church members representing all the different age groups and will be led by Terry Colvin. Look for future announcements from this committee.



For those of you who did not attend the NOV Voter's Meeting, the financial situation of the church was discussed. It was mentioned that the Church Council had 6 alternatives which could be implemented to help decrease the church expenditures during the 2021 church year and beyond. One of the alternatives was implemented in late OCT – paying off the mortgage. A motion was made and approved at the Voter's meeting to give the Church Council authority to implement any of the other alternatives when we deemed necessary. Within the last month, the Church Council has decided to implement 2 other alternatives starting in February and March. These 2 changes will save the church approximately \$2,500/month starting in



March. We been lucky on one hand due to the pandemic that committees have really kept their expenses down; however, it will not last forever, and we will be able to meet in person for a lot of events, which brings expenses. Of course, besides decreasing expenses, another way to help out the church financial situation is by giving more. We know that the pandemic have hurt certain people, but if you can give a little extra each week or month, it sure will help the church out...

If you have any questions concerning the church finances, please discuss it with your Elder, Vice-Chairman Dave Zeigler or myself. DO NOT talk about it with the Pastors or Nancy Schmidt.

Remember to keep up with church events by checking the website and Facebook page. The weekly church service is streamed live every Sunday morning at 9:30 on Facebook or is available to watch at a later time. It is a great way to feel that you are still a part of the church during this pandemic time.

Until we can see other in person once again, have a great February!!!

In God's Name,
Curtis Kuppler, BSLC Congregational Chairman

Christian Education

- 1) Watch for a new kind of "Hunt" to join for Easter this year. More details will be available next month but get your bible and your camera ready to hunt for items and post pictures of your success.
- 2) Virtual Sunday School! Hey kids, while we are still unable to have regular Sunday School, Pastor Matt is posting Virtual Sunday school lessons. Here is the Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKyJSqKyJmFdzigrJWYGlpq>



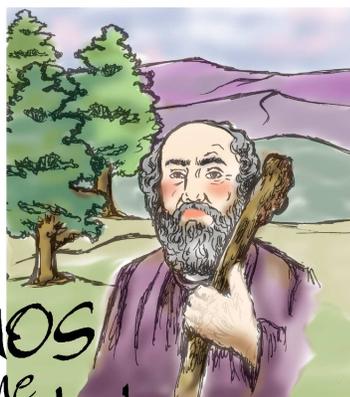
The Prophets of Old

There are some books of the Bible that are unforgettable, even to those who don't believe. The books of John, Revelation, Daniel, and even Samuel have all been turned

into either Hollywood spectacles or become synonymous with the end of the world and doomsday cults. But there are books that do not get a lot of attention, either by popular media or even within Christianity. When was the last time you heard a sermon of the book of Hosea, or meditated on the words of Ezra? Chances are it has been a while. However these books still hold important truths for today's world, lessons that we living in America during this time should heed.

One of these books is the prophet Amos. Amos himself was a lowly shepherd of the temple in Jerusalem. He was in charge of the sheep that would be used by the temple, so he was literally the shepherd of God's flock. The Word of God came to Amos, and he was to prophecy against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It was a time of great prosperity for those people. Their economy booming, their borders expanding, and it seemed that their king was in good health and strong. The nation was thriving, but at the heart of it they were rotten to the core. They did not revere God, did not give Him the praise due His name. They forgot the promises that God made to them and the promises they made to God. As such, the multitude of sins was too much to bear, and God was going to punish them.

Amos itself is a book that is God's displeasure concentrated into one book. It is full of the wrath of God, and what it means to have His displeasure. We as Christians need not fear this displeasure upon us, but we see in this book a glimpse at the wrath that was brought to bear upon God's own Son Jesus Christ. And we still see this great punishment of God and know that our Lord does take sin seriously. It is plain to see His displeasure with injustice even in the beginning of the book. The Lord says in refrain, "For three transgressions of (insert nation here) and for four, I will not revoke punishment." The book of Amos is a book that reminds us Christians that our Lord is a God of justice, of righteousness, and evil is not tolerated in His sight.



Amos the Prophet

And there is a single bit of hope within it too. At the very end of the book Amos speaks of the restoration of Israel, when the Lord will plant His people in a land and they will never be moved from. This land is the fertile foundation of Christ, the rock upon which we build our lives. And while this is a wonderful look toward the future hope, we must always remember the lessons of Amos. Even when things seem good to us, it does not mean that they are good to God. It is a reminder that earthly prosperity is not the same as heavenly fortune. I encourage each of you to join me as we continue to look at Amos and the other less known books of the Bible so that we may readily learn of God's will and how He continues to speak to us today.

