

Sierra Evangelical Lutheran Church
Monday Messenger
February 1, 2021

Pastor's Letter:

“Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, ‘What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.’”

- Mark 1:25-27

As I shared in my sermon yesterday, demons are not something we deal with on a regular basis (if ever), but demonic forces are, if we think about them in terms of the frightening and overwhelming forces at work in our world today that can include such things as violent rioting, family abuse, and addictions. We can feel very helpless in the face of such events and situations. But, as Mark 1 proclaims, we worship and serve the One who holds power over all kinds of evil, including, as Ephesians 6:12 describes, “...against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” The real issue here is not *possession* but *oppression* by such forces, as Paul Benz has said. While we need to hold people accountable who carry out such oppression, we do not treat them as enemies simply to be destroyed but seek to love them as God loves them.

I see four ways by which we can address such systemic evil: 1) Naming the evil and the lie it usually relies on, 2) Accepting it is out of our personal and individual control, 3) Asking God's divine help to address it, and 4) Engaging in collective and loving efforts to stop it. We have to admit that some things are simply beyond our ability to address by ourselves. We need to surrender to God's strength and wisdom and join with others of good will and greater expertise to work to overcome them. It is not easy. It takes time, patience and courage. But God is with us no matter what. And we follow the One who overcame the greatest power of evil ever known: Sin, Death and the Devil (as Martin Luther describes that unholy trinity).

May we not give up in despair when we see the terrible things that happen around us. May we remember that, as the Father's baptized children, we are held firmly in His gentle hand. May we trust not in our own strength but the strength of Him who conquers all things by His mighty power and love. And may we take seriously the need to continually encourage one another in these anxious and uncertain times.

Walking the Way with you,
Pastor Mark

ANNUAL MEETING FOLLOW UP

THANK YOU to all who led and participated in our Annual Congregational Meeting yesterday! Forty-one voting members joined us on Zoom and 4 in person in the Fellowship Hall. We were grateful that all went as smoothly as it did, technologically and otherwise. The informal straw votes taken overwhelmingly approved all the motions. Official SELC voting members will soon receive in the mail a ballot with all the motions to formally vote on. We ask each individual voting member in each household to return a separate ballot (one envelope per household is fine). Please mail or drop off your envelope or ballot into the black box outside the office door **by noon, February 17th** to be counted. All straw poll and paper ballots are anonymous. We must do it this way to abide by Arizona statutes. If you have any questions, please contact still-current Council President, Larry Rewis, ljrewis@gmail.com, or (520) 249-2973.

Our deep appreciation goes out to all outgoing leaders who served faithfully during this most challenging year: President Larry Rewis, Secretary Lynn Light, Treasurer Leslie McCourt, At-Large Council member Lilliana Dicks, and Financial Secretary Sandy Stephenson, as well as for those new leaders stepping into those roles (pending affirmation by return ballots), including Jim Cleven (President), Sandy Hall (Vice President), Janet Bobar (Secretary), Betty Burford (At-large member), and Dennis Cook (Financial Secretary). Please express your thanks to all who were and are willing to serve in these and so many other ways!

CONTEMPLATIVE STUDY ON WATER, BAPTISM AND CREATION CARE WITH INTERN PASTOR ANNELA

Twenty-five participants had a wonderful time this past Sunday as Intern Pastor Annela led us in a reflection on the biblical meanings of water and our faith. We have two more coming up and you're encouraged to join us even if you missed the first one. Sundays February 7 and 14 at 10:45 a.m. on Zoom.

The hope is to facilitate a coming together as we mindfully study and discuss - Does water matter to us as Christians? As members of SELC? As residents of Cochise County? This study is centered around contemplation, spiritual practice, and mindful discernment on how we as baptized members of the body of Christ value, connect and care for bodies of water that currently sustain and affirm our baptism. The February 7th Session will include a guest speaker from the San Pedro Riparian Conservation Area. The next Sunday members from our own landscape committee will share how we can all join in caring for our own water usage on campus. Join us and be refreshed spiritually and physically!

Topic: Contemplative Study on Water, Baptism & Creation Care - Session 2
Time: Feb 7, 2021 10:45 AM Arizona

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94793616875?pwd=N1pIT3JXNE5oaGlqZDRoaG9SVUIWQT09>

Meeting ID: 947 9361 6875

Passcode: 363361

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,94793616875#,,,,*363361# US (Houston)

**LENTEN LOVE ON LENZNER DRIVE-BY
AT SIERRA LUTHERAN!**

Ash Wednesday and Lent are quickly approaching! In this continued challenging time of COVID-19, our Faith Formation and Worship & Music teams discussed how we might help our faith family stay more connected and experience Lent in a different, yet we hope, meaningful way.

We are preparing Lenten Gift Bags for every household to be given out at a **Drive-by Lenten Love event on Saturday, February 13**, or hand delivered to those who cannot make the drive-by. This gift bag will include a can of ready-to-eat soup of your choice (and there will be many to choose from) for each person in the house, oyster crackers, a Lenten votive candle holder with tea lights included, placed on a decorative doily and cross to grace your table at home, ashes blessed by Pastor Mark, to be used in your home on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 17) a faith conversation handout and Lenten devotional authored by our own people and a few other fun surprises!

