



St. James News

CHRIST AT THE CENTER. TRUTH IN ALL THINGS

Volume 72 Issue 3

March 2026

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From The Desk Of *Pastor Mark Loder*

March Spiritual Discipline: Fasting

“16 Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:16-18).

You may notice a bit of a departure from our previous disciplines. Those were explicitly spiritual in nature. We have placed a focus on listening to the Word, reciting the Word, and praying the Word. THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE FOR MARCH IS FASTING. Fasting deals with the physical. It's bodily in nature. In and of itself, fasting is not about taking something up. It is about denying the self. But fasting is not devoid of the spiritual. Everything is spiritual. How we can incorporate our previous disciplines into fasting will be discussed, but first, some words of explanation.

There is something of an expectation Jesus has with His disciples concerning fasting. “16 Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.” (Matthew 6:16) There's a very clear prescription for what fasting should not be. It's not meant to draw attention to the self. It's not an act of mortifying the flesh to earn God's love. We already have God's love in Christ.

So why fast? Think of the catechism, which refers to fasting as “fine outward training.” And what fine outward training is afforded us with this discipline? Our body is put into subjection. In fasting, the will of the flesh is offended. This is the will that is always seeking its own gratification.

Fasting is an opportunity for man, who still lives in this mortal life upon earth, to rule his own body. It's a small way to say: “My belly is not my god. I am not controlled by my fleshly urges.” It's a small way to help us say “no” so that

when there comes temptation we must say “no” to, we have some experience in not giving in to our urges.

How then might we fast? Well, as noted before, nothing is mandated in the Scriptures for us. This is a matter of Christian freedom. From where can we then learn? We can learn from the history of the Church.

The traditional fast of the Western Church was ¼ meal for breakfast and lunch, with a simple dinner. This may be something like a slice of toast for breakfast, an orange for lunch, and a regular dinner that is not overly fancy. There are other traditions in the Western Church of abstaining from meat and wine on the Fridays of Lent (and some other days as well). But again, properly understood, this is neither mandated nor done for merit.

Now, here is how you can make use of our previous spiritual disciplines along with fasting, for fasting was never meant to live by itself. It is joined to the other Lenten disciplines of almsgiving and prayer. By not eating as much, you have more money to give to others who have less than you. By not fixing elaborate meals, you have more time to spend in the Word and prayer. By going hungry, we might be reminded: “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed Perhaps it means a meatless day or two during the week. Maybe it means that you don't consume anything on Sunday morning until the Lord's Supper. Whatever form it takes, use fasting as an opportunity to deny yourself and take up the Word of God.

Blessed Fastenzeit, as the Germans would say. That's the German word for “Lent.” It's translated as “fasting time.” And when you fast, do not glory in yourself but give all glory to the Lord.

✠ Bible Trivia ✠

See answers below

1. How was the presence of the Lord indicated at the door of the tabernacle during the time of Moses?
2. Why were 50,070 men in Bethshemesh "slaughtered" by God?
3. Which king's life did God extend by 15 years?
4. Who asked Jesus to perform His first recorded miracle?
5. What did Herod do as a result of Peter being freed from his jail by an angel?
6. Which book of the Bible lists the fruits of the Spirit?

Answers: 1. A cloud (Numbers 9) 2. They looked into the Ark of the Covenant. (1 Samuel 6:19) 3. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:6) 4. His mother, Mary (John 2:1-11) 5. He executed the guards. (Acts 12:19) 6. Galatians (Galatians 5:22-23)

Our Church Records

Church Attendance

Sunday, February 1	244
Sunday, February 8	205
Sunday, February 15	183
Ash Wednesday	69
Sunday, February 22	220

Communion Attendance

Sunday, February 1	127
Sunday, February 8	129
Sunday, February 15	183
Ash Wednesday	40
Sunday, February 22	127



Hear the Good News of the Gospel on the Lutheran hour each Sunday at 9:00 am on KDUZ 1260 AM Radio.

