

# Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

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March 2021

## What About ... The Bible?

The following article is another from the "What About" series by Dr. A. L. Barry, President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, ©2001. The entire series can be found at <https://steadfastlutherans.org/whatabout/>



Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible continues to be the best-selling book of all time. Throughout the ages, the Bible has provided inspiration, comfort, and guidance to those who have read it. But is the Bible merely an inspirational book? It is this, but so much more!

**Let's spend a few moments reviewing some important truths about the Bible.**

What is the Bible?

The word "**Bible**" is from a Greek word that means "**book.**" **What is this "good book"?** That question has a two-part answer.

First, the Bible is actually a collection of books – 66 of them to be exact – from the first book, Genesis, to the last, Revelation. These books cover thousands of years and were written in either Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. There are many different kinds of writing in the Bible: historical narrative, prophecy, poetry, speeches, letters, and so on. From a merely human perspective, there is no question that the Bible is a masterpiece of literature.

Second, **the much more important answer to the question, "What is the Bible?" is this: The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is the collection of the thoughts – even the very words – that God gave to the authors of the Biblical books. The Bible is a gift God has given to His church. It is not a collection of ancient fables and myths. The Bible is the sure and certain means that God the Holy Spirit uses to communicate God's Word to us today.**

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# The Bible . . .

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How did we receive the Bible?

The Bible itself explains how we received it. **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”** (2 Tim. 3:16). We read elsewhere that, **“Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”** (2 Pet. 1:21).

Because people knew that the Bible was the actual Word of God, it was copied and re-copied with painstaking care and attention to detail, letter by letter, word by word. Though today we no longer possess the actual, original text of the Bible, we can be certain that the Holy Spirit has preserved the Word of God for us. Careful study of the many thousands of copies of the New Testament reveals that though there are minor differences between the various copies, there is no place where any key teaching of the Bible is contradicted.

Our English Bibles are translations from the original languages. When we use reliable translations, we can be sure that we have the true Word of God. Whatever the Word of God is in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, it is also the Word of God in English, or in any other language, as long as the translation is faithful to the original languages. Reliable translations include the King James Version, the New King James Version, the old Revised Standard Version, the New International Version, and the New American Standard Bible.

Why is the Bible so important?

Someone may say, **“The Bible is important to me because it tells me what to do”** and another person might say, **“The old stories remind me of my childhood”** or **“The Bible is a guidebook for daily living.”** These answers all have a grain of truth, but they miss the real reason why the Bible is so important: It is the sure and certain source for knowing who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us.

Jesus said, **“The Scriptures testify about me”** (John 5:39). The main message of the Bible is **the good news of God’s work to reconcile the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.** Throughout Old and New Testaments, the central message of the Scripture is the account of how God was in the world preparing it to receive His Son and then what His Son did when He was here. It also tells how the church received this glorious message of salvation, and how it grew and spread throughout the known world. Luther once compared the Bible to the swaddling clothes the baby Jesus was wrapped in. Thus the Bible is Christ-centered.

Our Lord Jesus said, **“If you remain in my Word, truly you are my disciples”** (John 8:31). The divine authority and reliability of the Bible does not rest on the persons God used to write the Bible, nor on the endorsement of the Bible by the church, but rests entirely on the fact that it is the Word of the Lord. How do we **know this? This confession of the Bible’s** complete authority is part of the certainty of the faith God gives to us as a gift.

Real human beings were given real words from God to write down. As our Lord Jesus Christ

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# The Bible . . .

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was both true God and true man, so the Bible is truly the Word of God and also the writing of human beings. Even as our Lord Jesus took on human flesh free from sin and error, so God used human beings to provide a written revelation of Himself that is free from error. Thus, we believe that the Bible is both incapable of error (infallible) and free from error (inerrant).

The Bible has a very important distinction one needs to keep in mind in order to understand the Bible correctly: the difference between Law and Gospel. **The Bible reveals God's perfect** holiness and righteousness, and His expectation of perfection. His Law, summarized best in the Ten Commandments, reveals our sinful rebellion and our inability to save ourselves. The Gospel is the joyful news that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us complete forgiveness from our sins through His life, death, and resurrection for us. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is the key to understanding the Bible correctly.

