**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- February 2024

699 Stambaugh Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146

Phone: 724.347.3620 (Opt. 2, Pastor Deal; Opt. 3, Office)

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“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

**From the Pastor:**

**Preparing Ourselves for Lent**

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

1 Corinthians 9:27

The Apostle Paul is not unlike you and me. He struggled in the same war against the sinful nature that every man under heaven has if he is to live a righteous life. **There is no one who is good; no, not one,** except our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we ought to rise out of the temptation to slothfulness, take up the virtue of diligence, and strive toward the goal of subjecting the members of our body to what is righteous that all our life in both word and deed may be indeed holy for the Lord.

The body is not naturally a willing slave to righteousness because of the fall into sin. So, Paul speaks that he must discipline his body in order to bring it into subjection. As he writes in Romans 6:19, *“For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.”* What is really interesting about this verse in 1 Corinthians is that the word for “discipline” means to wear down, beat up, and tear down. That sounds like work to me and not all that entirely pleasant! Saint Paul concurs; it’s like a boxer training and like a runner preparing for a race; it is exercise which wears down the body so that it might be built up again stronger and purpose-driven to meet the goal set out before us. As he writes, *“Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”* (1 Cor. 9:27)

This imperishable crown won for us by Christ is our eternal life and we are running the race toward that goal. Yet, it is sin that weakens faith and guilt which brings thoughts of hopelessness. The temptation to sin comes at all times, but hits men most when they are weak or believe themselves to be weak against temptation. But we know this *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”* (1 Cor. 10:13)

You and I have no excuses for why we should fall to temptation other than we have not been disciplined enough in our spiritual life so as to bring the members of our body into subjection to righteousness. So why wait any longer? The Gesimatide, the three Sundays preceding Lent, is the time we have to prepare ourselves to take up a stricter discipline of devotion, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during the 40 days of Lent. You see, these widely and long-standing practices of the Church are meant to weaken the physical body in order to strengthen the spiritual body. These are meant to break your attachments to this world and strengthen your heart’s resolve in the Kingdom of God. These are meant to tear down all the idols of the heart so that God may alone reside in the temple of the body. Consider this:  the will of the flesh should not be the rudder that drives the ship of the body, but it is the Spirit of the Living God and the will of God which should steer the rudder of the ship directing us toward everlasting life.

Like stepping into the gym for the first time, you may ask yourself, “Where do I start?” Start at the front desk; come on Shrove Tuesday to Individual Confession and Absolution. Hear that your sins of the flesh are fully forgiven and all guilt has been washed away in Christ Jesus. Then, take up the Word of the Lord, meditate upon His Law day and night, pray for the help of the Spirit against temptations, teach your body through fasting to trust in the Lord for daily bread, and cheerfully give of what you have to others expecting nothing in return. God works in and through these things to bring into subjection all the members of your body so that you may walk in the works he has prepared for you. (Ephesians 2:10)

In Christ,

Pastor Deal

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**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE**

Blue: Pledged as of 01.21.2024 $184,320 (92.16%)

Orange: Remaining

$15,680 (7.84%)

Total Contributions

as of 01.21.2024:

$194,155 (97.08%)

Previous: $188,595 (94.3%)

New: $5,560 (2.78%)

Remaining: $5,845 (2.92%)

*Amounts used are based on*

*weekly deposits reported.*

It’s not too late to submit a Capital Campaign pledge card! Pledge cards are available on the table outside Pastor’s office. If circumstances have changed and you need to update your pledge card, please see Jonathan Baisch. Updated pledges help our Trustees plan more effectively and efficiently.

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**NEWS FROM THE TRUSTEES**

Thanks to all who helped with “un-decorating” the church, storing items, and cleaning up after the Christmas season.

*The following projects were addressed in the month of January:*

* Batteries in the motion light above the basement level lift door were replaced.
* A new motion light above the entrance doors from the parking lot was installed.
* The valve on the toilet in the women’s restroom on the main floor was fixed.

Trustees met Tuesday, January 23rd. Details from that meeting will be included in the March newsletter.

As always, please feel free to speak with a Trustee with any concerns or place a note in Mike Flaugher’s library mailbox.

