

The Love Letter

Volume 50

FEBRUARY 2020

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Worship Schedule

8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Mission Statement: Celebrating and sharing God's love in a welcoming community of faith, while serving others.

Looking Ahead

February 16: Semi-Annual Meeting

February 23: Blood Drive

February 23: Celebration of Love dinner and concert

February 26: Ash Wednesday

March 1: Bowling for Jesus

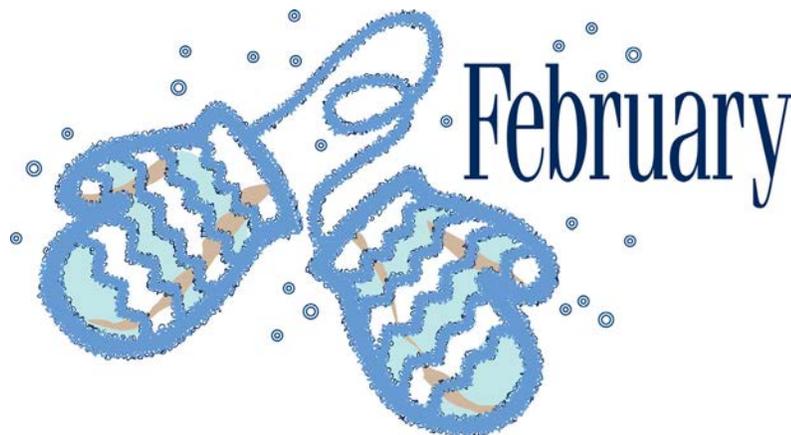


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PASTOR'S PAGE

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

—Colossians 2:6-7

I received an amaryllis as a Christmas present. And while it took me a few weeks to get around to planting it, my amaryllis really wanted to bloom! When I took it out of the package and it was not even in dirt or with water, it had already start to grow a bud. So when I put it in the pot, with dirt and water, it grew up sturdy and tall, and the bud is now bringing forth multiple beautiful blooms of life and color!

This plant was also my inspiration for explaining how new life comes forth through a continuing education project I recently finished. I talked about how God has given all of us the potential to bloom, but if we feed ourselves with the nourishment we need (God's Word, faith, hope, love, encouragement/a support team), then we can grow into the full potential and bloom that God intended us to become. So not only can we bloom into the beautiful creations God has called us to be, but we can stand tall and bold like my amaryllis grew to do after receiving the proper nourishment to pointing clearly upward and outward from its strong foundation. From this vantage point, it easier to see the light of God's love shining and nurturing it (and us, even on the cold days).

And when you and I make sure we are dwelling in God's Word, are always thankful for what we have (even on hard



days), and we are willing to share the gifts we've been given, then we, like my amaryllis, will find the courage to show up and shoot up, trusting that this is where God has planted us to live and grow, rooted and nurtured by God's love and grace.

So today, as I was thinking of this, I ran into the above verse, and thought it went well with my own growth story since being blessed and called to be your pastor, three years ago from today (1/22/17). What a great three years it has been for me! You have all helped me to trust and grow a lot as a leader. But it really is all about keeping on keeping on. It is about continuing the faithful journey of living our lives rooted in God's grace, love, hope, courage, and whatever else one needs to grow stronger in faith, and then making sure we live life abounding in thanksgiving and as a blessing to others.

And living this kind of life in Christ is always interesting, because there are always more ways for us to grow. For some, it is learning to hand over and give God the control for the things we just can't and probably aren't called to do on our own. *(continued on next)*

PASTOR'S PAGE

It means continuing daily devotions and regular worship and fellowship as the body of Christ together. It means seeking and discovering together how and where God is at work, calling us to be and participate as God's good news to the world, both as individuals and as Lord of Love.

So dear friends, how are you growing? Can you think of little changes that could make a huge impact on your ability to be the beautiful person God created you to be? If so, maybe it is time to dwell in good soil (God's Word, light, love and grace for you), set some goals and see how you might be strengthened and encouraged in faith in Christ, to bloom

brightly and boldly with God's beauty and glory. "Abounding in thanksgiving" is a great way to keep oneself in check and acknowledge the ways in which God's presence keeps us finding joy in who we are and what we can do with God's help and a little faith!

