

# Connections

Newsletter of Ascension Lutheran Church • El Paso, Texas • February 2020

## "CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO CHRIST!"

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#### Pastor's Desk

In 2 Kings, we encounter a funny, little story. It is an account about a borrowed axe and a tool mishap at the Jordan River. "They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water. 'Oh no, my lord!' he cried out. 'It was borrowed!' The man of God [Elisha] asked, 'Where did it fall?' When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. 'Lift it out,' he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it" (6:4b-7).

So, why did this story make it into Scripture? Why does God want us to know that this happened in Elisha's ministry? What benefit could we possibly get from a floating axe head? Well, I don't pretend to understand the mind of our heavenly Father or His reasons for doing what He does, but allow me to offer a couple of possible ideas as to why **this** story made it into **His** Story.

First of all, we learn that nothing is too small for God. In our daily prayers, we usually give God a long laundry list of things. Sometimes, in the midst of it all, the devil gets the better of us. It comes in the form of doubts. Satan specializes in making us think that our requests won't be heard by God or they are not important enough to bring to the Father's throne. When we look at all the really big problems in the world, our worries and concerns seem trivial. But nothing is too small for God. He truly wants us to bring any and everything to Him in prayer—from the big to the very small. Why? Because God loves us and cares about the little things. He cared about that borrowed axe-head and the worried man who carelessly lost it. He cared about Elisha and his ministry. And this lesser known Bible story shows us that He cares for us and all our little troubles, too, including the sick cat and the problem with a coworker.

How awesome that our gracious God gives His full attention to our tiny requests in the midst of this big world! Our misplaced idea that we should not be bothering God with our small things is colored by our own human limitations and not supported by Scripture. In fact, the Bible tells us over and over again that God is a God of details (see Matthew 10:29-30).



Secondly, we learn that **nothing is too big for God**. The story of the axe head is actually sandwiched between a bunch of amazing miracles. Elijah is taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. A widow draws from a bottomless jar of olive oil. Naaman gets healed of leprosy. Standing at a deathbed, God uses Elisha to bring a little boy back to life. And we watch in awe as the same life-giving God strikes an opposing army blind to ensure Israel's victory over the Arameans.

In short, God is taking care of His people in some really big ways. He's showing us that nothing is impossible for Him. He can raise an axe head from a watery grave. He can raise a child from an earthly grave. And this points us to an even greater rising—the resurrection of Jesus and, subsequently, our own rising to be with Him in heaven. Clearly, nothing is too big for God.

Jesus invites us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

Does this mean God will always answer our prayers the way we want and according to our time frame? Well...no. He still is God, and He knows what we need and answers our prayers in the way that is best for us. But because of His great love and sacrifice, we are His own dear children in Christ, worthy of approaching our Father in heaven. He wants us to pray. He loves to hear our voices. So, go ahead and ask—for the big, the little, and everything in between. H

#### CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



#### United in Vision



#### By Kim Bestian Director of Children's Ministry

Christian education is the first and most important element in children's ministry. The children cannot do ministry without the knowledge of God's Word and their heart connection for serving as a result of His love. Understanding this value, the Board of Children's Ministry has united in vision for 2020!

Many events and programs previously offered in children's ministry will be included in the Sunday School hour. The hopes are for increasing Sunday School attendance, acknowledging being in God's Word as most important. Mission and fellowship activities, that was once set apart on special days as events, is now included in the Family Bible Hour for 2020. Parents can be watching for particular days in the Sunday School for parental participation. Prayers, for parents to attend Sunday morning adult Bible class, are ascending. Parents in God's Word together, equips them to teach their children about Him. This is a directive from God (Deuteronomy 6).

Vacation Bible School (VBS) will have a new name this year: Family Night Bible Blast! It will be similar to the old VBS program just with a new name. Evening dates are: Tuesday May 26, Wednesday, May 27, and Thursday, May 28. This begins the day after Memorial Day and is the first week of vacation for children in the school district. The theme is **ANCHORED** -**Deepening Faith In God** by Group Publishing. Each evening there will be a meal, an opening, Bible adventures for all ages-including a two-year-old group and an adult group, lots of great (VBS) songs like always, and a closing. Mark your calendars now and be watching for more information. The last evening, the lesson will cover Jesus' death and resurrection. Here is where elements of the New Life Festival will be placed. Therefore, there will be no New Life Festival the day before Easter this year.

