

The Shepherd's *staff*

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH
LENT / MARCH 2022 — ORINDA, CALIFORNIA

Ash Wednesday Arrives

Every year Ash Wednesday falls 46 days before Easter. Christians of many backgrounds go to church and walk out with a black smudge on their head. So, what's the deal?



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Christian season known as Lent (*no, Tom, not the stuff that gums up your clothes dryer, that's "lint"!*) Historically, Lent is known as the 'going slow time', a time when new Christians prepared themselves for baptism on Easter Sunday. Nowadays, Lent more often is a time when Christians prepare themselves for Easter and seek to deepen faith, strengthen community, and forge a closer connection to God. This preparation happens through an emphasis on a few basic faith practices — worship, prayer, generosity, self-denial, and service to others.

Lent is season for changing your life-patterns, for turning things around, for getting back on the right path – what we sometimes call "repentance." Lent lasts for 40 days (not counting Sundays); reminding us of the flooding rains of Noah's time (Genesis 7:17-19) and of Jesus' temptation in the desert (Mark 1:12-13).

The ashes of Ash Wednesday remind us of our mortality. God created humankind from the dust of the earth, and it is to dust that we shall all return. "Remember you dust, and to dust you shall return" we are told. On Ash Wednesday, we recall that our time on this earth is short and reflect upon whether we living the life to which God has called us? Is a review of our lives likely to yield Jesus' words "Well done, good and faithful servant" or something else?

Ash Wednesday isn't a particularly cheerful celebration. But if we take it seriously, Ash Wednesday can be a reset point for the patterns of our lives and our living. Are you ready for deeper faith, stronger community, and a closer relationship with God? Join us (in-person or online via our Facebook page @HSLCOOrinda) as we together begin our Lenten journeys together at our Ash Wednesday worship service, March 2, at 7pm.

WEEKLY EVENTS SCHEDULE

We encourage you to join in the following events — virtually and/or in-person:

Every Sunday at 9:30 am — Our weekly in-person worship opportunity with Holy Communion in our Sanctuary!

Every Sunday at 9:30 am — Our in-person worship services are "Live-Streamed" via Facebook @HSLCOOrinda.

Every Sunday at 10:30 am — Coffee Fellowship time takes place following our in-person worship service.

Every Sunday at noon — A recording of our weekly 'Worship Video' should be accessible via our webpage at www.holyshepherd.org or our Facebook page @HSLCOOrinda.

Tuesdays at 7pm — Pastor John and/or Pastor Pam lead "Adult Ed" — a Zoom-based online fellowship opportunity. The Zoom Meeting ID# is 861 5874 8710 and the Password is 94563.

Social Ministry Update: LARC and HSCP

Our Community-Partners Come Together!

It doesn't get to happen often, but when it when it does, it's a whole lot of fun!



Our congregation is committed to serving our neighbors, be it by nurturing young children in our Preschool program, be it by supporting senior households through our LARC program, or be it by offering space to worthy community programs like Girl Scout troops and Cub Scout packs. And occasionally, we're able to find some synergy by inviting a couple of those programs to share an activity together.

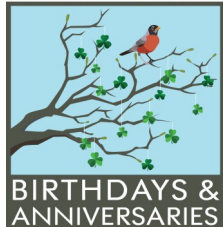


Such was the case on Thursday, February 24th, when our Preschoolers, our LARC participants and a couple of local Cub Scout leaders came together for a fun-filled day of Pinewood Derby

racing in Gregersen Hall! The Preschoolers ferried the cars to their starting blocks, the Cub leaders aligned them on the track, and the LARC-sters prognosticated on which would be the winners. And then they were off! There was some commotion, there was some cheering, and there was a whole lot of joy for multiple generations! Because sometimes we're better together!



MARCH



Birthdays

1st Christine Pad.
3rd Sophia Per.