The most important message of the Bible is not the Law of God. The Bible is not merely a collection of principles for daily living. The Bible is not a textbook that answers every possible question we may have. Nor for that matter is the Bible a book that predicts every last detail about the future. The central and most important teaching in the Bible is the Gospel, **the good news of God's gift of salvation** through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the message that predominates throughout the Bible, from Old Testament to New Testament. Thus the Bible is Gospel-centered.

We know that the Bible was not given merely for the sake of itself. We are not saved because we own a Bible. We are saved by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is revealed in the Bible. We believe the Bible because it is the **Lord's** Word. We believe in Him, thus we believe His Word to be true. We receive what He has given. He has given us the Scriptures. Thus, the Bible is the foundation and touchstone for everything that the church believes, teaches, confesses, and practices. Why? Because the Bible is the inspired, Christ-centered and Gospel-centered Word of the Lord.

## How Do We Use the Bible?

The Bible is foundational **for the church's** ministry. The Bible was never intended to stand alone or apart from the community of faith we call the Christian church. It is sad when some people think that, if they just read the Bible, they can stay away from church. We receive our **Lord's gifts with joy and do not** say, **"We want this, but not that."** It would be misleading if our high respect for the Scriptures was used to drive a wedge between the Bible and the church. The church is the **gathering of God's people around the Lord's** Word and Sacraments. The Scriptures are the **sure and certain revelation of God's Word** and thus are to be read, studied and meditated on by Christians at church and at home.

We Lutherans realize that Scripture must be interpreted according to the central truth of the Bible, the Gospel, not picked apart and made to teach things that actually conflict with the Gospel. Therefore, we pay close attention to the grammar and words of the Bible, seeking out the intended meaning, which is the plain sense of the text. We recognize that God

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## Tri-what? Easter Vigil?

As we press on in our Lenten journey, we grow ever closer to Holy Week. Beginning with the celebration of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we work our way through the days **leading up to Christ's crucifixion, and** ultimately His Resurrection. So naturally we have our own churchly way of marking this time, it is called the Triduum, which is the Latin word for **"three days."** These three days we know as Maundy (Holy) Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The Roman Missal explains it this way: *The Triduum is a single celebration of the paschal mystery presented, over three days, under different aspects. Christian remembering is more than retracing the Lord's steps during His last days in Jerusalem. At the Holy Thursday [Divine Service], the church is already drawn into the whole event of Jesus' death and resurrection. The Good Friday [liturgy] of the Lord's passion is austere but never sad, for the risen Lord already reigns triumphant. On Holy Saturday, the church waits for the celebration of Christ's resurrection and its own at the Easter Vigil, when the Spirit hovers over the waters of the font and the community of faith drinks deeply again of the mystery of Jesus' passage from death to life.*

So what does this have to do with anything? This year we will observe the Easter Vigil for the first time, at least the first time that most **of us are aware of in Immanuel's recent** history. This means we will observe the Holy Triduum in its fullness, the one service beginning Maundy Thursday all the way to the first reading of the Easter Gospel at the Easter Vigil. In preparation for this, here is an excerpt from an article written by the Rev. Michael Schuermann explaining the Easter Vigil. It is

my prayer that you would set aside the time to **attend and participate in the Church's liturgy of** the Triduum this year.

*So what does this Vigil look like then? What will we make sure to take time actually doing, hearing, and seeing? What follows is a brief **overview of the Vigil.** We'll look at it in more detail, in order to prepare and practice, during Sunday Scripture Study beginning in March. Lutheran Service Book gives a six-part outline to the Vigil: 1. the Service of Light; 2. the Service of Readings; 3. the Service of Holy Baptism; 4. the Service of Prayer; 5. the Service of the Word; and 6. the Service of the Sacrament. When congregations choose to do so, the Rite of Confirmation can take place within the Service of Holy Baptism.*

