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

Monthly Newsletter --- March 2021

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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.”

*This month, we are pleased to feature a “guest article” written by Pastor Ryan Loeslie posted February 9, 2021 on steadfastlutherans.org. We hope you enjoy it!*

# Administering the Sacraments According to His Institution

We install officers on New Year’s Day in my congregation.  It only makes sense.  Congregational officers serve terms based on calendar year, so it is appropriate to install these men as soon as possible.  Here we notice how rites such as the Installation of Congregational Officers instruct the people.  When we take the time to install officers every year, we are reminded of what our duties are as pastors, officers, and congregation members.  We have duties towards one another, firmly based in Scripture, which we need to be reminded of on a regular basis.  It might be that the Installation of Congregational Officers rite is the only time this happens during a given year.

Certain words of the installation rite have stuck with me over the past month,

especially in the wake of the events of last year.  The rite reads, “You are to see that the services of God’s house are held at the proper times, that the Word of God is purely preached and taught according to the Lutheran Confessions, that the Sacraments of Christ are administered according to His institution, that provision is made for the Christian instruction of the young and old, that the erring are admonished, and that disciplined is maintained.”  All of these are so pivotal to a congregation’s well-being.  We may not take these things lightly.

What has stuck with me is this – that congregational officers are to see to it that the Sacraments of Christ are administered “according to his institution.”  That is language which most Lutherans are not used to speaking, but it is language which we must recover.  We do not administer the Sacraments haphazardly, in ways which are only convenient, or in ways which simply make us feel most comfortable.  We administer the Sacraments according to his institution.  That is, we administer the Sacraments not only with the elements and the words, but in the very manners which our Lord Jesus Christ set down for us.

Why do we make a big deal of this?  We confess in article thirteen of the Augsburg Confession,

“Our churches teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but even more, to be signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us.  They were instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them.  Therefore, we must use the Sacraments in such a way that faith, which believes the promises offered and set forth in through the Sacraments, is increased [[2 Thessalonians 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess%201.3)].  Therefore, they condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify simply by the act of doing them” (AC XIII 1-3).

In other words, we do not administer the Sacraments in our churches simply to get the job done, or even simply to make people feel good temporarily.  Our confessions state that we must use the Sacraments in such a way that faith is increased.  We do this by following Jesus’ institutions, knowing that his Sacraments increase faith.  We do this especially at a time when the unbelieving world would insist that the Sacraments are dangerous.

The year 2020 exposed weaknesses in this regard.  I know that I saw pictures of Baptisms done with squirt guns and a myriad of novel practices with the Lord’s Supper, all across Christian denominations.  We could maybe say there were Sacraments, but Jesus’ institutions were not followed.  By altering Jesus’ institutions, can you increase faith?  I have a hard time finding how this is so.  When Jesus’ institutions are not followed, it gives the impression that the Sacraments are inherently dangerous, something we must be suspicious of.  This contradicts our confession.  We believe that salvation is given through the Sacraments, which is the ultimate safety.  Is it possible that we can improve on what Jesus himself gives?

I don’t think so.  As for Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, they are very safe practices, even from a worldly perspective.  Modern convenience allows for pastors to sanitize their hands well before administering the Sacraments, and we should put the best construction on our pastors, knowing they are doing their imperfect best.  [Marcus Zill’s valuable essay from nearly twenty years ago](https://www.lutheranliturgy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Chalice-Reconsidered-Rev-Marcus-T-Zill.pdf) in particular establishes the safety of the chalice from both theological and scientific perspectives.  There are countless more dangerous activities we could be doing than receiving the Sacraments, which bestow the grace of God himself.  We should not be afraid of what Christ himself gives, nor be afraid of his servants who administer these things.

When Jesus’ institutions are not followed, during a pandemic we are only increasing the fear which is prevalent, which is not a Christian thing to do.  It is pointless then to debate whether or not the body and blood of Jesus is present in something like a virtual celebration of the Lord’s Supper.  Perfect love casts out fear.  It does not increase it by following the frenzied spirit of our age.  In instituting the Sacraments our Lord Jesus meant to calm our fears.  Therefore we keep his institutions without knee-jerk measures which we have never known.

