

St. Peter Lutheran Church

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Where the Word of Life gathers, nurtures, and sends us forth to serve.



A Message From Pastor K.

FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

Hey – here’s an idea... Go up to a random friend or coworker and say, “I can’t believe that it’s almost time for Mardi Gras!” and see what their reaction is. Chances are that they’ve heard of it and could tell you something about the usual festivities. Alternatively, try saying this: “I can’t believe that Lent is almost here!”. Even many of your Christian friends will probably give you an odd look. Of course, if you know the history of Mardi Gras (Carnival in the Caribbean, or Fasching/Karneval in Germany), you remember that all of the revelry on Fat Tuesday is a precursor to Lent beginning the next day, on Ash Wednesday. So, yes... without Lent there would be no Mardi Gras.

Given the choice, many (if not most) people would prefer the carefree partying of Mardi Gras to the comparatively depressing season of Lent. It’s like

comparing the weekend to the work week. By nature, we crave fun and frivolity. Lent, to many people, seems to be the exact opposite. Christians who grew up in churches that were observant of this season probably mainly associate Lent with giving something up or abstaining from things they enjoy, hence it’s lack of popularity.

But I would suggest that Lent is really a time of intentionally reconnecting – with God, with our faith, and with our determination to live as disciples of Jesus. It’s a revival of sorts. A time when we intentionally evaluate how we’re doing in our walk with Jesus. A time for us to become more self-aware. In concert with this, it is common for Christians to use this as a time for self-discipline and sacrifice, when we might not only refrain from certain pleasures, but also set aside more time for spiritual development and service to our Lord.

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Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

It’s cold and gloomy out. You haven’t seen the sun in days. Your energy level is at zero and you just feel like staying in bed. You love to read, but you can’t focus or remember what you just read. And the strange thing is, you only feel like this in winter.

Does this sound like you? Many people go through short periods when they feel sad or unlike themselves. Sometimes these mood changes begin and end when the seasons change. You may feel “down” or have the “winter blues” when the days get shorter in the fall and winter and feel better in the spring when longer daylight hours return.

This brings us around to our communal Lenten practice of joining together on Wednesday evenings to reconnect with each other over a meal and with God's Word in study. Our Wednesdays in Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday – February 14th – at 7 PM, for a time of special worship (there will be no dinner on that night). The following Wednesdays we will begin with our meal at 6 PM and continue with a time of song, Word and prayer at 7 PM. Our theme this year will be, "Being the Body of Christ", by which we will consider how Jesus intentionally leads us to be interconnected and interdependent with each other in His Body, the Church (spoiler alert – we were NOT designed to "go it alone" in our journey of faith).

It is my prayer that you will take advantage of this opportunity to reconnect and join us on both Wednesdays and Sundays in Lent. We look forward to seeing you!

Your friend & servant in Christ,

Pastor Kanefke



February Birthdays



Charles Lewis	Feb 16
McKenna Foster	Feb 21
Richard Carlton	Feb 22
Scott Ricardson	Feb 29

Soup-er Bowl Sunday Fundraiser *February 4, 2024*

This year St. Peter has been paired with Dahlonge Methodist Church for this community fundraiser. We've been asked to **donate three to four crock pots of soup and three to four plates of desserts**. Or if someone would rather donate cornbread, crackers, sweet tea or lemonade, that would be appreciated too. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. All food should be delivered to the Methodist Church by 10:00 a.m. Five or six other churches will be simultaneously hosting their soup day. Then after church on February 4th, join your fellow Christians at Dahlonge Methodist Church and enjoy a meal together. Entrance fee at the door is \$10/person or \$25/family.

Proceeds collected on Soup-er Bowl Sunday will be used to purchase supplies (lumber, roofing materials, cleaning supplies, etc.) for the **day of service April 27th**. This is a one-day event uniting Lumpkin County churches of all denominations together in serving the community. Individual churches will be doing local mission work on a smaller scale, but the impact is huge when the faith community gathers together and cooperatively works to meet the needs of Lumpkin County!

Churches work together to provide services for those in need. This can be low-income families or elderly individuals who are no longer able to complete projects around the house. Side by Side also includes visiting shut-ins and nursing homes. Last year's event saw over 40 projects completed with the help of 300+ volunteers ranging in age from 5 to 80+ years. There is a job for everyone.



**Side by Side
in Service**

Sometimes these mood changes are more serious and can affect how a person feels, thinks and behaves. If you have noticed significant changes in your mood and behavior when the seasons change, you may be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD.

SAD is a type of depression characterized by a recurrent seasonal pattern. The symptoms last 4-5 months out of the year. But winter SAD should not be confused with "holiday blues". These feelings of sadness or anxiety are brought on by stressors at certain times of the year and the symptoms are different. The depression associated with SAD is related to change in daylight hours. Shorter days and less daylight can trigger a chemical change in the brain.

Symptoms may include:

- Persistent sadness, anxious or "empty" mood most of the day
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of irritability, frustration or restlessness

- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities

There's no way to prevent the development of SAD. However, if you take steps early on to manage the symptoms, you may be able to prevent them from getting worse over time. Treatment can prevent complications, especially if SAD is diagnosed before symptoms get bad. Treatments include light therapy, Vitamin D, medication and counseling (talk therapy). Counseling can help by teaching new ways of thinking, behaving and changing habits that contribute to depression.

If you, or someone you know, are experiencing symptoms of SAD, or have any questions, please contact me or your healthcare provider. There is no reason to suffer through the rest of the winter when help is just a phone call away.



Judy A. Lewis, Licensed Professional Counselor (810) 599-5188
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LENT - A Time to Reconnect



If you missed it in Pastor K's article, Ash Wednesday is February 14. St. Peter will observe it with a service at 7:00 PM. The following Wednesday's, February 21 - March 20, we will have a potluck dinner at 6:00 PM followed by a service at 7:00 PM. The theme for the services is "Being the Body of Christ." All this culminates with the celebration of Easter on March 31, the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Please take this time to reflect on what it means to be a Christian and what your part is in "Being the Body of Christ". Look for a Lenten Devotional Booklet "Lamb of God" in your mailbox here at church or your home mailbox.

If you cannot make the Wednesday services here at St. Peter, the Ministerial Association is once again offering community Lenten services at the Baptist Church on Tuesdays during the Lenten season. Services begin at 12:00 PM followed by a light soup and sandwich luncheon.