

Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

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<http://ImmanuelHouston.org/>

February 2017

"If You Love Me..."

In many cases these words can be poison if they are uttered in such a way as to force someone into submitting to another's desires. In other cases they may be uttered to question if the love is true or only a charade.

Words don't always have to be uttered that way. For instance, in John 14 when Jesus is speaking to His disciples, they are spoken out of care and concern. His disciples are seeking to know the truth and to follow the correct path. Jesus is promising to send the Holy Spirit to them as their counselor and guide.

The assumption is that Jesus' disciples DO in fact love Him and desire the godly path. He is simply instructing them that this means doing what He has commanded them. St John informs us that God is in fact the very definition of love and sent His only Son Jesus out of His unending love for you and for me. He has saved us. We have no need to fear sin, death, or the devil. Instead we can walk in love. That is what He instructs.

As you go out and interact with others, your life should in fact reflect the love that Christ has for you. You should follow God's command to love one another as you love yourself. As you make your way into 2017, ask yourself if your life reflects this.

Last week as I was working in the yard, I noticed the sound of a chainsaw. I went to the fence and saw my neighbor diligently laboring to cut away the rather large and cumbersome remains of the tree that once dominated his backyard. He was by himself and working with an undersized and underpowered chainsaw that would take him many afternoons to be rid of the unwanted obstacle. I went over to see if I could lend a hand.

(continued on page 3)





A Teen Member Welcome

About a year ago I met Allison Colvard. It was in the second Lenten evening worship service that a teenage girl sat next to me in church. I was sitting up front alone, and then Allison was there. I tried to recognize her, thinking her to be a granddaughter of one of our adult members. She introduced herself to me.

The evening service had not started and she asked, "What do you do here"? I told her that I was the Associate Pastor. Quickly she asked, "Why aren't you up there?" I explained to her that Pastor King has a special series for Lent and did not need my assistance. I was thinking to myself, "who is she, why so many questions?" I asked, "Where do you live, who do you know here at Immanuel?" She must have looked at my face and thought that I was uncomfortable with her questions. She turned around and saw Carolyn Breithaupt sitting behind us, and she got up and sat with Caroline. The two became very close friends.

Allison became a faithful visitor to Immanuel and would seek out Caroline. Caroline invited her to attend and help in Sunday School. She really liked being with the children and helping in Sunday School.

The Lord brought us together when I was asked to help in Sunday School. I also enjoy helping in Sunday School. As Allison helped distribute the lessons and materials, she surprised me, "Yo tambien hablo en español".

I turned to her and tested her to see how much Spanish she knew. We were able to converse back and forth. What a gem of a girl; helpful, eager to learn more, a bright star for Immanuel.

Pastor King had already made plans to prepare her for Confirmation when we found out that she had not been baptized. Allison was quickly learning why Lutherans baptize and have Confirmation. Upon finishing her lessons, the date was set for her to be baptized and confirmed. She was excited – her parents were glad for her and planned a reception for her.

Allison invited friends for this celebration. She had a list of invites, and three came. One could see how happy she was. Allison attends a high school that accepts students who have high scores and are encouraged by their teachers to enroll in accelerated courses that prepare them for college. Allison is now helping with the sound system on Sunday mornings at Immanuel, happy where she can help.

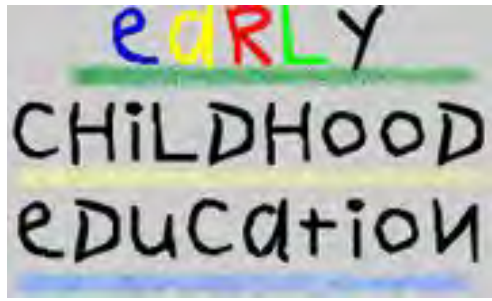
~Pastor Perez



A Journey with Jesus

March 1st is Ash Wednesday. The time to think about Lent is at hand. Lent is a time of reflection on what Jesus has done for you and how this should change your life. This year we will be taking a journey with Jesus as told through the Gospel account of St. Matthew. Come join us each Wednesday at 7:00 pm in Lent as we reflect on how Jesus' journey and your journey intersect. God bless.

