



## ***From Pastor Jessica***

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We will soon be entering the season of Lent. Don't think I can't see some of you already cringing. For some Lent is a four letter word, one best not spoken, much less observed. Following a season of light which has followed a season of celebration, the season of Lent seems such a downer. We want to pass right on by the hard work and make our way into the celebration of Easter, the day of the Resurrection of our Lord. Lilies and Alleluias!

Our observance of Lent goes back to the mid-fourth century. It is the 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter; the time reflecting the days that Jesus spent in the wilderness and Moses on the mountaintop. The tradition of not singing Alleluia during Lent goes back to the fifth century. The richness of church tradition and centuries of fellowship with other Christians are ours to experience in this church season.

The season of Lent was used by the early church as a time of baptismal preparation. For forty days the candidate would explore and learn what baptism meant and what it meant for the life of a Christian. Then, during the Easter Vigil (the service the night before Easter), the candidates would be baptized. We follow that tradition in the sense that we who are already baptized explore and rediscover what our baptismal life is and how it can be lived out. What *difference* does our baptism make in our lives? Maybe a question we'll be challenged by is "Does it make *any* difference?" We are so keen on seeing babies baptized and our young people affirm their baptism through Confirmation – then baptism must be important? Why? Spend some time with that this Lent. Hint: It's more than just salvation.

Others ask the question: why do we have to give something up? In a world of instant gratification and abundant self-indulgence, do we really need to ask this question? How many times do we not appreciate something until it is no longer there; how many things do we take for granted in our lives? However, giving things up isn't about deprivation. It's about simplifying our lives. Could it be that the time we take surfing the web, watching our favorite TV shows/soaps, gossiping on the phone might be better used sitting in prayer or reading scripture, engaging the Word of God. Do Lutherans and Presbyterians really spend much time engaging scripture outside of Sunday morning? If you can answer yes to this question – well, great! Keep it up. If you answer no to this question – give it a try, let the Spirit work on you and see what happens. If you need some help with this we have daily devotions provided by each of our churches: "Christ in our Homes" (ELCA) and "These Days" (PC(USA)). These are daily guides to scripture and reflection.

When we look at our entire year of church seasons Lent is good thing for us. It gives us a structured time to examine our lives as Christians, to study what it means to be a baptized child of God, and to look at our lives. The journey we take in Lent is a journey that informs the life that we continue to live into the year. We walk with Jesus towards Jerusalem; gaining a deeper understanding of what it means to pick up our cross and follow. Remember, this journey to the cross ends in life!

*"I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so great as our God? Psalm 77: 11-13*

Shalom,  
Pastor Jessica

## ***Interim pastor joining our staff***

Rev. Thea Monson has signed a contract to do interim ministry work here in Tri-County Ministry. She plans to begin working among us on March 7, and is committed to staying in our parish until we get into a permanent staffing situation.

Pastor Thea will be coming from the lakes area of central Minnesota. She has 10 years of pastoral experience, and feels the call to interim ministry. Her husband is currently serving a congregation in Minnesota and will remain in that call.

The McVile parsonage will be Thea's home for her time here.

Pastor Thea's first day of preaching in our parish on Ash Wednesday, March 9.

## **First Communion Classes March 5 in Binford March 26 in Hannaford 10:00—Noon**

- Open to all elementary-age youth who wish to participate in the Lord's Supper.
- Parents may call Pastor Jessica with any questions.
- Pre-registration would be greatly appreciated so that preparations for the class may be made. Attend the class which is more convenient for you.
- Classes at additional sites will be offered as needed.