5th Lisa Ver.
6th Marisa Cho.
13th MaryHelene Wag.
15th Juanita Gil.
20th Kim Whi.
24th Dr. Bob Wey.
26th Susan Pat.
27th Won K. Ya.

Anniversaries

1st Weyands (52)
23rd Hudaks (53)

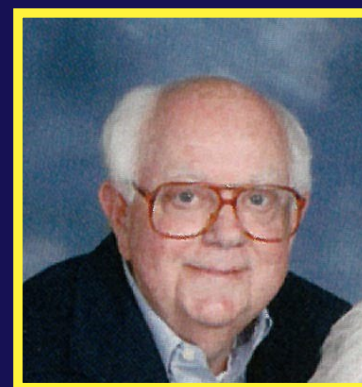
Don't Forget!

Daylight Savings Time

begins at 2am on March 13th! Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour on the evening of March 12th.



IN MEMORIAM



Longtime Holy Shepherd member Rolf Benseler passed into the company of God's saints on Friday, February 18th, following an extended battle with Parkinson's disease. Rolf held a doctoral degree in botany and was a long-tenured college professor at Cal State (Hayward). He is survived by his beloved wife Donna and sons Mark and Bill. Plans for a private memorial service are pending.

OUR MONTHLY PRAYER CONCERNS FOR MARCH

For Healing/Strength

Gloria & Bert E.
DoLoris & Doug T.
MaryHelene W.
Dr. Bob & Carole W.
Suzi M.
Judy B.
Diana N.
Pete & Zach Schm.
Cristi Ch.

For Peace/Comfort

Harry H.
Donna G.
Carol K.
Bob & Kristi L.
Marian McG.
DeLane R.
Marilyn N.
Igor & Rita S.

For Those Serving

Meghan H.
Brian H.
Peter K.



The Times They Are a-Changin’

On February 15, our County Health Department revised its rules for group gatherings. Particular attention was given in that update to questions of masking and vaccination status, with an eye on allowing people who have been fully vaccinated and boosted to resume more ‘normal’ lives. But what does that mean for our community?

There’s been some good news on the public health front in recent days. Vaccinations – in conjunction with appropriate boosters – have been shown to be quite effective in checking the spread of COVID-19. The Omicron variant – while far more contagious than previous strains of the virus – seems to be less severe in its complications in most incidences. And higher-quality masks and better-quality testing are increasingly available to those who wish them. Taken all together, those realities have led state and county officials to declare that “You’re no longer required to wear a mask if you’re vaccinated and boosted.”

But as we’ve all learned over the course of the past two years, such declarations come with caveats and asterisks and exceptions. Are we going to require proof of vaccinations as people enter our buildings? Are we going to maintain a register for contact-tracing purposes? Are we going to take temperatures like they do at your doctor’s office? Are we going to make accommodation for those of us (and especially our younger kids) who are unable to be vaccinated at present?

With all those questions and caveats in play, it’s quite a challenge to know just what to do, but at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee, Pastor John laid out our pandemic ‘game plan’ for the months of Spring 2022:

In Worship:

- Worshipers are expected to wear facemasks in our sanctuary, except when at the altar rail to receive Holy Communion.
- Worship leaders may be unmasked (with vaccinations and boosters) so as to enhance verbal/vocal communication.
- Facemasks will be available in the Narthex for those who need them.
- Effective March 6, 2022, we will return to the weekly distribution of Holy Communion in the context of our worship services!

In Fellowship:

- Coffee Fellowship will be served in the Center for Ministry following worship.
- Efforts will be made to ensure the free flow of fresh air in the gathering room.
- Participants are encouraged to ‘mask up’ when not actively eating / drinking.
- Participants are encouraged to take advantage of our lovely outdoor patio as a place to share conversation and a cup of coffee!

In Education:

- Tuesday evening Zoom Adult Education will continue through May 2022.
- Pastor John’s new hybrid New Testament 101 class allows participants to attend both in-person and virtually.
- Confirmation classes are being held, with all youth and adult participants being vaccinated (and boosted are appropriate.)