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**ATTENTION AUDITORS!** A **Quarterly Audit** will take place following worship, Sunday, February 18th in the library. If unable to attend, please phone Bev Chlpka at 724-962-4806.

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**SCRIP Program:**

The next date for **SCRIP orders and payments** is Sunday, February 4th. Checks should be made out to Sts. Peter & Paul’s and are to be given to Matt Berent or placed in the offering plate. You should receive your gift cards the following week.

Forms for ordering gift cards are available on tables in the narthex and next to the nursery.

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Collected pop tabs can be left for Marie Flaugher in the library.

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**Bible Study Classes**

* The **Sunday Morning Bible Study** (8 am)

is canceled for February 4th and will resume February 11th.

* **NEW!** During Lent, the **Women’s Bible Study** will be open to all! Join us following the weekly, Wednesday Matins Services for a light lunch of soup & bread while studying the book of Romans beginning February 21st. A sign-up sheet is available in the narthex for those willing to provide the meal.
* The monthly **Men’s Bible Study** is temporarily suspended until a new meeting day/time is determined.
* **NEW!** Join Pastor and Ana at their home (695 Crowder Ave., Sharon) for a twice-monthly **Sunday Evening Bible Study** at 7 pm on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. All ages are welcome!

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**CELEBRATING IN FEBRUARY!**

**Birthdays**

Beverly Chlpka 2 – 4

Jennifer Russell 2 – 20

Bradley Dirgo 2 – 21

Traudi Sulek 2 – 28

**Anniversary**

Joe & Beverly Chlpka 2 – 10

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

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Submissions for the March issue of **“The Rock and the Sword”** newsletter and calendar are due to the secretary’s office Monday, February 19th at 9 am. This includes meeting dates and times for the church calendar.

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**Ashes Turned to Gladness in the Cross of Christ**

by Vicar Wessel

 At Ash Wednesday, we enter into the somber season of Lent. It is a season in which we are called upon to mourn over our sins and repent of them. It is one where we likewise often focus on taking up our own cross and sufferings and following Jesus as He suffered even to the point of death. Having a season like Lent is something that really sets us apart from the world around us. We have a time of year that we dedicate to mourning and lamenting and pondering suffering – first Christ’s and then our own. These are things that we generally would much rather not think about. But we nonetheless dedicate six weeks out of the year to it.

 The way that we enter into Lent at Ash Wednesday really speaks to the character of Lent as a whole as well. We are marked with a cross of ashes on the forehead and told “remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Putting on ashes is a sign of deep sorrow and grief, as well as remorse over sin. All of these things are bound up in what we do on Ash Wednesday, and in the season of Lent that it begins. We remember that we are dust and that we shall return to dust – that we are doomed to die and so we must repent and turn away from our sin now, while there is still time, before we die in our frailty. Ash Wednesday and Lent are times of deep sorrow over our sin.

 And yet, although we grieve over our sins, our suffering, and our eventual death, we do not grieve as those without hope. It is important that the ashes are placed on your forehead in the sign of the cross. Throughout your life as a Christian, the sign of the cross is made upon your forehead, all hearkening back to the first time when it was placed there, when you were baptized. It is there that you were put to death and buried with Christ and arose again with Him in righteousness and purity. It is your baptism that is the foundation of your repentance as a Christian – whether your daily repentance over your stumbling and failings, your repentance when you realize that you have majorly and grievously sinned, or your Lenten mourning over your sin. When you are marked with ashes at the beginning of Lent, that is not a mere temporary sign placed upon you. Instead, it is merely tracing over the sign of the cross that is permanently marked upon your forehead, the mark by which God made you His own (cf. Revelation 7:3, 14:1).

