

MARCH 2025

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH

112 years proclaiming Christ in Bridgeland!

By Rev. Markus Zeuch

Dear friends!

We are entering the time of Lent. I have shared this text a few times now, but it's always important to remember. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with midday prayer on Holy Saturday. Lent is under the "Time of Easter". It invites us into the story of Jesus' sacrificial death and His glorious resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus gives proof that our salvation has been completed and that our hope for eternal life with God is secure.

Easter was the main celebration of the early church, which also set aside a period of preparation to celebrate the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord (Easter). Lent was a period of preparation first prescribed for baptismal candidates. During this period, the candidates were examined in preparation for Baptism at the Easter (Paschal) Vigil. Later these forty days were associated with Jesus' forty days in the desert prior to his temptation (Matthew 4:1-11) and with the forty years the children of Israel spent in the wilderness (Numbers 14:34), becoming a period of preparation for every Christian.

The Sundays during this season are not "of Lent" but "in Lent". Thus, the Sundays retain an Easter tone and may be less solemn than the midweek services that congregations typically offer. The observances of Lent are concrete reminders of the greater solemnity of this season, yet Lutherans emphasize the Gospel of Christ as central even to this penitential season.

In Lent, we prepare our hearts to receive our crucified and risen Lord.

Here are a few readings that you can use for your Lenten preparation at home:

Psalm 51, Matthew 4:1-11, Isaiah 58: 6-12, Matthew 6: 1-18, Joel 2: 12-13 & Romans 6: 1-4.

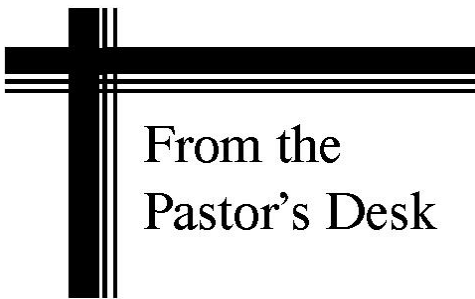
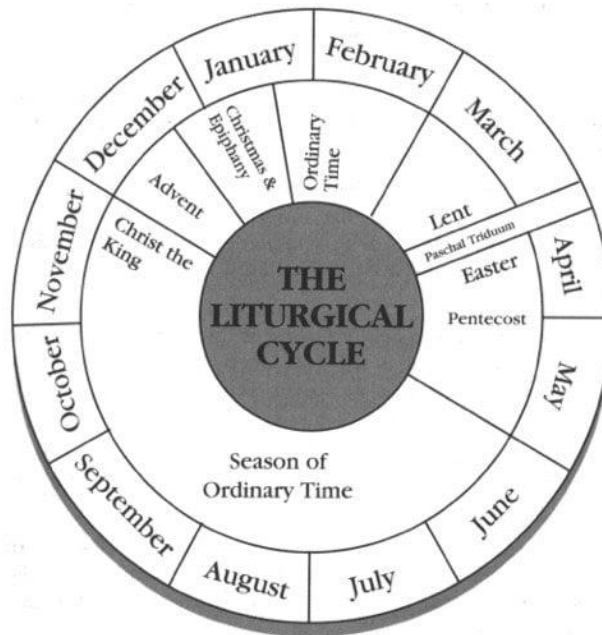
LENT PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS

- The church is decorated in violet, the colour of royalty and repentance. This period of repentance is marked by a purposeful turning away from our sinj and turning toward Christ for His mercy and forgiveness.
- Ash Wednesday begins the observance of Lent. Ashes on the forehead is a sign of penitence and a reminder that we, too, shall die and therefore need forgiveness from Jesus.
- Alleluia is the Hebrew word for "Praise the Lord". It is a joyous expression of faith in God. During Lent, we forgo using this joyous response in order to focus on our need for repentance and faith.



- As in Advent, so in Lent, we do not sing the Gloria in Excelsis in the Divine Service. We do this to focus our worship on repentance.
- Fasting is giving up eating at a particular meal or time in order to devote that time to prayer and meditation on the Word of God.
- Many churches observe Lent by gathering for midweek services. These additional times of worship and gathering around God's Word help us prepare to observe Holy Week and celebrate Easter.

From the "pastoral Desk Diary 2025" (CPH)



From the Pastor's Desk

Being part of the rather small Lutheran universe since birth, I realize that I've met so many people and made so many friends who share the same faith as the one I was given by the Holy Spirit in my baptism. Wherever I go, I can relate to others in all continents due to this identity in Christ given to me, even if I've never seen them before. In the January edition of the

Agape, I mentioned the importance of being part of the family of faith. We believe, become and belong to this special family. And, not only the Lutheran family, but also the larger Christian family.

