

Parents should also be prepared to teach sexual responsibility to their children in the home. It is especially important that young men and young women be taught to exercise their sexuality responsibly.

Because this church recognizes parenthood as a vocation that women and men share, we should encourage and educate males, from an early age, to assume more responsibility for raising children. Congregations should provide parenting classes and support groups for fathers and for mothers.

In keeping with our commitment to become communities that are truly life-affirming, this church challenges the following life-degrading attitudes that permeate the prevailing culture and may contribute to the high incidence of abortion: messages in the media and elsewhere that encourage irresponsible sexual activity; materialism, individualism, and excessive concern for self-interest; the desire for 'perfect' children, and treating those who are not as if they were 'disposable'; attitudes and practices that are inhospitable to children and to the women who bear them; low regard of human life, especially the lives of African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans, and of many women and children who are poor.

Through these and other efforts, we as a church seek to reduce the need to turn to abortion as the answer to unintended pregnancies.

**What is the status of this conversation in our local faith community? What words or phrases seem important to you today? What words challenge you?**

#### Sunday, February 2nd

- \* 8:30am Worship
- \* 9:30am Coffee Hour
- \* 10:30am Worship
- \* 12:00pm Adult Initiation Meeting

#### Monday, February 3rd

- \* 9:30am Woodland Park Worship ALL are Welcome
- \* 6:00pm All Leader Meeting—FH
- \* 8:00pm Council Meeting—FH

#### Tuesday, February 4th

- \* 12:00pm Sisters Ecumenical Study—Grounds & Goodies
- \* 1:30pm Prayer (Gratitude Ladder) — in side chapel
- \* 2:30pm R & R - in side chapel
- \* 6:00pm Grief Support—LL CE
- \* 8:00pm AA—LL CE

#### Wednesday, February 5th

- \* 7:00am Good Guys Bible Study—McOttos
- \* 8:00am Lutheran Men in Mission
- \* 6:00pm Worship
- \* 6:00pm WD4

#### Thursday, February 6th

- \* 1:30pm Anamosa Care Center Worship - All are Welcome

#### Saturday February 8

- \* 9:00am Council Retreat

Thanks to everyone who made my 90th birthday such a special event. The cards, gifts and attendance at the party was much appreciated. Doris Heeren

#### Wednesday, February 5th

**Ushers:** Jim & Eunice Conley  
**Reader:** Beth Hora  
**Comm Prep:** Dorothy Wood  
**Comm Server:** Beth Hora & Summer Parks  
**PowerPoint:** Beth Hora

#### Sunday, February 9th 8:30 a.m.

**Ushers:** Merlyn & Marlane Wilken  
**Reader:** Colin Stiffler  
**Comm Prep:** Merlyn & Marlane Wilken  
**Comm Server:** Don & Debbie Hardersen, Colin Stiffler  
**PowerPoint:** Lois Ocenosak  
**Video:** Linda Kenny

#### Sunday, February 9th 10:30 a.m.

**Ushers:** Rob Robertson family  
**Reader:** Kristi Robertson  
**Comm Prep:** Dan & Lynn Rickels  
**Comm Server:** Linda Kenny, Dan & Lynn Rickels  
**PowerPoint:** Ruby Robertson  
**Video:** Sebastian Goldsmith

#### Wednesday, January 29th

**Ushers:** WD4 Students  
**Reader:** WD4 Students  
**Comm Prep:** Donna Selk  
**Comm Server:** WD4 Students  
**PowerPoint:** WD4 Students

#### Sunday, February 2nd 8:30 a.m.

**Ushers:** Lance & Michelle Toenjes  
**Reader:** Jane Ortgies  
**Comm Prep:** Don & Dorothy Harmon  
**Comm Server:** Ed Gerst, Dave & Jane Ortgies  
**PowerPoint:** Conor Fortune  
**Video:** Linda Kenny

#### Sunday, February 2nd 10:30 a.m.

**Ushers:** Dustin Paulson Family  
**Reader:** Kaileen Weaver  
**Comm Prep:** DJ & Donna Condry  
**Comm Server:** Dj & Donna Condry, Nancy Lyon-Douglas  
**PowerPoint:** Dean Lambertsen  
**Video:** Ivan Lambertsen

## Sunday, February 2, 2020 Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord



Liturgy setting one can be found on pages 57-74 in the green Lutheran Book of Worship and grape juice. The inner ring of the tray is grape juice. If in doubt, please ask the distributor. Gluten free hosts are available; please notify an usher before service begins.

**All Are Welcome** to commune with Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We serve the fruit of the vine under two forms: wine

**The Presentation of Our Lord is referred to in some corners of the church as Candlemas because of an ancient tradition of blessing all the candles to be used in the church in the coming year at the mass celebrated on that day. It was a way of underscoring the truth of Simeon's confession that this baby Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" and a light for glory to Israel. Let the light of every candle in church be a little epiphany of the love of God for all people in the person of God's son, Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Prayer Concerns:** Loren Lubben, Bobbie Gersdorf, Karen Kleppe, Kara Butterworth, Sharm Sisler. (Names will be removed from the prayer list after four weeks unless there is a change in the person's condition. Requests need to be made by an immediate family member.)

