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Gathered by the Word: Reflections on Ash Wednesday and the Journey Through Lent

I write this article on February 19, less than 24 hours after we opened up our 2026 Lenten season with Ash Wednesday.

As I sat in my preacher's chair during the Ash Wednesday service, I couldn't help but be overcome with a sense of pride and joy—not typically words one might equate with an Ash Wednesday service. But it was amazing to witness the congregation gathered together at this service: a service filled with somber songs, the darkness of death, and readings riddled with our sin and wickedness; a service that does not give a person the warm and fuzzies; a service on a Wednesday evening in February, no less.

It is the Word of God that gathers us. Sure, the soup supper might have brought you through the doors. Maybe it was because you are a confirmation student or a parent of a student. It may have been tradition that drove you to show up. But at the end of the day, what keeps people coming back is the power of the Word that sustains us in this life.

And that's what filled me with pride: pride in the Word of God that reaches so many ears and gathers you in; joy that you, God's people, bring others in to hear His Word delivered. We had 78 people of all ages gathered together in the sanctuary of Our Savior's to hear His Word—some who have been members for a long time, others who are much younger in their faith life—all gathered to receive the same Word and the same Sacrament.

Now, this season of Lent will look slightly different from years past, as we are not formally gathering as

the entire Viborg community each week. However, that does not stop us from inviting others to join in worship and the hearing of the Word. God's Word is for all to hear.

May your Lenten season be filled with God's grace and mercy. While recognizing the depth of our sin and our wandering in the wilderness, Christ breaks into our lives to bring us back to Him.

This is most certainly true.

Pastor Max Whitehead

LENT
Pray, Fast, Give

Lent is a season in the Christian year that prepares believers for Resurrection Sunday. It begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts 40 days (excluding Sundays), ending on Holy Saturday. It is a time of repentance, reflection, and spiritual renewal, focusing on our sin, our need for a Savior, and Jesus' suffering and death.

Many Christians mark Lent with special services, fasting or "giving something up," and added practices like prayer, Bible reading, and acts of charity. The 40 days recall biblical "forties," especially Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, helping believers turn from sin and prepare to celebrate His resurrection on Resurrection Sunday.

Calendar

Sunday, March 1

9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Worship Service
 11:30 AM Council Mtg

Wednesday, March 4

2:00 PM Bible Study
 3:45 - 5 PM Jr. VCIS
5:45 PM Soup Supper @ SVLC
6:30 PM Lenten Service @ SVLC
 7:30 PM VCIS

Sunday, March 8

9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Worship Service

Monday, March 9

2:00 PM Circle Group

Wednesday, March 11

2:00 PM Bible Study
 3:45 - 5 PM Jr. VCIS
5:45 PM Soup Supper @ OSLC
6:30 PM Lenten Service @ OSLC
 7:30 PM VCIS

Sunday, March 15

9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Worship Service
 Photo Opportunity

Wednesday, March 18

2:00 PM Bible Study
 3:45 - 5 PM Jr. VCIS
5:45 PM Soup Supper @ BLC
6:30 PM Lenten Service @ BLC
 7:30 PM VCIS Public Bible Study @ BLC

Sunday, March 22

9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Worship Service
 Photo Opportunity

Wednesday, March 25

2:00 PM Bible Study
 3:45 - 5 PM Jr. VCIS
7:00 PM Community Lenten Service -
 Location: TBD
 8:00 PM VCIS

Palm Sunday, March 29

9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Worship Service

Looking Ahead to April

Wednesday, April 1

2:00 PM Bible Study

Maundy Thursday, April 2

7:00 PM Maundy Thursday Service @ SVLC

Good Friday, April 3

7:00 PM Good Friday Service @ OSLC

Easter Sunday, April 5

7:00 AM Easter Worship Service
~~9:15 AM~~ No Sunday School

Wednesday, April 8

2:00 PM Bible Study
 3:45 - 5 PM Jr. VCIS
 5:30 PM Confirmation Meal (Class @ 6PM)
 7:00 PM VCIS

Sunday, April 12

9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Worship Service
 11:30 AM Council Mtg.