So in this new year, congregational officers have a special duty towards their congregations.  They don’t merely see to it that the Sacraments are present, but we keep them in accord with Christ’s institutions, that we observe them in a way in which faith is increased.  I am thankful that our rites spell this out so clearly.  May we as pastors and congregations keep our vows to one another faithfully, for the edification of our people and the glory of God.

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**Thank You for Serving in March:**

**Assisting Elder:** Bob Sulek

**Altarware:** (Before service) Diane Riefstahl; (After service) Hank Holcroft & Kati Laird.

**Note:** Our greeting and ushering programs are temporarily suspended at this time.

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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 member **Kati Laird** who recently directed Choice dollars to our church!

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**Join us for Lenten Midweek Services**

**Wednesdays at noon and 6 pm**

**March 3, 10, 17, & 24**

**Thank you!** Special thanks go out to Bob Sulek and Barry Nelson for stepping up to temporarily run our Food Pantry! Somehow it comes as no surprise that it takes two people to do the work that John Dyll has done so long. Here’s praying that John is back with us again soon!

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**“Stock the Food Pantry Sunday”**

**is March 14th!**

Your financial contributions to this outreach mission will be greatly appreciated!

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**Sts. Peter & Paul’s Food Pantry is able to assist those in need of emergency food!**

If you or someone you know is in need of emergency food during this time, please contact John Dyll (724-734-7016) or Barry Nelson (724-866-7417). Our food pantry operates through the Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County and distributes food the second and fourth Thursdays of each month beginning at 9 am.

 Please consider “lending a hand up” to those in need.

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

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**Homebound Members & Friends**

***Please keep the following people in your prayers:***

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Marion Roberts

287 East 2nd St. Apt. #103

Hummelstown, PA 17036

724-893-4570

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Martin Weisenborn

833 Adams Ave., NW

Warren, OH 44483

330-394-4355

Please help us **RECYCLE!** A bin has been placed next to the parking lot doors for used bulletins. Please help us keep our sanctuary neat by either taking home your service bulletins or disposing of them here.

Additionally, there is a basket by the secretary’s office for donations of already-read Christian materials. These materials are shipped periodically to ICLD (International Christian Literature Distributors, Inc.) who, in turn, send them to Christians in third-world countries.

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**2021 THRIVENT POP**

**TAB CHALLENGE!**

Keep bringing in your pop tabs for the 2021 Thrivent Pop Tab Challenge! Tabs may be placed in the containers found in the narthex or main hallway or given to the church secretary.

 This project benefits the Ronald McDonald House.

 If you have any questions, feel free to contact Marie Flaugher at 724-301-8278.

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**CELEBRATING IN MARCH!**

**Birthdays**

Morgan McGowan 3-5

Josh Solyan 3-7

Barry Nelson 3-17

Michael Laird 3-23

**Anniversary**

Larry & Robin Hawthorne 3-9

Brian & Liz Shreffler 3-27

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

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Please note the following email address change in your Church directory for Evelyn Baisch: ejbaisch@protonmail.com. Thanks!

**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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**ATTENTION AUDITORS!**

**2021 auditors are reminded that there will be an audit of deposits following worship Sunday, March 14th. If unable to attend, please phone Bev Chlpka at 724-962-4806**.

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Just a reminder that the sign-up sheet for **2021 ALTAR FLOWERS** has been posted in the narthex. Please be sure to indicate whether you plan to supply the flowers yourself or if you wish for them to be ordered for you. Further details are posted on the bulletin board.

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**** **LIKE & FOLLOW our Church’s Facebook page (Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church)!**

Remember to like, comment, and share to help us reach as many people as possible.

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**Orders and payments for Easter flowering plants** are due to the office Sunday, March 7th. If you would like to place an order, but do not have a form, please phone Diane at 724-347-3620 (opt. 3).

 Please make all checks out to Sts. Peter & Paul Lutheran Church and make certain to note how you would like your “dedication” to read.