During the month of March, you will hear the following topics:

March 1, 2026

"The Fifth Act"

Through the Bible, God invites us to help Him complete the unfinished drama He's been writing for the world.
1 Corinthians 4:1

March 8, 2026

"What Was the Price on That?"

When we couldn't pay the price of our redemption, God did so completely by the life of Jesus.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

March 15, 2026

"No Command from the Lord"

Jesus is the only way to God, but there are many adventures with Jesus. Which ones will you pick?
1 Corinthians 7:6-7

March 22, 2026

"Meeting You Where You Are"

Jesus meets you where you are, not where you should have been.
1 Corinthians 9:19-23

March 29, 2026

"Dime-Sized"

God doesn't look for valuable, desirable, beautiful people so that He can love them. God loves first, and by loving them He makes people valuable, desirable, and beautiful.
1 Corinthians 13:11



March: Greta Goede (1), Annalie Kilpela (1), Dwayne Oestreich (1), Kaidyn Pollock (1), Lucas Probst (1), Randy Hatcher (2), Larae Ostgulen (2), Janet Koch (3), Justin Rehmann (3), Wes Klammer (4), Rodney Miller (4), Madisyn Remer (4), Christena Dickens (5), Pat Olson (6), Keith Diers (7), Erin Luchsinger (7), Kristen Smida (7), Bill Wickesberg (7), Marlin Diers (8), Shannon Johnson (8), McKensie Rehmann (8), Cody Utne (8), Deane Cloose (9), Connie Johnson (9), Daisy Blanchette (10), Donald Oestreich (10), William Workman (10), Kaitlynn Bickmann (11), Janice Comstock (11), Emilia Fleck (12), Steve Horsch (12), Marlene Jensen (12), Wyatt Stoll (12), Leigha Workmann (12), Alan Montgomery (13), Isaiah Painschab (13), Madyson Lueders (13), Brian Currey (14), William Hassa (14), Delia Hassa (14), Shelby Gabbert (15), Alexandr Kotila (15), Aaron Munson (15), Amelia Nowak (16), Patricia Diers (18), Cheryl Moist (18), Gracie Gabbert (20), Nicholas Borg (21), Dawn Kliche (21), Lily Koch (21), Kim Koosman (21), Timothy Schmieg (21), April Stueven (22), Joseph Bickmann (23), Lorraine Luhman (23), Allison Estrem (24), Jared Merges (24), Mason Glessing (25), Beatrice Buttenhoff (26), Colton Diers (26), Richard Zander (26), Paul Eklof (27), Angela Gabbert (27), Tanner Glessing (27), Samual Kittock (27), Hanna Skiles (27), Marey Woolhouse (27), Dennis Frey (28), Darlene Yager (28), Eden Koosman (29), Olivia Koosman (29), Deborah Workman (29), Ella Bobrowske (30), Corene Oestreich (30), Belinda Jo Estrem (31).

President Marge Opened our first meeting of 2026 on Monday, February 2nd at 2 PM with prayer and led the business meeting. We are invited to Madagascar, House of Hope seminar at St. John's, Atwater, March 3rd. Monday March 2nd 2 PM will be our annual "Workday" cleaning the fellowship kitchen and making Easter favors for the Care Center residents ending with a sub lunch.

Marge and Barb led us in the prayer service prayer Dynamics: Praise, Remember, Ask, Yield, Excitement, Rejoicing and how God answers prayers according to His wisdom, timing, and graciousness. Refreshments and fellowship followed.

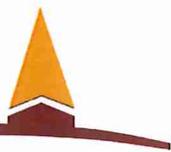
"Don't worry about anything, instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done." Philippians 4:6.

