

# The Shepherd's *staff*

THE NEWSLETTER OF HOLY SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH — LENT 2026  
433 MORAGA WAY, ORINDA, CALIFORNIA — WWW.HOLYSHEPHERD.ORG — (925)254-3422

## The Season of Lent Arrives

*Lent is the 40-day period of preparation which begins with Ash Wednesday and leads the days of Holy Week — and our shared remembrance of those events which changed our lives and our world forever. For nearly 1700 years, Christians have practiced "Lent" (a Latin word meaning 'slow down') as a way to prepare ourselves to face the horrifying news of Good Friday and great news of Easter.*

At least a handful of times over the course of the next six weeks, I'm going to hear a very familiar question: "Just what is this whole Lent thing, Pastor John?"

Perhaps we should begin by clarifying what Lent is NOT. Lent is NOT a divine diet plan. It is NOT about giving up chocolate nor is it about eating fish on Fridays. Lent is NOT abstaining from your favorite vice or even taking on a particular devotional rigor. Jesus made clear his view of such behaviors when he said "When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it sure won't make you a saint. If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly."

Rather, the spirit of Lent is found in a story Jesus told about a holier-than-thou fellow and a no-good tax-collector who went to worship one day. The pious man prayed: "Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like that tax man." Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the back pew, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, "God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner." Jesus commented that it was the tax man, not the other guy, who went home made right with God, for if you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face.

Lent IS about embracing the spirit of that humble tax collector. It's about being honest about who we are, who we're not, and the ways in which we have fallen short of God's best hopes for us. And its about asking for help from the One who IS 'all that' precisely because we know we aren't 'all that'. Lent is an attitude of honesty and humility, and at the same time one of quiet joy, knowing that our sins have been forgiven by God. Lent is that long, slow walk to the cross, wherein we discover just how serious our brokenness is, and just how wonderful God's love is.

In love and joy and peace, Pastor John

## WEEKLY EVENTS SCHEDULE

*We encourage you to join  
in!*

**Sundays at 9:30 am** — In-person worship with Holy Communion happens in our Sanctuary.

**Sundays at 9:30 am** — Our in-person worship services are "Live-Streamed" via Facebook @HSLCOrinda.

**Sundays at 10am** — Sunday School for Kids happens twice monthly following KidTalk. (Upcoming dates are February 22, March 8 and March 22!)

**Sundays at 10:30 am** — Coffee Fellowship takes place in the CFM following our worship service.

**Sundays at noon** — Our 'Worship Video' is available at [www.holyshepherd.org](http://www.holyshepherd.org).

# Ministry Update: Holy Shepherd Community Preschool

*Because — sometimes — when it rains, it really does pour!*

As noted in our January newsletter, a freak rainstorm over Christmas-break overwhelmed our exterior drainage systems, and flooded one bathroom and two classrooms in our preschool. At the Church Council meeting on February 11th, Congregational President Joan Kiekhaefer and Pastor John provided an encouraging update regarding the repair and restoration efforts.

- Steve Swanback coordinated improvement work on the V-ditch and exterior drainage systems behind Gregersen Hall with Bay Area Drainage. He since reported that all exterior work has been completed, and that he was VERY pleased with BAD's efforts and their generosity in going "above and beyond" to get things right.
- Pastor John took the lead in working with painting contractor Steve Rubenstein to replace/repair sheetrock in the preschool classrooms and to repaint the rooms which had been damaged by flooding. He reported that the work has been completed, again both quickly and at a very reasonable cost.
- President Kiekhaefer relayed news from Preschool Director Claire Peterson that the new flooring to replace the water-damaged carpet in the classrooms would be done over the Valentine's Day / Presidents' Day weekend.

All in all, though the ultimate cost of these repairs and renovations will be substantial, we're pleased that the congregation and preschool staffs were able to make operational accommodations that minimized the impacts of this flooding on all of our programs. Thanks, one and all, for your patience and understanding!



**Holy Shepherd Community Preschool** is a community/ministry partnership of our congregation — established in 2023 as a merger of Holy Shepherd Christian Preschool and St. Mark's Community Preschool.

We currently serve more than fifty local Lamorinda families with quality care and educational programming in a loving and affirming environment. *(And — yes — we're still working on a new logo!)*



## Late Feb. & March

### BIRTHDAYS

Barbara P. — 2/15  
Marci B. — 2/17  
Alanna L. — 2/18

Austin Mc. — 2/18  
John G. — 2/21  
Isaiah K. — 2/23  
Nadine C. — 2/26  
Stacey R. — 2/28  
Karen R-K — 2/29  
Lisa V. — 3/5  
Marisa Ch. — 3/6  
Mary Helene W. — 3/14  
Won K. Y. — 3/27

### Our heartfelt sympathies go out to:

Pastor John and Bethany Valentine at the passing of Bethany's brother — Dr. Mark Zuspan (who had been living at a care facility in Walnut Creek for the past three years.)

LARC Program Director Kathleen Januszewski and her family at the passing of her father — Dr. Dean Mason (who had been living in Orinda for the past four years.)

## PRAYER list...

"Prayer isn't about us getting God to see things from our perspective. It's about God getting us to see things from God's perspective, and about moving us from a place of self-focus to one of community."

**For Those Serving**  
Meghan and Brian P.

### For Healing and Hope

Donna B.  
Yvonne G.  
Louise H.  
Donna Z.  
Ed S.  
Judy B.  
Russ R.  
Joan B.  
Delane R.

### For Peace

Kristi L.  
Marian McG.  
MaryHelene W.  
Diana N.



Janine Crowe invites you to share in an online daily devotional program. Currently, they are using a six-week devotional program based on the Book of Acts — from a Christian women's organization called She Reads Truth.) Email Janine at [jlcrowe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jlcrowe@sbcglobal.net) for more info.

