



The Shepherd's *Staff*

THE NEWSLETTER OF HOLY SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH — VALENTINE'S DAY 2021 — ORINDA, CALIFORNIA

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE — THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

By Elizabeth Humphrey

"Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Wikipedia describes a Hallmark holiday as a 'holiday that is perceived to exist primarily for commercial purposes'. I'm fairly certain that Safeway and CVS had their shelves stocked with heart shaped boxes of Russell Stover chocolates and candy hearts on December 26th. Whether I am the giver or receiver, I personally dread Hallmark holidays such as Valentine's Day, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, etc. The expectations of what these holidays 'should' look like are unrealistic and often disappointing for many. Commercial holidays and our society have skewed what giving and receiving love truly is.

God's love for us is unconditional. Although he commands us to repent our sins and work toward righteousness, he never stops loving us through our stumbles and falls. His perfect love for us, as described in 1 Corinthians 13, is the guidebook for how we are to love others, not just on February 14th, but every day.

Exchanging Valentines at school, buying your sweetheart a box of chocolates or enjoying dinner at a fancy restaurant with your spouse on Valentine's Day are fun ways to celebrate love but let's not lose sight of the importance of giving and receiving love the way Jesus taught us every day. This thought reminded me of the old Master Card commercials. A Hallmark card - \$5. A heart shaped box of Russell Stover chocolates - \$25. A dozen roses - \$35. Loving others unconditionally - Priceless!

EVENTS SCHEDULE

Amid these days of pandemic, we invite you to stay connected with our community by participating in the following events:

Sundays at 9:30 am — Our weekly Facebook 'Worship Video Watch Party' hosted by our pastors @HSLCOrinda.

Sundays at 9:30 am — Our 'Weekly Worship Video' should be accessible on our webpage at www.holyshepherd.org.

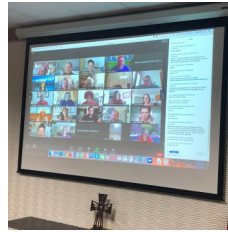
Sundays at 10:30 am — Our popular "Zoom Coffee Fellowship" allows you to connect with others. (Zoom Meeting ID# 823 6201 2420)

Third Sundays from noon to 1pm — Our Sanctuary is open for socially-distanced Holy Communion. (Join us on February 21st for our next gathering!)

Tuesdays at 7pm — Our online weekly 'Adult Ed.' Zoom Bible class meets at 7pm. (Zoom Meeting ID# 882 9062 7131)

Mission Partner Update: Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS)

Dear Friends at Holy Shepherd — Thank you for supporting PLTS! As you can imagine, seminary is very different during this pandemic time. Our classes were forced to move to Zoom last March and we will continue in this online learning space, exclusively, for the rest of this academic year. Weekly Wednesday worship also happens on Zoom, with an occasional pre-recorded service.



Some very good things are happening in the midst of pandemic challenges we share with congregations and people throughout our communities. I am happy to share that on August 22, 2020 I was ordained and my role at PLTS changed. In addition to serving in the Office of Seminary Relations doing church relations and fundraising work, I also now serve as Pastor for PLTS Worship. "Called for such a time as this" has taken on a whole new meaning. While I am not new to PLTS, it's been a new adventure of trying to figure out how to worship online in meaningful ways and work with our worship faculty to adapt courses to teach worship leadership for our new reality.



I am also happy to report that PLTS saw an increase in enrollment this year. That's right. We have more students this year than the year before. While we give credit to God for this, it has been interesting to talk with the students and hear their stories of feeling a deep sense to learn and serve NOW and not wait for a more convenient, post-pandemic time. Your monthly support really makes a difference because as enrollment and financial support to the seminary grow together, our mission in church and world also grows.

These are just a few of the exciting things happening at PLTS. Thank you again for your support and please contact me anytime with questions or curiosities about our work at the seminary.

Blessings, The Rev. Sara L. Wilson (Pastor, Seminary Relations & PLTS Worship)

What is PLTS?

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary is a graduate school of California Lutheran University. Located in Berkeley — PLTS provides theological education for the training of clergy and lay leaders through a variety of degree and certificate programs. It is one of seven seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and part of the Graduate Theological Union.