 The cross you receive on Ash Wednesday is a reminder of what the fact that God has made you His own means. Yes, it means that you mourn over your sin, as you strive to be holy as the God Who called you is holy. It means that you put to death your sinful desires. But the putting to death is only part of what you were given in baptism. You not only died with Christ, but also were raised with Him (Romans 6). Ash Wednesday is the beginning of a somber season of mourning and sorrow, but it always ends with Easter and the joy of the new life and resurrection Jesus gave to you. We mourn our sin, we grieve our impending death not without hope, but with the sure and certain expectation of forgiveness and life in Jesus. Just as certainly as Easter comes after Ash Wednesday, so certain can you be that God will take you through this valley of sorrow – where you mourn over your sin and must repent of it daily, where you are grieved by the knowledge of death that is coming to you and all those you love – so certain is it that He will take you from this valley of sorrow to Himself in the eternal joy of the resurrection from the dead, where there will no longer be sin and sorrow. Though now you put on ashes of sorrow, at Easter and eternally in the resurrection, you will rejoice in Jesus Christ, who was sent “to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit” (Isaiah 61:3a).

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Plans are to publish a **new church directory** in March 2024. Please notify the secretary *in writing* if you do NOT want your information included or if there has been a change in information. Information to be included includes mailing address, email, landline and mobile phone numbers, names of spouse and children (if living at home).

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**Women’s Craft Fellowship!**

Calling all women who enjoy knitting, crocheting, needlepoint and other crafts! Let’s meet Friday mornings in the Fellowship Hall starting February 9th at 10 am and share in some fellowship time. We will discuss at our first meeting how often we would like to meet and other details. Please enter the church using the Clover St. entrance and bring your ideas!



**Please keep the following**

**in your prayers**

 PVT Alexander Carr

(New address currently unknown.)

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Anna Mae Daris

1865 Hofius Lane

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-962-5079

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Millie Elavsky

1209 Maple Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-342-0345

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Rudy Tomko

Rm. 8

Nugent Convalescent Home

500 Clarksville Rd.

Hermitage, PA 16148

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Jean Tomko

2629 Romar Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-979-4360

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Betty Ann Wolf

7777 Arthur St.

Masury, OH 44438

330-448-1080

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Ed & Millie Zachar

1320 Old Forge Rd.

Niles, OH 44446

330-652-9316

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**REMINDER:** If you do not have an email account or do not receive emails from the church, but wish to be notified of significant information concerning your fellow church members, please put a note in the secretary’s mail slot asking to receive a phone call. Every attempt will be made to phone you within 24 hours of an email being sent out.

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**LIKE & FOLLOW our Church’s Facebook page**

**(Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church)!**

**Altar Guild News**

The Altar Guild recently met January 20th. Among the items discussed were the following:

* The Altar Guild will be having a cabinet built to hold the new Memorial display case.
* The polishing committee will next meet Wednesday March 13th following the Lenten soup lunch & Bible Study (approx. 12:15 pm). All are welcome to help! (In case of bad weather, we will meet at the same time March 20th.)
* The Altar Guild will be hosting a Spring Ladies Luncheon Saturday, April 20th at 11 am. All ladies of the church and their guests will be invited. Marie Flaugher and Elizabeth Haenftling will coordinate the event. Anyone who wishes to help should contact Marie.
* The Trustees will be asked to look at the pew hymnal holders and repair those in need.
* 2024 dues of $25 should be given to Treasurer Evelyn Baisch ASAP. Fifty percent of collected dues money will be donated to a local charity to be determined at our November meeting.

The next Altar Guild meeting will take place Saturday, March 16th at 1 pm. The March hostess will be Evelyn Baisch.

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**A sign-up sheet for 2024 Altar Flowers** has been posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. Please speak with Diane if you should have any questions.

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**To listen to Pastor Deal’s sermons, phone 724-347-3620 (Opt. 6).**

***Win for Parental Rights: ADF Holds Government Accountable to the Law***

***You*** *. . . helped make possible a major legal victory for Wisconsin parents to protect and raise their children!*

After nearly two years in court, a Wisconsin court ruled in October 2023 that the Kettle Moraine School District policy of changing students’ names and pronouns at school – without parental consent and, even despite their objections – violates parental rights.

The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, and Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) attorneys, representing two sets of parents challenged the school policy.

One of the couples had to remove their then 12-year-old daughter from the district to protect her health, as well as their rights as parents.

Parents should never find themselves pushed to the sidelines in their efforts to direct their children’s upbringing. That’s because children need their parents – as protectors, as guides, and as counselors.

