

MARTIN LUTHER NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026

Martin Luther Lutheran Church ~ 420 Clearmount Drive ~ Youngstown, Ohio 44511

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OUR MISSION IS

Martin Luther Lutheran Church shares the love of Jesus Christ in Word and Deed with each other, our neighborhood, community, and beyond.

OUR VISION IS

Martin Luther Lutheran Church is a community of faith, a beacon of light, united in a unique ministry that breaks down barriers through the power of sharing God's love.

PASTOR BARB'S INSPIRING WORDS

DISCERNMENT EVENT "Mining our History, Naming our Values"

During this first event, (which took place on January 18th) we did some reminiscing about personal and congregational experiences that have impacted our lives. After that we engaged an exercise where the values that have driven Martin Lu-

ther Lutheran Church's ministry throughout its many years are identified. This event is designed to get at the DNA or essential character of the congregation – meaning that this is "what makes Martin Luther Martin Luther" (or what makes us "tick").

DISCERNMENT or DECISION-MAKING

What's the difference between **DECISION-MAKING** and **DISERNMENT**? Most congregations have some sort of decision-making process they follow when considering new projects. It typically involves sharing of information at council or committee meetings, weighing the best option, and then

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Ash Wednesday
Feb 18, 2026

Worship service with
communion at 7pm
Soup & fellowship at 6pm
*Please join us in person
or on Facebook Live*

Lent Begins
Ash Wednesday

February Scripture Readings

Below is a list of scripture readings for the Sundays and Principal Festival Days in February, to allow you to prepare for worship.



	FIRST READING	PSALM	SECOND READING	GOSPEL READING
February 1 4th Sunday after Epiphany	Micah 6:1-8	15	1 Corinthians 1:18-31	Matthew 5:1-12
February 8 5th Sunday after Epiphany	Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]	112:1-9 [10]	1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]	Matthew 5:13-20
February 15 Transfiguration of Our Lord	Exodus 24:12-18	2	2 Peter 1:16-21	Matthew 17:1-9
February 18 Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17	51:1-17	2 Corinthians 5:20b—	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-
February 22 1st Sunday of Lent	Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7	32	Romans 5:12-19	Matthew 4:1-11

**Bible Study
Ash Wednesday
February 18th
at
1 pm
In fellowship hall**



**Mark
Your Calendar!**

**MARTIN LUTHER
Ash Wednesday Worship
and Soup Supper
6 pm Soup supper
7 pm Worship
Join us for faith, food
and fellowship!**

**Annual Congregational
meeting is
Rescheduled on
Sunday, February 8th
Due to severe weather
conditions
Please plan to attend!**

(Continued from page 1)

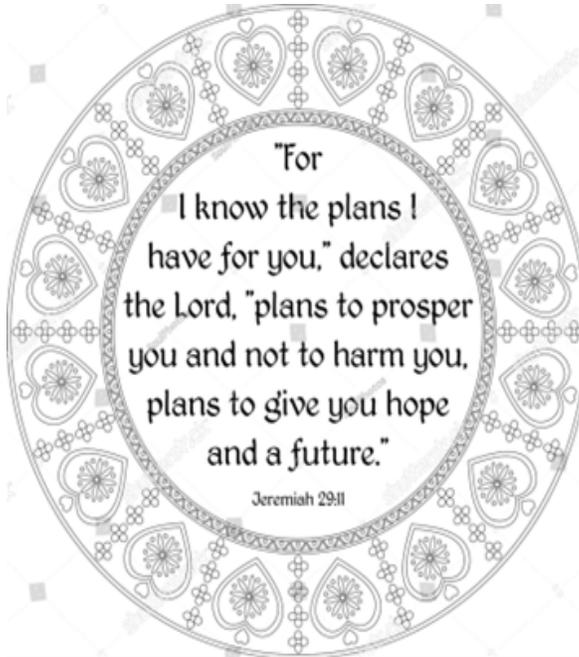
putting the decision to a vote. We often fill the agenda with words that we want to say. But we need to ask, where is God on the agenda? Or maybe more accurately where in our agenda is God? Frankly, it's probably not the best way for a spiritual community to function, especially when the future directions for a congregation are the focus.