We are inviting people to this Lenten drive-by (and to bring those in our SELC family who may not be able to drive themselves) to get a lift in their day and to pick up their gift bag and soup so that we may all share in eating that soup together at our first **Zoom Soup Supper at 6:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday in Lent - February 24!** For those who cannot participate in the Zoom Soup Supper, we trust they still feel a touch of connection in Christ as we break bread and enjoy our gift of soup at one collective time in each of our homes. The centerpiece decorations, handout and devotional can be used throughout the 40 days of Lent and at the following 4 - Wednesday Zoom Soup Suppers or in spirit together.

We hope you will come to this drive-by that will be full of surprises and people dressed in purple ready to serve up some fun and faith for all! We hope and pray this special gift will help us all to feel linked in love in our Lord as we wait and yearn for the day we all can be together in worship and fellowship! **And to add to the fun, all who come to the drive-by will be entered in a drawing to win a \$50 gift card to Chili's!**

**Lenten Love Drive-By February 13:
10:30a.m. - 12:30 p.m. & 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.**

**First of 5 Zoom Soup Suppers!
February 24 - 6:00 p.m.**

Topic: SELC Wednesday Lenten Soup Suppers

Time: This is a recurring meeting - use the same Zoom invite each Wednesday; may need Passcode (below)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94861459631?pwd=U1BqNlFlSjBjSFJueW9nMnVnVVhTZz09>

Meeting ID: 948 6145 9631

Passcode: 460120

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,94861459631#,,,,*460120# US (Houston)

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL WRITERS NEEDED

We still can use about 20 more contributors to our SELC Lenten Devotional. All it takes is a couple of paragraphs written about your favorite bible verse. You can write more than one. We need these by 2/10/21. You can email them to admin@selcaz.org or send them to the office.

INTERN PASTOR ANNELA'S NEW HOURS AT HOSPITAL

While a search is on for a new full-time Canyon Vista Medical Center chaplain, Intern Pastor Annela Rova has temporarily increased her hours working at the hospital during the interim. She is serving twenty hours a week there rather than the usual ten hours. Her schedule at the hospital is Tuesdays, 2:30 -6:30 pm, and Thursday and Friday, 8:30-4:30 pm. That means she is going to be less available for church tasks. Please be aware of this change and be patient with communications. And keep her in her prayers as she courageously and humbly serves God and the community in this much-needed way!

Consider the opportunity below to enhance understanding about local water issues. (Dr. Garfin facilitated last fall's Climate Change series).

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Cooperative Extension

Brown Bag Seminar:
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3 @ 12:00 PM

DROUGHT AND OTHER CLIMATE-RELATED HAZARDS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES AND SOUTHERN ARIZONA

FEATURING: DR. GREGG GARFIN
SCHOOL OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.WATERWISE.ARIZONA.EDU
SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS OR USE
ZOOM LINK:
[HTTPS://ARIZONA.ZOOM.US/J/83071899432](https://arizona.zoom.us/j/83071899432)

2021 BROWN BAG SERIES Water Wise

Dr. Garfin will reflect on possible impacts of drought and projected future climate changes on surface and groundwater in our region, along with drought-related impacts, such as wildfire and forest mortality.

FAITH

Every Night In Every Home!

Our FAITH5 verse of the week is

Mark 1:27:

“They were all amazed, and kept on asking one another, ‘What is this? A new teaching- with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.’”

(Post or keep this weekly scripture in a handy place and every morning or evening share the following as a couple, or with family members in the home or even with a dear friend over the phone.)



Share your highs and lows of the day with one another.



Read the verse of the week and if time permits, the Bible story that pertains to the Scripture of the week.



Talk about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows of the day or how it’s speaking to you.



Pray for one another’s highs and lows and other prayer requests.



Bless one another. Make the sign of the cross on each other’s forehead or the palm of your hands and say something simple such as: “God bless you and keep you in His love and care!” Or feel free to make up your own blessing that incorporates a part of the FAITH5 verse of the week.

Be creative!
Stay open to the Holy Spirit!

SUNDAY LECTIONARY DAILY READINGS

The readings are chosen so that the days flowing out from Sunday (Mon. - Wed.) reflect upon that Sunday’s readings. The days leading up to Sunday (Thur. - Sat.) prepare for next Sunday readings.

Monday

Psalms 35:1-10
Numbers 22:1-21
Acts 21:17-26

Tuesday

Psalms 35:1-10
Numbers 22:22-28
1 Corinthians 7:32-40

Wednesday

Psalms 35:1-10
Jeremiah 29:1-14
Mark 5:1-20

Thursday

Psalms 147:1-11, 20c
Proverbs 12:10-21
Galatians 5:2-15

Friday

Psalms 147:1-11, 20c
Job 36:1-23
1 Corinthians 9:1-16

Saturday

Psalms 147:1-11, 20c
Isaiah 46:1-13
Matthew 12:9-14

Sunday

Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalms 147:1-11, 20c
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39