Pastor Matt Kusch

Sanctity of Human Life

Our church is participating in Mosaic Pregnancy & Health Centers' (PHC) Baby Bottle Campaign. 100% of the proceeds from this collection will go to Mosaic PHC to support their efforts to reach out to women, men, and their unborn babies with free life-affirming medical services and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pick up a bottle in the narthex this Sunday and fill it with coins, cash or checks and return by Sunday, February 14. To learn more about Mosaic PHC, visit www.supportmosaic.org



Stewardship CORNER



The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod - LCMS Stewardship Ministry

"I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become

rich" (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).

Without commands or even arm-twisting, St. Paul encourages, even challenges, the Church in Corinth to demonstrate the sincerity of their faith by their generosity in giving. He does this because giving generously is a gift of the Spirit given to us through the Gospel.

St. Paul wrote: "But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7). In other words, just as we grow in faith and speech and knowledge of eternal things by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, so also do we grow in giving from the same Spirit through the same Word.

The problem is that the grace of generosity often grows cold in us. It's not so much that we stop giving, but we don't put it first. We treat it like all the other bills that must be paid. It becomes a chore, just one more thing to check off a list of things to do. That empties it of its spiritual power and robs us of the joy that Christ and the Scriptures assign to it.

On top of that, since this generosity is linked to faith and knowledge of divine things, a lack of excelling in giving is sure sign that our faith and knowledge of God are under attack as well.

Thus St. Paul points to the foundation of generosity: the generosity of Christ Himself. Even though He was rich, He became poor so that we who are poor might become rich. Thus, the incarnation, suffering, and death of our Lord on the cross is the reason, source, and driving force for our generosity in giving to the church.

And since Christ who was rich became poor so that we might be rich in His grace—of which generous giving is part—so we also who are rich in His grace can excel in pressing His grace into service toward the gracious work of the church.

Pay attention to what you give to the church so that you may excel at it. And if you find that your heart has grown cold or indifferent toward it, immerse yourself in God's Word. Read it at home. Attend Bible Class. Hear and listen to it preached in the Divine Service. Be reminded of what Christ has done for you in His incarnation, suffering, and death. For this will strengthen your faith and knowledge. And where that excels, so will the grace of giving excel also.



Join the Lutheran World Relief QUILTERS on **Tuesday, February 2, Tuesday, March 2, and Tuesday April 6** from 10:00 - 3:00 to tie quilts. (We don't actually quilt by hand. Instead we secure the layers by hand tying them.)

Bring your lunch and join us for a time of good ole fellowship. Stay the entire time or as long as your schedule permits. Hope to see you there!

Many thanks to those that have been taking the precut quilt top kits and putting them together. Your help is greatly appreciated

Mark your calendar for the 1st Tuesday of each month. If you have any fabric pieces, thin blankets, curtains, drapes, sheets, etc you no longer need, the quilters would love to recycle them into quilts.



Practicing Christianity

2020 is now behind us and the New Year has begun. Our personal needs, concerns, anxieties, and fears are still with us and with our nation. When and how will they be addressed?

We know as Christians that God gives us a faith to rely on and is fully aware of all the challenges we are confronted with. He hears each and every one of our prayers and will always be our source of help whatever our need. He has promised to faithfully guide us and He will. Do you fully believe in this promise? If we do not bring our concerns to Him in faith and continue to worry and fret in spite of His presence to be our guide as He watches over us, then we are showing a lack of confidence and trust in Him. God doesn't respond with a "maybe". He always hears our prayer but isn't compelled by our wishes or commands as to how and when we want our prayers answered. We are to acknowledge His wisdom, trust His love, and submit to His good and gracious will. God always answers prayer in the BEST way and at the BEST time.

"Yes, we are weak, but He is strong.
Jesus loves us this we know,
For the Bible tells us so."

We are to share this message with all those who long for assurance by our personal example of trust and personal witness. Always remember that the Holy Spirit dwells within you, goes with you, and will be your GUIDE and STAY. We can go in peace as we serve our Lord.

This is EVANGELISM at its finest!



