



New Era Lutheran Church

February 2021 Newsletter

Pastor Kirsten Lee
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New Era Lutheran Church
3455 New Era Road
Muscatine, IA 52761

Worship Services: 10:30 am (online
until further notice thru Zoom or on church
website & FaceBook

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Bulletin - Items due by Thursday night
Each week
Newsletter Items due by the 20th of the
Month

Check us out at www.neweralutheran.com
or [https://www.facebook.com/
NewEraLutheranChurch](https://www.facebook.com/NewEraLutheranChurch)

Dear beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from our risen Savior, Jesus Christ. This month of February marks our beginning of Lent in the Lutheran church. Ash Wednesday is February 17th. What does Ash Wednesday and Lent mean to you? How have you observed Lent in the past?

Lent is the forty-day journey toward Easter, which begins on Ash Wednesday. This is a day of repentance and worship when our foreheads are marked with the sign of the cross using ashes or dust or dirt. As this is done, we hear “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return”. We acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the cross also reminds us of the cross marked on our foreheads at baptism. As we acknowledge our mortality, we acknowledge our need for salvation through Jesus Christ and the promise of salvation already given to each of us.

Ash Wednesday and Lent is a time of repentance or turning to God. This invites us to consider what in our life distracts us from God and what can help us turn more intentionally to God. Repentance is a time of honest confession to God and a time to ask for forgiveness. Repentance need not be frightening or intimidating. Rather, it can be a liberating homecoming to a God who already knows you and loves you. This is an invitation to grow deeper in faith as we acknowledge our mortality, name our sins and trust God with our brokenness that we often hide and overlook. As we repent, we experience the grace and mercy of God’s forgiveness and acceptance.

While confessing our sins is part of repentance, there are many ways to turn toward God. This could be spending time in prayer or devotions or finding an activity that helps you connect with God. Some choose to fast from certain foods or take on a new spiritual practice. However the time is used, the meaning is gained when we focus our hearts and minds on Christ's relationship with us.

This year it may feel like we don't need Lent. We have had more reminders of our mortality than ever and there is not one of us who hasn't sacrificed greatly because of the pandemic. Perhaps this is an opportunity to experience Lent differently. Instead of focusing on the somberness of Lent, this could be a time to give thanks for God's merciful and gracious love who welcomes us in our brokenness. Repentance could be an opportunity to let go of unnecessary burdens that distract us from Christ's presence in our lives. This year, as we've painfully faced our mortality, we need the hope of Christ's salvation which is promised for you and your loved ones. Death is never the end as we live and die to Christ who lives eternally.

This year, our Lenten theme is "Created for Community." In a year when we've been physically separated from one another, it's never been more important to focus on being in community with one another. During Ash Wednesday, we are also reminded that "we are created for communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation." (LDE ELW, 617). We will remember and practice creatively ways we live in communion with God, with one another, and with creation. We will reflect on this in worship and through an invitation to share God's love with all creation. Thanks be to God who gives us grace upon grace as we can love God, our neighbors, and creation freely.

The Creator who fashions us together with all things,
the Christ who leads us into a new beloved community,
the Spirit who holds us in the communion of saints, one God, + bless you now and always. Amen.

In Christ, Pr. Kirsten



FEBRUARY



Birthdays

- 9 – Terry Hampton
- 13 – Jack Hull
- 14 – Aaron Turner
- 18 – Paislee Bear
- 21 – Emogene Sorgenfrey
- 21 – Grant Leacox
- 21 – Sue Kirk
- 22 – Gloria Batteau

Anniversaries

- 10 – Kris & Robert Gladwell

May the good Lord continue to shower you with happiness, good fortunate, prosperity and good health all the days of your life.

Happy Birthday and Anniversary!

Special dates

- African-American History Month
- Transfiguration Sunday, Feb 14, 2021
- Valentine's Day, Feb 14, 2021
- Presidents Day, Feb 15, 2021
- Ash Wednesday, Feb 17, 2021



*Steve & Becky Kammerer, Shirley Burr,
Doris Brandt, Laurie Schroeder, John &
Susan Hartung, Bonnie Steffen, Kara
Snyder, Catherine Dittmer, Scott Miller,
Jerry Shook, Jennifer & children, and The
Sturgeon Family, Family & loved ones of
Dennis, Jerry, Jim, Leroy, and all others
who are in need of prayer support.*

*Sincere condolences to the family of
Travis Schenkle who passed away Friday,
Jan. 15, 2021.*

LENT @ New Era 2021 **"Created for Community."**

As stated in the opening letter, our theme this year is created for community as we celebrate the many ways we live in communion with God, with one another, and with creation. This will occur as we worship together and think creatively and expansively on how God calls us to share love and grace with all creation.