FROM YOUR ALTAR GUILD:

**My Favorite explanation of Lent and the Easter season**

I did not write this article, but I am sharing it with you as my Altar Guild article this month because I love the simplicity of the explanation! The article was originally published by lutheranreformation.org in March of 2017. It has been edited for our purposes. Enjoy! -*Marie Flaugher*

***Lutheran Liturgical Practices During Lent***

*by Mr. Jonathan Swett*

Each year, the Christian church embarks on a forty-day journey leading up to Easter, known as the season of Lent. When discussing Lenten liturgical practices of Lutherans, I believe one can distinguish three different categories into which each practice can be placed: Visual, Historical/Traditional, and Emotional/Spiritual. It can be debated; however, that some of the practices fall into multiple categories—and rightfully so.

The first visual component is that of the color purple that adorns the Lord’s house in various manners throughout the season of Lent. The dye to make purple was very difficult to source in ancient times, thus attributed to royalty, and adorned the Christ only once—as He was mocked and ridiculed as the “King of the Jews” prior to His gruesome crucifixion. This deep hue has come to represent solemnity, penitence, and prayer as God’s people meditate on the agony His Son willingly endured. Twice in the Lenten season, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the Lord’s house may be adorned with the color black which represents the absence of light and the curse of sin and darkness which fell over creation that only the death of the perfect Son of God could abolish.

The second visual component is that of the sign of the cross applied upon the repentant Christian’s forehead during the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Typically utilizing ash created by the burning of palms from the previous Palm Sunday, this symbolic rite is a reminder of the sign of the cross that was placed on us in our Baptisms, our mortality (“Remember: you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”), and the filth of our sin that has been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

A historical/traditional component of the Lenten season is the omission of the word “Alleluia” from the liturgy and hymnody as well as an omission of the Hymn of Praise. “Alleluia”—a Hebrew word meaning “Praise the Lord”—returns full-voice in the glorious celebration of Easter morning.

A historic service, the Great Vigil of Easter, on the eve of Easter Sunday, had fallen out of common practice, yet is recently experiencing a resurgence. The service—which is centered on the themes of darkness to light, and God’s rescue of His people—includes the Services of Light (including the Kindling of a New Fire), the Word, Holy Baptism, and the Holy Eucharist.

As mentioned earlier, the emotional/spiritual character of the Lenten season is one of penitence. Connected to the Great Vigil of Easter; however, the season of Lent may also be one of preparation, as catechumens who had been prepared, were appointed to be baptized during the Service of Holy Baptism in the Easter Vigil service.

The practice of fasting (or “giving something up”) during Lent is not required for Lutherans because it is not commanded in Holy Scripture. Rather, as a matter of Christian freedom, starving oneself of a pleasure of the flesh is a way to remember daily the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to pay for the world’s sin.

You may already be well-along your Lenten journey. May it be a blessing to you as you again experience the depth of Jesus’ obedience and the great love of God to redeem a world so desperately in need of salvation.

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**REMINDER: 2021 MEETING DATES**

Finance Committee: (Corrected)

* **Sunday, February 21** following church

Lunch will be provided.

* **Sunday, May 2** following church

Lunch will be provided.

* **Wednesday, July 14** 8 pm

Steel Valley Logistics Office

(39 Chestnut Ave., Sharon)

* **Sunday, October 3** following church

*First budget meeting*

* **Sunday, November 28** following church

Lunch will be provided.

*Second budget meeting*

These meetings are for all auditors, financial staff members, Pastor Deal, Council President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

**Bible Memory Verses from February:**

**For Adults:**

Feb. 7:  *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mark 12:30*

Feb. 14: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:31*

Feb. 21:  *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8*

Feb. 28: **:**  *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8*

**For Children:**

Feb. 7:  *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Psalm 95: 7-8*

Feb. 14:  *See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. Luke 18:31*

Feb. 21:  *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8*

Feb. 28: *The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. Isaiah 50:4-5*



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**If entering the church during the week,** please let office staff know that you are in the building. Also, please make certain to turn off lights, lock doors, etc. upon leaving.

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**Sunday Morning Bible Study** is currently studying the Augsburg Confessions. This Bible Study is open to all ages.

 Bible Study begins at 8:45 am *prior* to the Divine Service.

