



BETHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Pastors

Rev. Brenda Henry, Rev. Susan Devine

and Rev John Gropp

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2024

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Blessings to you from your pastoral team. Here we are, in mid-winter. We have celebrated the birth of our Savior and the Epiphany of our Lord. In this month, when the secular world celebrates love, many of us will be spending a portion of our Valentine's Day in church, hearing again those familiar words, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return" while we receive the mark of ashes on our foreheads. In the bleak mid-winter, we begin the season of Lent.

The season of Lent derives from the ancient Church's period of preparation for those who were to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. That preparation included instruction, fasting, repentance, prayers and special acts of devotion. Today, the Church uses this same period and some of those practices to prepare for the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ. The word "Lent" comes from the old English word "Lencten" which means lengthen. You have probably noticed that each day is getting longer. Spring is on the way. We are seeing signs of rebirth on the earth; small green shoots are starting to appear. Just as the earth is being renewed, Lent is a time when we can consider our rebirth in our baptism and focus on our spiritual renewal in preparation for Easter. Lent is 40 days long, beginning on Ash Wednesday. We do not include the six Sundays, these are little celebrations of the resurrection. The 40 days identify with Jesus' 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness as he prepared for his ministry, and with Moses' 40 days of fasting and prayer on Mt. Sinai as he waited to receive the Law from God.

Lent is a time when we are invited to examine ourselves and determine what it is that leads us away from our love for God and neighbor. This examination will give us areas to focus on during this Lenten season and will direct us to disciplines that will renew our relationships with God and neighbor. Examining ourselves is never easy. Sometimes we discover things about ourselves that we do not like. Sometimes we learn that we are not doing things that we should be doing, and we make excuses about not having enough time or resources. We learn that we need to change something about ourselves, and change is never easy. It has been shown that in order for an old habit to be broken and a new habit formed, that it takes at least thirty days for this change to occur. We have forty days before us. What is it that you want to stop doing - or start doing - that will allow you to grow in your relationship with God? What is it that will keep you from experiencing the full joy of the resurrection? What are the disciplines of Lent that you want to practice?

Perhaps one of your Lenten disciplines is to increase and add meaning to your prayer life. The purpose of prayer is to communicate with God, not to God. When you pray, don't forget to pause and listen for God's response to you. Take time to be still. Perhaps the answer to your prayer may come as a thought, a phone call from a friend, or something that you observe. Take note of these responses. Be intentional about your prayers; set aside a specific time and/or place. If you are

searching for prayers to use, look to the Psalms. They are a great source of prayers for every situation – lament, praise and thanksgiving.

Perhaps you are thinking about fasting. Fasting is a practice designed to strengthen the spiritual life by weakening one's attractions to pleasures of the senses. Fasting should be coupled with prayer and spiritual preparation. Many people refrain from eating meat on all the Fridays of Lent. People give up sweets, tv, social media. The focus should not be on what is given up, but on what the giving up allows you to do. It should allow you to give more time to prayer and to spiritual work. What else can it allow you to do? Perhaps you are giving up your morning Starbucks coffee. You can donate the money that you are saving to a food bank or other charity. You can pray for God to bless this offering for his use. Remember that it should be a voluntary, conscious decision to abstain from something, that is the discipline of it.

What of our almsgiving? We can set aside an extra offering during this time. Our churches offer Lenten envelopes, these should be over and above our regular offerings. Perhaps there is a cause that you have been wanting to get involved with? Lent is a good time to devote some of your time and talents to this.

We can use this season to devote more of our time to works of love. The possibilities here are endless. You can send cards to those who are sick or shut in. You can visit those in the hospital. Send a care package to the person in the armed forces, who is far away from home. Offer to do some chores for someone who is recovering from an illness. Shovel your neighbor's sidewalk when it snows. Bake some cookies and deliver them to the local firefighters or senior center. What other things can you think of that you can do? When you do these things, remember the words of Matthew 25:40, "As you do it for the least of these, you do it for me."

We are offering Bible Study on Thursdays, beginning on February 22nd. We are using the Lenten Study created by ELCA World Hunger. You will find the materials for this study on our website or can get a printed copy at your congregation. Take advantage of the worship services available to you where we make our public confession. Our pastors are always willing to offer private confession to you for those sins that are weighing heavily on your heart. Contact us if you would like to make a private confession.

We encourage you to use the next 40 days to prepare spiritually for the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

May God Bless you during this Lenten season.
Pastor Sue on behalf of the PLUM Pastoral Team



FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

Dear PLUM Congregations,

Due to family concerns and a need to return to Ohio to care for his family, Pr. Alexander Sumo has submitted his resignation (resignation letter below). The PLUM Board accepted Pastor Alex's resignation effective Sunday, February 4. To provide care for Pr. Alex and his family during this time of transition, the board approved a severance package.