# ASH Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the starting point of the season of Lent. (For those who'd like to do the math, Ash Wednesday always falls 46 days before Easter — 40 days plus the 6 Sunday in

Lent — hence the hymn "O Lord, throughout These Forty Days. All of which means that this year, Ash Wednesday occurs on February 18th.)

We'll gather together for **Ash Wednesday Worship** in our sanctuary at **6pm on February 18th** for a time of mindful worship, joined by our friends and neighbors from Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette. Join us as we hear the poignant words "Remember that you are dust, and that to dust you shall return."

## CALENDAR ALERTS!

"Time Change" happens on **March 8th** this year. You'll want to remember to "Spring Forward" and set your clocks ahead one hour before you turn in on Saturday, March 7th so you 're not late for worship on Sunday, March 8th!

On **EASTER SUNDAY** (April 5, 2026), we'll gather for one combined service at 9:30am, with Easter brunch to follow in the CFM.

Steve Swanback — our hard-working Financial Secretary and Stewardship Chair — would like to extend his thanks to all who have completed a 2026 'Estimate of Giving' card and returned it to our Finance office in recent days. Your financial support of the work that we share is vital to the continued work of our congregation in this community and throughout the world, and your 'Estimate of Giving' cards better enable us to manage the church budget and to guide us as we support our ongoing ministerial programs or plan for new programs.

If you have yet to complete a 2026 Estimate of Giving, please contact Steve Swanback (our Financial Secretary), Cristi Chow (our Office Administrator) or Bridget Marko (our bookkeeper).



## A Lenten Journey Through the Gospel of John

*You're invited to join with others in our community in reading through the Gospel of John this Lent, and experiencing the rich meaning of this the story that changed the world. (Check them off each day as you go!)*

- 2/18 — **Ash Wednesday** — read John 1:1-18
- 2/19 — Thursday — read John 1:19-34
- 2/20 — Friday — read John 1:35-51
- 2/21 — Saturday — read John 2:1-12
- 2/22 — **The 1st Sunday in Lent** — read John 2:13-25
- 2/23 — Monday — read John 3:1-21
- 2/24 — Tuesday — read John 3:22-36
- 2/25 — Wednesday — read John 4:1-26
- 2/26 — Thursday — read John 4:27-42
- 2/27 — Friday — read John 4:43-54
- 2/28 — Saturday — read John 5:1-18
- 3/1 — **The 2nd Sunday in Lent** — read John 5:19-29
- 3/2 — Monday — read John 5:30-47
- 3/3 — Tuesday — read John 6:1-15
- 3/4 — Wednesday — read John 6:16-40
- 3/5 — Thursday — read John 6:41-71
- 3/6 — Friday — read John 7:1-24
- 3/7 — Saturday — read John 7:25-52
- 3/8 — **The 3rd Sunday in Lent** — read John 8:1-11
- 3/9 — Monday — read John 8:12-30
- 3/10 — Tuesday — read John 8:31-47
- 3/11 — Wednesday — read John 8:48-59
- 3/12 — Thursday — read John 9:1-17
- 3/13 — Friday — read John 9:18-41
- 3/14 — Saturday — read John 10:1-21
- 3/15 — **The 4th Sunday in Lent** — read John 10:21-42
- 3/16 — Monday — read John 11:1-16
- 3/17 — Tuesday — read John 11:17-37
- 3/18 — Wednesday — read John 11:38-57
- 3/19 — Thursday — read John 12:1-19
- 3/20 — Friday — read John 12:20-36a
- 3/21 — Saturday — read John 12:36b-50
- 3/22 — **The 5th Sunday in Lent** — read John 13:1-20
- 3/23 — Monday — read John 13:21-38
- 3/24 — Tuesday — read John 14:1-17
- 3/25 — Wednesday — read John 14:18-31
- 3/26 — Thursday — read John 15:1-11
- 3/27 — Friday — read John 15:12-27
- 3/28 — Saturday — read John 16:1-11
- 3/29 — **Palm Sunday** — read John 16:12-33
- 3/30 — Monday of Holy Week — read John 17:1-26
- 3/31 — Tuesday of Holy Week — read John 18:1-18
- 4/1 — Wednesday of Holy Week — read John 18:19-40
- 4/2 — Maundy Thursday — read John 19:1-16a
- 4/3 — Good Friday — read John 19:16b-30
- 4/4 — Holy Saturday — read John 19:31-42
- 4/5 — **Easter Sunday** — read John 20:1-18

# OUR 2026 DRIVE-THRU CRAB FEED IS HAPPENING!

Our annual 'Drive-Thru Crab Feed' is scheduled for Saturday, February 21st (2:00p to 4:00p) and Sunday, February 22nd (10:30a -11:30a) in support of Holy Shepherd's community ministries. Each meal is priced at \$75 (and includes a \$50 tax-deductible receipt.)

Each Crab Meal includes 3 lbs. of local Dungeness crab (freshly-caught/cracked/cleaned of course!), along with some fresh-baked Semifreddi's bread, a serving of tasty pasta salad and a fresh-baked cookie for dessert!

Food Pickup — Swing by our parking lot at 433 Moraga Way between 2p and 4p on Saturday, February 21 (or after worship on Sunday, February 22) where you'll be greeted by our Crabby Crew! They'll hand you your pre-packaged / bundled meal kit so that you can take it home and get to eating some tasty, tasty crab!



Contact Cristi Chow in the Church Office or visit [www.holyshepherd.org](http://www.holyshepherd.org) for more information  
PLEASE NOTE THAT PRE-ORDERING BY THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19th IS REQUIRED!

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