This could be a message for All Saints Day, but I decided to share with you at this time. Last November I went to Brazil, and I decided that I needed to be careful about how

many people I would choose to see again. After all, I went there to spend quality time with my kids, daughters-in-law and my three grandchildren (all boys). We had a great time!

After my trip, in December, I lost one of my best friends that I've met in Calgary 16 years ago, and was currently living in Dallas. Brad was 50 years old and had a sudden heart attack, leaving his wife and two daughters behind. A devoted husband, a loving father, a faithful Christian, doctor in Theology, musician, writer, founder of the Christian "school of Identity". He wasn't a Lutheran, he was certainly a strong believer whose life reflected Christ everyday wherever he went. He was humble and loved the Lord. He also loved people and had a heart for mission. The Lord called him way too soon, according to our human judgement.



This reminded me of my dear father, Rev. Hermann Zeuch, who died of cancer at the age of 48. I was 18 back then. He also was a faithful Christian, a pastor, a humble human being, a loving husband and father, he had a heart for missions and had compassion for the needy and for seniors. He was the director of a senior home maintained by the Lutheran church in Brazil. That's me on the photo, being confirmed by my father. I'm the fourth boy from left to right. The Lord also called him "way too soon" – he was "way too young" according to our human judgement.

Back to my visit to Brazil last November, among a few friends, I saw my dear colleague, friend and brother Paulo Gerhard Pietzsch. We went out for lunch and shared so many memories of past times during the seminary years! We have always been friends throughout the years. A few weeks ago, I woke up with the news that he died of cancer! He was 58 years old. The Lord took him "way too soon", according to our human judgement. He was also a pastor, took his doctorate in theology a musician, a hymnodist (hymn writer, composer), a liturgist, a professor at the Concordia Seminary in Brazil and a faithful Christian who loved his Lord and was humble. I wonder if



his parents were foreseeing that he would be a Lutheran composer and musician and gave him this name, after Paul Gerhard (1607-1676), the great Lutheran hymn writer!

All of them whom I mentioned had many things in common and, according to our poor human judgement, the Lord took them home "way too soon". Is that true though?

These three men reflected the love of God and proclaimed His Gospel to many people. They dedicated their lives to Christ and His message. They were called to spread the good news of salvation in this broken world. They knew they needed God's forgiveness everyday. And they died in their faith. They must have heard the words that all those who trust in the Lord will hear: "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"

The Lord may have taken home someone you loved or were close to. Maybe you are grieving right now. Maybe you miss someone so badly that you could relate to my feelings. But just remember: death is the consequence of sin. We have all sinned and “missed the point”. We read in Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.

God is the giver of life...and he takes us home according to His plans. None of the three faithful pastors made it to their 60’s as I have the privilege to be now. The Lord has His own time. He is not trapped in our chronological time, but his time is called “Kairos” in Greek. In Ecclesiastes 3 we read: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

As I mentioned on my sermon recently, when we talked about Joseph in the Old Testament, God always sees the bigger picture, something we are not able to do. He had a plan for those we lost, and he certainly has a plan for you. We shall see our dear ones again....and I shall see my dad, Brad and Paulo again!

I hope this message spoke to your heart. Blessings to you!

In His service,

Rev. Markus Zeuch



A pastoral letter on three years of war in Ukraine



From: The Canadian Lutheran – Feb 24, 2025

Today marks the third anniversary of the war in Ukraine. The following pastoral letter is written by Rev. M.L. Smith, Director of International Missions for Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC).

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we mark three years of war in Ukraine, our hearts are heavy with sorrow for all those affected by this ongoing conflict. The members of Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) grieve with those who have suffered loss, displacement, and unimaginable hardship. We especially hold in our prayers the countless families torn apart—husbands and fathers separated from their wives and children, uncertain of when they might be reunited. The pain of such separation, endured for the sake of defending one’s home and loved ones, is a burden no family should have to bear.

As the war rages on, we continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, offering our heartfelt compassion, prayers, and tangible support. We remember those forced to flee their homes, many of whom now live as refugees in foreign lands, struggling to rebuild their lives. We also acknowledge those who remain, enduring the daily realities of war, trusting in

God's provision and strength. May the Lord be their refuge and stronghold in these troubled times.