Happy Anniversary

Don't worry about anything; instead, Pray about everything.
Philippians 4:6

3/4 Tyler & Ashlee Gruenhagen
3/9 Erland & Linda Hoese
3/18 Gerald & Carol Burau
3/26 Allan & Donna Munson

Monthly Financial Report



St. James Lutheran Church
Monthly Financial Summary
January 2026

	Year to Date	
	Actual	Budget
Receipts		
Offerings & Donations	410,502	307,100
Tuition & Other Receipts	175,558	168,197
Mission Receipts	5,439	7,250
Total Receipts	591,498	482,547
Expenses		
Salaries-Church & School	301,820	305,833
Benefits/Payroll/Taxes/Mileage	78,243	83,315
Administration & Program Expenses	40,982	37,693
Utilities/Maintenance & Repair	111,592	104,580
Mission Disbursements	2,000	875
Total Expenses	534,636	532,296
Net Receipts/Expenses	56,862	(49,748)

March Newsletter Articles

LCMS Family Ministry

Visit lcms.org/family to find free family devotional and prayer resources to help make devotions and prayer a family habit.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18.

Many Christians give something up during Lent as a reminder that Jesus gave up everything when He came down to earth to die and rise for us. Lent is a time where we remember our sin, repent and focus on Christ's suffering for us. In this time of reflection and repentance, instead of (or in addition to) giving something up, it can also be helpful to add something into our lives. These verses from 1 Thessalonians tell us to “pray without ceasing” and to “give thanks in all circumstances.” One habit that could be helpful to focus on is prayer. As a family, you can start developing this habit by finding times to pray together such as before meals, before bed or whenever works best in your family’s routine.

LCMS Stewardship

As a kid, I remember my Grandma and Grandpa Diepholz’ home with extraordinary joy. Family fun. Great food. A legacy of faith. One of my lasting memories of that house was the table that sat between their twin beds. It contained a lamp, a Bible, a catechism and a hymnal. These were well-worn, as Grandpa read to Grandma every night before they went to sleep! What a treasure these tools of faith are! Let us spend some time this month in the hymnal to help us better understand our life as Christian stewards! To do this, we will use LSB 785 “We Praise You, O God.”

We Praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;

In grateful devotion our tributes we bring.

We lay it before You, and kneel and adore You;

We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.

Stewardship is an act of worship. It flows from the grace and mercy we have received in Jesus! Faithful stewardship can never start with us. Our sinful nature will make us and our desires the center of our worship. Our tributes, our giving and our serving only flow from how the Lord Jesus has given of Himself for our sake! When we have this in clear view, our knees bow and our praises flow freely! All this flows from the Name that has been placed on us in Holy Baptism!

School NEWS

Christ at the Center Truth in All Things.

Although February is a short month, it was full of activities for the students and families of St. James. Besides the daily academics of religion instruction, reading, writing and arithmetic, here are highlights of some of the extras:

Kindergarten celebrated the 100th day of school with many counting activities and the joy of 100 balloons at gym time. The PTL supplied a treat for everyone in the school that day as well. (See picture).



Grades one and two had a visit from a dental hygienist who shared information on the best ways to care for our teeth. They have also been doing their own version of the Olympics in PE class. They have used scooters as curling stones and bobsleds. Carpet squares under your feet substitute as "skates" for speed skating races.

Preschoolers and their friends spent part of the evening of the 19th jumping, hopping, bouncing, and balancing at Flip Flopping in February. Those large motor skills are great fun to practice. Parents had time to chat with the teachers and other parents of little ones.

Kindergarten through eighth grade were able to finish celebrating National Lutheran Schools Week by tubing at



Powder Ridge on the 18th. The event was originally planned for January 28th but was postponed due to the extreme wind chills. Lots of parents were also able to attend and enjoy the snow.

The third-grade class has begun learning how to play recorders in their music classes. The melody "Hot Cross Buns" has been heard wafting through the hallways. Every music class continues to prepare special music for both chapel and Sunday morning services.

The midyear parent/teacher conferences were held the first week of February. We are grateful for the teamwork between parents and teachers to provide what's best for our students. Thank you to the PTL and all the parents who donated food for the evening meal on conference night. It was a wonderful blessing!