Family Night Bible Blast! is an opportunity to grow together as a congregation in God's Word, and share Jesus with others—a great outreach opportunity! It is hoped Ascension will come together for this wonderful outreach experience to serve and invite. The congregation, including Ascension boards, are asked to be a part of and help lead in this all-church opportunity for Jesus' sake and the body of Christ.

During Sunday School on Palm Sunday, April 5, the children will experience Countdown to Passoverevents of the 10 plagues and God's rescue-and participate in a mini children's Seder meal experience. After which they will present a Hebrew song, in Bible-time costume, for the congregation during worship.



#### Big Dates to Put on Your 2020 Family Planning Calendar:

Each Sunday: Sunday School

April 5: Palm Sunday, Countdown to Passover &

Seder Meal/children sing in worship

May 26-28: Family Night Bible Blast! (VBS)

June 14—August 23: Vacation Bible School

(Summer Sunday School)

August 30: Rally Day/Jump Day

**December 13:** Family Christmas Worship Service

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



## **Sunday School at Ascension**

Sunday School is a great way for nities. All classes children to build a deeper relation- gather together as ship with their Savior and other one assembly for Christian children at Ascension.

offerings to be col-

The Sunday School is scheduled on the calendar by quarters:

**Fall** - September, October, and November;

**Winter** - December, January, and February;

**Spring** - March, April and May; **Summer** June, July, and August

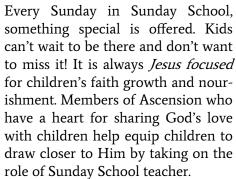
The classes are programmed:

- Preschool through Kindergarten;
- 1<sup>st</sup> grade through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade;
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade through 6<sup>th</sup> grade;

The summer quarter format combines preschool through 6<sup>th</sup> grade as one group.

The Sunday School meets in the Children's Christian Education Wing of Ascension Lutheran Church and Preschool. The beginning 45 minutes of the Sunday School hour offer grade level Bible lessons for faith building. *Concordia Publishing House* materials are used. The last 15 minutes provide occasions for faith expression. This includes fellowship, praise, mission, and serving opportu-

nities. All classes gather together as one assembly for offerings to be collected, songs and prayers to be presented, and special enrichment to take place. Sometimes service projects or fellowship playing together happens (like fun indoor snowball fights, painting, etc.).

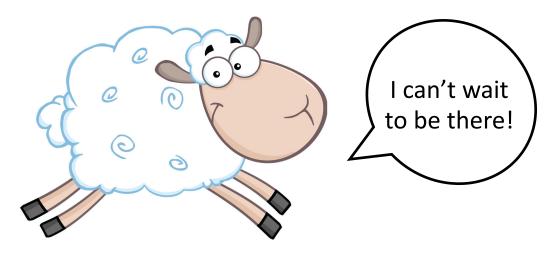


At this time, Sunday School begins at 9:15 a.m. and concludes at 10:15 a.m. every Sunday. Parents are welcome to bring their children to the classrooms a few minutes before *start time* and retrieve them again from the back pews in the church sanctuary.



The Board of Children's Ministry and I are praying that parents will bring or continue bringing their child(ren) to Ascension's Sunday School program. This is one way the congregation partners with parents to help *feed the lambs* (John 21:15) to give them a *future and a hope* (Jeremiah 29:11).

Thank you for keeping the Ascension Sunday School in your prayers. It is a great and important part of children's ministry and a blessing for today, tomorrow, and into the future for eternal purposes!



#### YOUTH MINISTRY



## **Battle Cry**

I have a very important question for you—do you have a battle cry?

If you've seen *Braveheart*, or *Lord of the Rings*, you know the purpose of a battle cry—to warn the enemy of the incoming attack. It was meant to get the enemy scared, to have them off-balanced, but it also served a second purpose—to encourage and embolden the soldiers of the attacking army.

As followers of Christ and children of God, we are indeed in the middle of a battle—a battle for our attention, our priorities, our time, our thoughts, our

actions, our words, our deeds. Goodness, the battle around us rages and many times, we go down without a whimper, without a battle cry to cause the enemy that is Satan to shake in his blackened boots.

We live our day to day life as defeated prisoners of war. What's interesting, though, is you belong to an army of redeemed saints, an army who follows the Victor of the war between Good and Evil, between God and Satan, so why don't you have a battle cry?