~Pastor King



If You Love Me ...

(continued from page 1)

Every day, the children in the Early Childhood program learn about Jesus. In January, we learned about these Bible narratives:

The narrative of Jesus as a young boy teaches us that "God is with you wherever you go." (*Joshua 1:9*) The narrative is found in Luke 2:41-52 and is about Jesus in the temple-church. Praise God that we are given parents, teachers, and other caregivers who tell us about the love of Jesus.

"Jairus' daughter lives!" is the narrative of Jesus' power over death found in Luke 8:40-42, 49-56. It is a preview of the power of His own resurrection. We can be certain that by faith in Jesus, we too, will have a resurrection one day when Jesus will give us new life so that we can live in Heaven with Him. He has won the victory over death and Satan.

The Bible narrative in Mark 10:46-52 shows us the power and compassion of Jesus. This man did not just say "thank you" and go happily on his way. He follows Jesus and becomes a disciple in faith, living for Him. This is the response that we too should have to the love of Jesus in our lives.

*~Cathy Swanstrom
ECE Director*

It turns out that he had promised his wife he would try and get rid of the remains of the tree before the new baby arrived in early February. Time was not on his side.

For the next hour or so, the boys and I lent a hand with the task. When I got home, I called up an old friend who happens to collect all sorts of machines and equipment. I asked if he happened to have a large chainsaw I could borrow. My next day off, while my neighbor was still at work, I cut up the remains and when the boys got out of school they helped haul the wood away.

The boys asked why we were working so hard when it wasn't even our tree. I answered that Jesus loves them and wants them to share that love with others. By our actions we give testimony to the reality of salvation and grace in which we live. Sometimes we get to tell people about Jesus' grace and loving actions. Sometimes we demonstrate that same loving character by cutting out a tree, returning a grocery basket to the cart area for a mother with her hands full, or sometimes, we simply sit and listen to a friend who has had a rough day.

We are always witnesses giving our testimony. Our testimony can be of sacrificial love and care or it can be of selfishness, fear, or a broken heart. What kind of witness do you choose to be today?

~In Christ, Pastor King



Mus N c N tes

It is an ancient custom in the Christian church that a "Farewell to Alleluia" be sung at the close of the last Divine Service on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday (Transfiguration Sunday). Traditionally "alleluia" is not sung again in Divine Service until Easter Sunday, symbolizing our voluntary restraint of praise during the penitential season of Lent. In our *Lutheran Service Book* we have #417 "Alleluia, Song of Gladness," which is the last Transfiguration hymn before the section on Lent.

Alleluia, song of gladness,
Voice of joy that cannot die;
Alleluia is the anthem
Ever raised by choirs on high;
In the house of God abiding
Thus they sing eternally.

The text comes from the 11th century, and was translated by John Mason Neale (1818-1861). The hymnal melody is "Lauda anima," which is in a major (joyful) key. The melody often used by this hymn in choral arrangement is "Picardy," a 17th century French tune which is in a minor (mournful) key.

Alleluia, thou resounds,
True Jerusalem and free;
Alleluia, joyful mother,
All the children sing with thee,
But by Babylon's sad waters
Mourning exiles now are we.

As stated in Psalm 137:1 "By the rivers of Babylon we [the Israelites] sat and wept when

we remembered Zion," and v.4 "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" We Christians are also mourning exiles in this foreign land (earth) who long to be in our heavenly home, heavenly Jerusalem, here referred to as "joyful mother." (NIV)

Alleluia cannot always
Be our song while here below;
Alleluia, our transgressions
Make us for a while forgo;
For the solemn time is coming
When our tears for sin must flow.

We would like life to always be happy and joyful, full of alleluias, but because of our sinful nature, we also must deal with the pain and sorrow of our sinful nature, and turn to repentance.

Therefore in our hymns we pray Thee,
Grant us blessed Trinity,
At the last to keep Thine Easter
With the faithful saints on high;
There to Thee forever singing
Alleluia joyfully.