PLTS received \$1666 from Holy Shepherd in fiscal year September 2019 — August 2020, as part of our 'Giving Beyond Ourselves' commitments! Our funds support the education of Vicar Diane Washington, as well as the ministry of HSLC member (and now ordained Pastor!) Sara Wilson, the seminary's Development Officer and new Campus Pastor for Worship.

We Remember in Prayer

If you — or a loved one — would like to be included on our congregation's Prayer

List, please contact Office Administrator Lisa Verley at (925)254-3422

Prayers for Healing

- Gloria & Bert Ens.
- Doug & DoLoris Tim.
- Mary Helene Wag.
- Yvonne Tsc.
- Dr. Bob and Carole Wey.
- Susie Mor.
- Bruce Neu.
- Jeff Kli.
- Henry and Carol Kra.
- Miss Susie Koe.
- Louise Har.

Prayers for Comfort

- Harry How.
- Rolf Ben.
- Marilyn and Kristi Lin.
- Marian McG.
- DeLane Riv.
- Marilyn Nor.

Prayers for Those Serving

- Megan How.
- Brian Hen.
- Peter Kle

February Celebrations

Birthdays

1st Mitchell Cho.	13th Dona Law.	26th Bob Val.
3rd Ruth Pea.	15th Barbara Per.	29th Karen R-K
4th Bryant Cho.	17th Marci Bau.	
10th Joan Kie.	18th Alanna Lau.	
10th Diana Yor.	18th Austin McM.	
11th Mary Ann Ber.	21st Lori Ocz.	
	25th Marissa Per.	
	26th Nadine Cob.	

Anniversaries

- 3rd Hurleys
- 5th Gambles

ASH WEDNESDAY 2021

Ash Wednesday — the first day of the Season of Lent — occurs on February 17th this year. Ash Wednesday is one of the most important holy days on the Christian calendar. It marks the first day of Lent, the season leading up to Easter that is traditionally observed with fasting and prayer. Christians receive ashes, usually placed on the forehead in the symbol of the cross, with the reminder that "you are dust, and to dust you shall return."



This year, due to current public health restrictions we are unable to share traditional Ash Wednesday services. However, Pastor Valentine will be offering a simple 'imposition of ashes' in our Sanctuary from 1pm until 2pm on February 17 — in a format akin to our recent pandemic-communion gatherings. If you would like to receive the sign of ashes to start your own Lenten journey, please join us at that time.

Re-Opening Our Campus

Our Church Council is leading the way toward a safe reopening plan for our facilities!

Our most recent Church Council meeting took place via Zoom on the evening of January 27th, and much of the meeting focused on matters of 'when' and 'how' we may begin re-opening our campus to our own programming as well of the programs of our community-ministry partners and our outside user groups.

Congregational Worship, Fellowship and Education

Pastor John reports that both the CDC and our County Health Department continue to mandate that we NOT resume in-person worship, education and fellowship events until our community moves into the "orange" (moderate) tier of infections. We anticipate that this level MAY be achieved by mid-Spring IF our county's vaccination rates are high and IF the community-wide use of masks remains widespread. Until then, we will continue to be 'Church Together' through our online and mailed delivery systems as noted on the front page of this newsletter.

LARC (The Lamorinda Adult Respite Center)

Because LARC is considered an 'essential service', we anticipate early vaccination access for all our LARC staff and participants. Pastor John Valentine — the Executive Director of the LARC Program — believes that returning LARC participants may well be able to access in-person programming by early May, and that LARC will be able to fully reopen by mid-July. Progress is happening here!

Holy Shepherd Christian Preschool

Joan Kiekhaefer noted that our preschool is currently open on a limited basis to service the needs of families with young children. We currently operate a single class 'cohort' on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays under the tutelage of Miss Joanna and Miss Pat, per county and state regulations. We will continue to operate in this way through the end of the current school year with a return to more robust programming in the 2021/22 school year.