School districts across the nation with similar policies keeping parents “in the dark” about their children should find a warning in this decision: those who endanger a child’s well-being and ignore the rights of parents will be held accountable by the law.

As a society we can’t give up on supporting and defending the truth about the centrality of the nuclear family unit being the main foundational building block of our society; that parents raising and nurturing their children are necessary for the well-being of us all. No society can flourish if it is built upon lies about this fundamental relationship.

That’s why [Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church’s] partnership with Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) makes a difference – standing for the truth about the family unit!

**YOUR** support for ADF’s efforts is making a path to victory possible.

Together with ADF we will stand for the truth that:

* God created us and placed us in families, a fact that matters in how we educate our children;
* Religious freedom means that all people have the right to follow their conscience and peaceably to live out their faith; and
* The right to speak freely should be protected because it is the basis of a free nation.

From ADF’s ***Freedom Insider, January 2024.***

Submitted by Pastor Emeritus Arthur H. Baisch

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Lenten Soup Fellowship

Join us during the penitential season of Lent and share a weekly meal of soup and bread combined with fellowship.

 From February 21st through March 20th, meals will be offered following the 10 am Matins Service and at 6 pm, prior to the 7 pm Vespers Service.

 A sign-up sheet is on the table in the narthex for those willing to provide the soup and bread. Please plan on enough for about 12-14 people at each meal. Soup bowls are available in the Fellowship Hall kitchen along with napkins and cutlery.

 The morning meal will be combined with a Bible Study on the book of Romans.

 Hope to see you there!



**Word of Hope: 1-888-217-8679**

The only 24/7 CONFIDENTIAL Hotline that is distinctly Lutheran, bringing healing found in Christ, to those whose hearts have been broken by abortion.

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**Coffee Fellowship**

**is February 11th!**

Join us following worship, Sunday, February 11th for **Coffee Fellowship.** February’s sponsors are Mark & Bess Kleindienst.

The 2024 Fellowship Sponsor sheet has been posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. If interested in being a sponsor, please sign your name on the sheet. Sponsors are asked to drop off 2-1/2—3 dozen “treats” and a quart of juice in the Fellowship Hall kitchen prior to church on their given Sunday. Coffee preparation, set-up, and clean-up will be done for you.

Please speak with Diane Riefstahl if you should have any questions.

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**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

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**We were chosen!** By directing designated Choice Dollars through Thrivent Choice, eligible Thrivent members choose where Thrivent Financial for Lutherans distributes some of its charitable outreach grant dollars among thousands of participating Lutheran nonprofit organizations and congregations.

 **Many thanks** to Thrivent Financial members **Mike & Marie Flaugher** who recently directed Choice dollars to our church!

Remember thefollowing in prayer…

**~The Hurting and Healing:**  *Amy, Mary Jane Anderson, Steve Antolovich, Ellen BaronCA, Amy Blomenberg, Lois BortnerCA, Sara Brubaker, Dee Bullock, Bev & Joe Chlpka, Susan Davies, Loretta Deal, Tim Dudash, Mike Flaugher, Judith & Eddy Furey, Griffin, Austin Hamilton, Pastor Charles Henrickson, Joan, Keith Jozwiakowski, Darla Krajci, Barbara Kreske, Jess Lavoie, Paul LucasCA, Sandy Marshall, Frank NiemeyerCA, Lynn Price, Juanita Rentschler, Richard ReuningCA, Nancy RobertsonCA, Kriss SvidroCA, Rudy Tomko, Bob Usnarski, Joel & Peggy Wasson, Angela WeserCA, Ruth Wolf, and Michelle Young.*

**~The Homebound:**  *Anna Mae Daris, Millie Elavsky, Jean Tomko, Betty Wolf, and Ed & Millie Zachar.*

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Alex (Sasha) Carr, Duncan Vaupel, Curtis Sinewe, and Joshua Solyan.*

**~Community & World Needs:**  *Those suffering from or affected by the coronavirus; those suffering due to the conflicts in the Middle East and between Ukraine and Russia; those suffering from loss and dislocation because weather disasters; those suffering from addiction and their families; Local, State, and National Government Leaders; safety for all Police Officers, Firefighters, & First Responders; the unemployed; our First Quarter Local Mission: Community Outreach. \*CA represents cancer.*

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**Pastor Deal** will be on vacation Jan. 30-Feb. 5, 2024. Please contact Rev. Baisch (501-253-8292) or Elder Jonathan Baisch (724-816-6866) if in need of care during this time.