 If you should have a topic which you would like considered for Bible Study *or* are possibly interested in a midweek Bible Study, please speak with Pastor Deal.

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Sincere sympathy is extended to the friends and families of **Robert Murchek**  who passed away February 3, 2021.

 May those who mourn his passing find comfort in the promise of eternal life with our Lord and Savior.

Robert’s obituary follows.

Robert Andrew “Bob” Murchek, of Sharon, was welcomed home to Heaven, Monday afternoon, February 3, 2021, following several years of struggling with health issues.

  Mr. Murchek was born November 30, 1948, in Sharon, a son of the late Andrew and Emma (Marinko) Murchek. A 1967 graduate of Sharon High School, he honorably and faithfully served his country in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War  from 1969-1973.

  Following his return home, Bob graduated Cum Laude from Slippery Rock University with a Bachelor’s degree in History and Secondary Education.

For 22 years, he was employed by the New Wilmington School District, where he worked in the maintenance department until retiring in 1998 due to health concerns.

  Uncle Bob, as he was known to his family, enjoyed hunting and spending fall weekends in his cabin. He raised several hunting beagles and cherished them all! He also had a passion for history and sharing stories about his military service in Vietnam.

  Bob loved God and was an avid reader of the Bible. He always did his best to live out the lessons he learned in scripture. He took very good care of his mother after his father’s passing. He loved his family deeply and was known for leaving bags of treats at their doorsteps.

Robert is survived by his nephews, Christopher (Holly) Bobby, Sharon; and Erich (Roxanne) Bobby, S. Pymatuning Twp.; great nieces, Cara and Lauren Bobby; great nephews, Chase and Zachary Bobby; and a brother-in-law, Carl Bobby, Farrell.

  In addition to his parents, Bob was preceded in death by a sister, Jean Murchek Bobby.

  The family would like to thank all of the extended family who helped care for Bob by delivering food and love to his home regularly.

  The family suggests donations be made to disabled veterans’ programs or the senior food packing program; c/o Grace Chapel Community Church, 4075 Lamor Rd., Hermitage, PA 16148.

  Due to concerns presented by the Covid-19 virus, all services will be held privately.

Interment: America’s Cemetery, Hermitage.

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**REMINDER:** If you would like someone’s name to be added to or deleted from our prayer list, please put a written note in the secretary’s mail slot by the office door.

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**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 (such as births or deaths), 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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Remember the

following in Prayer…

**~The Mourning:** *The friends and family of Robert Murchek, who passed away February 3, 2021, and Donna Dougherty (friend of Joani Rice), who passed away February 8, 2021.*

**~The Healing:** *Lois BortnerCA, Richard Brandes, John Burdette, Kim, Darlene Cesta, Susan Davies, Tim Dudash, John Dyll, Joseph Fleet, Marie Haenftling, Neale & Melissa Huston, Michelle KellyCA, Donna Kennedy, Jess Lavoie, Paul Lucas****CA****, Sandy Marshall, Ernie Meszaros, Mike Moats, Rhonda Moats, David Nelson, Juanita Rentschler, Richard ReuningCA, Marty Scott, Dan Spanos, Audrey Trimble, Angela WeserCA, Betty Wolf, and Millie Zachar.*

**~The Homebound:**  *Marion Roberts and Martin Weisenborn.*

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Curtis Sinewe and Joshua Solyan.*

**~Community & World Needs:**  *Those suffering from or affected by the coronavirus; 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: Willow Women’s Center.*

*\*CA represents cancer.*

**Picture Restoration Update:**

The restoration project involving the historical pictures which hung in our Fellowship Hall is moving towards its final stages. Our inquiry for missing photos did result in one additional photo being found and submitted for copying.

At the February 7th Voters’ Assembly meeting, voters approved the usage of SCRIP profits for covering the costs of this project. To date, the SCRIP program has earned $634.51. This amount, combined with memorial gifts dedicated to this project, leaves approximately $1425.00 yet to be earned.

The next step in this project will be the reframing of the pictures. This will be done through Hobby Lobby. Tentative plans are to place decades of photos together in large frames which will once again be hung throughout the Fellowship Hall. Reframing will begin in March.