We give thanks to God for the courage and dedication of our brothers and sisters in the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Ukraine (SELCU). We especially give thanks for the faithful shepherds who have embraced their calling in the face of overwhelming adversity, tirelessly caring for their flocks even as they themselves endure hardship and uncertainty.

Despite being separated from their own families—many of whom have found safety in Germany and other parts of Europe—these pastors have remained steadfast, offering spiritual nourishment and works of mercy to those in need. Their selfless sacrifices exemplify the love of Christ, who laid down His life for His sheep. We thank God for their unwavering commitment to the Gospel, as they continue to proclaim His Word and administer the Sacraments amid war's devastation. Their example reminds us that the Church endures, not because of human strength, but by the sustaining power of Christ, our Good Shepherd.



Among these faithful servants, we particularly commend the work of our missionary in Ukraine, Rev. Olexsiy Navrotskyy. Throughout these difficult years, he has remained steadfast in his calling, shepherding the flock entrusted to him at the Nikolaev parish and Lviv mission.

When the war began, most of his congregation in Nikolaev was forced to seek refuge elsewhere, leaving behind only a small remnant. Yet, instead of retreating, Rev. Navrotskyy turned outward, faithfully serving his community, overseeing LCC's Ukraine Aid Fund, and providing both physical and spiritual care to those in need. Through his tireless ministry, he has shared the love of Christ in word and deed, bringing the comfort of the Gospel to many lives.

By God's grace, this faithfulness has borne great fruit. The once-diminished congregation now overflows with new members who have come to hear the Word of God and receive Christ's Life-giving gifts. The church is filled with those seeking the peace that only Christ Jesus can give. We rejoice in this remarkable witness to the power of the Gospel, which shines ever brighter in the darkest of times.

As we reflect on these three years of suffering and endurance, we lift our voices in prayer. We implore our merciful Lord to bring an end to this war, to restore peace, and to heal the wounds of all who have been affected. We pray for the people of Ukraine, for those displaced, for the grieving, for those living in fear, and for those who hunger and thirst for justice and restoration.

We also commend to God the members of SELCU and their pastors, who continue their ministry with faithfulness and perseverance. We pray for Rev. Olexsiy Navrotskyy and the work he carries out in Nikolaev, Odessa and Lviv, that the Lord would strengthen him and bless his labours for the sake of Christ's kingdom. Finally, we remember the Ukrainian diaspora—our brothers and sisters now scattered here in Canada and throughout the world—asking that they would find comfort, support, and a steadfast faith in their new circumstances.

May the Lord of all peace, who has conquered sin and death through the victory of His Son, grant His abiding presence to His people in Ukraine and throughout the world. We place our trust in His unfailing mercy, knowing that He will sustain His Church until the day when all things are made anew and His faithful dwell in eternal peace.

In Christ,

Rev. M.L. Smith



**DON'T FORGET TO "SPRING FORWARD" YOUR
CLOCK...DON'T BE LATE FOR CHURCH ON MARCH 9!**

WHAT'S PLANNED FOR MARCH?

- March 2 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.
- March 4 (Tues):** Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner 6 p.m. (church basement)
- March 5 (Ash Wednesday):** Pastor holds service at Bethany Calgary at 10:30 a.m.
- March 5 (Ash Wednesday):** Evening service with imposition of ashes at 7 p.m.
- March 6 (Thurs):** Confirmation class (online) 7 p.m.
- March 6 (Thurs):** Board of Elders' online meeting 7 p.m.
- March 8 (Sat):** Men's Breakfast @ 9 a.m. followed by Bible study
- March 9 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m. (Daylight Saving Time)
- March 11 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.
- March 12 (Wed):** Lenten Evening Service @ 7 p.m. (Guest speaker: Rev. Mark Rekken)
- March 13 (Thurs):** Confirmation class (online) 7 p.m.
- March 16 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.
- March 18 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.
- March 19 (Wed):** Lenten Evening Service @ 7 p.m. (Guest speaker: Rev. David Dressler)
- March 20 (Thurs):** Confirmation class (online) 7 p.m. **Spring Equinox!**
- March 23 (Sun):** Worship services – German @ 9:30 English @ 11 a.m.
- March 23 (Sun):** Bach Society Concert at Knox United Church 3 p.m.
- March 25 (Tues):** Bible Study (online) @ 7 p.m.
- March 26 (Wed):** Pastor attends Calgary circuit's winkel
- March 26 (Wed):** Lenten Evening Service @ 7 p.m. (Guest speaker: Rev. Eric Moffet)

March 27 (Thurs): PPC meeting @ 7 pm

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

March 30 (Sun): Ukrainian Luncheon Fundraiser after worship service.