Monday, April 13

2:00 PM Circle Group

Ushers & Cleaners

March Ushers

- ❖ Kelsey & Alex Hanten
- ❖ Tim & Tammy Sorensen
- ❖ Troy & Kayla Larsen

Cleaners Mar 1 - 7

- ❖ Elaine Lee
- ❖ Brenda Lee
- ❖ Kaye Lee
- ❖ Katie Smit
- ❖ Morgan Myrvik

Cleaners Mar 8 - 21

- ❖ Kaye Lee
- ❖ Faydra Christensen
- ❖ Tena Johansen

Cleaners Mar 22 - Apr 4

- ❖ Tammy Zimmerman
- ❖ Tonya Rudd
- ❖ Kelli Zimmerman
- ❖ Amy Christensen
- ❖ Emily Thompson

Worship Helpers

Sunday, March 1

Reader Mitch Larsen
Acolytes Ryker Larsen & Barrett Larsen
Communion Helper Lincoln Mellem
Stream Youth
Organist/Pianist Annet Kropuenske

Sunday, March 8

Reader Kelli Zimmerman
Acolytes Chloe Sorensen & Braxton Sorensen
Stream Youth
Organist/Pianist Annet Kropuenske

Sunday, March 15

Reader Faydra Christensen
Acolytes Nora Rudd & Eden Rudd
Communion Helper Riley Gall
Stream Youth
Organist/Pianist Annet Kropuenske

Sunday, March 22

Reader Dawn Kludt
Acolytes Ainsley Hanten & Beau Hanten
Stream Youth
Organist/Pianist Praise Band

Sunday, March 29

Reader Brett Mellem
Acolytes Bayler Ludens & Ryker Larsen
Communion Helper Carston Mellem
Stream Youth
Organist/Pianist Praise Band

Scripture Readings

March 01: Genesis 12:1-4a, Psalm 121, Romans 4:1-5, 13-17, John 3:1-17

March 08: Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 95, , Romans 5:1-11, John 4:5-42

March 15: 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

March 22: Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

March 29: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29, Matthew 21:1-11



Join us for the Spring Valley Circle group! We meet on the second Monday of each month at 2:00 PM for fellowship, delicious desserts, and to explore the teachings of God's Word. Everyone is welcome!

ROTATING VENUE BIBLE STUDY



This Bible study takes place on the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM with a rotating venue.

For additional information, please contact Pr. Max.

To give on-line, please visit
<https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z8FH/home>
or scan this QRCode:



Please designate your Thrivent Choice dollars money before March 31 by logging in to
<https://login.apps.thrivent.com/login>

For questions, please contact Tammy Sorensen at
tsorens@iw.net



Bible Study

Every Sunday of March
9:15 AM at SVLC



Come and learn about the
Ten Commandments
All are welcome to join us!



The Centerville Community Arts Council Presents:

“THE LIVING LAST SUPPER”

You are invited to a powerful Holy Week drama, The Living Last Supper—a moving presentation of Jesus and the twelve apostles in the moments after Jesus declares, “One of you will betray me,” and each man cries out, “Lord, is it I?”

This drama is based on Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting The Last Supper and was written by Ernest K. Emurian.

We extend a warm welcome to our congregation, confirmation students, and youth to attend.
Performance dates:

Sunday, March 29, 2026 – 5:00 pm
Scandia Lutheran – Centerville

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 – 7:00 pm
Emmanuel Lutheran – Beresford

Monday, March 30, 2026 – 7:00 pm
Grace Lutheran – Parker

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – 7:00 pm
Shalom Lutheran – Harrisburg

A freewill offering will be received each night to support a local charity. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend!