Decision-making is NOT the same as discernment.

Decision-making is a rational process of choosing from available options based on logic and analysis. Discernment, on the other hand, is a deeper process of listening to oneself and "external sources" (God, the Holy Spirit, group reflection etc.) to find the best path, often involving a more spiritual or intuitive element.

Here's what author Henri Nouwen has to say about the distinction:

Christian Discernment is not the same as decision making. Reaching a decision can be straightforward: we consider our goals and options; maybe we list the pros and cons of each possible choice; and then we choose the action that meets our goal most effectively. Discernment, on the other hand, is about listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God's desire. As discerning



people, we sift through our impulses, motives, and options to discover which ones lead us closer to divine love and compassion for ourselves and other people and which ones lead us further away.

Discernment reveals new priorities, directions, and gifts from God. We come to realize that what previously seemed so important for our lives loses its power over us. Our desire to be successful, well liked and influential becomes increasingly less important as we move closer to God's heart. To our surprise, we even may experience a strange inner freedom to follow a new call or direction as previous concerns move into the background of our consciousness. . . . Most rewarding of all is the discovery that . . . God's will — that is, God's concrete ways of loving us and our world—gradually is made known to us.

(Henri Nouwen, *Reading the Signs of Daily Life*, 2013)

In today's world, where the church faces many challenges — not the least of which are a shortage of clergy and a lack of resources needed to sustain individual congregations — we are being called to go BEYOND decision-making to discernment. It requires that we learn new ways of being the church in today's world. Without intentional conversation rooted and grounded in prayer and deep listening, discernment is not possible. We need to learn how to hold space for

God to enter, for in that way we develop the capacity to truly discern. All of this takes practice because the work of listening to God is foreign to how the world works.

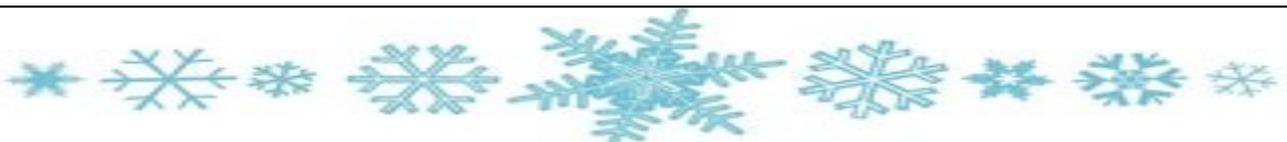
As we embrace this process, a word of caution is in order:

[1] Be aware of our human inclination to be too busy speaking to catch what God is saying.

[2] Beware of falling into the trap of telling God what we are going to do and expecting God to bless it.

I have been earnestly holding Martin Luther in prayer as this New Year brings new learning, new beginnings, and new ways of being church in today's world. Know this . . . God loves you and cherishes you beyond your wildest imagination!

Pastor Barbara Holzhauser



THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS PROGRAM

If you are a Thrivent member, please consider selecting Martin Luther Lutheran Church as the recipient of your Choice Dollars. The Thrivent Choice Dollars program allows you to select the charitable organization close to your heart to receive a fraternal monetary gift from Thrivent.

PLEASE NOTE: These "Choice Dollars" are yours to allocate, if you do not make a choice,

Thrivent will get to make the allocation to an organization of their choosing,

DON'T LOSE THIS CHANCE to direct your own "Choice Dollars" to MLLC!

Choice Dollars must be directed by March 31, 2026.

Martin Luther Lutheran Church received \$921 from Thrivent Choice members in past years!!

Let's make this year's donations even better!



Call the Member Connection Center at 1-800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" at the prompt and you will be instructed on how to direct your Thrivent Dollars.
Thank you for your continued support!