#### Sub Sunday Pickup TODAY after each service.

**Last Call:** Please pick up your 2019 Giving Statements and 2020 'My Offering' box on the table behind the pews. After this weekend these items will be available in the church office.

#### " Love is Kind Dinner"

**What:** Home cooked meal featuring: Ham Balls, Mashed Potatoes, Rolls, Green Beans and Pie

**When:** February 16, 2020 **Time:** 4:30pm

**Place:** St. Paul Fellowship Hall

**Why:** Because we Love you! We hope you can join us for this evening of fellowship.

**Please RSVP on the sign-up sheet or to the church office by February 10th (319) 462-4841**

**Lutheran Disaster Response blog and updates**  
The Lutheran Disaster Response blog provides updates on the church's response to disasters in the United States and around the world. With catastrophic events currently unfolding in the Asia-Pacific region, look for situation reports for specific information on what is happening and what you can do to support disaster response efforts. Read the Lutheran Disaster Response blog at [blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse](https://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse).

#### ELCA Prayer Ventures

ELCA Prayer Ventures is a resource that provides a prayer for every day of the year. These petitions are offered as a guide for your own prayer life, as we pray for the needs of the world and give thanks for the ministries of the ELCA. Download the full month of daily prayers at [elca.org/resources/prayer-ventures](https://elca.org/resources/prayer-ventures).

**TOWN HALL MEETING**

**Join us after services on Wednesday, February 5 and Sunday, February 9, for a congregational open discussion (town hall style) on the life, vision and mission of St. Paul Church. Please submit topics to Council Chair, Nancy Stout, nancyannstout@gmail.com prior to the meeting.**

#### Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

As you listen to the readings today, keep in mind that two primary points are being entertained, and the committee who constructed the lectionary were intentionally responding to them: 1) Who is Jesus? 2) What is the purpose of sacrifice?

#### Reading I: The Book of the minor prophet Malachi 3:1-4 NIV

This section of Malachi was selected because it introduces a concern about sacrifice and respect for God's presence. Malachi (whose name means "my messenger") was with the Israelites who had returned from the

Babylonian exile around 525 BCE. With the help of foreigners, they rebuilt the Temple and reestablished the priesthood to practice the cultic ritual sacrifice. However, in a matter of a few years, corruption had once again crept into the Jewish leadership. Having been impoverished when they returned from exile, the leaders grasped at opportunities to become wealthy. The Persian kings and armies were frequently passing through Judea on their way to Egypt, where the boundaries of the empire were being expanded. Along with these people came wealth. Some of the Jews began to take pagan wives as their own, receiving sizeable dowries and comforts. Malachi was very concerned about this trend. A reflection of this new greed creeping in was the fact that the priests were offering “blemished sacrifices” to Yahweh, while keeping the good portions for themselves. This was akin to slapping God in the face. Malachi rails against both of these practices and promises God’s swift action of refinement against those who do not change their ways.

Verse one is the voice of Yahweh promising a messenger and then His own arrival in the Temple. The Temple in Jerusalem was the place the Jewish people identified with God’s presence among them. While the people acted as if God was present in the Temple through sacrifice and ritual action, the types of sacrifice being offered indicated that they didn’t really believe God was there at all. Malachi wanted the Temple purified of this greedy element, and he used the images of a metal refiner’s fire and a fuller’s lye to indicate this process. {A fuller is a person who prepares cloth by cleaning, stretching, and bleaching it. Lye, or harsh soaps, help break down the course threads by stripping away oils and impurities.} Malachi also believes that by reestablishing the Levitical priesthood in its rightful place, the Temple will be cleansed of wrongdoing. Levites are the most ancient group of priests said to be descendants of Aaron the Levite, brother of Moses. They were charged from the time of Moses with offering sacrifice on behalf of the people and administering the divine law (Leviticus). They functioned in all of the villages throughout Israel. They were the only ones who could carry the Ark of the Covenant, provide music for services, and act as judges over local disputes. When the Temple was built in Jerusalem, they were brought there to serve but were made secondary to the stronger aristocratic priesthood of Zadok’s family.

The Levites would be kept this way until the time of Malachi when much of their role was restored. The Levites remained in relatively high status until the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Was Malachi prophesying about John the Baptist and Jesus? If we put ourselves in Malachi’s place, we have to answer, “No,” because he was longing for the messenger and the presence of the Lord in his own day. The future was no further off than tomorrow. As Christians gifted with hindsight, we say that “Yes” John was the messenger and Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy Malachi foretold. It just took 500 years for it to be realized.