Why We Lament

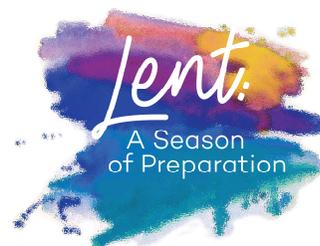
In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic struck America during the middle of Lent, a season associated with deprivation. Some people made light of the shutdowns, joking, "I didn't mean to give up *this* much for Lent!" Others asked why the suffering was occurring in the first place. Professor N.T. Wright, in an essay for *Time*, explains that asking "why?" but receiving no answer is key to biblical lamenting. Adding to the mystery, he says, is that God also laments — grieving at the wickedness of humans, despairing over Israel's unfaithfulness. Jesus cries at a friend's tomb; the Holy Spirit groans in anguish. "Part of the Christian vocation," Wright concludes, is not being able to explain why but lamenting instead. "As the Spirit laments within us," he says, "so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of that there can emerge new possibilities ... new hope."

COUNTER SCHEDULE—FEBRUARY & MARCH

January 31	Ginger/Gwen
February 7	Charla/Cheryl
February 14	Dale/Curtis
February 21	John/Dean
February 28	Ginger/Gwen
March 7	Charla/Cheryl
March 14	Dale/Curtis
March 21	John/Dean
March 28	Ginger/Gwen



OFFERING COUNTERS



February BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Karen Olson | 12 Rachel Weaver |
| 4 Sara Lesire | 15 Karen Depping |
| 6 Barbara Edgar | 17 Elise Trapp, Thomas Griffin |
| 8 Elizabeth Lundebly | 21 Nancy Schmidt , Reeve Alvarado |
| 9 Brian Gass, Maurine Trapp | 22 Jill Kinsella, Samuel Calzada |
| 10 Sam Bradfield | 24 Nate Berens |
| 11 Diane Colvin, | 25 Lorene Lurtz, Margene Jerrolds, |
| 11 John & Joan Gefferth | 26 Jackson Husemann |

February ANNIVERSARIES

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 4 Ed & Kathy Markle | We are sorry if your birthday or anniversary has been overlooked. Please call the church office, 632-0126 or email Nancy at nancy@mybslc.org so we may add your name to our list. Thanks for your help. |
| 14 Tom & Kris McManus | |
| 26 Wayne & Gwen Kemp | |

The Parable of the Lost Ring

Only three years after Paula and Joe Walter married, her wedding ring was lost as she played catch with their son. Naturally, she was heartbroken. Over the years, whenever family and friends gathered in the back yard, she urged everyone to look for the ring — but to no avail. Because the yard borders on woods, Paula feared the ring had flown into the trees, never to be seen again.

But just before the couple's 40th anniversary, landscapers hired to do work in the yard brought her a surprise: They'd found the ring — right where Paula had been playing with her child so long ago! Like the woman in Jesus' parable who finally found her lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), Paula rejoiced. God too searches until every person who has strayed or been flung away from the faith is found.

Sometimes the place we rediscover faith is right where we've looked before. What makes the difference? A different person helping us search? Light shining in a different way? We may never know. We simply rejoice — and so does God. Heidi Mann



The Power of Love

By comparing love to everything from oxygen and fire to wind and war, songs and poetry emphasize its immense power — for good or for ill. Christian author Patrick Morley uses metaphors that focus on love's practicality in everyday life: "Love is the glue that holds us together and the oil that keeps us from rubbing each other the wrong way." He also calls love "the WD-40 of relationships" because it "can seep into tight places where logic, threats and even promises just can't seem to penetrate."

St. Augustine, who predated WD-40 by centuries, knew that love not only eases friction in personal interactions but, with God's help, can change hearts and lives. "Love all [people], even your enemies," he advises. "Love them, not because they are your brothers, but that they may become your brothers. Thus you will ever burn with fraternal love, both for him who is already your brother and for your enemy, that he may by loving become your brother."





Church Council Minutes – November 10, 2020

Present: Ginger Kieffer, Ed Brandmeyer, Cheryl Krantz, Pastor Vern, Curtis Kuppler, Pastor Matt, Janet & Kirk Satrom, Brian Lloyd, Eric Stake, and Dale Schutte joining us by Zoom.

The meeting was called to order at 7:08pm. The opening prayer was given by Pastor Vern.

Pastor Vern: Peggy Russell fell and broke her wrist. Eric Stake's mother also fell and broke her leg. November 23 will be the anniversary of Connor Drouin's death. Please remember the Drouin's in your prayers.

Pastor Matt: Working on U-tube ministry. Please keep Pastor Matt's family in prayers as his Aunt has passed away. Pastor Matt is also doing services on Zoom.

The minutes of the last meeting we emailed out. The minutes were approved by email vote.

Vice Chairman: Dave Ziegler had no report.