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." ~Ephesians 6:10-13

Be prepared for when the day of evil comes ... that's every day! Every morning, before you get up, you start putting on that armor because you are awake and it is time for a fight with gratitude! Every time you walk out of your room to greet your family—it is time to fight with love and obedience! When you walk out of your house and into your neighborhood—it is time to fight with kindness and compassion! When you walk into your schools, to meet your friends, to sit down for class—it is time to fight with gentleness, peace and joy!



When we forget to fight, we step down in a battle that belongs to the LORD. Even though He's already won the war on the cross, and sealed the victory through the empty tomb, you are called to stand firm and to be prepared to fight a world of hate, division, lies, distortions, heartbreak, and sin. Fight the enemy of God the same way God fought him—"No greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." ~John 15:13

This doesn't just mean physically giving your life for someone else; what about giving up something you want so someone else can have something they need? Giving up your wants and desires so someone else can experience joy? Giving up your perception of people and reaching out to them with kindness and compassion when everyone else shuns them?

Let me share my battle cry with you, and I urge you to find one and keep it close to your heart—use it every day to remind you to fight, to be a force of God's love that leaves Satan shaken to the core and running for cover.

"For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Philippians 1:21



## February 2020 Youth Happenings

## Youth Winter Fun Day Postponed

Instead, we're having Youth Fun Day!

Sunday, February 2, 2020

Meet at Ascension by 1:30 pm

Bob O's Family Fun for games and laser tag!

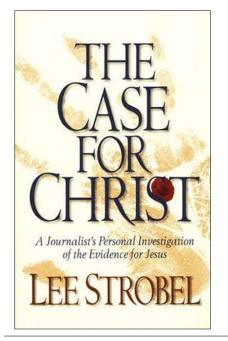
Will return to Ascension by 4:00 pm

Join us! Super Bowl Game doesn't start until 4:30 pm & you can have fun and catch the game, too!

## Ascension Food Pantry Coming Up in March!

Congregation is invited to join the youth Fri, March 20 - 9:00 to 11:00 am

Sat, March 21 - 7:30 to 10:30am



## Is Jesus of Nazareth Really the Son of God?

Together, we will use the Student Guide for Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*, to go on a riveting quest to discover the truth about history's most compelling figure.

Don't miss the opportunity to explore the hard questions many Christians aren't willing to ask and can't answer!



Sundays

9:15 -10:15 AM

Continue

The Case for Christ

February 2

February 9

Adult Class: WLDO

February 16

Adult Class: Care Ministry

February 23

All junior and senior youth will be meeting downstairs in the YOUTH ROOM

for Sunday Morning

Contact Information

Luz M. Soto, DYM

Phone: (915) 219-1686 E-mail: luzsoto07@gmail.com

## MINISTRY & BOARD REPORTS



### **February Preschool News**

February 24 – Open registration begins February 17 – No school—President's Day

Chapel—Age 2s & 3s Bible Story

2/5 – Jesus is Caring and Powerful – Jesus feeds five thousand people (John 6:1-15) 2/12 – Jesus tells his children to come – Jesus blesses the children (Mark 10:13-16) 2/19 – Jesus says to show mercy – The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) 2/26 – God Provides for His children –

Chapel—Age 4s Bible Story

The widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4)

2/5 – God forgives those who repent – The lost son (Luke 15:11-32) 2/12 – Jesus welcomes children – Jesus Blesses children (Mark 10:13-16) 2/19 – God's word is most important – Jesus visits friends (Luke 10:38-42) 2/26 – Jesus came to save sinners – Jesus forgives Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) **Attention:** Our Preschool will be having our first Garage Sale Saturday, April 18. We are asking for unwanted items in good condition that you would like to donate for us to sell. We are raising money to purchase new items for our class-If you do



have items you would like to donate, you may drop them off during the office hours from 9:00 a.m. - 2:30p.m. MWF or from 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. T &Th. Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Marhel A. Cueva Director, Ascension Lutheran Preschool Phone: (915) 833-4849

#### Treasurer's Report



Approved Council Minutes are sent to Ascension members with the Friday e-mail when they are received by the Church Office. Please call 833-1009 to request a copy of the minutes.