Please join us this Sunday, February 4th at 3 pm on Zoom for a service of farewell and Godspeed for Pr. Alex.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM MY CALL WITH PLUM

January 18, 2024

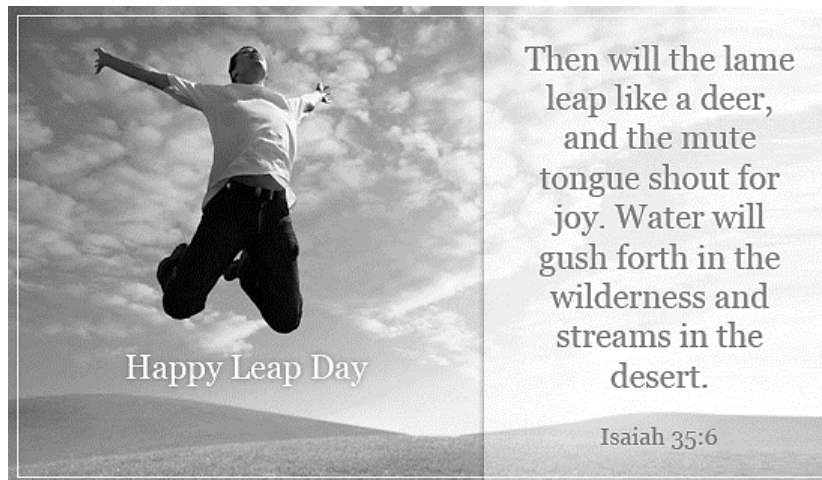
The Rev. Dr. Alexander Y. Sumo Pastor
Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM)

Sis. Susan Smith, PhD.
President of the Board Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM)

Dear Madam President:

After careful conversations with the PLUM Pastors and a meaningful consultation with Bishop Kurt Kusserow of our synod, it is with heavy heart that I write to submit to you a "Letter of resignation from my call" with the Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM) to enable me to provide urgent care for my family. Please let this action take effect as of February 4, 2024. This decision did not come easily, we are taking it because our children in Columbus are in crisis and are going through difficult times both at home and in school and they need my urgent fatherly intervention. It is in this regard that we are leaving PLUM at this time. It has been truly a remarkable and rewarding ministry experience here at PLUM. The people are loving and caring and faithful and gracious. The ministry opportunities are enormous, the future of the congregations is bright and beautiful. We hope to continue to remain in touch even while our paths are separated. Please bring our warm gratitude and blessed sentiments to all our siblings across PLUM. We will forever remain grateful for the opportunity they afforded us to serve and to share our lives and ministry with you all. Please continue to keep us in your prayers as we go through this difficult chapter of our ministry and family journeys. We will need all your moral and financial support as we navigate through this challenging era.

Blessings, Pr. Alexander Y. Sumo



BETHANY NEWS

BETHANY COUNCIL MEETING

Bethany's next Church Council Meeting will be on **Monday, February 19th**, at **7:00pm** via **ZOOM**. All Council members are encouraged to attend.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2/3: DAVID ARTH**
- 2/5: JOSEPH WILLIAMS**
- 2/6: MARIANNE MILLER**
- 2/11: J W BRUCKHOFF**
- 2/11: BECKI BLOSS (sexton)**
- 2/16: KAREN BROWN**
- 2/24: ELIZABETH MOLTER**
- 2/26: KIM CHIRICO**



CONGRATULATION EVERYONE!!!



LET US REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS:



OUR MILITARY: Matt, Josh, Lee, Chase, Cameron, Michael and Bryan.

THOSE THAT PROTECT & SERVE: Craig and Jaco, Sean, Michael, Zach, Tom and John

OUR SHUT INS: Roberta, Mary, Linda, Jeanne, Jan, and Jean.

THOSE WHO ARE ILL: John, Carol, Jeanne, Roberta, Karen, Arion, Sharon, Tom, Carol, Ann, Colleen, Alan, Rose, Ryan, Mary, Bud, Joanne, Patty, David, Liz, Vince, Linda, Jim, Ed, Bill, Eric, Paul, Naziario, Ardith, Debbie, Gerri, Joe, Heather, Logan, Jessica, Harvey, Ashley, Beth, Charlie & Kelsey.

THE CHURCHES OF PLUM

THE DORMONT COMMUNITY



BETHANY'S COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2024

**ELDERS: BOB AVERELL
ANNA WILLIAMS**

**PRESIDENT: ANNA WILLIAMS
VICE PRESIDENT: JIM WILLIAMS**

**DEACONS: PAUL BAKER
SANDY BAKER
KATHY GRZELKA
SAMANTHA GREIG**

**SECRETARY: KAREN BROWN
TREASURER: DAVID MOLTER
FINANCIAL SECRETARY: J.W. BRUCKHOFF
PASTOR SUE DEVINE**

TRUSTEES: JIM WILLIAMS



BETHANY'S PLUM BOARD MEMBERS

**BOB AVERELL (PLUM BOARD VICE PRESIDENT)
SANDY BAKER
KAREN BROWN (PLUM BOARD SECRETARY)
ANNA WILLIAMS**

JIM WILLIAMS (ALTERNATE)



BETHANY GOES TO ST. ANDREW FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Bethany has been cordially invited to join St. Andrew, Carnegie for Ash Wednesday worship service. The service will take place at 7pm on Wednesday, February 14th. Once again this year, we will be inviting St. Andrew to worship with us on Maundy Thursday. We are excited to join our sister church for these two special worship services.