*Ideally, the Service of Light begins outside—weather permitting, of course—and moves us from darkness into light bit by bit. A fire may be built outside, to symbolize the light penetrating the darkness and to facilitate the **lighting of the paschal candle (that's the candle that sits by Baptismal Font).** The candle symbolizes the presence of Christ with his people, the risen Lord shining in the splendor of his resurrection. As the children of Israel were led by a pillar of fire from slavery to freedom in the promised land, so the church is led from the slavery of sin to the glorious liberty of the children of God in the heavenly land of promise. Again, a pillar of fire, the candle, leads the way. After an opening address and prayer, the paschal candle is lit according to certain detailed instructions. There are ritual actions of tracing the Alpha and Omega, placing the year on the candle, and inserting five nails, which communicate*

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# Easter Vigil . . .

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*the focal point of the whole service: Christ crucified and risen is coming to bring us out of darkness into His most marvelous light. Then, those gathered enter into the Church and all in the pews light their own individual candles from the paschal candle. Now there's a little more light! Then the song of the Easter Proclamation—the Exsultet—is sung by either the Pastor, one of the Assistants, or by a choir. Next is the Service of Readings. There is an option for a total of twelve readings to be heard. However, in the Vigil, the emphasis is on the beautiful Gospel word optional. At a minimum, the accounts of Creation, the Flood, and Israel's Deliverance at the Red Sea are read. The point in this part of the Vigil is to know that the entire scope of God's saving work in Christ may be heard, read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested. We're not rushing; we're waiting, savoring the wonderful story of God's rescue of His people, and it's our story.*

*Next comes the Service of Holy Baptism. This is a slightly shorter version of the usual baptismal rite. What makes this special is this: it's always used, even if there's no one to be baptized. No matter what, the entire congregation gets to remember the joys of baptism once again. If congregations choose to do so, the Rite of Confirmation also takes place during this portion, immediately after any baptisms that take place and the remembrance of baptism.*

*Next is the Service of Prayer. This uses a modified version of the Litany (which we used to begin Lent on Ash Wednesday): the Litany*

*of the Resurrection. This responsive prayer weaves together the Holy Week and Easter stories into our prayers to God to "have mercy on us."*

*Next is the Service of the Word. At this point we're definitely ready to burst forth in joy and praise. Here, the pastor shouts out "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" and all respond for the first time of the Easter season. The lights come up fully, and we sing "This is the Feast," for first time that strains of Alleluia are sung since the Feast of Transfiguration. The candles are all lit. The Table is prepared for our Lord's Supper. Darkness has finally given way fully to light. Death is defeated; life is ours! The Holy Gospel is read. A very brief sermon is preached. And then finally, we feast on the body and blood of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus in the Service of the Sacrament. This portion of the service is just as we're used to every Divine Service. As we receive the Body and Blood, we hear wonderful Easter hymns being sung (and look forward to singing them again the next morning and for weeks to come)! That's it; that's the Vigil!*

~Stephen Hernandez  
Director of Music



## Holy Week Divine Services

Maundy Thursday, April 1 • 7:00 pm

Good Friday, April 2 • 7:00 pm

Easter Vigil, April 3 • 6:00 pm

Easter Sunday, April 4 • 9:00 am  
Breakfast following the service / Elders  
(No Bible Class nor Sunday School)

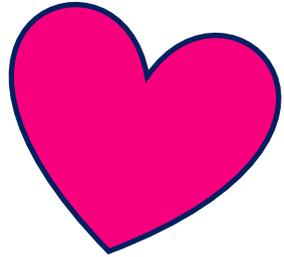
# SUNDAY SCHOOL



Learning about Jesus and His Love on a regular Sunday morning through the Bible and picture books.  
March Theme: On the Road to the Cross (Easter)



Everyone working hard making Valentine cards for the seniors and shut-ins.



Sharing the Love!



Doors always open! Join Us! Bring a friend! Sunday mornings @ 10:30 am.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL



SHARE



Care



LOVE



Be Kind

**A Sunday of Love!**  
 SS Valentine Party! Object Lesson, Crafts and Games all focusing on sharing the "Love of Jesus" with others, finished off with Strawberries and Cream. Yum!