## ***Lent begins in March***

Lent 2011 begins with Ash Wednesday on March 9. Services of Holy Communion will be held that evening as follows:

- 5:30 Trinity Lutheran of Binford
- 7:00 Lutheran Church of McVile
- 7:00 Faith Lutheran of Hannaford
- 7:00 Grace of Grace City

For the following five weeks, Lenten services will be held Wednesday evenings at three locations:

- 5:30 Trinity Lutheran of Binford
- 7:00 Lutheran Church of McVile
- 7:00 Faith Lutheran of Hannaford

The Lenten services will include the Holden Evening Prayer, and then a video and discussion period. The videos are from the Nooma series, featuring Rob Bell. These videos are appropriate for discussion among all ages, youth and adult. A brief summary of the topics:

**“Lump”** (Topics: Guilt, Forgiveness, Shame, Unconditional Love, Hiding)

A lot of us have done things in our lives that we're ashamed of. But no matter how much what we've done has had an impact on the way other people feel about us or how we feel about ourselves, God loves us, and there's nothing we can do to change that.

**“Today”** (Topics: Letting Go, Moving On, The Past Today, Worry)

How much time and energy do we spend wishing things were how they used to be? Maybe we need to learn to embrace our past for what it is, in order to live our lives to the fullest, right here, right now.

**“Rhythm”** (Topics: Relationship, Harmony, Full Life, Compassion, Truth)

What does it mean to have a relationship with God? If God is an infinite spirit with no shape or form, how can we possibly relate to that? And what about Jesus? He came to show us how to live. Maybe the way we live every day, every single choice we make, determines how in tune with God we are.

**“Shells”** (Topics: Time, Balance, Values, Importance, Saying No)

Do you often find yourself saying, "I'm so busy" or "I just have so much to do"? Most of us find it hard to say no. Maybe saying no would be easier if we knew what it meant to say yes.

**“Matthew”** (Topics: Grief, Loss, Death, Mourning, Hope)

Suffering the loss of someone we love can be the most difficult thing in life to deal with. What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to feel? What might help us, is to understand how Jesus dealt with this kind of loss.

## **March at Red Willow Bible Camp**

### **Winter IMPACT Retreat**

Friday-Saturday, March 4-5  
Grades 7-9

(If you have not yet signed up for this retreat, you may register for the repeat that is scheduled for April 1-2, as the March retreat is full.)

### **Winter IGNITE Retreat**

Saturday-Sunday, March 12-13  
Grades 4-6

(Sunday School classes might want to attend this as a group.)

### **Radio Stars Concert**

Saturday, March 19  
Fund raiser for the camp  
El Zagel Center in Fargo  
Supper 5:00-6:30, Music 7:00-9:00  
Live and Silent Auctions

### **Looking ahead:**

#### **Day Play**

The elementary Day Play originally set for April 2 is being rescheduled.

### **Red Willow Ministries Annual Meeting**

Sunday, April 3 at 3:00

### **Vacation Bible School**

June 12-14 has been set as the date for VBS at the camp. If your church would like to be included in this VBS, please call Theresa at the TCM office, or call Becky Goetz at the camp.

### **Quilt Auction — Sunday, August 28**

Summer brochures have been mailed, and are also available in our churches.

For more information, call the camp or go to their website.

[www.redwillowbiblecamp.org](http://www.redwillowbiblecamp.org)

## **Confirmation news**

During Confirmation this year there are mid-month assignments. Most of these assignments have the Confirmands read a particular Bible story and then answer questions; the assignment is then discussed during the regular class session.

The January-February assignment focused on The Good Samaritan. Pastor Jessica shares with you the responses our youth gave to the final question.

*In your own words, what do you think Jesus is telling you through this story?*

- ◆ Help people in need.
- ◆ To love your neighbor as yourself.
- ◆ I think Jesus is telling us that we can help a person in need no matter who they are.
- ◆ Even if a person we don't like is in need of help we should help because it's the right thing to do.
- ◆ To be a good neighbor you have to be kind and loving to people. A man asked him how he could be a good neighbor, so Jesus told him what he thought.
- ◆ That if you see someone hurt you should try to help them out.
- ◆ That even if it is a person we don't know or dislike – help them out when they are in need of it.
- ◆ Everyone is equal so treat each other the same.
- ◆ That there are people who will help you when you get hurt.
- ◆ That we should help people in need.
- ◆ Give back to the ones that helped you.
- ◆ Don't ignore things help someone in need.
- ◆ Help people even if you don't like them.
- ◆ To love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Our confirmation class has two class sessions and one service project remaining in this class year. On May 7, they'll be working at the Great Plains Food Bank in Fargo. If there are people in the parish who would like to join them, please contact the TCM office in Binford.