March 1 10:30 a.m. Preschool Choir
March 8 8:00 a.m. Grades 5-8 Choir
March 14 St. James Gala
March 15 10:30 a.m. Grades 3-4 Choir
March 17 Science Fair
March 20 End of the third quarter (no bussing)
March 23-27 Spring Break
March 29 Palm Sunday - all choirs at both services

A Message from Vicar Hallock

“For this reason let everyone value his Baptism as a daily dress [Galatians 3:27] in which he is to walk constantly. Then he may ever be found in the faith and its fruit, so that he may suppress the old man and grow up in the new. For if we would be Christians, we must do the work by which we are Christians.” (Large Catechism, Part 4, 84-85)

During this season of Lent, we observe a time of repentance. This season began with us receiving ashes upon our foreheads, reminding us of the death and destruction sin brings upon us. But we are also reminded of our need to live in continual repentance. As you heard on Ash Wednesday, repentance has two parts: contrition, grief over sin, and forgiveness, receiving pardon for our sins. This repentance then leads us to amend our lives, growing more and more in holiness, and suppressing the sinful man in us.

All of this begins in Holy Baptism. In the waters of Baptism, we are rescued from our lives of sin. We are claimed by God as his own in those blessed waters. Saint Paul wrote “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). In Baptism, we experience death and resurrection. Our old man, is drowned and destroyed. And a new man emerges from the waters.

Repentance is none other than returning to those promises in Baptism again and again. It’s dying to the old man and growing again in the new man. That’s the Christian life. It’s dying to sin and rising in this newness of life. It’s dying to the sinful man who prevents us from our Christian tasks and growing in the new man who delights in good.

The words of the Large Catechism are especially important for us to note. Here, Luther, drawing on the language of Saint Paul, describes our Baptism as a daily garment. It’s the Christian’s uniform so to speak. Each of us have been entrusted with vocations. We hear about these vocations in the Table of Duties. As we carry out each of our vocations, Baptism becomes the uniform that identifies whose name we do our work in. Just as a badge indicates someone is a police officer or scrubs indicates someone is a nurse.

This is where the custom of making the sign of the cross is especially helpful. It reminds us that when we go out into the world we don’t leave our Christian faith behind, but rather we are presenting ourselves as Christians. And so it reminds us that we represent Christ and his Church everywhere we go.

Like any other vocation, there is growth. We are continually growing in our Baptism, in our vocation as Christians. Just as a nurse grows in their skill, a farmer grows in their skill, so a Christian grows. Jesus himself notes three acts that he assumes Christians do and that we focus on in Lent: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Almsgiving is simply doing good to others, whatever that looks like according to your vocation. Prayer is lifting our petitions to God knowing he will answer them. And fasting is the practice of disciplining the body. Usually, fasting is removing distractions or ceasing from eating for a time in order to practice discipline. Here, we are given opportunities to grow in our Baptisms. Jesus gives us Christian freedom in these practices and gives them as tools and aids as we journey through this life. They are given for our benefit so that we may suppress the old man and grow up in the new. And when we practice these things we do so with our garment—Holy Baptism. We begin to grow more and more into our garments that the Lord has given us.

So this Lent, it’s worth contemplating on this image of Baptism as a daily garment. It’s a rich image that shapes our Christian identity and how we conduct ourselves as we carry out our vocations. So let us ever remember and hold fast to Baptism as we serve those God has given us to serve. promises of God, that for the sake of Christ’s merits we are accounted righteous.

