

## FEBRUARY 2025

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH

*112 years proclaiming Christ in Bridgeland!*

By Rev. Markus Zeuch

Dear readers!



How are you doing? I hope all is well in your life. As we walk into the second month of 2025, we remember Valentines and the celebration of LOVE – you just have to walk into any store and all you see is pink and red. Roses, chocolate, cards, hearts, stuffies...all pointing to romance and "love". We will get back to the theme. Today's key words will be "love" and "change".

Many things have shaped the world since our last Agape. As the Beatles used to sing: "I read the news today, oh boy!"

There's some positive and terrible news on the daily headlines. We have heard and watched things like: "Israel and Hamas came to a cease-fire agreement", the U.S. has a new president, our Prime Minister announced his resignation, the planets of our solar system came to an alignment (still going on), the Russia-Ukraine war passed the mark of one thousand days – it is going to be three years since it started on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Entire neighbourhoods in Los Angeles were levelled to the ground by the fires, Artificial Intelligence is growing exponentially day by day.

I could write a huge list of things that impacted the world since our last edition of the Agape. Things change every minute, also in our personal lives.

What is my point here? Things change every minute. As the saying goes, yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery. We only have today in our hands. And, even so, how many things can happen in a single day that we haven't planned?

However, there's one thing that never changes: it is God's love for us! That's right: the AGAPE.

### ἀγάπη

His love is unconditional and unchangeable, as you have read many times. And, since I mentioned Artificial Intelligence, I tried something new today: I asked A.I. to write something about Agape. This is what the "robot" came up with:

*The word "agape" has its roots in ancient Greek. In the context of the New Testament, "agape" (ἀγάπη) refers to a selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. It is often used to describe the love that God has for humanity and the love that Christians are called to have for one another.*

*In classical Greek, "agape" was a general term for love, but it took on a deeper, more profound meaning in Christian theology. Unlike other Greek words for love, such as "eros" (romantic love) and "philia" (brotherly love), "agape" is characterized by its self-giving nature and its focus on the well-being of others.*

*The concept of "agape" is central to Christian teachings and is exemplified in passages such as 1 Corinthians 13, which describes the qualities of true love, and John 3:16, which speaks of God's love for the world.*

*In summary, "agape" represents the highest form of love, one that is selfless, unconditional, and rooted in the divine.*

Not bad, eh? May this true love of God, the kind that is unchangeable and unconditional, fill your heart and guide you through this month of February. God truly loves you!

And now, have fun reading on to check on what's happening – note: there's a lot of good information in this edition! 😊

In His service,

**Rev. Markus Zeuch**



**Cease-fire agreement:** We got this letter from the Canadian Lutheran World Relief:



**Canadian Lutheran  
World Relief**

Dear Friends,

The news of a ceasefire in Gaza has filled CLWR and our partners with hope. Those same partners have laboured for 15 months to get aid to families in Gaza through any means possible. Calgary got through, and it made a difference for thousands. But so many more in Gaza went without food, shelter, medicine or clean water because the horrors of war made it impossible to reach them. Now, we have the opportunity to reach them.

Since the onset of the war, at least 45,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, and over 100,000 injured in violence. 59% of the victims are women, children and the elderly. The healthcare system, targeted by violence, has been devastated. 90% of Gaza's population of 2.2m was displaced by violence in just over a year. So many of them are desperate for help, and acting now could save lives.

Our partners at Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem have already been in touch, indicating they are ready to move immediately with whatever we can fund. Now that a ceasefire is in place, from their base of operations in Jerusalem, they'll be able to provide immediate treatment for sick and injured patients, help rehabilitate the healthcare system in Gaza, provide trauma support, and distribute winter clothes,

food parcels, blankets, and hygiene kits.

I'm touched by the generosity Lutherans in Canada showed in response to this crisis as it unfolded. Please, if you're able, consider making a gift at this critical window now that humanitarian access has been restored. Thank you for continuing to pray with us for justice and peace.

Sincerely, Heather Platt - *Acting Director - Development Programs*

**Pastor's note:** We received a thank-you letter from CLWR for the donation of \$1,000 we sent to them last year.



**CONCORDIA  
LUTHERAN  
SEMINARY**

We also received a thank-you letter from Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton for our \$1,000.00 donation. The letter says: "Thank you for your continued generosity...we are blessed to be surrounded by "such a great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1), which includes both the saints of the past (as enumerated in Hebrews 11) and saints of the present, such as partners like you in Alberta. Truly the churches and people of LCC have invested in both seminaries to the extent that we are able to develop "servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5) while meeting our financial obligations. Thank you very much for your support!"



**FROM CONCORDIA LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY**, we received a list of the 2025 Mission Projects. Check it out on the bulletin board in the church.

There are 3 mission projects in Canada, 7 projects in Central America, 4 in Ukraine, 2 in Thailand and 4 in Cambodia.

Besides these projects, we do have mission projects in our own Calgary circuit. The Oromo Evangelical Church of Calgary (OECC) is a group of Lutherans from Ethiopia that gathers at Foothills Lutheran Church. OECC became a member of LCC "by being committed itself to the true teaching and authority of the Scripture". They established a fundraiser to build their own church. Take a look at their building project on the bulletin board.

