

**Knowing God's Truth
Living God's Love
Spreading God's Word**

Calvary Lutheran Church

April 2026

Dear Friends in Christ,

From Ashes to Alleluia

Each year, the Church walks a sacred path—a journey that begins with ashes and ends in alleluias. From the solemn reminder on Ash Wednesday, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” to the triumphant proclamation on Easter morning, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!” we are drawn into the heart of the faith we confess. Lent began with humility. Ashes on our foreheads marked us with a sobering truth: we are sinners in desperate need of repentance. The world in which we live regularly encourages us to be self-reliant and self-justified, but Lent calls us to something different—we are called to honest confession. We are called to come before God **NOT** with excuses, but with empty hands, confessing our sin and pleading for His mercy.

And while there is brokenness and even death in the ashes, there is also amazing grace! It's true!

You see, Lent is not about earning God's favor or proving our devotion. It is about returning to the Lord who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13). It is a season where we hear again the comforting words of absolution, where God Himself declares that our sins are forgiven for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Having journeyed through Lent, we walked with Christ to the cross. We heard again and again the account of His suffering and death. Please know that this is not merely history lesson—but that it is the very heart of our salvation. Jesus bears our sin, carries our grief, and takes upon Himself the judgment we deserve. Yes, He who knew no sin became sin for us, and the cross shows us not just the seriousness of our sin, but also the immense depth of God's love for us.

As Lutherans, central to our Lutheran confession is the Theology of the Cross, where God reveals Himself **NOT** in power and glory and majesty as the world expects, but instead in weakness and humility and suffering. There, in the cross, is where we see most clearly who God is for us. Which is why the journey doesn't end at the cross.

After the silence of Holy Saturday comes the dawn of a new day. The giant rock is rolled away and the tomb is empty. The stench of death is absent because death has been defeated. Christ is risen!

Hence our alleluias! Easter isn't just a happy ending to a sad and troubling story. It is the victory of God over sin, death, the devil and hell. Easter's victory is the confirmation and blessed assurance that Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient, that our sins are truly forgiven, and that eternal life is ours.

Which is why Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday are not just something...some day...that we observe. No...from ashes to alleluias is something we live. It is the very stuff that courses through our veins of faith. For having been joined to Jesus' story in Baptism where we died and rose with Christ, our Christian life is one of daily repentance and renewal – dying daily to sin and rising daily to new life in Christ. It is receiving inwardly the very broken and bleeding body of Christ in the Eucharist where we are given life and salvation in the Lamb that was slain, while boldly living in the Faith in the face of a broken and sinful world, proclaiming Christ risen from the dead. Lent and Easter just have a way of making visible what is always true for the believer.

And so, we have journeyed through the ashes of Lent to the alleluias of Easter with confidence. Praise be to God that we do not remain in the ashes. That does not mean that we pretend that they aren't real. But, we know they don't remain because we have been carried by the promises of God in Christ Jesus through them – all the way to the empty tomb! And there is where we find our hope.

In Christ, our life doesn't end in death because sin doesn't get the final say. Our names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. That means, our story doesn't end in ashes...it ends with alleluias!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In Christian Love
Pastor Kessler



From the Elders

How to Keep a Pastor (or Manage a Vacancy)

The February issue of the *Lutheran Witness* (LW) reported that 1 in 5 LCMS congregations have a vacancy for a pastor. Whereas most congregations expect to fill their vacancy within 6 months, the LW advised congregations to expect the process to take at least 18 months. Rural areas can take even longer. This also is true outside the church, as experienced by one of your elders when he tried to fill a professional position in his office. Whether keeping a pastor or filling a vacancy, there are several things that each of us can do to make it easier.

The primary way to keep a pastor is to respect his privacy. Pastors are people just like you. They need their own time for themselves and their family. Sundays are not days off for pastors. Neither are Saturdays due to weddings, funerals and Bible Studies. Couples normally schedule weddings well in advance based on their schedules with the availability of a pastor (or church) maybe only as an afterthought. Funerals have less advance warning but have some flexibility. Remember pastors make plans, too, and might be out of town. Feel free to text anytime or to call and leave a voicemail, but do not expect them to drop everything to text or call back immediately. Afterall, would you want to be on call 24/7/365?