I am so thankful and blessed for all the time I've gotten to spend growing and blooming with you! May we continue to build up one another in faith and point to the one who gives our life meaning, and helps us be the beautifully and wonderfully made people we are called to be!

Pastor Becky <><



WORSHIP

Ash Wednesday and Lent

Lent starts on **Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26**. We will have our first Lenten meal from 5:30 p.m. until 6:30-ish, and will continue with our 7 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service. At this service, you will be invited to come up for the imposition of ashes, and contemplate your mortality with the words, "*Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*" We will contemplate the ways we are encouraged to draw near to God and spend time loving God and neighbor. We will also celebrate Holy Communion.

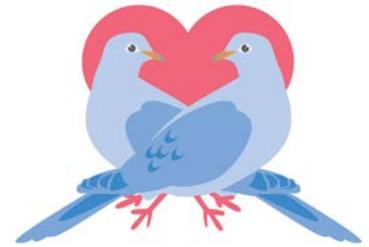
ASH WEDNESDAY
worship

NURTURE AND MEMBER CARE

"Celebration of Love" Dinner and Concert

You, your friends and family are invited to a "Celebration of Love" at Lord of Love on **Sunday, Feb. 23**, with a catered meal by Matt Weber and a concert by Simone Weber of vocal, piano and guitar selections. Appetizers are at 5:30 p.m. with the delicious meal to be served by some of our youth at 6 p.m. and the concert to follow.

Tickets of \$25 will be available from Pat and Jesse Brewer and Joan Witt. As we share our love with each other, proceeds will also benefit our Youth group and Table Grace Ministries. Child care is pending, depending on expressed interest.



LOVE

Donut and Coffee Fellowship

Thank you to all who have helped with Sunday morning fellowship time by preparing the coffee carts on Saturday mornings, plugging in the pots, picking up the goodies from HyVee and/or cleaning up the coffee carts on Sunday mornings.

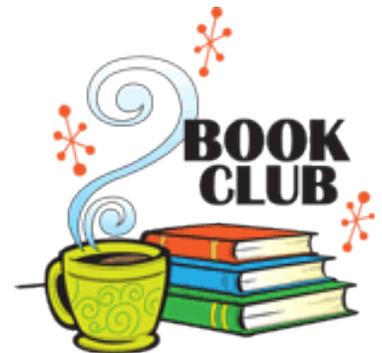
If you enjoy this ministry, consider participating by indicating when you can pick up donuts or clean up the coffee cups. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the narthex. For questions, contact Joan Witt or Rosie Avalos. Thank you!



Book Club: The Children's Blizzard

The Children's Blizzard by David Laskin will be discussed **Tuesday, Feb. 25 at 1 p.m.** Thousands of impoverished Northern European immigrants were promised that the prairie offered land, freedom and hope. But the disastrous blizzard of 1888 revealed that their free homestead was not a paradise but a hard, unforgiving place governed by natural forces they neither understood nor controlled. Hundreds of children died when they left school seeking shelter.

Everyone is welcome! Contact Jane Gehringer if you would like help obtaining a copy of this book.



Aged to Perfection luncheon

Aged to Perfection will be on **Wednesday, Feb. 12 at noon.**



NURTURE AND MEMBER CARE

Are You Lonely? There's a Cure for That!

An article in the *AARP* magazine December 2019/January 2020 edition, pages 50-55, entitled, "Is there a Cure for Loneliness?" caught my attention. In this article, genomics researcher Steve Cole explained that he hadn't thought much about loneliness until he looked into a molecular microscope at a small sample of white blood cells. In each of the samples taken from a handful of very lonely men and women, the blood cells appeared to be in a state of high alert. These cells were acting like they would if there was a bacterial infection in the person's body. It was as though the subjects were under *mortal assault* by a disease—the disease of loneliness.

Loneliness, or feeling "socially disconnected," according to senior research scientist at the University of Chicago Louise Hawkely, is "a universal human experience and being the social animals that we are, there must be implications when those social connections are not satisfied." In fact, it is a "killer." Loneliness is more dangerous to our health than obesity.