## **FROM LAST CALGARY CIRCUIT'S "WINKEL" (Jan 22)**

### ***Coming Events***

- National Youth Gathering (July 4-8)
- Rev. Eric Moffett has returned the call to St. John, Vernon, BC.
- Rev. Mark Rekken has returned the call to St John, Beach Corner, AB.
- Alberta Lutheran Spring Youth Retreat May 2-4 in Pigeon Lake, AB
- Dr. Jeff Khloha has declined the call to be president of CLS, Edmonton.
- Circuit Sunday School Teachers' workshop will be held at Foothills on February 8th.
- Lutheran Hospital Ministries 50th anniversary in October. More info to come. Training sessions will begin in February.
- Rev. David Bode (Foothills Luth.) will be retiring on March 2nd.
- *Church Workers Conference in Calgary* - September 29 - October 2.

### ***Synodical Notes***

- Thanks are expressed for the support congregations provide, but we also note that support continues to fall short each year, curtailing much of the work we would like to do.
- Please keep our missions and ministries in prayer as we adapt to these realities.
- God is opening opportunities for ministry. We thank Him for His blessings!
- RMMC meeting in Kamloops in May, looking at First Nations ministry.



### ***Congregational News*** (not all congregations of the circuit are listed here)

#### ***Shepherd of Peace, Calgary*** (Prince of Peace)

- very close to the completion of the Constitution and bylaws – NEW NAME is "Shepherd of Peace."
- Having conversations about a new lease with the school, but looking for new facilities.

#### ***Redeemer, Didsbury***

- they are feeling more peace and encouragement than in the past few years. Those who attend continue to be faithful in worship.

#### ***Trinity, Torrington / St. John, Trochu***

- Trinity Lutheran Church - Torrington and St. John's Lutheran Church - Trochu are officially working towards amalgamating.

#### ***Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Calgary***

- Retiring the mortgage. Looking to the future.

***Grace, Calgary***

- studies for the Sudanese congregation.

***Foothills, Calgary***

- Time of transition with pastor Bode retiring, working with a future directions committee. We will have townhall meetings with the congregation in February.



**WHAT'S PLANNED FOR FEBRUARY?**

**Feb 2 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.

**Feb 4 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.

**Feb 5 (Wed):** Pastor leads worship service at Bethany Riverview

**Feb 6 (Thurs):** Board of Elders' online meeting

**Feb 6 (Thurs):** Confirmation class (online) 7 p.m.

**Feb 8 (Sat):** Men's Breakfast @ 9 a.m. followed by Bible study

**Feb 9 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.

**Feb 11 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.

**Feb 13 (Thurs):** Confirmation class (online) 7 p.m.

**Feb 13 (Thurs):** Meeting of the Tannenbaum Lighting Festival committee

**Feb 14 (Fri):** Pastor travels to Vancouver for his aunt's memorial service. Back next day!

**Feb 16 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.

**Feb 17 (Mon):** Family Day – Office closed

**Feb 18 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.

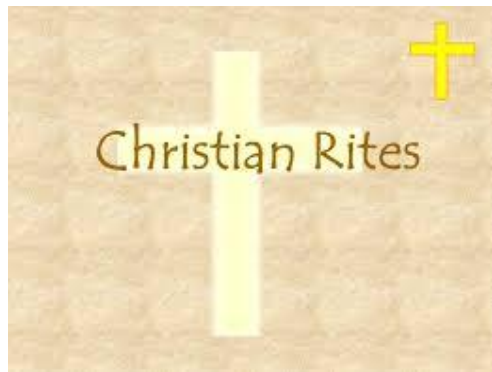
**Feb 20 (Thurs):** Confirmation class (online) 7 p.m.

**Feb 23 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.

**Feb 25 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.

**Feb 26 (Wed):** Pastor attends the Calgary circuit winkel in Canmore, AB

**Feb 27 (Thurs):** PPC meeting @ 7 pm



**In 2024 we had:**

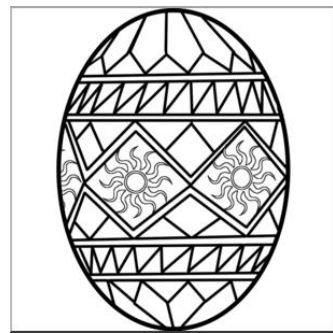
- 2 Baptisms
- 1 wedding
- 14 funerals
- 12 new members
- 3 house blessings

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**UKRANIAN LUNCH AND PRESENTATION**

Prevet! - Hello!

The Evangelism Board will be hosting a Ukrainian lunch/new presentation on Sunday, March 30 following the 11am service. Joyce Lobitz from CLMS (Canadian Lutheran Mission Society) will join us for information and updates about our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. So, come with your appetites and enjoy perogies, sausage, and more! Monetary donations given will go to Lutheran Mission in Ukraine. There will be a sign up sheet in the narthex closer to the event.