The next best way to keep a pastor or manage a vacancy is to step up and participate. The same issue of LW offered these tips for members of congregations –

- Be Flexible. Whether in your own schedule or your congregation's schedule, be willing to schedule your events, including service times, at an alternate time. Congregations with vacancies relying on a visiting pastor may be only one of multiple congregations that he serves.
- Get Involved. Not every event or meeting requires the presence of a pastor. Step up and be the one to schedule and plan an event, lead a prayer or teach Sunday School or a Bible study. Retaining or attracting a pastor is easier when the pastor does not have to do everything.
- Carry On. One may need to scale back the number or frequency of events, but do not cancel everything. Just as we should not use church for a once per week worship service, a congregation should not completely shut down except for weekly worship.
- Communicate. Keep everyone informed of the schedule for your activity or committee and the progress towards completing it. Use what works – emails, newsletters and announcements provide information to people. Use multiple methods as not everyone uses the same method.
- Explore Partnerships. Work with others on various activities. People from outside the congregation may be interested in participating, too.
- Love One Another. With or without a pastor, conflicts arise. Work on peace and cooperation. Show gratitude and respect. Treat others as you want to be treated.

- Pray. This should be the first thing one does, but being placed here on the list is a good reminder that all we do and are results from Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Remembering that “God is in control” cannot be overstated because we find it too easy to place us first when God is Number 1.

With our winter visitors leaving for the summer, take these tips with you and share them with your home congregations’ members. For more information on encouraging someone to become a church worker or pastor, supporting a LCMS university or seminary, or joining a Bible study, contact one of your elders (Albert Claude, Bruce Fenske, Ron Hill, Ryan Pope) or Pastor Kessler.



Safety/Security Team Report

Our Team Scripture verse is Nahum 2:1, “He who scatters has come up before your face. Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily.”

The February Church Clean-Up, in coordination with the City of Yuma Neighborhood Clean-Up, went very well! 28 of our Members and Visitors pitched in to organize, throw away, rearrange, clean, de-clutter, and scrub 10 “zones” in and around the property! THANK YOU to all who participated!

So far, we have coordinated with APS and Spectrum to raise the low-hanging wires in the back parking lot. APS removed one of their wires. Spectrum pulled theirs as tight as possible. CenturyLink is next. Please be cautious when parking near/under them.

Due to some alleged thievery from the Little Free Library, lights have been placed on and around for added visibility.

Currently, we are using only 2 of the 4 trash bins on our property. A request to the City has been made to take away the 2 extra bins from our property, saving us \$[13.25](#) each month on the trash bill. The City has assured the 2 bins will be picked up by the first week in April.

Sprague’s Sports will host another FREE US Law Shield Attorney Seminar about Using Physical and Deadly Force on Saturday, April 25 from 2-4pm. This is your chance to ask questions and learn about the Arizona laws related to self-defense from an actual defense Lawyer...for FREE!

Click the link to enroll:

<https://www.spragues.com/training.html>

Thank you!
Stay in the fight and remain vigilant!

Matt Dusek

A Double Blessing

I drove to Walgreens to pick up photos and parked my car on the east side of the store. When I walked around the corner of the building, I nearly ran into a young man who was squatting down on the sidewalk with his back leaned up against the wall. A backpack was next to him. He looked to be in his early twenties. I moved over to the far side of the sidewalk to keep my distance. Immediately, a silent voice spoke to me, "Ask him if he is hungry".

I know that voice....that still small voice that prompts me to do something, often something that makes me feel uncomfortable. Right away, some of my own thoughts popped into my head and suggested it might not be such a good idea. I'm a senior citizen. What about stranger danger? He could be on drugs. Something bad could happen. And isn't there a Bible verse that says, *Be ye comfortable*? No. That's not right! It's *Be ye kind*.

I knew it was the Holy Spirit because I've heard that voice many times before. It usually happens like this. I'm in the middle of doing life, when I'm directed to do something I wouldn't normally do on my own. I feel a little anxious because I have to get out of my comfort zone to do it. And if I'm not careful, my own reasoning and overthinking can distract me from the task at hand.

