

ST. JOHN'S NEWSLETTER



BUILT ON CHRIST OUR CORNERSTONE

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Hearing/Handicapped Assistance Available

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GROWING IN CHRIST'S FAMILY -In God's Grace - In God's Service

"Christian Witnessing Part I: Some (Sobering) Realities"

Witnessing can be a daunting, even an overwhelming task to many (most?) Christians. It is hard (at least for most of us) to witness to unbelievers in general, harder when they are those who have fallen away from the Church, harder still when they are close friends or family members, and hardest of all when those same family and friends still call themselves Christians but, tragically, we know better based upon their words and deeds. Yes, witnessing can seem to be both a horrific and, many times, impossible task. So we like to hide behind excuses such as, "witnessing is for pastors and the Evangelism committee," "witnessing is for those who have 'the spiritual gift of evangelism,'" or maybe just something like, "I'll just mess it up if I open my mouth," any sort of pretext that leaves witnessing *to somebody else*. Yet, try as we might to believe such, deep down we know better. We know that witnessing of Christ is not only for some people, but is a part of the calling to be a disciple of Christ Jesus.

So knowing witnessing cannot be avoided, people want the "magic wand" or, perhaps more appropriate, the "magic words" for evangelism. You know what I mean, the three questions, the eight statements, the five Bible passages, *whatever makes witnessing both easy and assured*. And believe me when I tell you that it isn't just lay members who wish for such, but every pastor and professional church worker do as well. But there simply is no such thing, for if there was the whole world would be Christians! And so we note that the so-called "tried and true methods" of yesterday often seem to no longer work as effectively as they once did. Yet, even those methods weren't "magic" since not everyone became Christians when they were first being used either.

And that leads us to another sobering reality of witnessing: it doesn't always work. For some people, the path of coming to faith or returning to faith requires many various people speaking numerous times, the majority of which may never know that their witnessing played a part. In addition, we have to recognize the sad truth that not everyone will be converted or converted again, and sometimes a person who was converted or reconverted through our witnessing (at least in part) falls away again, maybe permanently. While we wish, and God truly desires, that hell will be empty except for the demons, we sadly recognize that the Bible teaches otherwise.

So the facts are threefold: 1) witnessing is for all of us, 2) there is no surefire method, thus 3) our witnessing may, earthly speaking, fail to produce results, both immediately and possibly ever. Yet we dare not hesitate to do such as the fact is that nothing less than people's eternal destination is at stake. But that only makes witnessing more daunting than ever as we are left wondering if we are doomed to flop and flail (even fail!) on our own *when heaven or hell is on the line*. Thanks be to God that is *not* the case at all!

There is theology that helps us understand our roles as witnesses, Biblical truths and practical guidance for our witnessing, and a tremendous promise backing our witnessing. Therefore, in the next few articles we shall look at witnessing of Christ Jesus to others and, with God's blessing, grow in both confidence and urgency as faithful witnesses to our Savior, who is also the Savior of those to whom we are witnessing.

Your fellow witness in Christ,

Pastor Nerud

A Look at the Lutheran Confessions

Last month we saw what God did to save us who are lost in sin, the sending of His Son into human flesh to live, die and rise for us. Now we confess what Jesus' sacrifice has done for us and how we personally receive the benefits of His sacrifice. This article is the heart of the Gospel message and a historic saying in the Lutheran Church is that the Church stands or falls on the article of justification. It is true, since if this article is corrupted, the entire saving work of Jesus is covered over and the certainty of our salvation is clouded.

Augsburg Confession Article IV: Justification¹

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified² for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe³ that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins.⁴ God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4 [3:21-26; 4:5]).

Apologetics Article: Earth's inner core shouldn't exist!⁵

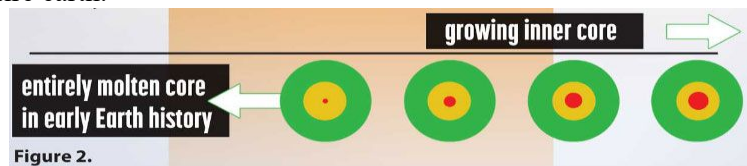
Since the 1930s, observations of earthquake-generated seismic waves have indicated that the earth has a liquid outer core and a solid inner core.

Now a team of researchers from Case Western Reserve University has concluded that our planet's "inner core should not exist at all."^a In a paper titled, 'Earth's inner core nucleation paradox'^b they explain that the previously unaccounted for 'nucleation energy barrier' (see below) puts a seemingly unassailable hurdle in front of the naturalistic explanation for the inner core's formation.