If interested in assisting with this project, please contact Marie Flaugher.

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**From the February 7th Voters’ Assembly Meeting**

After much discussion, Sts. Peter & Paul voters approved casting our congregation’s vote in support of adding a third year to the triennium thus delaying the LC—MS Conference until 2023.

 We were recently informed of the results of this referendum.

More than the required one-fourth (63.32%) of the Synod’s member congregations registered a vote, and the majority (90.67%) of votes cast favored this action.

**SCRIP Program**

SCRIP program overseer, Matt Berent, has submitted a current breakdown of the percentage profits earned through the purchase of SCRIP gift cards. These percentages have been indicated on the order forms now available.

 The following is a breakdown of the gift cards by profit earned by the church.

**1-1.5%**

* Exxon

**1%**

* Sunoco

**1.5%**

* BP
* Circle K
* Shell

**2.5%**

* Amazon
* Walmart

**3%**

* Dairy Queen
* Dunkin’ Donuts
* Marathon
* Menards
* Sheetz

**4%**

* Burger King
* Giant Eagle
* Home Depot
* Kohl’s
* Lowe’s
* Rite Aid
* Speedway

**5%**

* Apple App Store & ITunes
* JCPenney
* Taco Bell
* Walgreens

**6%**

* CVS Pharmacy
* Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Stores
* Subway Restaurants

**6.5%**

* Wendy’s

**7%**

* Advance Auto Parts
* Denny’s
* Starbucks

**8%**

* AMC Theatres
* Applebees
* AutoZone
* Buffalo Wild Wings
* Cracker Barrel
* Dick’s Sporting Goods
* Domino’s
* Famous Footwear
* Great Clips
* Little Caesars Pizza
* Long John Silver’s
* Panera Bread
* Red Lobster

**9%**

* Dillard’s
* Eat’n Park
* Golden Corral
* Shutterfly

**10%**

* Bob Evans Restaurants
* Chipotle Mexican Grill
* Macy’s

For a complete list of retailers participating in this program as well as details on current specials and availability, visit ShopWithScrip.com.

 **March SCRIP orders and payments are due Sunday, March 7th. You should receive your cards the following Sunday.**



Join us for the LC—MS

Virtual Life Conference

March 19 & 20, 2021

The first **virtual** **LCMS Life Conference** is scheduled for March 19–20, 2021. The conference’s online platform will allow participants to livestream sessions on demand, and attendees can engage with conference speakers through question-and-answer opportunities.

We will be streaming this conference in our Fellowship Hall and hope to have at least ten participants. Preregistration is required by Sunday, March 14th and there is a $20 participation fee which is to be paid by this date. Checks may be made out to Sts. Peter & Paul’s. The sign-up sheet for the conference is found on the table in the narthex.

The sessions on both Friday and Saturday will run from noon until 5 pm. Participants are asked to arrive no later than 11:45 am and should use the Clover St. entrance.

The conference, under the theme “Making Disciples: Valuing Life,” will feature sessions from theologians and human care advocates, including LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, Focus on the Family Vice President of External and Government Relations Timothy Goeglein, and Director of LCMS Life Ministry Deaconess Tiffany Manor.

The conference will feature sessions for participants of all ages.

**Our First Quarter Local Mission is**

**Willow Women’s Center**

Willow Women’s Center, located in nearby Transfer, PA, is a non-profit organization which assists women facing unplanned pregnancies with quality medical services at no cost. The Center does not promote or provide abortions. The organization is funded by individuals and grants.

 Pastor Deal was recently appointed to the board of directors at the Center.

Please consider supporting this organization! For further information as to how you can make a difference, check out their website: willowwomenscenter.com.

 Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and placed in the offering plate. Please make certain to mark “Quarterly Mission” on your envelope along with your name and envelope number.

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**A note from Pastor Deal:** *Please let me know if you or a loved one are in the hospital or have a special need. Also, please ask the hospital or family members to phone me or the church office as I wish to visit those who may be hurting.*

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Be sure to check out the **card rack in the main hall!** New cards have arrived. All cards are only 50¢.

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**Don’t forget to turn your clocks ahead one hour Sunday, March 14th!**