#### **Reading II: The letter to the Hebrews 2:14-18 NIV**

Who is Jesus? According to the author of this letter, Jesus is the perfect sacrifice because instead of offering external objects such as animals, grains, and fruits, he internalized the offering by sacrificing himself, his very life. In this way, he is the perfect messiah because he was fully human (blood and flesh) and can help us who struggle with life’s sufferings. He endured our temptations and testing, and gave himself over completely to God’s will. Jesus frees us from slavery to death and sin because while these are a part of life, they do not define the totality of human existence. A relationship with God brings meaning to sacrifice, hope to suffering, and the promise of new life. Jesus lived and died the way he did not to sway God to love us more, but to convince us to love and trust God more.

The radical good news of Jesus’ messiahship is found in the last verse. He was not God pretending to be human; he wasn’t an angel in human form; he wasn’t controlled by God like a puppet. Jesus was fully human, and because of that fact, he was and is able to help us. This message was particularly significant to this author’s audience because they were apparently suffering persecution for their belief in Jesus. Some were faltering and considering a return to the perceived safety of their Jewish ways. The author goes to great lengths to show that Jesus had made the Jewish ritual and cult unnecessary because he made the kingdom of God present, and by following him, God’s reign was fulfilled. When we are filled with faith, we realize that no matter what, God is on our side.

#### **Gospel Luke 2:22-40 NIV**

Luke is writing his infancy story to a group of Christians living outside Jerusalem around 80 CE. Apparently, they were Gentiles (non-Jews) asking, “Why should we follow a Jewish Messiah? Who is this Jesus to us, anyway?” Luke answers those questions the most convincing way he knows how, by putting the response on the lips of two righteous Jews: Simeon and Anna. When joined with Joseph and Mary, they represent three generations of believers, and all proclaim the greatness destined for this special child named Jesus (*God saves*). The name Simeon means “God has heard,” and as God’s messenger gets to deliver the real riveting message of this story: **Jesus is the light of revelation to the Gentiles!** God had heard all of creation groaning for new life, and this is God’s response. Unlike former messiahs who spoke for and acted on behalf of the chosen people, Israel, Jesus would speak for God on behalf of all creation. God willed salvation for all people. The world would be turned upside down.

This could have been a severe blow to the Jewish identity, but Anna, whose ancestor Asher was one of the original twelve sons of Jacob, adds to the good news by saying that Jesus is the one who will usher in the promised redemption of Jerusalem. Her age indicates the significance of her witness: 84, because it is 7x12, biblical numbers for perfection and fulfillment. Like Simeon, she and the former age can now pass away because the new age has begun. By having this story placed in the Temple (which no longer existed when Luke was writing) he intended to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy: in Jesus, the Lord God was present among the people.

The period of purification to which the passage refers is taken from Leviticus 12. It reads, “If a woman...gives birth to a boy, she will be unclean for seven days as when in a state of pollution due to menstruation. On the eighth day, the child’s foreskin is to be circumcised and she will wait another thirty-three days for her blood to be purified. She will not touch anything consecrated nor go to the sanctuary until the time of her purification is over.” It was not a

sin to be unclean; it did mean however that a person had come into contact with something that was not consistent with God’s realm (life-giving) and precluded a person from ritual participation. The loss of blood was regarded as a loss of vitality (remember, these are ancient, non-scientific people). A person returned to ritual purity and union with God by cleansing in a pool (*mikveh*) with living water. These ritual baths were located along the southern end of the Temple. In keeping with the custom, Jesus, the first born son, was presented in the Temple for consecration to the Lord. They apparently made the seven kilometer trek into Jerusalem from Bethlehem having stayed there with relatives to allow for Mary’s recovery from childbirth (i.e. 33 days). We get a glimpse into the fact that Luke did not really understand the Jewish laws because the number of days does not match the prescriptions of the law, and different rituals get combined into one. A mother, still recovering from the trauma of childbirth and awaiting the conclusion of her confinement, would not even be present for the presentation and circumcision of her son. This is a practical explanation for why the father presented, claimed, and named the son (the real paternity test).

#### **Taking It Home:**

--Honestly: who is Jesus for you? A friend, an idea, a really cool dude, a role model, a myth, an idiot, a name that wields power...? How do your actions convey your beliefs about him?

--Imagine the faces of your friends and family. Who needs to hear a bit of good news from you right now? Picture yourself saying it and her/his reaction. If it is reasonable, go deliver the message.

--What behaviors of yours “slap God in the face?”

--If the refiner’s (God’s) fire of love was held up to your life, what attitudes or behaviors would be burned away?

--How do you know your parents claim you? Have they ever said they love you?

**A Social Statement on: ABORTION** [This social teaching statement was adopted by a more than two-thirds majority vote at the second biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, meeting in Orlando, Florida, August 28-September 4, 1991.]

III. THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE OF LIFE: Our congregations and church schools ought to provide sex education in the context of the Christian faith. Such education, beginning in the elementary years, needs to emphasize values such as responsibility, mutuality, and abstinence from sexual intercourse outside of marriage.