Ash Wednesday, February 17th

This year, we will deliver a Lent at home kit. This will contain devotions for the family and a kit to make your own ashes. We purchased kits from Old Lutheran which contain the dry ashes that you can mix with oil (NOT WATER).

We will share a recording of Ash Wednesday on the church's Facebook page and church website. There will be a time

for you to make the sign of the cross on your forehead during this worship service. You can keep the ashes in the kit during Lent as a reminder of our need for Christ's salvation and the promise of salvation given to you.

You are also invited to a drive-up worship service at Gloria Dei on Ash Wednesday at 5:30 pm. You will park your vehicle facing the entrance of the church and will tune your radio to a certain station. We will gather together to pray, to hear scripture, and be reminded of Christ's eternal love which is made known to us on the cross. You will have an opportunity to receive the imposition of ashes on your forehead. I will wear a mask, face shield, and gloves. The service will be less than 30 minutes.

Mid- week services

Mid-week services will be shared on the church's Facebook page & church website every Wednesday. They will follow the theme of created for community and offer a time of prayer, scripture, and reflection. Lenten Devotions

This year we are sharing devotions from Augsburg Fortress entitled A Story to tell. These devotionals are in booklet form and provide a brief scripture reading, prayer, and questions for reflection. We are also sharing a children's Lenten booklet, which provides age-appropriate readings, questions, and activities for families to enjoy together. Lastly, we will share weekly & daily ideas on how we can live in communion with God, with one another, and with creation.

These devotions & the ash kit will be delivered to your home. If you would like to volunteer to help deliver, please let Pr. Kirsten know.

Farewell to ALLELUIA.

You may notice that during Lent we refrain from saying or singing "Alleluia". This word, alleluia, is a Hebrew word for praise the Lord. While we continue to praise the Lord throughout Lent, this is one way we observe a fasting during Lent. This a tradition that dates back to the 5th Century. When we worship on Easter morning, we joyously proclaim Alleluia as we celebrate Christ's conquering of death and resurrection.

Offering & Giving Envelopes and Booklets

2021 Giving envelopes and the booklets "*The Word in Season*," "*Christ in Our Home*," and "*Lutheran Journal*" are available in the entryway of the church. Please continue to mail in offering to the church or bring it by the church. We are ensuring the mail is regularly collected. The church address is:

New Era Lutheran Church
3455 New Era Road
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Happy Holiday to New Era Lutheran Church.

In the spring of 2005 I sat in the conference room of the Blue Grass Savings Bank with Elton Farley, Dennis and Jerry Egel. I jokingly handed over a wooden toy box filled with fake gold coins to commemorate e an important transaction.

Since that time, Elton Farley has retired and a new bank has been built. The general economy has risen, fallen, risen again, and now fallen again. There have been several record setting weather events and the Chicago Cubs have even won baseball's World Series. A constant through all of it is the land. Quietly, powerfully, gracefully-always the land remains timeless. I am struck by the quote "all of human existence is owed to a few inches of topsoil and God's grace that is rains periodically."

Summer 2020 marked the conclusion to purchase the Egel Farm from my 1st cousins, Jerry and Dennis. For anyone who has ever bought land, it is understood that you never truly own it. Instead you are responsible to be the steward of it in this generation. A property abstract is a written record of every family that has balanced the risk and reward of land stewardship. While I can't know many of the names on the Egel farm abstract, I do have strong memories of Jerry and Dennis and their parents Clarence and Marie Egel.

At the conclusion of the contract, I invited Jerry and Dennis to name an organization that I could make a memorial to, honoring Clarence and Marie for their generation of care on this tract of land. Jerry chose the New Era Lutheran Church. Clearly his years of serving as your pastor meant a great deal to him.