Treasurer: The mortgage has been paid off. This was accomplished with donations and LCEF rebates. Discussion was held on the status of the money we have and what we need to efficiently run the church. We need to make sure the signature cards are updated with all the current signers.

Elders: Brian Lloyd, Advent is approaching and we will not be having dinners before the services. We should all be aware of any updates on COVID.

Christian Ed: No report.

Fellowship: No report.

Properties: No report.

Stewardship: No report.

Worship: No report however a slide will be made remind members to make sure phones are turned off before service starts.

Youth: Wendy and Pastor Matt: Trying to meet in person – going back to Zoom every couple of weeks – with families. There are 6 students in confirmation and it is working out well.

Curtis discussed the officers and how we would hold elections. It has been delayed until the Spring Voters meeting. The current officers have agreed to stay in office until the Spring.

Budget: Lengthy discussion on ways to make the money stretch. We might have to tighten the spending but we are hoping it will make it.

There being no further business to come before the council, Eric Stake moved to adjourn the meeting. Dale Schutte seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 with all present reciting the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted, Cheryl Krantz



LOVE BITES

Retailers eager to capture some of the \$20 billion that Americans spend every year for Valentine’s Day gifts are moving beyond candy and flowers. For an outside-the-box edible present for that special someone, now you can purchase a bouquet of bacon roses, pickles or even Olive Garden breadsticks. If money is tight, you can visit Waffle House on February 14, the one night it takes reservations.



Last year, a most unusual Valentine’s Day promotion had no takers. A reptile park in Mosca, Colorado, offered a two-for-one deal on gator-wrestling classes, but no one “snapped” up the opportunity. Maybe another heart-shaped box of chocolates isn’t such a bad idea after all!

ALWAYS CHOOSE LOVE

God wants us to choose to love him freely, even when that choice involves pain, because we are committed to him, not to our own good feelings and rewards. He wants us to cleave to him, as Job did, even when we have every reason to deny him hotly. That, I believe, is the central message of Job.

Satan had taunted God with the accusation that humans are not truly free. Was Job being faithful simply because God had allowed him a prosperous life? Job’s fiery trials proved the answer beyond doubt. Job clung to God’s justice when he was the best example in history of God’s apparent injustice. He did not seek the Giver because of his gifts; when all gifts were removed, he still sought the Giver. --Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?*



The Very Best Valentine

Almost everyone — at least of the female persuasion — knows the romantic meaning of the phrase “hearts and flowers.” Valentine’s Day is coming! What will I get from my boyfriend ... my husband ... my best friend? I’m hoping for some sort of bouquet, a card full of loving words and red hearts, candy or at least a sweet balloon.

Human beings may disappoint. That special someone may forget to check the calendar for February 14. But even if he doesn’t come through exactly as I hope, I can still be amazed and happy with the valentine I am sure to receive every day from my heavenly Father and his Son: words of delight and joy and caring — always surrounding me with love and more love. These are the best “hearts and flowers” I could ever have, and which I do have, on Valentine’s Day and throughout eternity.

—Sandy Hyland

Our Lenten Focus

Lent, the church-year season that begins on Ash Wednesday, is a time of penitence and spiritual renewal. Some people give up a luxury or vice during Lent as a form of self-denial; others undertake a project that benefits others.

The point isn’t to denigrate ourselves or to see how much we can do without. Instead, Lent helps us reflect on Jesus’ death. As Timothy Keller writes in *The Reason for God*: “The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less.”



The Gift of Desperation



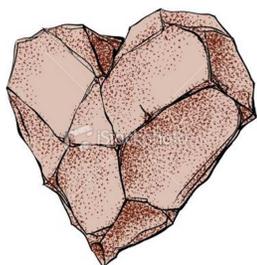
In a 2012 interview with NPR, author Anne Lamott shared: "I've heard people say that God is the gift of desperation, and there's a lot to be said for having really reached a bottom where you've run out of anymore good ideas, or plans for everybody else's behavior; or how to save and fix and rescue; or just get out of a huge mess, possibly of your own creation. And when you're done, you may take a long, quavering breath and say, 'Help.'"

Amid the pandemic and life's other, more typical trials of life, have you found a silver lining — a gift that has arisen out of your desperation? Sometimes we're more open to God during times of struggle than when all flows smoothly. As long as we think our ideas and plans for ourselves and our loved ones are pretty good, we don't feel we need a Savior. But when life is so challenging that we call to God for help, "the gift of [that] desperation" is finding that God's loving arms have embraced and strengthened us all along.