Is there a cure for loneliness? Well, there are ways to minimize feelings of "social disconnectedness." F. Michler Bishop, a cognitive behavioral therapist, suggests having a "sense of purpose can moderate loneliness." So, offer to volunteer! Brigham Young University professor Julianne Holt-Lunstad suggests having face-to-face connections to combat feeling socially disconnected. Studies show that learning a new skill or language, joining in on community events and reaching out to others are also good ways.

What does The Bible tell us about feeling connected?

See what love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called Children of God! And that is what we are!

1 John 3:1

Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God.

Isaiah 41:10

So we, being many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another!

Romans 12:5

Lord of Love is an awesome way to connect with like minded people! Reading and studying God's word and coming to church is a way to connect, but it may seem like something is still missing. Remember we are "social animals!" You can also:

- Join in on a Bible study or the women's and men's groups
- Community gardening in the spring
- Tai Chi classes
- Quilting group
- Lord of Love book club
- Coffee at Scooters on Fridays
- Choir
- Bell choir
- Volunteering for small committees, such as Mission Possible, or Worship Planning
- Help at a funeral luncheon or bring food
- Altar care
- Loads of Love laundry and paper pantry
- Food pantry at Holy Cross
- Attending upcoming fellowship events.

If there is something you would like to start at Lord of Love, contact one of the people on Member Care: Cathy Aden, Jackie Barnett, Kathy Christiansen, Paula Foster or Joan Witt. Peace be with you?

—Paula Foster, Member Care Committee

MISSION

"Mission Possible" Update

Thanks to all for your generosity in giving to the special offerings for Thanksgiving, Advent services and Christmas. The total for those special offerings was **\$1953.66**. Of that, \$715 goes to ELCA Good Gifts to purchase a family farm, and the remainder is going to the ELCA AMMPARO program to work with migrant youth in Northern Central American Triangle countries (El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) and the U.S.

The Mission Possible Team designated the special Lenten service and Easter offerings in 2020 to go to the ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response. Lutheran Disaster Response is usually the first on the scene of natural disasters throughout the U.S. and throughout the world, and the last to leave.

ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response: How We Work

From: <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response/How-We-Work>

Lutheran Disaster Response collaborates with other disaster response organizations and religious entities in the United States and around the world. This enables the greatest stewardship of resources and maximum impact of response. We are a welcome partner because we respect the perspectives and strengths of others.

We recognize that every disaster is local. Because of this, we believe every response needs to be rooted in the community; we work to accompany



that community from immediate relief through long-term recovery. In our international work, we partner closely with companion churches and other Lutheran and ecumenical relief agencies to make sure local needs are being addressed and met. In the U.S., we work through our extensive affiliate network and other partners to address these same concerns.

We strive to help the church continue to be church in the midst of disaster — following Christ's call to bring hope and healing to our neighbor in need. Some key areas of work include:

- Providing emotional and spiritual care for people who have been affected by a disaster and for leaders who respond to a disaster
- Coordinating volunteers through our local affiliates
- Assisting refugees in a holistic way by meeting the varied needs of the community
- Promoting disaster risk-reduction by helping communities build their assets thereby reducing the effects of likely disasters
- Providing long-term recovery efforts by addressing the unmet needs months or even years after a disaster strikes

From Council President Brian Lund

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10 (NRSV)

We just had our 2020 council organizing retreat. We spent time in discussion on several different topics: our strengths and weaknesses as a congregation, consideration of priorities for the coming year, and congregation engagement in our mission. I believe it is helpful for us to do this to remind us of whose we are and to remain focused on the mission of the church as both a worshiping body and people actively being God's hands in our community.

Each year, I like the council to establish a statement of focus for the year. It helps ground us in our mission and identifies specific areas of focus. In 2020, our theme is:

Building and Fostering a Faithful Community

- in our congregation
- across generations
- with our neighbors locally and globally
- by sharing and living our stories

Through worship, service, and fellowship

This framework statement will help ground our work as a congregation in mission throughout this year. I'm excited to think about the ways we will write new stories to tell of God's

unlimited love for his children. Please participate in the worship, service and fellowship opportunities that develop and continue throughout this year. Your ideas, feedback, input and prayers are also needed.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4: 8-9 (NIV)

Lord of Love is blessed to be served by Pastor Becky. Please join me in thanking and praying for her, members of our congregation council, and the members of our congregation who faithfully support the congregation through many different forms of service.