Enclosed is my memorial honoring Uncle Clarence and Aunt Marie Egel for their care of the land. Please send your thanks to Jerry for thinking of New Era Lutheran Church. Jerry moved to St Louis in September to be closer to his son Mike. Jerry's new address:

701 S Laclede Station Road #401
St Louis MO 63119

Sincerely,
Daniel Petersen

The power of love

By comparing love to everything from oxygen and fire to wind and war, songs and poetry emphasize its immense power — for good or for ill. Christian author Patrick Morley uses metaphors that focus on love's practicality in everyday life: "Love is the glue that holds us together and the oil that keeps us from rubbing each other the wrong way." He also calls love "the WD-40 of relationships" because it "can seep into tight places where logic, threats and even promises just can't seem to penetrate."

St. Augustine, who predated WD-40 by centuries, knew that love not only eases friction in personal interactions but, with God's help, can change hearts and lives.



"Love all [people], even your enemies," he advises. "Love them, not because they are your brothers, but that they may become your brothers. Thus you will ever burn with fraternal love, both for him who is already your brother and for your enemy, that he may by loving become your brother."

Why we lament

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic struck America during the middle of Lent, a season associated with deprivation. Some people made light of the shutdowns, joking, "I didn't mean to give up *this* much for Lent!" Others asked why the suffering was occurring in the first place.

Professor N.T. Wright, in an essay for *Time*, explains that asking "why?" but receiving no answer is key to biblical lamenting. Adding to the mystery, he says, is that God also laments — grieving at the wickedness of humans, despairing over Israel's unfaithfulness. Jesus cries at a friend's tomb; the Holy Spirit groans in anguish. "Part of the Christian vocation," Wright concludes, is not being able to explain why but lamenting instead. "As the Spirit laments within us," he says, "so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of that there can emerge new possibilities ... new hope."

"Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone; we find it with another."—Thomas Merton

* * *

"I would permit no man, no matter what his color might be, to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him."

—Booker T. Washington

* * *

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"—Corrie ten Boom

* * *

"Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday."—Dale Carnegie

An interlocking community



Christ distributes courage through community; he dissipates doubts through fellowship. He never deposits all knowledge in one person but distributes pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to many. When you interlock your understanding with mine, and we share our discoveries, when we mix, mingle, confess and pray, Christ speaks.

—Max Lucado, *Fearless*

The parable of the lost ring

Only three years after Paula and Joe Walter married, her wedding ring was lost as she played catch with their son. Naturally, she was heartbroken. Over the years, whenever family and friends gathered in the back yard, she urged everyone to look for the ring — but to no avail. Because the yard borders on woods, Paula feared the ring had flown into the trees, never to be seen again.

But just before the couple's 40th anniversary, landscapers hired to do work in the yard brought her a surprise: They'd found the ring — right where Paula had been playing with her child so long ago! Like the woman in Jesus' parable who finally found her lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), Paula rejoiced. God too searches until every person who has strayed or been flung away from the faith is found.

Sometimes the place we rediscover faith is right where we've looked before. What makes the difference? A different person helping us search? Light shining in a different way? We may never know. We simply rejoice — and so does God.

—Heidi Mann

Love bites!

Retailers eager to capture some of the \$20 billion that Americans spend every year for Valentine's Day gifts are moving beyond candy and flowers. For an outside-the-box edible present for that special someone, now you can purchase a bouquet of bacon roses, pickles or even Olive Garden breadsticks. If money is tight, you can visit Waffle House on February 14, the one night it takes reservations.

Last year, a most unusual Valentine's Day promotion had no takers. A reptile park in Mosca, Colorado, offered a two-for-one deal on gator-wrestling classes, but no one "snapped" up the opportunity. Maybe another heart-shaped box of chocolates isn't such a bad idea after all!

A daily prayer

Whatever happens today, dear Lord, help us remember that you are present. If we find ourselves in the shadows of disappointment or rejection or pain, let us see your comforting light. If we're in the radiant light of success or acceptance or wholeness, may we acknowledge your providence and grace. Wherever we are, grant us the assurance of your nearness. Amen.

Jesus Loves Me

A church in Atlanta was honoring one of its senior pastors who had been retired many years. He was 92 at that time and I wondered why the church even bothered to ask the old gentleman to preach at that age.

After a warm welcome, introduction of this speaker, and as the applause quieted down, he rose from his high back chair and walked slowly, with great effort and a sliding gait to the podium.

Without a note or written paper of any kind he placed both hands on the pulpit to steady himself and then quietly and slowly he began to speak....