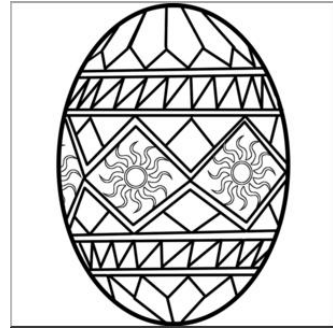
March 30 (Sun): Online Bible Study in Portuguese 5 p.m.



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 signup sheet in the narthex closer to the event.



TO OUR GERMAN-SPEAKING CONGREGATION:

DIE STRAFE ZU UNSEREM FRIEDEM

„Doch um unserer Übertretungen willen war er verwundet, um unserer Ungerechtigkeiten willen zerschlagen. Die Strafe zu unserem Frieden lag auf ihm, und durch seine Striemen ist uns Heilung geworden“ (Jes 53,5).

Hier dringt das Licht Gottes in die Leiden Christi ein und offenbart (welch ergreifende Offenbarung!): Unser war die Übertretung, Sein der Schlag dafür. Unser war die Ungerechtigkeit, Sein die Wunde dafür. Unser war die Sünde, Sein der Tod, ihr Lohn und ihre Strafe! Aber hier müssen wir unsere Worte wenige sein lassen und in einem Schweigen verharren, das ausdrucksvoller ist als alle Worte, denn hinter dem Schlag, der Wunde, dem Tod müssen wir etwas von der LIEBE erahnen, die uns zgedacht war!

Hier sehen wir, was die höchsten der geschaffenen Intelligenzen mit tiefem Staunen betrachten; und sie wollen diese unergründlichen Tiefen noch weiter ausloten. Dass Gott, der Gott, von dem sich jeder von uns, wenn auch in verschiedene Richtungen, weit entfernt hat, dass Er selbst es ist, der unser aller Ungerechtigkeiten wie Myriaden schwarzer Abwasserkanäle zusammenströmen lässt, um sie in einer furchtbaren, rauschenden, tosenden, schmutzigen, übel riechenden Flut an *einem* Ort auszuschütten – auf Ihn, den liebsten Gegenstand seines Herzens!

Kann man einem solchen Gott fernbleiben? Wenn man weiß, dass nicht nur Brot auf einen wartet, sondern eine Umarmung; nicht der Platz eines Knechtes, sondern die Brust des Vaters; nicht die Kleider eines Knechtes, sondern das beste Gewand – welcher verlorene Sohn würde sich nicht beeilen zurückzukehren? Ich möchte die Hand meines Lesers ergreifen und sagen: Lasst uns gemeinsam zu diesem Gott rufen: „O Vater, mögen die wenigen Tage, die ich noch hier bin, für Dich sein, denn Du hast sie wahrlich um einen hohen Preis erkaufte. O Gott, mein Vater, lass die Liebe, die selbst für mich, den armen Unwürdigen, Deinen Geliebten nicht verschont hat, mein Herz, das leider immer noch so leicht umherirrt, für immer an Dich binden. Nicht nur in den Tagen, als ich noch nicht wiedergeboren war, irrte ich in die Ferne, sondern auch seitdem ich etwas von Deiner Liebe kenne. Meine Seele beugt sich vor Scham und schreit: O lass die vergangene Zeit für solches Umherirren genügen. So schwach ich auch bin, Herr Jesus, ich bin doch Dein armes Schaf, und Du allein bist mein Hirte, der Du sogar Dein Leben für mich hingegeben hast. Halte mich in Deiner Nähe, ich bitte Dich, bis ich für immer bei Dir bin!“

Aus: bibelstudium.de



QUIPS & QUOTES:

“Life is fragile; handle it with prayer”.

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



WE ARE GOING TO THE BACH SOCIETY CONCERT ON MARCH 23!

The Calgary Philharmonic’s annual Bach@Knox baroque music festival is held at Knox United Church on March 23 from 3-5 p.m. There’s a signup sheet at our church if you are interested to join us.

\$25.00 person Seniors: \$20.00 Students over 18: \$10.00 Under 18: Free

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Thank you for your support and prayers.

In His service, Pastor Zeuch

Serving St. Matthew Lutheran Church for 16 years, 4 months and 26 days!

Calgary, March 3, 2025