Ireas	surer's Repo	rt: 2019 Incon	ne & Expense	2 St	atement [D	ec	emberj	
				D	ecember		YTD	Budget
	Income:	Offerings		\$	36,025.73	\$	306,738.03	\$ 310,300.00
		Other Income	е	\$	4,670.03	\$	54,608.64	\$ 49,787.00
		Total		\$	40,695.76	\$	366,016.70	\$ 360,087.00
	Expense:			\$	37,102.64	\$	384,783.20	\$ 386,465.00
	Raise The	Roof						
		Donations 2019				\$	44,318.46	
		Total 2017-20	)18			\$	135,184.30	
	Building P	Maintenance on Debt		\$	1,695.00	\$	3,675.00	
	Pay Down			\$	1,380.00	\$	2,935.00	

## Stewardship Minute



The three words "I love you" are very powerful. Love is expressed not only in one that you love him is certainly not for Jesus. cheap, but love also needs to be expressed by what we do and how we act. As God's people, we convey love through our giving and serving.

In God's Word, He tells us how much He love to Jesus when we serve those around

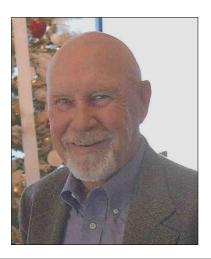
loves each of us and then proves it by us. Serving communicates love. "For giving His Son to die for us. "For God so even the Son of Man did not come to be loved the world that He gave His one served but to serve, and to give His life as and only son, that whoever believes in a ransom/or many" (Mark 10:45). Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus gave His life for us and He keeps on giving. We can demonstrate our love for Him through our givwords but also in action. In fact, it has ing. When we give faithfully of our time, been said, "Talk is cheap." To tell some-talents, and treasures, we show our love

> God takes love seriously. He loves us, expression of our love as seen through and He expects us to love one another. our giving and serving as God gives us Jesus said, "Love one another as I have grace to do. loved you" (John 13:34). We express our

The love that Jesus places in our hearts can be our fuel to make a difference not only in our lives, but in the lives of those around us. It is important to express our love as we thank God for His abundant grace, mercy, and blessing, but our words must be supported through the greater

#### New 2020 Council Officer

We welcome our new Congregation Chairman, Mr. Jan Ryberg. We also welcome all of the new members of our ministries and boards at Ascension! Thank you for serving Christ's church!



## **BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER**





#### Sunday Morning Bible Study

#### Family Bible Hour:

Pastor Bestian will continue the study on the Book of Acts in the Fellowship Hall. All members & friends of Ascension are encouraged to attend!

## Please call the office if you need additional information for a Bible study.

Another resource available to you can be found at <a href="https://www.lhm.org">www.lhm.org</a>.
You will find the Lutheran Hour daily devotions at this website.

#### Men's Bible Study

Men's Saturday Breakfast and Bible Study: This group meets every Saturday at 8:00 a.m. at the church.

**Tuesday Night:** This group meets every Tuesday at the church at 6:30 p.m. Their study is called "Stuff They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School."

#### Women's Bible Study

**Woman-to-Woman:** This group meets Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. at the church.

**Tuesday Evening:** This women's Bible study meets Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Please call or text Anita Werner at (915) 494-2335 with any questions.

**Thursday Morning:** The Thursday a.m. Bible study group is doing a study of James. They meet at 9:45 a.m. at the Schlak home.

#### PrayerTime

PrayerTime takes place on the first Sunday of each month. Please join us as we silently pray for the many prayers received in the church. You may come to the altar or pray in the pew as well. Next PrayerTime dates are: February 9 & March 1 from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.



#### UPCOMING EVENTS



## World Lutheran Deaf Outreach Coming February 9



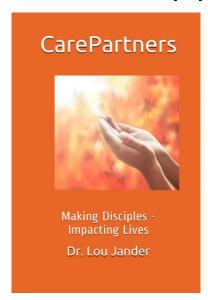
Be sure to NOT miss our guest pastor & Bible study leader, Rev. Dr. John Reinke on Sun, Feb 9 as we learn more about WLDO and their ministry to the deaf population. Did you know 98% of deaf people do not know Jesus? WLDO trains and equips disciples to spread His Kingdom among deaf people and their families. Their materials are developed by and adapted for deaf people to study and learn God's Word. These materials are also designed for deaf people to then begin teaching and sharing the Gospel with others. Please

invite anyone you may know in the deaf community.

Rev. Dr. John Reinke was born and raised on a farm near Gaylord, MN. He received most of his formal education in the Lutheran school system. He attended K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Immanuel Lutheran School in

Gaylord. Following his graduation from Gaylord High School he attended Concordia University in St. Paul, MN and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. While attending the seminary, he became involved with deaf outreach at Holy Cross Lutheran Church of the Deaf in St. Louis. He did his vicarage at Alpha Lutheran Church of the Deaf in Rochester, NY.