**NOW, FROM THE HOSPITAL MINISTRIES**



Many of you may know about Lutheran Hospital Ministries but for those of you who don't, let me tell you about us. Lutheran Hospital Ministries was started in Calgary in 1975 to provide for a need in the hospitals. Lutheran Hospital Ministries helps the ill, injured and lonely people in hospitals, hospices and long-term care centres. We bring Jesus' healing and strength to where people are at. Our visitors get trained and provided with brochures

from Lutheran Hospital Ministries to leave with these folks. Our dedicated visitors usually go to one or more places every week meeting with people. The ministers involved with our society provide services in the long-term care centres for the patients/clients and even the staff. Staff also struggle with the loss of someone that they've cared for over the years. Staff also struggle with amount of work that has to be done and delivering the kind of care they want to deliver.

Lutheran Hospital Ministries is entirely funded by individuals and local and rural congregations in Southern Alberta with some grants from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League – Canada (LWML-C) and some corporate sponsorship. This year we had help from Capital Power's "Empower" grant program and our banking service provider, Christian Credit Union. Every year we host the Annual Walk, Run and Roll for Love at Confederation Park. Walkers collect funds to walk 5 km on a spring morning. That means they can expect any kind of weather on a given year. We also need to thank St. Matthew Lutheran Church who allows us to operate in a room in the office for the past several years. St. Matthew also allows us to host our training and education sessions for anyone who's interested.

Most importantly, we depend on prayers from everyone. This is a faith-based operation and God has provided to us for 50 years so we can serve His will to all people in need. We will visit anyone who requests a visit, an active Lutheran or not. It is estimated that we have served about 250,000 people over the past 50 years. To give Glory to God, we will be hosting a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service at St. Matthew Lutheran Church on October 18, 2025 followed by a German style luncheon with music from "Cross" Country. Guess what, you are all invited to join us.

Like any society, we go through ups and down. During the pandemic, visiting was not allowed. In the fall of 2022, we were finally allowed back into these sites to provide visits. Because of the 2-and-a-half-year break, we lost a lot of visitors and we basically had to start over again. In 2024, we managed to double our active visitors and to bring on two more Pastors to help us. The requests for visits and services currently exceeds our capacity to supply all the long-term sites. This year our visitors visited over 3700 people, donated 653 hours of time and provided 160 worship services at care centres.

Some of our bigger goals in the near future is training more visitors and recruiting some Pastors in rural Alberta so they can serve their local communities. We are also looking to print large print hymnals for the Pastors to take to their worship services. We have recently got polo shirts printed for our visitors (supplied by Christian Credit Union). When our visitors go in to visit someone, they must be asked by that person. By having our logo and message on the shirts, other people can ask our visitors for a visit because they know who we are. Another idea is to update our website and adding new features and more training opportunities to the site. We would also like folks to be able to get comforting brochures online and to maybe watch some short devotional videos given by our Director of Pastoral Care directly on their phone at anytime they need.

Should like anymore information about Lutheran Hospitals Ministries, know someone who needs a visit, think this might be a calling for you or you would like to support us in anyway, please contact Heather Graham-Navis.

## TO OUR GERMAN-SPEAKING CONGREGATION:

Das Markusevangelium redet dreimal davon, dass Gott alles möglich ist. Dem Glaubenden ist alles möglich, auch wenn die Lage wie bei dem besessenen Jungen hoffnungslos erscheint (Mk 9,23). Gott ist auch die Rettung eines Reichen möglich, auch wenn ein Kamel leichter durch ein Nadelöhr marschiert. Ihm ist eben alles möglich (Mk 10,27). Gott vermag alles, und wenn der Glaube aufseiten des Menschen da ist, wird das auch wirksam. Aber als der Herr Jesus betete: „Abba, Vater, alles ist dir möglich; nimm diesen Kelch von mir weg! Doch nicht, was ich will, sondern was du willst!“ (Mk 14,36), da fand er dennoch keine Antwort. Denn die Liebe Gottes konnte den Kelch nicht wegnehmen, was der Herr auch wusste und so annahm.



Wieso werden die Toten eigentlich *zuerst* auferweckt (1. Thes 4,16)? Warum geschieht dies nicht zeitgleich mit der Verwandlung der lebenden Heiligen? Liegt es daran, dass die Liebe Christi sich gerne immer da zuerst hinwendet, wo sich Schwachheit zeigt?

Christus hat im Himmel die Stätte für uns bereitet (Joh 14,2) und am Kreuz hat er uns dafür bereitet.

Was für eine Gnade! Er, der einen vorzüglicheren Namen vor den Engeln ererbt hat, hat sich unter die Engel wegen des Leidens des Todes um unseretwillen erniedrigt (Heb 1,4; 2,9).

Aus: [bibelstudium.de](http://bibelstudium.de)



## QUIPS & QUOTES:

### “Salvation is free, but it is not cheap”.

From “Quips & Quotes for Church Bulletins” by E.C. McKenzie (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan), 1993



Thank you for your support and prayers.

See you at church!

In His service,

**Rev. Markus Zeuch**

Calgary, February 1, 2025

16 years, 3 months, 28 days as your pastor!

Soli Deo gloria (To God only be the glory)