ROCK OF AGES

On walks, I enjoy searching for heart-shaped rocks. One day in 2020, I spotted a broken heart, which seemed fitting as illness, racism and suffering dominated the headlines. I thought of Psalm 34:18, NIV: "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."



Humans can be hard-hearted — pointing fingers, assuming the worst and failing to extend compassion. We often reject people who look, think or act differently from us. All these things break hearts, including God's. Only with his help can we rise above hatred, learn to listen more than we speak, and express kindness, empathy and a willingness to learn.

Jesus, be our rock as we face life's brokenness. Stay near and start the healing. Amen. Julie Lee

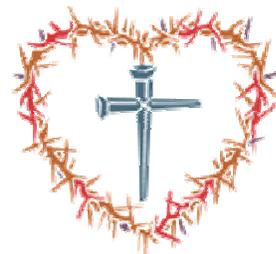
BSLC Staff thanks you

The Blessed Savior staff wishes to thank all of you for your generosity toward us this Christmas. We appreciate the love you have shown us through the monetary gifts you shared with us. We have not failed to notice the significance of this blessing in a time when our struggling economy has hurt so many. We are truly thankful for the high privilege of sharing Christ with you, in the hope that His life, in you, might draw others to our blessed fellowship. **With the arrival of a new year, it is our prayer that our heavenly Father will abundantly bless each and every one of you spiritually and materially; for we know that the continuance of our ministry depends on His all-sustaining blessing. He gives us His love, His gifts, His forgiveness, His life so that we may share with others. Thank you for making us the recipients of His blessing to you!** Pastor Vern, Pastor Matt & Nancy



A Daily Prayer

Whatever happens today, dear Lord, help us remember that you are present. If we find ourselves in the shadows of disappointment or rejection or pain, let us see your comforting light. If we're in the radiant light of success or acceptance or wholeness, may we acknowledge your providence and grace. Wherever we are, grant us the assurance of your nearness. Amen.

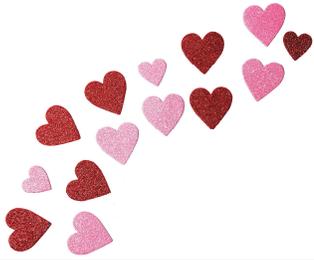


A Prayer for Ash Wednesday

Lord of the winds,
I cry to thee,
I that am dust,
and blown about
by every gust
I fly to thee.

Lord of the waters,
unto thee I call.
I that am weed
upon the waters borne,
and by the waters torn,
tossed by the waters,
at thy feet I fall.

—Mary Coleridge
(1861-1907)



Loving embraces

Express your love and friendship with handcrafted bracelets.



What you need:

- Adult help
- Bowl of boiling water
- Wide wooden craft sticks
- Glass cup
- Markers, paint or decorative tape

What you do:

1. Pour about 3 cups of boiling water into a bowl. Soak sticks in the water about 30 minutes.
2. Remove sticks and slowly, gently bend them into a curve.
3. To maintain the shape, place curved sticks inside a glass cup overnight to dry completely.
4. Remove and decorate the bracelets, which make fun Valentine's Day gifts.

FOR THE BIRDS

Display this recycled craft to care for feathered friends.

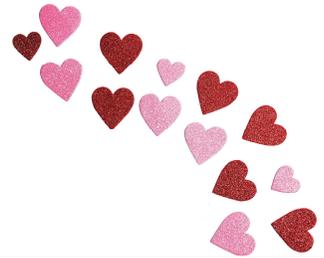


What you need:

- Peanut butter or vegetable shortening
- Plastic knife
- Empty toilet paper tube
- Bird seed
- A plate
- String

What you do:

1. Spread peanut butter or vegetable shortening on the tube, covering the entire outside surface.
2. Pour bird seed on a plate and roll the tube in the seeds.
3. Thread string through the tube and tie it to make a loop.
4. Hang the bird feeder outside. When seeds are eaten, coat the roll again.



Friendship Squares

This tasty treat doubles as a game to play with a buddy.



What you need:

- Graham crackers
- Chocolate chips
- Microwave-safe bowl
- Zippered baggie
- Scissors
- Raspberries
- Blueberries

What you do:

1. Gently break cracker sheets in half to form squares.
2. Heat chocolate chips in microwave for 30 seconds. Stir, then continue heating for 30 seconds at a time until melted.
3. Spoon melted chocolate into baggie and snip a small triangle from one bottom corner.
4. On each cracker, squeeze chocolate lines to form a Tic-Tac-Toe board. Let cool.
5. Using the fruit as X's and O's, play Tic-Tac-Toe with a friend. The winner gets to eat the treat!