PPP Funding Application — Round Two

Congregational Treasurer Steve Swanback and Pastor John Valentine were authorized to make application for a second round of PPP (Payroll Protection Program) through the ELCA Credit Union. The PPP is a federal 'forgivable loan' program that supports small businesses and non-profits amid these challenging economic times. Our first round application resulted in a grant of \$107,000, which was used to support staff salaries of our furloughed workers. We envision that a second-round of PPP funding may be used in part to support the phased re-opening of our LARC program later this Spring.

On Losing The Lottery

A Word from Pastor John Valentine



Don't shed a tear for me, but I lost the Lottery the other day. Along with some forty million other Americans, I decided to take the plunge and purchase a chance of winning a BILLION dollars in the Mega Millions Lottery and I lost. But the strangest thing happened when I found out my ticket wasn't a winner. I actually found myself suddenly overwhelmed by the awareness that I've already won the lottery of life in so many ways.

You see, Martin Luther once generated a litany of that which constitutes 'daily bread', and it seems a pretty apt checklist of life's essentials: *"Food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name, and true friends and neighbors."* And as I rattle through that list in my mind, it becomes immediately obvious that those things have been mine in abundance most all the days of my life. I truly have already won the lottery of life in ever so many ways.

But it's what precedes that checklist that perhaps needs my attention. For there Doctor Luther wrote: *"God gives daily bread, even without prayer, to all people, though sinful, but we ask in this prayer that God will help us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanks."* Luther's realization is that it's not just that we have those things, but that daily we receive them with a spirit of thanksgiving that is transformative in our lives.

With that in mind, I'd encourage you to find your own ways of taking time each day to practice thankfulness. Be it first thing in the morning, before or after a meal, or at some other time that fits your own life's rhythm, make time for thankfulness. I'm pretty sure that simple spiritual practice WILL change your life — and you won't even need to buy a Lottery ticket to find your life enriched!

**I asked God for strength, that I might achieve;
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all men most richly blessed.**

Attributed to an anonymous soldier in the closing days of our nation's Civil War

Lent Begins with Ash Wednesday 2021 on February 17th

This Lenten season will be unlike any in our recent memory. Current COVID restrictions mean that there will be no midweek Soup Suppers, no Wednesday evening Compline Services, no communal Ash Wednesday service. But rather than lamenting what we cannot do, let's recommit ourselves to doing what we can! This Lent, our online worship experiences will focus on key stories from the Gospel of Luke. Tune in each weekend — via Facebook (@HSLCORinda) or the church webpage (www.holyshepherd.org) to get connected to God's Word and stay connected with one another. Then join us on Tuesday evenings at 7pm for a Zoom-based 'Adult Ed. Conversation about the week's Scriptural text, and what it might have to say to us!

Sunday, February 7 — Our weekly reading will be Luke 7:1-17. In that text, Jesus is twice seen offering life-giving hope to those overcome by grief, and the gift of healing to those for whom all hope seemed lost.

Sunday, February 14 — **Transfiguration Sunday** means the end of Epiphany and the near approach of Lent. We'll look at Luke's account of the Transfiguration in Luke 9:28-45, where Jesus' closest friends and followers catch a glimpse of his purpose and power.

Wednesday, February 17 — **Ash Wednesday** marks the beginning of Lent. Pastor Valentine will be offering the traditional 'imposition of ashes' on a drop-in basis from 1pm until 2pm in our Sanctuary. Please remember to bring (and wear!) your mask. (See page 2 for more information about our Ash Wednesday opportunity.)

Sunday, February 21 — On this 1st Sunday of Lent, we'll invite the story of the Good Samaritan — Luke 10:25-42 — give our souls a deep-root watering, as we hear Jesus ask "Who was it that acted like a neighbor to the broken and beaten man?"

Sunday February 28 — On this 2nd Sunday of Lent, our Gospel lesson (selections from Luke 13) is an account of Jesus' lament for the Holy City of Jerusalem. Our worship service will focus on God's gracious and generous gifts, and our neglect of them.

Sunday, March 7 — The 3rd Sunday of Lent will be Luke 15:1-32, in which Jesus recounts three items which are lost and then found — a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. Together they serve as a beautiful reminder of the love God has for us!

Join us on Sundays for worship and fellowship, and on Tuesdays for learning and reflection!

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