The evolutionary story of the earth's formation has it beginning as a very hot molten ball. So, it is also postulated that the earth's nickel-iron inner core solidified ('froze') as the molten ball of the earth cooled (see fig. 2). Note that the earth's surface experiences much less pressure than the earth's core. So, the freezing temperature of Iron at the core is much higher than its freezing temperature at the surface (1538°C).

For a liquid to turn into a solid without an artificial nucleation site (e.g. a foreign particle) present, its temperature needs to drop below the standard freezing point. This extra drop in temperature required is known as the 'nucleation energy barrier' (NEB), and its effect can be observed in the clouds—for water drops to turn to ice without dust particles acting as nucleation sites, the temperature needs to fall below -35°C (-31°F).

Although nucleation theory has been discussed and tested for the last 100 years, it had not previously been applied to the formation of the earth's inner core. By including the NEB, the Case Western University team calculated that the earth's liquid metallic core would need 1,000°C of cooling below the standard freezing point before it could crystallize—which would take far too long for evolutionary core formation models to work. The time needed for the formation of the inner core blows out beyond the expected 1-billion-year age to at least 10 billion years, even longer than the alleged 4.5-billion-year age of the entire earth.



The inner core's formation and growth (see fig. 2—as the earth cools, more of the outer core freezes onto the inner core) are also essential to the naturalistic explanation of the earth's magnetic field. This is an important shield against harmful radiation from the sun, without which life on Earth would be impossible!

Hence the conundrum for long-age earth formation theories; the inner core's existence is baffling, a paradox.

With so much at stake, the Case Western team attempts to rescue the naturalistic explanation of the inner core's formation by suggesting that a nucleation seed could have made its way into the core, thus lowering the nucleation barrier. However, this seed would need to survive all the way to the center without melting, so it would need to be *huge*—a radius of about 10 km (6 miles). The Case Western team conclude that there is no known feasible mechanism to achieve this.

However, there is no paradox when we start with the biblical position on origins, that the earth did not form over vast ages through natural processes; God created it (and its core) during Creation Week.

References and notes

- a. Specktor, B., Earth's inner core shouldn't technically exist; livescience.com, 9 Feb 2018.
- b. Huguet, L., Van Orman, J.A., Hauck, S.A., Willard, M.A., Earth's inner core nucleation paradox, *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, **487**(201):9–20, 2018.

¹ *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, 2nd Edition*; Paul McCain, Ed. CPH, 2006.

² To be justified is a judicial verdict. It is both a declaration of "not guilty" for the sinner and, more, a declaration of "righteous."

³ To believe is to have faith, hence "justified by Christ's sake, *through faith*."

⁴ This is the "vicarious satisfaction," which means Jesus' substitutionary payment for the debt of our sins.

⁵ By Scot Devlin, January 2020; <https://creation.com/inner-core-conundrum>



Then Lenten season begins with Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021. We will gather at 7 pm for Divine worship and Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday and the Order of Evening Prayer from the 1998 Hymnal Supplement will be utilized for the following 5 Wednesday evenings. Our meditations for these services will be on “The Letters to the Churches in Revelation”. Prayerfully worshiping at these special services will be a priority for you and your family. Special devotional booklets will be available for each family to use in their homes.

We are hoping and planning to serve light suppers before each Wednesday evening service. These suppers will be served from 5:15 – 6:30 pm. Watch the bulletins for further details. A free-will donation will be taken at each supper. The total of these donations, along with donations from the Easter Breakfast, will be given to our sister church, Cristo Rey.

HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS

The 2021 contribution envelopes are out. Please pick yours up when at church. If you were not assigned envelopes and desire them for your weekly contributions, please let Terri Hock know. She will get a box to you.

The 2021 ‘Membership Directory’ is being updated for printing in early January. Please contact Terri Hock if you have changes or additions to your information or other family members. It would be appreciated to contact Terri ASAP.

BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

All high school age and adults are invited to participate in any or all Bible studies offered at St. John’s. We are thankful we can gather together around God’s Word. You are welcome to attend anytime.