## CarePartner Equipping Workshop & Potluck February 16



Being a CarePartner is being available church office as soon as possible. to people as they make their daily journey through life experiencing the ups and downs life inevitably seems to provide. "God is indeed our shelter and strength and provides hope and comfort through presence, listening, prayer and the Word." Every person can be a CarePartner ... Please join us on Sun, Feb 16 from noon to 2:00 p.m. for a workshop and potluck l unch as we learn from Dr. Lou Jander and explore practical ways to walk along with others in times of stress and difficulties ... just being caring! If you will need childcare for this workshop, please contact the

Dr. Jander has been an elementary school teacher and principal, Director of Christian Education, District Parish Education Executive with the Missouri District of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Director of Adult and Leadership Ministry for the LCMS, and a Mission and Ministry Facilitator for the Texas District of the LCMS. During this last phase, he served as the district coordinator for disaster relief, helping congregations in times of disaster, keeping the rest of the district informed and connected to what was happening, and asking for their help in contributions and prayers.

## Sign Up Now to Provide Food for Lenten Meals

The Lenten season begins on Wednesday, February 26 with Ash Wednesday. We enjoy our fellowship time at the Lenten Meal before each service, but we need your help to provide the food. Please sign up on the sheet located on the A-frame bulletin board. Thank you!



#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**





## At-a-Glance **Church Calendar of Events**

Sun, Feb 2

11:30 am **Board of Youth Ministry** 

Mon, Feb 3

7:00 pm **Board of Trustees** 

Tue, Feb 4

8:30 am Pastors' Conference

Wed, Feb 5

**Board of Preschool** 12:15 pm

Sat, Feb 8

9:00 am Board of Christian Education 10:00 am Board of Children's Ministry 10:00 am LWML Brunch & Bible Study

Sun, Feb 9 | Deaf Ministry Guest Pastor

9:00 am Board of Christian Service 11:45 am New Member Orientation

5:00 pm PrayerTime

Sat, Feb 15

9:30 am Board of Elders 9:30 am Board of Stewardship

Sun, Feb 16 | Workshop & Potluck New Members Received (both services)

12:00 pm CarePartner Equipping Workshop

& Potluck

Tue, Feb 18

7:00 pm Church Council Meeting

Wed, Feb 19

12:15 pm **Preschool Staff Meeting**  Thu, Feb 20

3:00 pm March newsletter & calendar updates

due in office

6:30 pm Ladies' Night Out (Saltgrass)

Mon, Feb 24

Preschool Open Registration Begins

Wed, Feb 26 | Ash Wednesday

Lenten Meal 6:00 pm

6:45 pm Ash Wednesday Service

## **February Weekly Events**

Sun:

8:00 & 10:30 am | Worship (Communion 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays) 9:15 am | Family Bible Hour 11:45 am | Confirmation Class