BETHANY’S COMMUNITY CUPBOARD

The need in Dormont is still quite evident, as we continue to see our neighbors utilizing our Community Cupboard daily. Donations are always welcome. We are always looking for non-perishable foods, paper products, cleaning supplies and health and beauty aids. We also welcome new and gently used clothing, shoes and housewares. Warm clothing donations at this time are greatly appreciated.



PLUM NEWS

AT HOME TAIZÉ PRAYER SERVICE: Please join us in Taizé Prayer from the safety of your homes on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 7:00 pm via ZOOM.



PLUM WORSHIP AND MEETINGS VIA ZOOM: As we continue to embrace the changes we had to make during the Covid-19 restrictions, we are thrilled to continue to gather for Worship, meeting bible studies and fellowship by connecting on the ZOOM format. Just use the information below and you can be a part of all we are currently doing.

Zoom online: <https://zoom.us/j/401596541>

Zoom by phone: (646) 876-9923

Meeting ID: 401 596 541



**JOIN PLUM FOR A LENTEN STUDY:
5 THURSDAYS: FEBRUARY 22 & 29; MARCH 7, 14 & 21 AT 7 PM ON ZOOM**

Using the 2024 Lenten Study created by ELCA World Hunger, we will study scripture and explore how we experience the living God today. Along the way we will reflect on what it means to encounter God in experiences of reconciliation, transfiguration, crucifixion, restoration and resurrection.



LOVE THE MUSIC IN CHURCH? DO YOU MISS SINGING IN THE CHOIR? HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO SING IN THE CHURCH CHOIR?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to join your fellow PLUM members in a Combined PLUM Choir. We are looking for anyone who would like to help us perform and record music for PLUM’s joint live services and our weekly ZOOM worship services. All experience levels and all voice types are welcome. We will have in person practices prior to performances. Attend as often as you can, we will try to work around schedules. Prayerfully consider joining this endeavor. Please contact Karen Brown by Thursday, February 15th at either:

Bethany, Dormont: 412-531-9363 bethany-dormont@verizon.net
or St. Andrew, East Carnegie: 412-279-3615 standrew3@aol.com



READERS NEEDED: PLUM's ZOOM worship has become an important part of PLUM's ministry, as it helps to keep many of our compromised members and non-members vital and included in worship and fellowship.

The PLUM Worship Committee is reaching out to all PLUM members to prayerfully consider joining the 3pm Sunday ZOOM worship services to assist the Pastors in the reading of the service. Readers are asked to read the lessons and also provide the congregational voice throughout the service.

You can choose the day you can help, be it monthly, quarterly, etc. You can volunteer individually or encourage a fellow member to join you in the experience. Bulletins are provided well in advance, so that you can read through and prepare.

We hope you will consider assisting us in this worthwhile ministry. If interested or to schedule a day to read, please contact Deann George at Christ, Duquesne at 412-466-7773 or deann.george@plumofpa.com. Thank you for your assistance.



PLUM BOARD MEETING: The next PLUM Board meeting will be held on **Monday, March 25 at 7:00 p.m.** via Zoom. Board members are encouraged to attend.



WORSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING: The next Worship Committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, April 10** at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. All are welcome.



WHAT'S NEXT? PLANNING MEETING: The next gathering of the What's Next committee will be on **Wednesday, February 21 at 7:00 p.m.** Each church is asked to have a representative.



MEN'S DEVOTIONAL BREAKFAST: Prince of Peace Lutheran (400 Old Clairton Road, Pleasant Hills, PA 15236) will host their Men's Devotional Breakfast on **Saturday, February 3 at 9:00 a.m.** in the Luther Room. It lasts about an hour. We'd love to see you there!



Mardi Gras Celebration

Tuesday, February 13

6:00 PM

at

Christ Lutheran Church

405 Kennedy Avenue

Duquesne, PA

Do food, music, and friends sound fun to you? Join us! We will be having a covered dish dinner, so help by bringing a side dish or dessert. Rolls and beverage will be provided.

Whether you're a student, senior citizen, or somewhere in between, plan to join us.

Bring your friends!

There is no charge for this fellowship event.

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

February 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 BIBLE STUDY 7PM ZOOM	2  Groundhog Day	3 
4  WORSHIP 9:15 ZOOM 3PM Farewell to Pastor Alex	5	6	7 TAIZE WORSHIP 7PM ZOOM	8 BIBLE STUDY 7PM ZOOM	9 	10
11  WORSHIP 9:15 ZOOM 3PM	12 	13	14  ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP AT SAL 7PM St. Valentine's Day	15 	16	17 
18  WORSHIP 9:15 ZOOM 3PM	19  President's Day BELC COUNCIL 7PM ZOOM	20	21 WHAT'S NEXT MEETING 7PM ZOOM	22 BIBLE STUDY 7PM ZOOM	23 	24
25  WORSHIP 9:15 ZOOM 3PM	26	27	28	29  BIBLE STUDY 7PM ZOOM		

FEBRUARY