Please continue to pray for the ELCA, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, our Nebraska Synod, Bishop Brian Maas, Pastor Becky, our staff, our members, our ministry together, and for all of those who are in need.

Blessings in faith and service,
Brian Lund



CHURCH COUNCIL AND RESOURCES

2020 Lord of Love Church Council

Vision and Coordination: Brian Lund, President; Paul Murphy, Vice-President; Renae Rich, Secretary; Rett Messerschmidt, Treasurer

Nurture: Rosie Avalos and Joan Witt

Outreach: Matt Willard and Charise Adams

Resources: Brandon Zalesky and Paul Christenson

Worship: Rex Quadhamer and Shawn Lorenzen



Giving Status

General Fund financial information for December 2019:

Actual Income - \$32,046.00

Actual Expense - \$34,702.57

Financial Information Year-To-Date as of the end of December:

Actual Income - \$350,048.00

(Includes Debt Reduction of \$20,900)

Actual Expense - \$330,470.07

As of the end of December, the available cash balance is \$7,325.99. Debt reduction offerings of \$20,900 were received in November, which includes the Thrivent match of \$5,000. Weekly offerings of \$6,912 are needed to meet budgeted expenses. The weekly offering average at the end of December was \$6,200, which does not include the amount received for debt reduction. Thank you for your continued support.



Stewardship: Intent of Giving Cards

Members of Lord of Love were invited to return intent of giving cards for 2020 on November 22, 2019. Sixty giving units returned commitment cards for a total of \$241,774 pledged for 2020. Thank you!

*Stewardship is not just raising funds. It's raising Christians.
Stewardship is not a matter of budgets. It's a matter of faith.
-Unknown*

RESOURCES

Stewardship: Good Habits

I recently bought a student devotional for the high school class. One of the devotions caught my eye as it was something I was thinking about: "If you develop bad habits, how do you get rid of them?" It states that the answer is to develop good habits. Here are four of them to start with:

- 1) **Pray.** Steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer. Romans 12:12 says to persevere in prayer. God wants to hear from you daily.
- 2) **Study.** Use a devotional, Bible, or attend a class.
- 3) **Give.** Give of your time to help someone. Give of your talents in some special way. Give of your possessions to help others.
- 4) **Fellowship.** As Hebrews 10:25 says: "Let us not give up the habit of meeting together." You need support every week from other Christians.

We all have habits we live with and often don't want to get rid of any bad habits, as they don't seem to give us any problems at the moment! But, the devotional says, "if you want to grow in your faith and be more like Jesus, adding a few good—and godly—habits will put you well on your way." Besides, bad habits have a way of catching up to you eventually!

—Rex Quadhamer

OUTREACH

Blood Drive

The annual blood drive will take place on **Sunday, Feb. 23** from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Sign up online today at <https://www.redcrossblood.org>

Loads of Love Challenge

During the month of February, we are asking you to share a little love with the Loads of Love program (laundry and dry goods pantry). Our goal is to raise \$2500 to match a challenge grant by the Immanuel Vision Foundation. Simply take an envelope off of the Loads of Love board in the back, put that amount (or more) into the envelope and drop it in the offering plate. Please make sure you put (For Loads of Love) in the memo on your check to make things clear for our counters.

We will be collecting any needed items that you'd like to donate as well, but buying in bulk does make things cheaper. Thanks for all the love you have shared and will continue to share with this program! The next Loads of Love event will be on April 4.



WOMEN OF LOVE

Bowling for Jesus

Sunday, March 1, noon-2 p.m.

All are invited to this fun, inter-generational event at Maplewood Lanes (102nd & Maple). You will get two games of bowling plus shoes for \$15 per person with the proceeds going to a good cause (to be decided). See Beth Olson or another member of the women's team to purchase tickets.