Service Planner

SEASON	DATE	LITURGY	PREACHER	ORGANIST	HYMNS	COMMUNION
MID-WEEK 2	Feb. 25		Ex 24:12-18 / 1 Ki 19:3-8/ Matt 12:38-50			
		Vespers	Vicar	Nancy	542, 421, 878 1 & 6	
	Mar. 1	Second S. in Lent (Reminiscere)	Gen 32:22-32	Psalm 121	1 Thess. 4:1-7 or Rom. 5:1-5	Matt. 15:21-28
		DS I - pg. 151	Vicar	Molly	772, 615, 770	779, 713, 632
	Mar. 4	Chapel	Matt. 15:21-28			
		Prayer and Preaching	Vicar	Molly	550, 770, 433	5-8 choir
MID-WEEK 3	Mar. 4		Esther 13:8-11, 15-17 / Matthew 20:17-28			
		Vespers- pg. 229	Pastor	Molly	425, 428, 878 1 & 6	
	Mar. 8	Third S. in Lent (Oculi)	Ex. 8:16-24 or Jer. 26:1-15	Psalm 136:1-16 or Psalm 4	Eph. 5:1-9	Luke 11:14-28
		DS I - pg. 151	Pastor	Nancy	411, 659, 533	642, 614, 617
	Mar. 11	Chapel	Luke 11:14-28			
		Prayer and Preaching	Pastor	Molly	550, 435, 433	3-4 choir
MID-WEEK 4	Mar. 11		Exodus 20:12-24a / Matthew 15:1-20			
		Vespers- pg. 229	Vicar	Nancy	550, 435, 878 1 & 6	
	Mar. 15	Fourth S. in Lent (Laetare)	Ex. 16:2-21 or Is. 49:8-13	Psalm 132:8-18	Gal. 4:21-31 or Acts 2:41-47	John 6:1-15
		DS I - pg. 151	Pastor	Molly	625, 743, 711	642, 774, 634
	Mar. 18	Chapel	John 6:1-15			
			Vicar	Molly	740, 711, 547	
MID-WEEK 5	Mar. 18		Ezekiel 36:23-28 / Isaiah 1:16-19 / John 9:1-38			
		Vespers- pg. 229	Pastor	Molly	430, 744, 878 1 & 6	
	Mar. 22	Fifth S. in Lent (Judica)	Gen. 22:1-14	Psalm 43	Heb. 9:11-15	John 8:(42-45) 46-59
Veil		DS I - pg. 151	Pastor	Nancy	563, 430, 429	428, 610, 624
MID-WEEK 6	Mar. 25	The Annunciation of our Lord	Isaiah 7:10-14	Psalm 45:7-17	Hebrews 10:4-10	Luke 1:26-38

March

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Second Sunday in Lent 8:00 Divine Service 9:15 Bible Study/Catechesis/SS 10:30 Divine Service 7:30 Trustees Meeting	2 2:00 LWML	3 7:00 Women's Bible Study	4 8:20 Chapel 5:30 Catechesis 7:00 Women's Bible Study 8:00 Worship Choir	5 9:00 Bible Study 9:30 HL Care Center 1:30 The Lodge	6	7
8 Third Sunday in Lent 8:00 Divine Service 9:15 Bible Study/Catechesis/SS 10:30 Divine Service	9 1:00 Naomi Guild	10 7:00 Women's Bible Study	11 8:20 Chapel 5:30 Catechesis 7:00 Women's Bible Study 8:00 Worship Choir	12 9:00 Bible Study 10:30 Cokato Care Center	13	14 7:30 Iron Sharpening Irons Breakfast 9:00 Elders Meeting 4:30 Gala
15 Fourth Sunday in Lent 8:00 Divine Service 9:15 Bible Study/Catechesis/SS 10:30 Divine Service	16 7:00 School Board	17 7:00 Leadership Council 7:00 Women's Bible Study	18 5:30 Catechesis 7:00 Mid-Week Lent Service 8:00 Worship Choir	19 9:00 Bible Study 9:30 HL Care Center 1:30 The Lodge	20	21
22 Fifth Sunday in Lent 8:00 Divine Service 9:15 Bible Study/Catechesis/SS 10:30 Divine Service	23	24 7:00 Women's Bible Study St. Patrick's Day	25 8:20 Chapel 5:30 Catechesis 7:00 Mid-Week Lent Service 8:00 Worship Choir	26 9:00 Bible Study	27 Spring Begins	28 9:00-12:00 Private Confession/Absolution
29 Palm Sunday 8:00 Divine Service 9:15 Bible Study/Catechesis/SS 10:30 Divine Service	30 7:00 Holy Week Monday Vespers	31 7:00 Holy Week Tuesday Vespers				