We pray that God would keep us faithful unto death so that we might join the great multitude in heaven shouting "Alleluia!"

[Information for this article came from Lutheran Service Book, CPH, 2006.]

~Diane Robinson

Correction: The photo of Alice & Herb Richter and Martha McFarland at The Village in the Heights (January 2017 issue) was taken by Harvey Richter, not Bob McFarland as listed in the print copy. The Editor regrets the error.



Focus on Stewardship

We've all heard that stewardship is giving to the church of our time, talents, and treasure. This alliterative trinity helps us see that giving is not just about money, but about our whole lives. For God has given us everything we have and enjoy as we confess in the meaning to the First Article of the Apostle's Creed. And what we confess first among those is that God gives us "our body and soul, our eyes, ears, and all our members, our reason and all our senses." Only then do we confess that he gives us material things. Thus the time, talents, and treasure trinity places before our eyes the fact that we are to give something of all of these things toward the mission of the church in thanksgiving for what God has provided. For everything we have and indeed everything we are comes from God's fatherly divine goodness and mercy.

The problem with this alliterative trinity comes when we replace one little word with another little word—when we replace the word *and* with the word *or*. It is always written with the *and*, but when we read it, we read it with the *or*. Thus this quite helpful trinity, which extolled that everything that we have and are is a gift from God and which is to be pressed into the service of God in His church, turns into a trinity that we can pick and choose which of the trinity we use into the service of God. The giving of our time, talents, *and* treasure turns into the giving of our time, talents, *or* treasure.

Then the question arises: Can we give of our time and talents instead of our treasures? Or perhaps it is the other way around: Can we give our treasure and not of our time and our talents? But these are the wrong questions. The right question is, can we give of our time and our talents in addition to our treasure? Yes, indeed, we are called to give of all three. The things that God gives us are not to be pitted against one another. They are given to us and we are to press them all into God's service for benefit of His church and our neighbors in need.

Thus we give all three. We give our treasure in the form of a generous, first-fruits, proportion of our income. We give of our time in generosity for the benefit of Christ's holy church. We give of our talents in the same manner. Since God gave us all these things, we are called to give generously of all these things in faith toward Him and in fervent love to our neighbors.

For God has provided all these things to us. Out of His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, He gives us each time, talents, *AND* treasures as a means to bless those around us. We serve our neighbors with these things, blessing them with the blessings in which God has blessed us. We give of our time, talents, and treasures to our families, our society, and to our church, our local congregations. And we do this because we know that we are not our own. Rather, we belong to God. We have been bought with a price—with the holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave everything—His time, His talents, and His treasure,—to have us as His own and to live under Him in His

(continued on page 6)



For over 42 years, Campbell has proudly offered *Labels for Education*® which has contributed more than \$110 million in school supplies to tens of thousands of schools across the U.S. It is one of a number of ways in which Campbell supported American kids and families as part of their commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen. Sadly, Campbell has made the very difficult decision to wind down the program.

Immanuel has been a part of this program for many years. Thank you to everyone for your continued support of this program. At this time, we are asking for all Labels for Education UPC's to be turned in to the office or placed in the box in the church hallway.

~Cathleen Chevallier

Stewardship . . .

(continued from page 5)

kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. We have these things as gifts and blessings from God. Let us then press them all into service for the sake of His love—time, talents, and treasures together.

(Stewardship newsletter insert for February 2017, provided on the LCMS website <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4466>)

~submitted by Kathy Angst

The new year is off to a great start in Sunday School. Our attendance continues to range between 10-15 students each Sunday. Praise the Lord!

We still have room and would love to invite children from ages 12 and under to join us for an hour of fun and excitement learning about Jesus. Children under 3 are welcome to join us when they bring along their parent or adult. Invite your friends!

February will be focused on "Love" with a Valentine party on Sunday, February 12th. March and April will build up to Easter on April 16th.

Please continue to keep the Sunday School staff and children in your prayers. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless our children's ministry and allow it to grow.

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."
Proverbs 22:6.