Women's Bible Study

The theme for February's "Gather" Bible study is "The Call of Jesus." This session focuses on Jesus' calling of the disciples, on Jesus' call to Saul (Paul) on the road to Damascus, and on Jesus' call to all Christians to take up the cross and follow. As Christians, how do we see ourselves in these stories today? How do we respond to the call of Jesus?

The Monday evening Bible study will meet at the home of Deb Christenson, 16117 Clay Court (Bennington) at **6 p.m. Feb. 3**. Please let Deb know ahead of time if you plan to attend (402-1139). The Wednesday evening study which will meet at **6 p.m. on Feb. 5** in the Mary Room at church. All women are invited to attend the group of their choice.

Lutheran Women of Omaha

Lutheran Women of Omaha will meet on **Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2020** at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 1725 S. 60th St., for a noon luncheon (\$7). David Hibler, Benson Plant Rescue, will present the program and the free-will offering will go to that organization.

Please make your reservations with Ruth Manning, 402-451-0221, by 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 9.

Bold Women's Day

Sunday, Feb. 23

Bold Women's Day—observed annually on the fourth Sunday of February—celebrates Lutheran women who have acted or are acting boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. Some women are bold in their unceasing prayers, others in their service to those in need. Still other women are bold in their advocacy or hospitality. Whether we live out our bold story of faith in the workplace, home, or community, our faith compels us to make a difference in the lives of others. It's about living out our baptismal call as a disciple of Christ. Are you bold?

**BOLD
WOMEN'S
DAY 2020**

Learn more about how to celebrate at <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/bwd>

WOMEN OF LOVE

DATES TO REMEMBER

- March 1** Bowling for Jesus family event
Feb. 23 Bold Women's Day
Feb. 26 Ash Wednesday
March 25 LOL Women of the ELCA, Fellowship Hall
April 18 Metro East Women's Spring Gathering at Lord of Love

Friendly
Reminders

IN OUR PRAYERS

Janet Baker
Jackie and Paul Barnett
Connie Bennett (cousin of Karen Armitage)
Kate Boarts (mother of David & grandmother of Chris Boarts)
Kathy Campina (cousin of Rose Roberts)
Gloria Chalkley (friend of Ann Kroll)
Jason Combes
Larry Czapl
Jim Edwards (uncle of John Edwards)
Mardi Fiske
Babette Garder (mother of Kenn Garder)
Olivia Griffin (daughter of Scott and Dana Griffin)
Ed & Janet Guthrie
Pr. Joe Hernandez – Missionary in the Middle East (cousin of David & Chris Boarts)
David Hojnacke (neighbor of the Armitage family)
Janet Jensen (mother of Dawn Burton)
Juanita Kiesel (friend of Mary Lou)
Lucy Klos (sister-in-law of Mike & Christie Klos)
Lester (friend of Paul Barnett)
Ken Lineweaver (step-dad of Gwen Edwards)
Don Lueders (brother of Dave Lueders)
Lisa Lueders (sister-in-law of Dave Lueders)
Deb Lund
Chris Martin (brother of Connie Martin)
Alan Mayer (uncle of Todd Meyer)
Cindy Moos (friend of Tom and Beth Olson)

Eileen Nagle (mother-in-law of Tara Novak)
Vern Nemitz (uncle of Paula Foster)
Orla (sister of Ruth Manning)
Bill Pickens
Otto & Leona Piehl (parents of Deb Lund)
Sarge Schuchard
Peggy Seck (cousin of Ann Kroll)
Nancy Shinrock
Ron & Brenda Thom
Roslynn Thom (sister of Ron Thom)
Betty Thompson (mother of Beth Olson)
Bill Todd (husband of Pam Todd)
Stephanie Ulrich (relative of Paula Foster)
Steve Wiitala (friend of Karen Mullen)
Pat Wineinger

Caregivers, those who suffer with addictions and depression, those seeking employment, those dealing with infertility or seeking to adopt.

Those Who Mourn

Family and friends of Joni Stinson, friend of the Edwards family
Family and friends of Tillie Mathiasen, grandmother of Todd Meyer
Family and friends of Sandi Kistler, mother of Lynette Lueders

Those Who Are Deployed

Abel Avalos, son of Miguel & Rosie Avalos
Brian Kroeger, friend of the Lueders family

To add a name to the "In Our Prayers" section, email marylou@lord-of-love.org, contact the office at 402.493.2946, or fill out a prayer request note available in the narthex and place it in the basket.