- Sunday morning Adult Bible class – 8:45am in the Fellowship Hall. Topic is the book of Ecclesiastes.
- Men’s Bible Study – 7 pm the first Thursday of each month. Topic is, “The Genesis Academy”.
- Adult Bible study – 1:30 pm the third Thursday of each month. A new topic (TBD) will begin with the February class. All are encouraged to join us for this study.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Sherry Wechsler
7 Brennan Lambin
8 Robert Erdman
16 Sean Helke



16 Caleb Nash
19 Lisa Allison
23 Kristin Mosher
23 Carmen Sette

25 Sarah Hock
25 Joel Jorgensen
25 Joseph Schillinger
26 Carolyn Werner

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

12 Brent/Laura Anderson (2011) - 10 yrs



15 Alex/Lindsey Gustafson (2014) - 7 yrs

FEBRUARY BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

6 Teresa Hock
7 Kelly Helg
7 Mary Jayne Nash
8 Carson Mitchell



13 Laura Anderson
13 Sara Yerkey
18 Nicole Magerkurth
25 Lauren Curry

25 Emily Marckese
26 Kyra Nash
00 Cathy Schillinger
00 Sherry Wechsler

OFFICE

- Please call the office or Pastor if you desire private communion during this time.
- Please call the office when someone is ill, hospitalized, or homebound.
- Please use the email addresses below.

Terri Hock – churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org

Website address – www.stjohnsgeneseo.org

Facebook pages: <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> (church page)

All Sunday services are ‘Live’ streamed at 10am on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/>)
These streamed services are posted to our church website (churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org) the following day.

THANK YOU!

As I needed to get January’s newsletter “to the printer” before leaving on vacation, it was completed earlier in December than normal and so I did not include a thank you note last month. However, my family and I sincerely thank all of you for the gifts, prayers, support, and love that you have extended to us this last Christmas and over the last year. They are very appreciated as are each of you!

Pastor, Heidi, Sarah, Nicole and Katrina Nerud

On behalf of the Robert Esterlein family, we wish to thank each and every one of the parishioners of St. John's Lutheran Church for their love, friendship, support and especially their prayers. It is so appreciated. Our family thanks Rev. Nerud for the heartwarming eulogy he gave at Bob's service. The words were very comforting.

I am at peace knowing my beloved Bob is with our Heavenly Father. Thanks be to God my Bob is no longer in pain. God bless each of you.

With love and friendship, Lois Esterlein

ALTAR FLOWERS

Flowers will **NOT** adorn our Altar during the somber season of Lent. Easter lilies will be used for Easter Sunday. Watch the bulletins for cost and sign-up information for the lilies.

Celebrate a special occasion with flowers for our Sunday worship services. Sign the flower chart, which is on the bulletin board next to the rest rooms. Put \$20 in a yellow envelope (found by the chart). Fill in the date you want to provide flowers and the occasion/memory and place envelope in the offering plate. The rest is done for you.



"I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).

Without commands or even arm-twisting, St. Paul encourages, even challenges, the Church in Corinth to demonstrate the sincerity of their faith by their generosity in giving. He does this because giving generously is a gift of the Spirit given to us through the Gospel.

St. Paul wrote: "But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7). In other words, just as we grow in faith and speech and knowledge of eternal things by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, so also do we grow in giving from the same Spirit through the same Word.

The problem is that the grace of generosity often grows cold in us. It's not so much that we stop giving, but we don't put it first. We treat it like all the other bills that must be paid. It becomes a chore, just one more thing to check off a list of things to do. That empties it of its spiritual power and robs us of the joy that Christ and the Scriptures assign to it.

On top of that, since this generosity is linked to faith and knowledge of divine things, a lack of excelling in giving is sure sign that our faith and knowledge of God are under attack as well.

Thus St. Paul points to the foundation of generosity: the generosity of Christ Himself. Even though He was rich, He became poor so that we who are poor might become rich. Thus, the incarnation, suffering, and death of our Lord on the cross is the reason, source, and driving force for our generosity in giving to the church.

And since Christ who was rich became poor so that we might be rich in His grace—of which generous giving is part—so we also who are rich in His grace can excel in pressing His grace into service toward the gracious work of the church.

Pay attention to what you give to the church so that you may excel at it. And if you find that your heart has grown cold or indifferent toward it, immerse yourself in God's Word. Read it at home. Attend Bible Class. Hear and listen to it preached in the Divine Service. Be reminded of what Christ has done for you in His incarnation, suffering, and death. For this will strengthen your faith and knowledge. And where that excels, so will the grace of giving excel also.

EVANGELISM

God comes to us through His Word and Sacraments during worship at church, and then the family's devotional life at home keeps its members connected to those gifts all week long. This routine creates a lifelong rhythm that helps keep kids in the faith throughout all stages of their lives. - Zech. 4:10: "Do not despise this small beginning, for the eyes of the Lord rejoice to see the work, begin." LCMS.Org/Making Disciples for Life

(Be sure to get your Lenten devotion booklet. This is a great way to begin the special time with your family members.)