A Word from Pastor John



The County changed their rules again! It would appear that we don’t have to wear masks indoors any more ... if we’re all vaccinated, if we’re all boosted, if we check vaccination cards, if ... if ... if! But just because we ‘can’, does it mean we ‘should’? How — and why — we adjust those protocols is related to the subject of ‘Ethics’ — and specifically the application of our Christian ethics in real life.

The Bible is chock-a-block full of ethical guidance. Much of it is in the Old Testament — and some of it is in the New. Some of it seems ‘conservative and ‘narrow-minded’ — and some of it seems ‘liberal’ and ‘expansive’. But how do we know which biblical words and what sentiments to apply to a given ethical conundrum?

For me, the foundational ethical directives of Holy Scripture are these:

- ◆ *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (Jesus’ words in Mark 12:30-31)*
- ◆ *“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.” (Saint Paul’s words in Galatians 5:13)*

Together, those two passages invite us to base our ethical decisions less on ‘What is good for me?’ and more on ‘What is good for my neighbor?’ In fact, it was those verses which led Martin Luther to create his own understanding of ethics as “Faith active in love.”

It is those passages which guide our thinking as we walk through this phase of the pandemic. We will continue to encourage mask wearing in worship not because we like the way we look in masks, but because some in our community (and particularly our youngest members) cannot — as of yet — be vaccinated. We will continue to wear masks in worship because we don’t want to require proof of vaccinations and boosters from any and all who might wish to enter our worship space. We will continue to wear masks because we don’t want to stigmatize those who — by medical condition or personal choice — have elected not to be vaccinated. We will continue to wear masks in worship because it is one way in which we can say to one another “I’m going to put you and your well-being and your comfort ahead of my own.”

Sometimes there’s a cost associated with ‘loving your neighbor’. In this case, the cost of that love is the inconvenience of wearing a mask. But that minor discomfort pales in comparison to the inconvenience Jesus endured when he put our needs above his own that we might know the love of God.

Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus our Lord!

In faith and in love! Pastor John



It's Not Too Late to Sign Up for Our Drive-Thru Crab Feed

We cannot celebrate an 'in-person' Crab Feed event this year, but we know that you really, really want a hearty crab dinner AND we know that you really want to support our community-ministry partners, Holy Shepherd Christian Preschool and LARC (the Lamorinda Adult Respite Center.) So join us on the weekend of Saturday, March 12 / Sunday, March 13 for our first-ever "Drive-Thru Crab Feed"!

Due to the relative abundance and availability of Dungeness crab this year in local waters, we're excited to be offering first-quality crab direct from the docks of North Beach! And your \$75 event-ticket gets you a full crab meal for a single person, including 3 lbs. of cracked/cleaned crab, fresh bread, a serving of pasta salad, a fresh-baked cookie and condiments! (Additionally, each meal comes with a free raffle ticket for some outstanding raffle items!)

Swing by our parking lot between 2p and 4p on Saturday, March 12 (or between 10:30a and 11:30a on Sunday, March 13) where you'll be greeted by our Crabby Crew! They'll hand you your prepackaged / bundled meal kit so that you can take it home and dig in! Additionally, they'll make sure that you've got all the raffle tickets you need!

Pre-ordering is REQUIRED! To ensure that your crab meals are ready and waiting for you, ALL meal orders must be placed by Sunday, March 6th! There will be NO day-of-event sales. To order, visit our website at www.holyshepherd.org or contact Cristi in the church office at (925) 254-3422.



Make note of our worship schedule for Holy Week 2022 as you prepare your household plans for Easter!

Palm Sunday — April 10th
Worship at 9:30 am

Maundy Thursday — April 14th
Worship at 7:00 pm

Good Friday — April 15th
Worship at 7:00 pm

Easter Sunday — April 17th
Contempo Worship at 8:30 am
Traditional Worship at 10:00 am

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