## ***Tri-County Ministry Council update — February 9 meeting***

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** The following were elected for 2011:

- President – Kathy McCracken
- Vice President – Iris Brandt
- Secretary – Missy Erickson
- Treasurer – Brian Dinger

The Council extended a thank you to Connie Eslinger for serving on the TCM Council, and especially for assuming the presidency of the council during 2010.

**Interim Pastor:** Terry Brandt is in contact with prospective interim pastors. Theresa will be contacted by the Presbytery regarding Commissioned Lay Pastors who may be available for the interim period. The Executive Committee was given the authority to hire an interim pastor, based on the recommendation from the synod office.

The Council was advised that an interim pastor would not be available for a permanent call.

**Cooperstown Parsonage:** A letter will be sent from Tri-County Ministry Council to the Trinity congregation.

**Call Process:** Terry Brandt and Dale Shook explained the call process, as it relates to the END Synod and Presbytery of the Northern Plains. Discussion of whether staff configuration would be Lead/Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor, or Co-Pastors. Consensus leaned toward Lead and Associate Pastors.

Before the next TCM Council meeting, each congregation council/session will appoint a member and an alternate to the Call Committee. Also before the next meeting, each congregation will update its congregational profile, so that a Ministry Site Profile (ELCA) and a Church Information Form (PCUSA) may be compiled.

Terry Brandt advised that a youth could be part of the Call Committee. The youth representative would not necessarily have a vote on the committee.

**Confirmed Membership Numbers:** Congregations need to report their active confirmed membership number as of 1.1.11 to Theresa as soon as possible.

**Worship Scheduling:** Grace and Our Savior's/McHenry are both opting out of regular Lenten services. Grace asked for services on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The weekly Lenten services may be scheduled for both Wednesday and Thursday evenings, depending on staffing.

**Parsonage Policy:** Theresa and Pastor Jessica will contact other multi-point parishes for information on their parsonage policies.

**Staff Report:** Pastor Jessica thanked the council for their leadership during this time of transition, and thanked the congregations for their understanding, flexibility, and prayers.

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### ***Why does the church have the imposition of ashes?***

The early church adopted the use of ashes from the Jewish practice as an external sign of repentance. The following reasons are also listed:

- ◆ Ashes remind us of God's condemnation of sin, as God said to Adam, "Dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).
- ◆ Ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. They were used anciently in the absence of soap. On Ash Wednesday ashes are a penitential substitute for water as a reminder of our baptism.
- ◆ Ashes remind us of the shortness of human life, for it is said as we are buried: "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."
- ◆ Ashes are a symbol of our need to repent, confess our sins, and return to God.

If you wish to get more information about Ash Wednesday and the imposition of ashes visit the ELCA worship website:

<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/FAQs/Imposition-of-Ashes.aspx>

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***Tri-County Ministry News is published  
nine times per year: January,  
February, March, April, June, August,  
September, October, and November.***

**Town Hall**

**Sunday, March 20**

**1:30 p.m.**

**Trinity Lutheran Church in Binford**

An open discussion on the ELCA's proposed Social Statement on Genetics.

Discussion will be led by Bishop Bill Rindy and Rev. Kari Bahe of the END Synod, and by Dr. Per Anderson of Concordia College. Dr. Anderson is a member of the task force that authored the statement.

(This town hall was rescheduled from January 30.)

The proposed statement can be found at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org).

All are welcome.