"When I was asked to come here today and talk to you, your pastor asked me to tell you what was the greatest lesson ever learned in my 50-odd years of preaching. I thought about it for a few days and boiled it down to just one thing that made the most difference in my life and sustained me through all my trials. The one thing that I

could always rely on when tears and heartbreak and pain and fear and sorrow paralyzed me..."

The only thing that would comfort was this verse....

"Jesus loves me this I know.
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong,
We are weak but He is strong.....
Yes, Jesus loves me....
The Bible tells me so."

The old pastor stated, "I always noticed that it was the adults who chose the children's hymn 'Jesus Loves Me' (for the children of course) during a hymn sing, and it was the adults who sang the loudest because I could see they knew it the best."

"Here for you now is a Senior version of Jesus Loves Me":

JESUS LOVES ME
Jesus loves me, this I know,
Though my hair is white as snow
Though my sight is growing dim,
Still He bids me trust in Him.

(CHORUS)
YES, JESUS LOVES ME.. YES, JESUS LOVES ME..
YES, JESUS LOVES ME, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.
Though my steps are oh, so slow,
With my hand in His I'll go
On through life, let come what may,
He'll be there to lead the way.

(verse 2)

When the nights are dark and long,
In my heart He puts a song..
Telling me in words so clear,
"Have no fear, for I am near."

(Verse 3)

When my work on earth is done,
And life's victories have been won.
He will take me home above,
Then I'll understand His love.

(CHORUS)

I love Jesus, does He know?
Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say,
That I love Him every day.

If you think this is neat, please pass it on to your friends. If you do not pass it on, nothing bad will happen, but you will have missed an opportunity to "reach out and touch" a friend or a loved one. God Bless Us All!!! AMEN!

Fasting from criticalness

Most fasting involves temporarily giving up something you enjoy. When you long for a cookie or a favorite show, you instead turn your attention to God, reorienting yourself to his best.

Catherine Marshall, in *A Closer Walk*, presents a different approach she calls fasting from "criticalness." God dealt with her judgmental spirit by prompting her to spend 24 hours without criticizing "anyone about anything." At first, Marshall felt rather empty when she didn't engage in a heated political debate. But friends and

family didn't seem to miss her comments. Plus, God replaced the energy she'd spent attempting to correct others with energy and creativity to positively influence them. A critical spirit can make us lose perspective, joy and even relationships. It also can prevent the good work God wants to achieve through us. Consider what could happen as a result of your own "criticalness fast." Pray for God to do the correcting while you focus on building up others.

—Janna Firestone

The soul of Christianity

A Christ-centered life does not mean a life in which one sings hymns, reads Scripture and edifies his neighbors by hanging texts on the walls. One does not become a Christian by doing a good deed a day, nor by go-getting for religion, nor by engaging in economic and political reform movements, even though these things are done from the noblest of human motives. A Christian is one who, believing that Christ is the Son of God, has that Christ-life in his soul. —Fulton Sheen

Celebrating love

For 80 years, a couple in Ecuador was an exceptional example of marital love. Julio Cesar Mora Tapia, 110, and Waldramina Maclovia Quinteros Reyes, 104, were wed on February 7, 1941. Until Julio's death last October, they were reportedly the world's oldest married couple. Their large family includes nine great-great-grandchildren! Good News Network recounts: "Julio Cesar fell in love with Waldramina's beauty, her conversation, and her big heart."

Meanwhile, she found in him "a poet with a young spirit." The couple says the formula for a lasting marriage is "love + maturity + mutual respect," as well as patience, compassion and hard work.

That calls to mind Paul's words, often read at weddings: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:4-6, ESV).

The gift of desperation

In a 2012 interview with NPR, author Anne Lamott shared: "I've heard people say that God is the gift of desperation, and there's a lot to be said for having really reached a bottom where you've run out of anymore good ideas, or plans for everybody else's behavior; or how to save and fix and rescue; or just get out of a huge mess, possibly of your own creation. And when you're done, you may take a long, quavering breath and say, 'Help.'"

Amid the pandemic and life's other, more typical trials of life, have you found a silver lining — a gift that has arisen out of your desperation? Sometimes we're more open to God during times of struggle than when all flows smoothly. As long as we think our ideas and plans for ourselves and our loved ones are pretty good, we don't feel we need a Savior. But when life is so challenging that we call to God for help, "the gift of [that] desperation" is finding that God's loving arms have embraced and strengthened us all along.