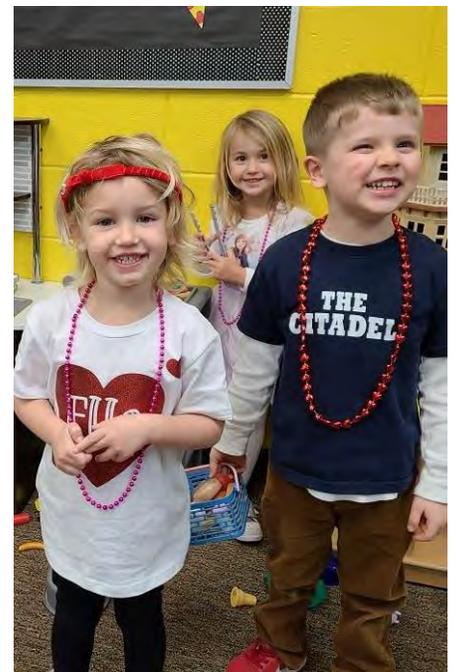
Smile

God Loves You

"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





~Connie Meave

# The Bible . . .

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the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures to create and sustain the church as it comes together around the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

Whenever the Word of God is preached, taught, studied, read, learned, or meditated on, the Holy Spirit is actively turning people from their sin and drawing them to Christ for their salvation. Thus, we will want to be in the Word daily. At home we read and meditate on the Word through our private and family devotions. At church, our hymns and liturgy are anchored in the Word of God. Our pastors preach to us on the basis of the Scripture lessons appointed for each Sunday in the church year. Our school teachers lead our children into a deeper knowledge of the Word of God. In Sunday school, children learn the biblical accounts and thus have a foundation for their lives. In youth and adult Bible studies, the Scriptures are studied in a variety of ways so they can inform and enlighten us and help us understand how we live out our lives as **God's people.**

What a blessed gift the Holy Scriptures are to us and to all people! Everything God wants us to know about Himself is contained in His Word. Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit reveals the truth about our sinful condition and **the joyful news of God's saving work for us** through His Son, **Jesus Christ. Truly, God's** Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path (*Ps. 119:105*). For that reason we pray, **"Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word."**



# Midweek Lenten Prayer Services

Readings will **pair selections from Isaiah's** Servant Songs with the Passion reading from St. Matthew, who stresses throughout his Gospel how the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in our Lord Jesus and in the events of His life. The Psalm in each service is a plea for rescue and deliverance.

- Week 3, March 3. Truly you are a God who hides himself
- Week 4, March 10. One deeply despised, abhorred by the nation
- Week 5, March 17. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting
- Week 6, March 24. The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all

*An evening meal will be provided before each service 5:30-6:30 pm.*

Newsletter Contributors	
Editor.....	<b>Barbara Szalkowski</b>
Contributors.....	Kathy Angst
.....	Dr. A. L. Barry
.....	Cathleen Chevallier
.....	Karen Evans
.....	<b>Pastor Richard Gaub</b>
.....	Stephen Hernandez
.....	Winnie McNamara
.....	Connie Meave
Graphic Design.....	<b>Matthew Szalkowski</b>



## Focus on Stewardship

Hudson Taylor, a nineteenth century British missionary to China, is reported to have said, **"God's work, done in God's way, will not lack God's supply."** To know God's way, we need to know His Holy Word. Or to say it another way: you need to know your Bible.

St. Paul, before he spends two chapters on giving, wrote that every thought is to be taken captive to the obedience of Christ (*2 Cor 10:5*). Doctrine matters. And doctrine matters because the Scriptures matter. And the Scriptures matter because this is where we learn the teaching of Christ. Our thoughts must be brought into line with the teaching of Scripture so that our work is what God wants done and so that we do this work in His way.

A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. We have been made good trees in holy baptism. We are fertilized and pruned for **bearing good fruit by constantly hearing God's Word** preached and taught in sermon and Bible Class and in receiving the life-giving, faith-sustaining food of the Lord's Supper.