JRV CIS - GRADES 1-6
Wednesdays After School - 5:00 PM

The first 3 weeks of February all looked different for this group. We did not gather the first week due to illness. The second week we played a game called 7 Steps and made communion bread! Then the third week we went and sang at the nursing home. The kids do so well at the nursing home! They are quiet when they need to be, but loud and full of joy when they are singing! This last time there we sang a song called "Shake Another Hand" and the students all went out and greeted the residents with various greets: handshakes, high fives, and fist bumps. It's always so much fun to see the faces of both the kids and the residents light up when we are there.

We will continue on with our regularly scheduled programming throughout the Lenten season. With the help of Krista and Quinn, we can make it through! We will still take your help in serving these kids snack time though. That way we can focus on other programming things. Thank you for your consideration!

VCIS - GRADES 8-12
Wednesdays • 7:30-9:00

Just like the other groups of Youth, the first 3 Wednesdays all looked different in February. The first was canceled due to illness. The second found us having a little waffle feed and devotion provided by Dawn. And the third was filled with the Ash Wednesday service.

Moving forward, we will serve a soup supper before every Lenten service as a fundraiser for our trip to Boston! Some of the students have already met their goal as they have been raising funds for the past 3 years. But some of the students are newer to the game and simply have not had as much time to do the fundraising. So this is a great opportunity for service, fundraising, and fellowship!

We will continue to meet throughout the Lenten season. We will just gather at whatever church we had midweek service. At the end of the season of Lent we will also put on our Good Friday presentation as we have the last several years! Be sure to put Good Friday on your calendar.

Thank you for the continued support of this group! It is amazing the depth of study, conversation, and fellowship we get to when we gather.



CONFIRMATION - GRADES 6-8
NEW LENTEN SCHEDULE!
5:45 Meal • 6:30 Lenten Service

February was a calm month for our standard "learning". The first week we canceled due to illness, the second week we were at the nursing home, the third week we had our Ash Wednesday service, and then the fourth week we had another midweek service held at Bethany.

All but one of our students were able to be there, serve, and participate in worship! We had 3 different students read, another 2 help serve the Lord's Supper, and then another impose ashes on my forehead.

Now that Lent is in full swing, we will have the students participating in different capacities in the services moving forward as well. It gives them a chance to be involved as well as helps work on their public speakin.

By the time you are reading this, we will have already been to our confirmation retreat in Vinning, MN held at Inspiration Point Retreat Center. This is a gathering of over 200 confirmation students (typically middle schoolers) from throughout the Augustana District! As stated in previous articles, this trip cost \$130/person not including vehicle rental to get there. And between the congregations, women's groups, and the generosity of those who came and joined us for an Ash Wednesday soup supper, we made our financial goal so that no parent had to take anything out of pocket! This year's theme is "Tricky Questions". I get the privilege to lead a breakout session discussing baptism this year. I encourage you to ask our students about the trip that they will have just returned from and hear all about what they did and learned!

Spring Valley
LUTHERAN CHURCH
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!!! EMERGENCY NEED !!!

PLEASE HELP END HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY!

Anything you can contribute would be very much appreciated. We do have a fridge and freezer for cold storage items such as meats and cheeses. Barbecue sauce, mayonnaise, sugar, flour, coffee, canned vegetables other than green beans, breakfast bars, toaster pastries, quick or cook oats, pasta, canned fruits, cooking oil, toilet paper and tissues. Thank you so very much in advance!

SPRING VALLEY 2026 DIRECTORY

Jena Hight (JJ Photography) will be taking pictures for our new directory on Sundays- March 15 and 22. We will have a sign up sheet at church for you to sign up for times to get your family pictures taken. You can email Faydra Christensen also, if you would like to be assigned a time. Pictures will be taken in 10 minute intervals. Jena will be providing the church the photograph of your choice for the directory at no charge. You may also order pictures from her- 3 x 5 print- \$4.00/ 5 x 7 print- \$8.00/ 8 x 10 print- \$12.00 / Digital Download- \$30.00. You will need to pay for the pictures you want to order on the same day as they are taken. Thank you!

If you have any questions or want to be assigned a time, please contact Faydra Christensen, 605-661-4150 or faydrac70@gmail.com.