Worship Meeting
February 10th
11 am
at MLC

Finance Meeting
February 10th
3 pm
via zoom

Council Meeting
February 19th
6:00 pm
Via zoom

Worship Participants

February Ushers—Team Two

Team Two: Jerry Baker, Burt Ciccone, Paul Ericson, Doris Givens, Bob McDowall, Tim Ritter



	Sun, Feb 1 10:30 am	Sun, Feb 8 10:30 am	Sun., Feb. 15 10:30 am	Sun, Feb. 22 10:30 am
Altar Set up	Anne Davies	Anne Davies	Anne Davies	Anne Davies
Altar Clean Up	Nancy Evans	Nancy Evans	Nancy Evans	Nancy Evans
Lector:	Eileen White	Karen Thompson	Paul Ericson	Shirleyah Peakes
Communion Asst	Stu & Julianne Smith	Doris Givens & Marguerite Craciun	Rick & Sue Straight	Joyce & Shirleyah Peakes
Counters:	Team 3 Rick Vesey, Captain	Team 4 Eileen White, Captain	Team 1 Jerry Baker, Captain	Team 2 Tim Ritter, Captain
Video Camera	Video Camera work being done	Video Camera work being done	Video Camera work being done	Video Camera work being done
Coffee Hour Hosts:	Congregational life	Volunteers needed	Volunteers needed	Congregational life

Please Note: If you are unable to serve on your assigned Sunday, please find a replacement and notify the church office about the change. Those setting up for communion in the sanctuary, please check the church year calendar (located in the hallway and the preparation room) or check with the office for the correct color of the frontal cloth on the altar. Any questions or concerns for the altar duties, lectors should be directed to Anne Davies; for ushers, Jerry Baker. ***Thank you to all our worship participants! Martin Luther Church appreciates your dedication!***

QR codes are ready for you to use by simply scanning this QR code to take you to the various options available for your donation.



Please try it... it's so easy!
Thank you for your continued support!

Happy Valentine's Day

Help make your loved ones feel special....do something sweet and kind. We all need love on Valentine's day!!



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

PLEASE NOTE: Birthdays are listed from the 1st day of the issue month through the 15th day of the following month to allow for advance planning in sending birthday wishes.

BIRTHDAYS (February 1-28)

Norma Lyden	5
Charity Welton	12
Ryan MacDonald	13
Tim Barreiro	14
Dawn Bailey	18
Jerry Baker	21
Kasey Bland	23
Stuart Smith	25
Jakob Diefenderfer	26
Tim Bailey	27
Marguerite Craciun	28
Priscilla Fitori	28
Reid Fitori	28



BIRTHDAYS (March 1-15)

Justin McClellan	3
Tim Ritter	8
Madison Evans	11
Alex McClellan	11
Karen Willig	11
Alayceona Thomas	12
Karen Thompson	12
Bill Richardson	14
Eric McClellan	15

Special Anniversary Wishes...

Ray & Edna Slanco

May God Bless you with many more!

Married on February 20, 1971

Celebrating 55 years together!



Be **THE REASON**
SOMEONE
Smiles
TODAY

SPREAD
LOVE & KINDNESS
EVERYWHERE YOU GO

FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR

The Flower Chart for 2026 is available in the church entrance hallway. If you would like to provide flowers to either honor or remember a loved one for a particular Sunday, please note your name and whether you would like to provide one or two vases. The cost is \$31 for one vase and \$50 for two vases. When writing your check, please note "Altar Flowers" on the memo line and on the envelope.