~Cathleen Chevallier
Sunday School Superintendent



Paper Goods Drive



The Naomi Willing Workers' Group will again be sponsoring a congregational wide paper goods drive to benefit the Good Samaritan Group

Home in Cypress, Texas. Please bring your donations of paper towels, toilet tissue, and Kleenex.

There will be a collection box in the Narthex on Sunday, February 5th, and Sunday, February 12th. Thank you for all your support.

~Martha McFarland



ECE Registration for 2017-18 School Year

Current students and any siblings of Immanuel Lutheran School Early Childhood Education will be registering for the 2017-2018 school year from January 23 through February 3. We will then register our wait list families on February 8. Registration opens to the public starting



Monday, February 13. Immanuel accepts children who are 18 months to 4 years old.

~Connie Meave



I feel you all know me but let me introduce myself anyway. I'm Ray Thomas and I've been a member here since 1994; I met my wife, Bonnie, here. You might know our daughter Kristen and her children (our first two grandchildren) Cameron and Malachi Whitener, who are also members here.

In addition to being the chairman of the Elders, I also help with the Sunday school which has children from Immanuel and Unveil. I enjoy playing handbells and singing with the Choir.

This year, Mike Rivera has joined continuing Elders Lonnie Angst and Steve Hairgrove, and we look forward to reassigning our member lists and serving you. You should be getting a letter from your Elder in the next month. Please pray for our board and let us know how we can better serve you.

~In Christ, Ray Thomas



The trustees are maintaining the Immanuel property, but we could use someone with the ability to look ahead for projects to better serve our needs now as well as in the future.

All are welcome to meet with us or drop us a note at the church office and most definitely welcome to join us – any help is greatly appreciated. Thank you and Happy New Year.

~Blessings, Mike Rivera



Save the Date!

GHHA Handbell Concert

Saturday, February 25 at 3 p.m.

Stafford Centre, 10505 Cash Rd.,

Stafford, TX

Greetings - The Altar Guild continues to seek additional members: young, old, men and women! This is an organization that has been continuously serving Immanuel for 41 years!

We meet only 4 times per year on Sunday morning following Bible class in February, May, August, and November. Teams of 2 are assigned 1 or 2 service months per year which requires a minimal amount of time and effort.

The Altar Guild is a meaningful and spiritual way to serve our Lord and contribute to Immanuel's worship services. Please prayerfully consider joining this very important organization.

*~Peace and Blessings, Denise Goehring
President*



The Ushers are starting a new year and are looking forward to serving the congregation. If there are any questions concerning the ushers, please feel free to talk to me or Pastor King.

*~God's blessings to all,
Mike Rivera, Head Usher*



Immanuel's Handbell Choir will be participating in FebFest, a handbell festival sponsored by the Greater Houston Handbell Association. The guest clinician will be Dr. John A. Behnke, retired from Concordia University Wisconsin, and former teacher of Diane Robinson.

There will be workshops for directors and ringers on Friday, February 24, and mass handbell choir rehearsals on Saturday, February 25, concluding with an afternoon concert at 3:00 pm.

Please plan to attend the concert! It will be wonderful with 10+ handbell choirs in mass ringing at different skill levels, as well as some groups performing solo pieces. You will be amazed at the different sound effects that can be created with handbells, as well as the lovely music and visual beauty!

Immanuel's handbell ringers are excited about this opportunity to have fun, fellowship, and grow musically. We hope to see you there!

~Diane Robinson

**Mark Your Calendars!
Grandparents Day at
Immanuel ECE
Wednesday March 8th**

Upcoming Events in March

- Sunday, March 5 Choir concert 3:00 pm
(home concert for the choir tour)
- Friday, March 24 Band festival concert
6:30 pm
- Friday, March 31 Gala 5:30 pm

Plan ahead for the musical



Matinees for senior citizens and children

Thursday, April 27, 9:00 am and 12:30 pm

Evening performances

Friday, April 28 & Saturday, April 29, 7:00 pm

For athletic events and additional information

<http://www.lutheranhighnorth.org>

or call 713-880-3131.