As I continued on into the store, I wondered how to begin a conversation with the man. What should I say to him, if he were still there when I completed my purchase?

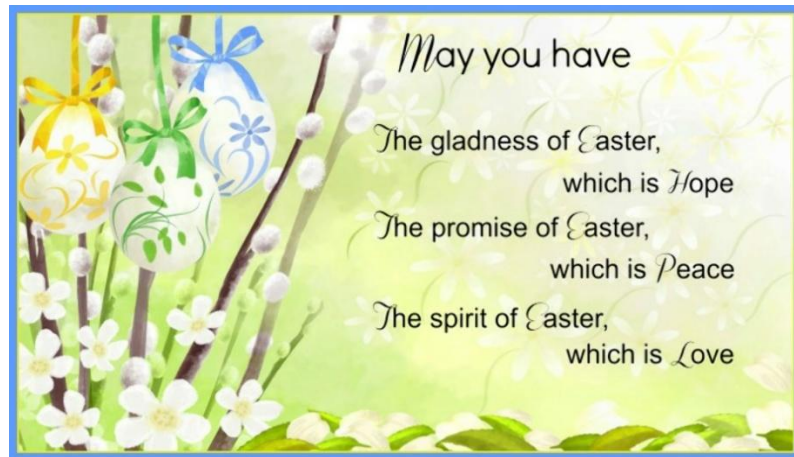
When I came out of the store, the man hadn't moved. I don't remember what I said, but in no time at all we were having a pleasant conversation. He told me he'd just arrived in Yuma from Phoenix and had been waiting several hours for his friend to pick him up. After we chatted a bit, I asked him if he was hungry. He said he was.

There is a Subway shop two doors down so we walked to it together. I told him to order whatever he wanted. He only got a sandwich. I paid for it and he thanked me. Then he said, "God Bless You".

After we parted ways, I felt doubly blessed. First, I was blessed because, even though I felt uncomfortable and it took a little while for me to comply, I had completed the assignment I'd been given. And second, I received a blessing from the man, as well. I felt certain he understood that God was involved in the situation.

If you're like me, following the leading of the Holy Spirit can sometimes seem daunting or more than a little uncomfortable. But don't let that keep you from the blessing that comes from hearing and doing the will of God. It's well worth the time and trouble.

Guest Contributor



**God is
amazing**

**doing
things at**

A Brighter Day Ministries!

In 2025, in several different ways, we helped another 17 people get off the streets. We purchased 15 beds (and gave away numerous ones that were donated to the ministry) and assisted 7 people with housing/utility deposits. We helped a widow who was about to lose her home because she couldn't afford the taxes. She will now be able to keep up with it in the future. 17 people obtained their ID/license and 2 their birth certificates. By establishing good relationships with local hotels, several times we've had the opportunity to help the disabled and victims of accidents by giving them temporary shelter in these establishments, sometimes at no cost and other times at a discount. We also helped a handicapped person with greatly needed housekeeping. Twice we bought bus tickets for people getting out of jail who had no way to get home to Phoenix. Unfortunately, sometimes society creates homelessness when all they need is a bus ticket. Five times the ministry purchased medications for those who couldn't afford them. Two single moms who were employed, had their cars break down. We were able to get the vehicles towed at a reasonable price and assist with getting the cars fixed so they could continue to support their children. We blessed a hardworking, Christian family, that has a son with special needs, with a window AC unit this past summer when theirs went out.

There are many other things that happened throughout the year, but the one nearest and dearest to my heart is sharing the Gospel and raising up disciples for Christ. We have 2 hour Bible Studies two days a week. On Tuesday afternoons we are just starting a study of 2 Corinthians, and Thursday we are continuing a journey through Disciples Path, a 6 book study by Lifeway. The desire of everyone at the ministry is that all would know our Living, Loving God and would receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I could fill a book with all the stories of God working miracles at A Brighter Day. In short, God is healing, providing, tearing down walls, breaking the chains of addiction and drawing people close to Him. That would not happen if it were not for the prayers, volunteers, encouragement, donations and financial support of those who have joined us in the mission. Our hearts are overflowing with gratitude, and we praise God for each and everyone of you. Thank you! God bless you!

A Brighter Day Ministries Director, Laurie Krumm