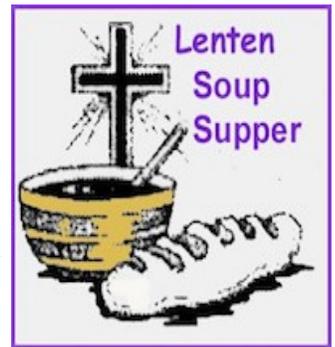
Payment and completion of the "Altar flower order form" is due the week prior to your selected Sunday. **YOU MAY ALSO TRY ORDERING WITH OUR QR CODE!** *Thank you for helping to beautify our altar with lovely flowers for our worship services !*



MAHONING CLUSTER LENTEN SUPPERS & WORSHIP



February 25th - At Lord of Life ~ Canfield
 March 4th - At Grace ~ Austintown
 March 11th - At Bethel ~ Boardman
 March 18th - At Martin Luther ~ Youngstown
 March 26th - At Prince of Peace ~ Poland



6 pm Soup dinners and 7 pm Worship service
Join us each Wednesday for faith, food and fellowship!

Also consider Saturday, April 4th - Easter Vigil at Lord of Life ~ Canfield.

***Thoughts for Lent which begins on
 Ash Wednesday, February 18th.***

What will you do for Lent and how will you do it?



#1: Give up your daily Starbucks or Duncan

Do you love to stop by Starbucks (or another local coffee shop) in the mornings?

**What if you gave that up for Lent? – and instead, put the money aside each day that you'd have spent on coffee and put it toward freshwater wells in a developing country or to buy food or medicine for those in need.



#2: Give up Facebook or Instagram

Do you spend a lot of time on social media? Constantly checking the latest updates on Facebook or Instagram? Give that up for Lent. Delete the app from your phone, so you're not as tempted.

**Instead of checking your feed each morning, spend 10 minutes each day keeping a gratitude journal.



#3: Give up discretionary spending

Each time you're tempted to spend money on something that isn't truly needed, say no.

**Instead, set aside the amount you would have spent. At the end of Lent, donate the money you've saved.



#4: Give up resentment and anger

Has anger or resentment made a home in your heart? Lent is a great time to send them packing.

**Spend the 40 days of Lent in prayer to forgive and let go of the anger and resentment. Dig deep with God to determine the sources and ask his help to heal your heart.

NOTES FROM OUR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Happy new year! Of course, the church new year began with Advent 1 (Year A, featuring Matthew), and now the calendar New Year, fiscal new year, but also a year of discussion and decision here at Martin Luther. Hymn 446 in the ELW, more familiar to camp veterans than here I think, is I'm Going on a Journey (text Ken Larkin, music Eddie Bonnemère), a baptismal hymn:

"I'm going on a journey, and I'm starting today. My head is wet, and I'm on my way.

Christ's mark is on me; it's on you too; it says he loves me, and he loves you too!"

We're going on a journey We started this last year, with Pastor Barb called as an intentional interim pastor, which means, she has a specific call to lead us in a time of transition. In that role, she has a specific plan to lead us (the baptized, wet heads, beloved by Christ) in holy conversation and planning for new ways to be in mission here, as well as carrying the best of tradition forward. This plan became delayed as her back issues required surgery, but we're back on track.

On behalf of council and the pastor, I'm asking several things of you:

Faith and prayer: We are all convinced that God is not done with us here at Martin Luther, but we have to discern what the unfolding mission is.

This is done through prayer and discussion.

Pastor Barb has been pouring out Weekly Words and explanations in the Newsletter. We need you to join us in doing the work to read those, think, pray, and engage.

Pastor Barb has schedule three major discussion and listening events, the first being Sunday January 18. This is after worship for convenience and your participation is needed. I'm told there's food. You should have received a letter from Pastor Barb.

A 500-year-old core principle of the Lutheran Reformation is the "priesthood of all believers": meaning that we are not passive followers of the clergy and hierarchy. We have agency. We've lived through generations of "Herr (und Frau) Pastor" and live among our Catholic friends and their reliance on priests, and it has been easier for us to "let them do it". Now, it seems that the Spirit is calling for more from us. Also, calling on us to work more in cooperation with others. The Church in interesting times. So ...