Always choose love

God wants us to choose to love him freely, even when that choice involves pain, because we are committed to him, not to our own good feelings and rewards. He wants us to cleave to him, as Job did, even when we have every reason to deny him hotly. That, I believe, is the central message of Job.

Satan had taunted God with the accusation that humans are not truly free. Was Job being faithful simply because God had allowed him a prosperous life? Job's fiery trials proved the answer beyond doubt. Job clung to God's justice when he was the best example in history of God's apparent injustice. He did not seek the Giver because of his gifts; when all gifts were removed, he still sought the Giver.

--Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?*

Christian symbol



FOUNTAIN

A fountain, or well, symbolizes Jesus, our living water. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that everyone who drinks the water he gives will never thirst again. It "will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life," Jesus said (see John 4:14, NRSV).

Bible Quiz

What was the name of Moses' wife?

1. Miriam
 2. Jochebed
 3. Zipporah
 4. Leah

Answer: C (See Exodus 2:21.)



PUZZLE



A famous friendship

In the Bible, Ruth and Naomi are known for their loving friendship.

Directions: Using the key, fill in the blanks to see what Ruth says to Naomi.

5



Answer: "Where you go I will go," and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." Ruth 1:16, NIV

!Loving'embraces

Express your love and friendship with handcrafted bracelets.



What you need:

- Adult help
 - Bowl of boiling water
 - Wide wooden craft sticks
 - Glass cup
 - Markers, paint or decorative tape

What you do:

1. Pour about 3 cups of boiling water into a bowl. Soak sticks in the water about 30 minutes.
 2. Remove sticks and slowly, gently bend them into a curve.
 3. To maintain the shape, place curved sticks inside a glass cup overnight to dry completely.
 4. Remove and decorate the bracelets, which make fun Valentine's Day gifts.



Colorful Vegetable Salad (from "Taste of Home")

6 cups fresh broccoli florets
6 cups fresh cauliflowerets
2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
1 large red onion, sliced
1 can (6 ounces) pitted ripe olives,
drained and sliced
1 envelope ranch salad dressing mix
2/3 cup canola oil
1/4 cup vinegar

In a large bowl, combine the broccoli, cauliflower, tomatoes, onion and olives. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine dressing mix, oil and vinegar; shake well. Pour over salad; toss to coat. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours.

Nutrition Facts

3/4 cup: 94 calories, 8g fat (0 saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 130mg sodium, 5g carbohydrate (0 sugars, 0 fiber), 1g protein. **Diabetic Exchanges:** 1-1/2 fat, 1 vegetable.

Puzzle!

Discover the identity of a biblical person. First, assign a number value to each letter, starting with M = 1, N = 2, O = 3, ... A = 15, etc. Then use the code to complete the clues.

Puzzle!

Discover the identity of a biblical person. First, assign a number value to each letter, starting with M=1, N=2, O=3, ... A=15, etc. Then use the code to complete the clues.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
15 _____ 1 2 3 _____

FIRST CLUE: 15 7 15 13 3 9 2 21 115 2

22 19 25 23 26 26 19 18 7 3 1 19 3 2 19.

SECOND CLUE: 22 19 11 15 7 8 19 2 18 23 2 21

7 22 19 19 4 23 2 8 22 19 18 19 7 19 6 8

11 22 19 2 21 3 18 17 15 26 26 19 18 22 23 1.

THIRD CLUE: 15 7 15 16 15 16 13 22 19 11 15 7

20 3 9 2 18 20 26 3 15 8 23 2 21 23 2 15

16 15 7 25 19 8 23 2 8 22 19 2 23 26 19 6 23 10 19 6.

Who is this person? _____

Answer: Moses

February 2021

| January '21 | | | | | | | March '21 | | | | | | |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 31 | | | | | | | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|---|----------|--------|----------|
| 31 | 1 | 2  GROUNDHOG DAY | 3 10:00 am - Care & Concern meet at Church | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7  | 8 | 9  Church Council 6 p.m. | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  Transfiguration of the Lord Valentine's Day | 15  | 16 | 17  ASH WEDNESDAY Home Kit or Drive-up Worship service at Gloria Dei @ 5:30 pm | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21  | 22 | 23 | 24  Wednesday Night Services Services on church's Facebook page and church website | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | Black History Month — February 1-28, 2021  JOIN US FOR BIBLE STUDY Every Tuesday at Gloria Dei at Noon. Feel free to join in via Zoom meeting. | | | | |