Tue: 10:00 am | Woman-to-Woman Bible Study

6:30 pm | Men's Bible Study 6:30 pm | Women's Bible Study

6:45 pm | Boy Scouts

**Wed:** 8:45 am | Preschool Chapel

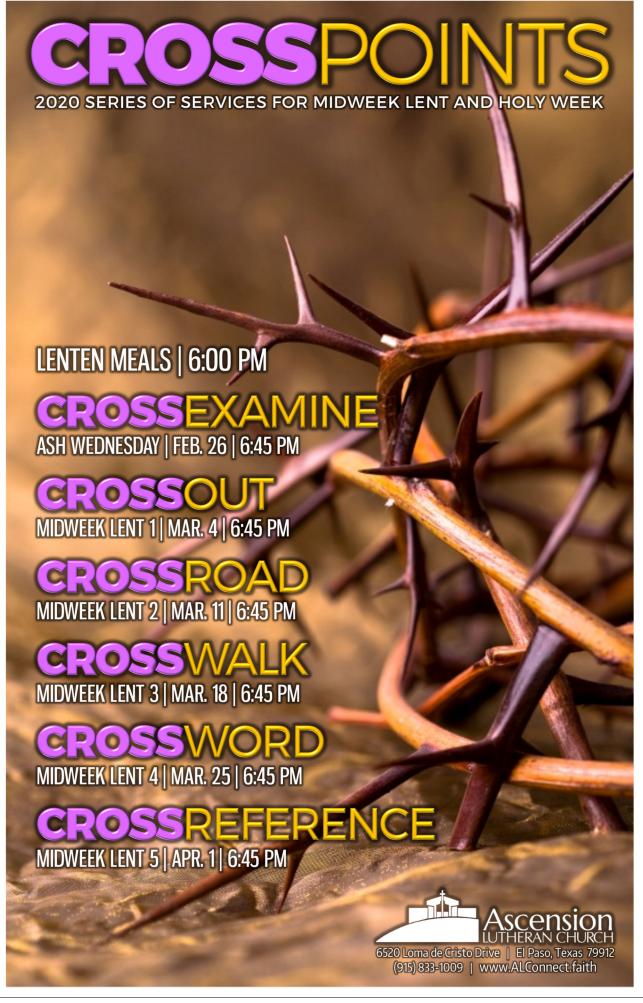
10:00 am | Weight Watchers Meeting

11:15 am | Sit & Sew 7:00 pm | Choir Rehearsal

Thu: 9:45 am | Women's Bible Study

Sat: 8:00 am | Men's Bible Study & Breakfast

\*If you're not sure or don't have a schedule already, please call the church office at (915) 833-1009 to verify if a specific event is being held that week.



## 2020 Daily Bible Reading Plan

Is it time to read your Bible through from cover to cover? Why not do it? Set aside just ten minutes each morning before going to work. Make it a promise to yourself. We offer this Bible reading schedule to follow for 2020.

#### Tips on Reading the Bible Daily

- 1. Start reading the Bible today—there is no better time, and there's no reason to wait.
- 2. Set aside a specific time each day. Set your schedule and then stick to it. Mornings are great, but feel free to use any time that works consistently for you.
- 3. Read the Bible for the sake of learning, not simply to accomplish your next reading. Highlight verses, take notes and bookmark. Say a short prayer to God before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding, then be refreshed by the words you read!

February	☐ 18 Leviticus 26-27; Mark 2
1 Exodus 27-28; Matthew 21:23-46	☐ 19 Numbers 1-2; Mark 3:1-21
2 Exodus 29-30; Matthew 22:1-22	20 Numbers 3-4; Mark 3:22-35
3 Exodus 31-33; Matthew 22:23-46	21 Numbers 5-6; Mark 4:1-20
4 Exodus 34-36; Matthew 23:1-22	☐ 22 Numbers 7; Mark 4:21-41
5 Exodus 37-38; Matthew 23:23-39	23 Numbers 8-10; Mark 5:1-20
☐ 6 Exodus 39-40; Matthew 24:1-22	☐ 24 Numbers 11-13; Mark 5:21-43
7 Leviticus 1-3; Matthew 24:23-51	☐ 25 Numbers 14-15; Mark 6:1-32
8 Leviticus 4-6; Matthew 25:1-30	☐ 26 Numbers 16-17; Mark 6:33-56
9 Leviticus 7-9; Matthew 25:31-46	☐ 27 Numbers 18-20; Mark 7:1-13
☐ 10 Leviticus 10-12; Matthew 26:1-19	28 Numbers 21-25; Mark 7:14-37; Mark 8:1-21
☐ 11 Leviticus 13; Matthew 26:20-54	29 Numbers 26-27; Mark 8:22-38
12 Leviticus 14; Matthew 26:55-75	
☐ 13 Leviticus 15-17; Matthew 27:1-31	
☐ 14 Leviticus 18-19; Matthew 27:32-66	
15 Leviticus 20-21; Matthew 28	
☐ 16 Leviticus 22-23; Mark 1:1-22	
☐ 17 Leviticus 24-25; Mark 1:23-45	



#### Our Staff

Pastor:

Rev. Brian R. Bestian

Director of Children's Ministry:

Kim Bestian

**Director of Youth Ministry:** Luz Soto

**Preschool Director:**Marhel Cueva

Music Director/Organist: Ruth Ann Ostergren

> Office Administrator: Lynn Burchfield

Tender Care Nursery Attendant: Haleigh Gonzales

> Custodian: Lorena Rodriguez

#### Our Sunday Schedule

Worship: 8:00 & 10:30 a.m. Coffee Fellowship: 9:00 a.m. Family Bible Hour: 9:15 a.m.



Articles for the March newsletter are due **Thursday, February 20** 