January 18: Conversation 1 after worship and February 8th: Annual Meeting
Annual Meeting:

Please note: 1) Council is proposing an annual budget for congregational approval. 2) Council is also proposing, due to all the transitions and decisions, that we suspend elections for 2026. As it happens, all Council officers (including me) and ministry team chairs are in term (I am through 2026) or up for re-election, so this is not much of a putsch. We really, really encourage your participation on the ministry teams and your active input. Any questions about any of this: direct them to a council member.

Many blessings for 2026, In Christ, Stu Smith

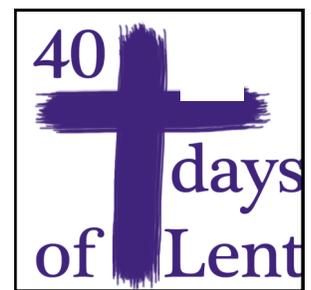




Lenten Word Search

D	G	O	O	D	F	R	I	D	A	Y	F	H	I
C	I	N	I	G	P	U	R	P	L	E	I	H	G
I	V	S	T	A	T	I	O	N	S	E	A	N	A
G	I	N	O	P	E	N	A	N	C	E	I	S	P
R	N	S	C	S	S	T	H	S	N	T	S	P	A
O	G	C	W	E	R	O	S	O	S	E	R	R	S
R	D	Y	U	N	L	S	I	A	A	S	C	E	H
E	O	P	H	Y	S	O	F	S	S	O	S	P	E
F	R	R	W	D	S	S	O	O	N	F	P	A	S
C	I	E	L	G	C	N	R	A	I	E	R	R	T
R	E	S	I	P	O	C	O	P	R	A	Y	E	R
K	N	R	I	F	O	R	T	Y	A	S	O	G	P
A	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	N	E	S	S	P	N
O	Y	V	I	E	C	I	F	I	R	C	A	S	E

- CROSS STATIONS
- GIVING FORTY FISH
- PRAYER PENANCE SEASON PURPLE ASHES
- SACRIFICE FORGIVENESS PREPARE FASTING
- GOOD FRIDAY HOLY WEEK



Lent



Pastor Barb Holzhauser	Church staff
Congregational Council	Ministry Teams
Bill Richardson	Ron Mang
Deborah Vesey	Patty DeAcentis (LuAnn's Friend)
Charity Welton	Bryan Givens
Deanna Holmes Cousin of Sue Straight & Edna Slanco	Lori Richards, & the Lloyd Murray Family
Eleanor Guimarin (Rick & LuAnn's niece)	Jeff Keller B-I-L of Bob McDowall
Kristian Saunders (Peakes family)	Luke Haus (Friend of LuAnn)
Tiffany Porter (Friend of Sue Straight)	Peace & Kindness



note: Family members or friends may be added to our prayer list by calling the church office at 330-788-8707.

If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact Pastor Barb at 440-465-9405.



2026
Phone directory
Available on the church entrance table. Please take yours home!

VALENTINE WORD SEARCH

Happy Valentine's Day!

- Candle Light
- Cards
- Chocolate
- Cupid
- Date
- Dinner
- First Kiss
- Memories
- Movie
- Pink
- Poem
- Proposal
- Red
- Romance
- Roses
- St. Valentine
- Sweetarts
- Teddy Bear
- True Love



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

Martin Luther News

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420 Clearmount Drive
Youngstown, Ohio 44511**

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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



FEBRUARY 2026

Martin Luther Lutheran Church

VIRTUAL WORSHIP SERVICES

**Watch our weekly services on our
Facebook page MLLC
Youngstown**



Church Office Hours:
Monday-Wednesday
9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
.Phone No: 330-788-8707

**QR codes are ready to use by
simply scanning this QR code to
take you to the various options
available for your donation!**



**Please try it...
it's so easy!**

*Thank you for your
support!*

Interim Pastor... ..Rev. Barb Holzhauser
President of the Congregation Stuart Smith
Church Secretary/Newsletter creator.....LuAnn Vesy
Financial SecretaryJoseph Heard
Choir Director.....Garry Adair
Organist.....Mark Halls
Custodian Tom Davis

**In-Person
Worship with Communion**

Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