**Bible Memory Verses for January**

**For Adults:**

Jan. 7: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

*Psalm 27:1*

Jan. 14: But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

 *2 Corinthians 12:9*

Jan. 21: I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*Galatians 2:20*

Jan. 28: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

*1 John 4:7*

**For Children:**

Jan. 7: We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

*John 1:14*

Jan. 14: The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

*John 1:17*

Jan. 21: God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*2 Corinthians 4:6*

Jan. 28: We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. *Daniel 9:8*

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**OUR 1st QUARTER MISSION:**

**Community Outreach**

Recently re-named “Community Outreach”, our first quarter local mission gives us an opportunity to increase our presence in our community and our community’s knowledge about us. Monies collected can be used for participating in or supporting local events which will help us reach our neighbors in a positive fashion. Such events may include sponsoring community meals or taking part in community activities.

 If you have any specific ideas as to what you would like to see us participate in, please speak with Pastor Deal.

Your support of this Quarterly Mission will be greatly appreciated. Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and put in the offering plate.



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Shelves have been placed in front of the secretary’s office for *recent* copies of items generally found in the narthex (Council/Voters’ Assembly agendas & minutes, etc.). Items will now be available in both locations for your convenience.

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**Please check in!** It is important that you mark the attendance sheet *each* service which you attend! This information is valuable in helping us track attendance and plan for up-coming services (preparing bulletins, etc.).

 Checking in not only is important for Divine Services (when the Sacrament of Holy Communion occurs), but should be done at *all* services. Check-in sheets are available both in the narthex and near the parking lot entrance. Please help and take a moment to let us know you’re here. It will be greatly appreciated!

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**Additional Opportunities for Worship this February**

In addition to regular Sunday morning Divine Services at 9 am, the following will be observed this month:

* **Friday, February 2nd at 7 pm**

Vespers Service celebrating The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord

* **Wednesday, February 14th at 7 pm**

Divine Ash Wednesday Service

* **Saturday, February 24th at 7 pm**

Vespers Service celebrating the Feast of St. Mathias, Apostle

* **Advent Midweek Services**

Wednesdays, beginning February 21st

Matins Service beginning at 10 am

Vespers Service beginning at 7 pm

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**INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION**

**Monday, February 12 (9am-5 pm)**

*(or by appointment)*

**Thank You for Serving in February:**

**Elder:** Jonathan Baisch; **Ushers:** Matt Berent, Mark Gabriel, Michael Laird, & Jerome Thomas; **Altarware ~ Sundays:** (prior) Elizabeth Haenftling (02.04), Marie Flaugher (02.11), & Diane Riefstahl (02.18 & 02.25); (after) Marie Flaugher; **Special Divine Service 02.14):** (prior) Diane Riefstahl; (after) Marie Flaugher.

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Daily Lenten Devotions, will be available the week of February 4th.

**February Church Office Hours**

The secretary’s office will be open as follows in February:

* Weeks of January 28th and February 4th: Mondays and Thursdays (8:30 am – 4:30 pm).
* Weeks of February 11th: Tuesday & Thursday (8:30 am – 4:30 pm).
* Weeks of February 18th and 25th: Mondays (8:30 am – 4:30 pm), Wednesday (8:30 am – 10 am; 12:15 pm – 5 pm), and Thursday or Friday, as needed.

If needing to enter the building during the week, please phone first to make certain someone is there to let you in.

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**2024 Church Finances Report**

**GENERAL FUND**

*Amount needed to meet budget needs:*

$141,051.00

*Received as of 01.21.2024:*

$4,844.50 (3.43%)

**SELC**

*Pledged:*

$4,000.00

*Received as of 01.21.2024:*

$172.00 (4.30%)