~Lynn Eickemeyer

Congratulations!
Nathan Chevallier
Lutheran High North
Sophomore Student of the Month
December 2016

A New Home

Mark Twain said that nothing is certain but death and taxes, and of course, as a Christian, I add Heaven. Living where I do, I believed I had another certainty in my life. No matter how old or feeble I would become, I was comforted in knowing that Bethany, my church home since 1964, was so close. When I could no longer drive, I could walk or hitch a ride; I even fancied I could crawl if need be. One way or another, I would be at Bethany until I died.

God had other plans, and my recognizing it was God's plan did not stop my heart from breaking.

Before Bethany closed, I considered my options. The first church I visited was Immanuel; it was also the last. With my first, tenuous steps to a pew, I felt at home. It was enough like Bethany to keep my tears to a minimum. There was a central aisle with two banks of pews. There was an altar. And there were the three stained glass windows behind it depicting Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I felt the same holiness and presence of God that I had felt every time I entered Bethany.

Pastor King's sermon that very first Sunday seemed especially crafted for and directed to me. I was home. It was perfect.

That was over a year ago. My resolve to go only to worship services and Bible class and not get further "involved" didn't last long. It isn't in my nature not to get involved. I love the Wednesday morning ladies' Bible study; I love the hamburger lunch; I've joined voters' assembly.

(continued on page 10)



Dominican Republic Ministry

*Excerpt from the November/December 2016 newsletter,
available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/334878086/Fritsche-Family-Mission-Newsletter-Nov-Dec-2016>.*

*Also follow the Fritsche's ministry on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/lcmsfritsche/>*

Mission Work Updates

Music Camp for Advent/Christmas. With the addition of Tyler McMiller and Vicar Paul Flo to our team in Santo Domingo, we now have two excellent guitar instructors. We decided to offer music camps for our youth (the primary musicians in our churches here) to prepare for the music of the season, but also to promote fellowship among the youth from all of our DR congregations. We gathered one Friday/Saturday at the seminary in Palmar Arriba amidst torrential rains. We opened with Matins and closed with a service of lessons and carols.

Forming Pastors in the Dominican. We continue to have a pre-seminary Bible study once a month at the seminary in Palmar Arriba. I usually drive about six or seven boys up to Palmar (2 1/2 hour drive) the first Friday of the month. The goal is to have the boys read as much Scripture as possible, with a bit of commentary along the way. We arrive in the evening, study for two hours and close with a meal. Our Santo Domingo group spends the night, then we head home Saturday morning.

Next fall, we plan to begin formal courses at our Dominican seminary. Construction for classrooms and a library is under way. Stay tuned!

Fritsche Family Update

It's been a busy couple of months for the Fritsches, filled with holiday celebrations, numerous trips across the island and back, school projects and presentations, but most of all filled with blessings from our Lord.

(continued on page 11)

New Home . . .

(continued from page 9)

I know now that Immanuel isn't perfect. There is gossiping, complaining and pettiness, just like there was at Bethany – just like there is in all churches, for another certainty is that Satan is his most active among Christians. However, even more certain is that God is stronger than Satan, and He will accomplish His purposes in spite of – or because of – the frailties of His people.

I am home at Immanuel, and I am more and more AT home at Immanuel. For this I owe a debt of gratitude to Pastor King and Pastor Perez and to the welcoming and accepting congregational members. Most of all, I am thankful to God for His unfailing love which is the same at my new church home as it was at my old one and which will be greater still in the endless home that I will someday share with my fellow saints from Bethany and from Immanuel.

~Sandi Hrozek

Dominican ministry . . .

(continued from page 10)

Vik, Sergei and Andrei stay very busy with school-related things. In early November their school had a cultural fair. Each class had a particular country to represent. All three boys are also doing tae kwon do twice a week after school.

Clarion remains busy chasing the boys, keeping them on track with school work and maintaining order at our house. She's been teaching English to our friend Yanela (Tyler McMiller's wife). She also has been able to participate in women's activities at our churches and women's missionary activities up in Santiago.

Joel not only spends time in meetings, church activities, and pastoral study group, but also leads our family in daily devotions and prayer, drives us everywhere we need to go, and manages to find time to spend in the kitchen cooking and making Christmas goodies.