SUNDAY SCHOOL



We are blessed with two men teachers, Joel Werling and Larry Kane. We are still looking for several who would serve as substitute teachers for those times a regular might be absent. Please contact Sandy Rahn or Becky Ague if you are interested.

Lenten devotional materials will be sent home with your children in the next several weeks. We encourage you to use them as a family during the Lenten season.

Soon we will begin looking at VBS materials. We hope that this year we can go back to a normal VBS program. Pray about this and also where God would lead you to help out.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Norma Daniels – Transferred to the Church Triumphant, December 26, 2020

Patricia Johnson – Transferred to the Church Triumphant, December 26, 2020

Robert Esterlein – Transferred to the Church Triumphant, January 9, 2021

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

We have a 'Prayer Chain'. All prayer requests can be made to the office and a special prayer will be sent to those prayer warriors.

'What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer'!



Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16b

Our Infrequent Attendees – pray the Holy Spirit bring them to the understanding of their need to be in regular worship in church on Sunday and that we as their brothers and sisters in Christ would reach out to them.

Our LWML Chapter – that God would continue to bless their work.

Sunday school – pray the Holy Spirit would direct and guide the students to a better understanding of God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ and that all parents would be diligent in bringing their children each Sunday.

Women's Ministry - we pray that a ministry would begin which would speak to the needs of all women.

Youth – pray the Holy Spirit would provide the means to work with our youth to keep them faithful to their confirmation promises. Bless and increase their numbers.

Elderly/Homebound - pray that this congregation would continually remember our Elderly and Shut-ins and minister to their special needs.

Stephen/Care Ministry – pray that God would guide us to the needs of others and supply willing people who will reach out to help provide for those needs.

Confirmation Students – pray that they will be eager to study, learn and grow in the teachings of the Lutheran church and their faith. May they see this is the beginning of a life lived for Jesus.

PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH COUNCIL/VOLUNTEERS

During the month of February, we are encouraged to pray for those who are part of the Council Executive Board: Don Hock – Congregational Chairman, Dave Schmedt – Congregational Vice Chairman, and Sheila Magerkurth – Congregational Secretary. May they be guided by our Heavenly Father to serve with willing hearts, patience and love. May all they do bring praise and glory to the name of Jesus Christ.

REMEMBERING THOSE IN NEED!

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy these members of St. John's:

Drew Schillinger

Arlyn Helke

Derek Helke

Jim Dahl

Jim Rahn

Lois Esterlein

Lynne Johnson

John Erdman

Lillian Hock

Carolyn Werner

Fred Magerkurth

Linda Aper

Carolyn Wildermuth

Betty Firch

Paula Chapa

OUR EXTENDED FAMILY/FRIENDS:

Andrew, Sarah, John, Daniel Hill (seminary student)

Don Eggers (son of a friend of Marilyn Woods)

Mike Miller (friend of Bob & Sherry Wechsler)

Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

John & Anita Causling (missionaries in Kenya)

Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal, former LFC)

Pam Bennett (friend of Dan/Roselyn Maeltzer)

Karen Wright (wife of Pastor Gary Wright)

Virginia Miller (mother of Jamie Werling)

Casey Powers (husband of Lisa (Bear) Powers)

Kelly Wechsler (cousin of Bob Wechsler)

Kathleen VanDe Rostyne (friend of Bob/Sherry Wechsler)

Joseph Baamonde (friend of Paula Mooney)

Clinton Kane Family (son of Sandy Kane)

Jim Neumann (father-in-law of Brad Gehn's son)

Harley Hepner (cousin of Sarah Hock)

Delores Gonion (mother of Michele Barry)

Glen McAdam (friend of Bob/Sherry Wechsler)

Justine Fowler (son of Kathy/Kurt Gehn)

Lonnie Anderson (employee of Brad Gehn)

Laurie Sanford (sister of Jan Dahl)

Carol Leaneagh (sister of Jan Dahl)

MILITARY, THOSE SERVING & THEIR FAMILIES:

Mandy & Richard Davila (daughter & son-in-law of Dale & Linda Aper)

Luke & Nicole Thompson (son & daughter-in-law of John & Kindra Thompson)

Ken Willeford (husband of Alicia Willeford)
Tyler Hynes (nephew of Mark Ague)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Flynn)
Zachary & Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Lois Esterlein)

NEWS YOU CAN USE

January 2021



Many people have no clear sense of purpose. Maybe this is because contemplating our purpose in life may leave us feeling like we have failed. The “should have’s” and “what if’s” can discourage us and keep us stuck without a sense of purpose, and feeling unfulfilled, discontent, and unworthy of God’s blessings. So, how do we identify our purpose, embrace it, and successfully live it in meaningful and significant ways?