SUNDAY SERVANTS

	8:00 a.m. Service	10:30 a.m. Service
February 2		
Greeters	Boy Scouts	Joan Witt, Kathy Christiansen
Liturgist	Jesse Brewer	Karen Armitage
Communion Servers	Mike Klos	Doug Armitage
	Kenn Garder	Joan Witt
	Nathaniel and Levi Gust	Charise and Maykala Adams
Altar Care	Mardi Fiske	Shelby Lamoureux, Ann & Paul Kroll
CD Recording		Pat Brewer
February 9		
Greeters	Brian and Deb Lund	Paul and Ann Kroll
Liturgist	Deb Lund	Rex Quadhamer
Communion Servers	Brian Lund	Susan Lueders
	Connie Walther	Julie Thompson
	Jim and Jeri Morgan	Paul and Ann Kroll
Altar Care	Joan Witt	Deb Quadhamer, Judy Messerschmidt
CD Recording		Paul Christenson
February 16		
Greeters	Joe and Jackie Combes	Mike and Christie Klos
Liturgist	Heather Hansen	Claudia Rowen
Communion Servers	Brandon, Kayci, and Brayden Hansen	Don Rowen
	Shawn Lorenzen	Karen Mullen
		Kathy Christiansen
		Judy Messerschmidt
Altar Care	Angie Meyers	Diana Haye, Marcia Roads
CD Recording		Dave Lueders
February 23		
Greeters	Kenn and Shari Garder	Charise Adams, Rosie Avalos
Liturgist	Chris Rich	Lori Vandeventer
Communion Servers	Caleb and Lorelei Rich	Charise and Maykala Adams
	Doug and Cathy Aden	Rosie Avalos
		Ashley Hamik
Altar Care	Doug & Rose Roberts, Karen & Dale Fink	Karen Armitage, Gwen Edwards
CD Recording		Paul Murphy
Ushers		
	8:00	Josh Combes, Brian Walther, Brandon Zalesky, Dale Finck
	10:30	Dave Lueders, Adam Lueders, Miguel Avalos

MONTHLY CALENDAR

February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 7:00am Men's Ministry 1:00pm Jr. Leadership Training
2 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Sunday School/FISH 10:30am Worship & Communion 5:00pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Youth Group	3 6:00pm Gather Bible Study 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	4 9:00am Quilters	5 6:00pm Gather Bible Study 6:00pm Confirmation 6:00pm Brass Rehearsal 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal	6 7:00pm Boy Scouts	7 9:00am Scooter's Coffee Fellowship 9:30am Al Anon 7:30pm AA Mtg.	8 7:00am Men's Ministry
9 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship & Communion 1:00pm District 18 AA Mtg. 5:00pm Bell Choir	10 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	11 7:00pm Vision & Coordination Mtg.	12 6:00pm Confirmation 6:00pm Brass Rehearsal 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal	13 7:00pm Boy Scouts	14 9:00am Scooter's Coffee Fellowship 9:30am Al Anon 7:30pm AA Mtg.	15 7:00am Men's Ministry
16 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship & Communion 11:30am Semi Annual Mtg. 5:00pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Youth Group	17 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	18 9:00am Quilters 7:00pm Church Council	19 6:00pm Brass Rehearsal 6:00pm Confirmation 6:15pm FISH 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal	20 7:00pm Boy Scouts	21 9:00am Scooter's Coffee Fellowship 9:30am Al Anon 7:30pm AA Mtg.	22 7:00am Men's Ministry
23 Blood Drive 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship & Communion 5:00pm Bell Choir 6:00pm Valentine Dinner	24 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	25	26 5:30pm Brass Rehearsal 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service 7:45pm Choir Rehearsal	27 7:00pm Boy Scouts	28 9:00am Scooter's Coffee Fellowship 9:30am Al Anon 7:30pm AA Mtg.	29 7:00am Men's Ministry