As always, our church and family lives have a lot of overlap. We hosted Thanksgiving meal at our home, including members of our team, both American, Dominican, and even a friend from Switzerland. We enjoyed a "cena navideña" (Christmas dinner) with our congregation in Las Americas and have another coming at our Pan de Vida mission. We wish you all a blessed Christmas. You are in our hearts and minds as we celebrate Christmas, not only as a family, but as the greater family of God, of which you all are a part. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all! We thank God for you all!

To support the Fritsche's ministry in the Dominican Republic, you may send a tax-deductible gift to either of the following:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Mission Central
40718 Highway E16, Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Joel & Clarion Fritsche."

Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on our online giving page at <http://www.lcms.org/fritsche> or call (888) 930-4438.

~Rev. Joel Fritsche

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Immanuel Lutheran Church - February 2017



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	MH = Miertschin Hall		1 Adult Bible Study @ 10:30 am Glocal Mission Bible Institute Youth Room @ 7:00–10:00 pm	2 Bingo @ 1:00–3:00 pm FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00–1:30 pm Men's Basketball @ 6:00–9:00 pm Bells @ 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	3 Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00–8:00 pm	4
5 Usher Team #3 Worship Service w/Communion @ 9:00 am Bible Class & Sunday School @ 10:15 am Altar Guild Meeting after Bible Class (MH)	6 Young Life Club Gym @ 5:30–9:00 pm Bible Study @ 6:30–8:00 pm	7 FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00 am–1:30 pm Glocal Mission Catalyst Core Youth Rm @ 10:00 am–1:00 pm All Boards @ 7:00 pm	8 Glocal Mission Bible Institute Youth Room @ 7:00–10:00 pm	9 FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00 am–1:30 pm Men's Basketball @ 6:00–9:00 pm Bells @ 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	10 Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00–8:00 pm	11
12 Usher Team #4 Worship Service @ 9:00 am Bible Class & Sunday School @ 10:15 am	13 Young Life Club Gym @ 5:30–9:00 pm	14 VALENTINES DAY Naomi Meeting @ 10:00 am FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00 am–1:30 pm Glocal Mission Catalyst Core Youth Rm @ 10:00 am–1:00 pm	15 Adult Bible Study @ 10:30 am Glocal Mission Bible Institute Youth Room @ 7:00–10:00 pm	16 FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00 am–1:30 pm Hamburger Fry @ 11:00 am–1:00 pm Men's Basketball @ 6:00–9:00 pm Bells @ 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	17 Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00–8:00 pm	18
19 Usher Team #5 Worship Service w/Communion @ 9:00 am Bible Class & Sunday School @ 10:15 am	20 President's Day ECE Closed Young Life Club Gym @ 5:30–9:00 pm Bible Study @ 6:30–8:00 pm	21 FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00 – 1:30 pm Glocal Mission Catalyst Core Youth Rm @ 10:00–1:00 pm	22 ECE Scholastic Book Fair (MH) Glocal Mission Bible Institute Youth Room @ 7:00–10:00 pm	23 ECE Scholastic Book Fair (MH) FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00–1:30 pm Men's Basketball @ 6:00–9:00 pm Bells @ 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	24 ECE Scholastic Book Fair (MH) Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00 – 8:00 pm	25 ECE Scholastic Book Fair (MH) FebFest Handbell Concert Stafford Centre 3:00 pm
26 Usher Team #1 Worship Service @ 9:00 am Bible Class & Sunday School @ 10:15 am ECE Scholastic Book Fair	27 ECE Scholastic Book Fair (MH) Young Life Club Gym @ 5:30–9:00 pm GMN Youth Room (evening)	28 ECE Scholastic Book Fair (MH) FOD Work Day (MH) @ 10:00–1:30 pm Glocal Mission Catalyst Core Youth Rm @ 10:00–1:00 pm	March 1 Ash Wednesday Usher Team #2 Worship Service w/ Imposition of Ashes & Communion 7:00 pm			



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Ash Wednesday
March 1st
Worship Service
with
Imposition of Ashes
and Communion
7:00 pm