The first thing is to realize that God has already given us a purpose. Rick Warren wrote in *The Purpose Driven Life*, our purpose is to “give God glory and share His story.” How we specifically live out God’s purpose is determined by the context of our life and by the gifts, talents, and strength he gives us. As life changes, how we live out our purpose will change. An 88 year-old may live out his purpose differently than a 48 year old or an 18 year old. But each one’s life is made meaningful by their sense of purpose.

Secondly, put away regrets. We should do three things with past mistakes: learn from them, let go of them, and live what we have learned. Regret is different from guilt. Regret is buried within us and remains there, weighing us down and holding us back. We can bring our guilt to God where it is taken away by Christ’s forgiveness. He frees us to move forward from our mistakes and failures.

Thirdly, accept that we are never complete. We continually learn and grow, often from our mistakes. Making mistakes is part of growing. The person who never makes mistakes accomplishes nothing and never learns anything. Martin Luther wrote: “A Christian is never in a state of completion but always in a process of becoming.”

Finally, trust that God works in us, through us, and even in spite of us. A friend of mine likes to say: I take comfort in knowing that I have insufficient strength to ruin God’s plans. God graciously allows us to carry out his purpose with his strength and by His blessing. Colossians 1:29 says To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

God cannot fail. He can turn our failures and mistakes into something good in order to fulfill his purpose in us. We can joyfully live out our purpose. And God will one day graciously say to us: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

Rev. Jeff Harter

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO SHARE, CTSFW – Continuing Education Class

Trinity Lutheran Church- 1960 E. Johns Ave Decatur, IL - June 21-23 2021

“The Book of Jeremiah: Overcoming Life’s Sorrows: Instructor- Dr. R. Reed Lessing – Professor of Theology and Ministry and the Director of the Center of Biblical Studies at Concordia -St. Paul.

Based upon Dr. Lessing’s forthcoming book on Jeremiah (Concordia Publishing House, September 2021), this course will be a combination of in-depth study and practical application—all based upon one of the prophet’s major themes: surviving life’s sorrows. Jeremiah offers a hope and future in Christ to all who have experienced a major disaster in life. (For cost and additional information contact email Rev. Matthew Versemann at pastorversemann@msn.com or by phone 217-420-0586)

LCMS- Virtual Life Conference - March 19-20, 2021

Cost: For \$20, you get access to the event live. For \$40, you get that, plus ongoing access to the recordings for another 90 days. Each participant must register individually. See the following link for additional information and to register. https://www.lcms-life.org/?r_done=1.

Camp CILCA “Life Changing, Life Long, Life Eternal” Campaign Update





In 2018 Camp CILCA launched the Life Changing, Life Long, Life Eternal capital campaign with the goal of raising \$1,000,000 to expand the Dining Hall, add a full-time program director, eliminate debt, and add a significant amount of money to CILCA's endowment fund. The generosity of God's people abounded and two of these goals were met in full. The \$60,000 mortgage was paid in full and the endowment fund is up to \$100,000. The funds from this endowment go toward providing "camperships" for children who might not otherwise be able to afford a full week at camp.

While 2020 was a tumultuous year, CILCA was able to break ground on the Dining Hall expansion in September. As of January 11, the exterior frame is nearly completed, and interior work continues. With the Lord's blessings the work will be completed by Spring. Once the Dining Hall is completed the program director position will become the next priority.

Our Lord has been truly generous, and His grace has made this all possible, working through His people. "Thank you" to all who have prayed, donated, and volunteered. You are a gift from the Lord.

FEBRUARY

2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	2 	3 Confirmation 5 pm	4 Elders 6 pm Men's Bible Study 7 pm	5	6
7 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am Voters' Assembly 11 am	8 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	9 LWML 1 pm Council 6:30 pm	10 Confirmation 5 pm	11	12	13
14 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am	15 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	16	17 Confirmation 5 pm Lenten Supper 5:15 Worship/Comm 7 pm	18 Bible Study 1:30 pm 	19	20
21 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am	22 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	23 SS Teachers' 6:30 pm	24 Confirmation 5 pm Lenten Supper 5:15 Worship 7 pm	25 	26	27
28 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am	ELDER Mike Dahl					



ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
8948 N 1900 AVE
GENESEO IL 61254-8941

Sunday school/Adult & Youth Bible Class - 8:45 am

Live Streaming each week on Facebook

Lenten Worship – 7 pm

February 17 and 24

WORSHIP SERVICES 10 am
(Communion -1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays of each month)

Lent