Remember your doctrine, hold on to the **Lord's** teaching, and your thoughts will be taken captive to the obedience of Christ.

Bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is recognizing that God **does provide. The Lord's Prayer** teaches us to pray for daily bread. Praying this day in and

day out reminds us that the Lord is the giver of our daily bread, and that we are to give thanks for His daily provision of it. God is rarely early and never late in His work, as Abraham learned on the mount of the Lord it will be provided. The Lord's **generosity forms** our generosity in return.

Thus, we set aside for the work of God a generous, first-fruits, proportion of the daily bread that God has given to us. This act of **trust in the Lord's** provision is the working out of our faith in Him. When budgetary discussions pop up our natural reaction is to point fingers. But remember your doctrine, and what your mother taught about pointing fingers. Our first natural reaction is not always right. In fact, when our thoughts are brought into captivity of Christ, our first reaction should be repentance. It should raise questions in our own lives. As good trees in Christ who are to bear good fruit, we should ask whether our thoughts have been taken captive by obedience to Christ. Have we given generously? Have we given our first-fruits? You **know. And God knows. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him"** (*2 Chron 16:9*).

God will provide. He always has and He always will. He gives His meat in due season. He has not left you as orphans but has grafted you into His own family. You belong to Him. Remember this, letting this thought dwell in you richly. And you will then be rich toward others.

*~submitted by Kathy Angst*

*[Stewardship newsletter insert for March 2021, from the LCMS website <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=iMNMAXe8gxLRmyrtGjXDFSkakRYHbA7b>]*



# THANK YOU ALL

## H.I.M. Food Bank Breakfast Food Drive A HUGE SUCCESS!

Thank you all so much for your generous support of our H.I.M. breakfast food project. We exceeded our donation goals thanks to you!

Every class met or exceeded their box donation goal! Ice cream parties for every class. Each teacher received 10 new books for their classroom. New books are always a welcome addition to any classroom.

The ECE collected **535 boxes of product** and our chapel offerings totaled **\$2,634**. The church members and Children's Sunday School contributed **130 boxes of product** and **\$1,070**.



We delivered a check for **\$3,704** and **665 boxes of product** to the food pantry.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in our January 2021 community service project.

*~Winnie McNamara  
Food Drive Coordinator*



# Serving Immanuel March 2021

	Wednesday March 3	Sunday March 7	Wednesday March 10	Sunday March 14
Elder	Ray T.	Ray T.	Ray T.	Ray T.
Acolyte	<i>Elder</i>	Emily H.	<i>Elder</i>	Eve H.
Usher Team	#5 Bill O.	#1 Bill E.	#2 Larry G.	#3 Lonnie A.
Media	<i>No Media</i>	Melissa T.	<i>No Media</i>	Barbara S.
Audio	Gerald O.	Ray T.	Max B.	Gerald O.
Altar Guild	Denise G.	Denise G.	Denise G.	Denise G.

	Wednesday March 17	Sunday March 21	Wednesday March 24	Palm Sunday March 28
Elder	Ray T.	Ray T.	Ray T.	Ray T.
Acolyte	<i>Elder</i>	Malachi W.	<i>Elder</i>	Molly H.
Usher Team	#4 John C.	#5 Bill O.	#1 Bill E.	#2 Larry G.
Media	<i>No Media</i>	Karen E.	<i>No Media</i>	<i>No Media</i>
Audio	Ray T.	Gerald O.	Max B.	Ray T.
Altar Guild	Denise G.	Denise G.	Denise G.	Denise G.

If you would like to fill in, trade, or substitute please contact the church office. Thank you.

# Serving Immanuel April 2021

	Maundy Thursday April 1	Good Friday April 2	Holy Saturday Easter Vigil April 3	Easter Sunday April 4
Elder	Max B.	Max B.	Max B.	Max B.
Acolyte	<i>Elder</i>	<i>Elder</i>	<i>Elder</i>	Nikki B.
Usher Team	#3 Lonnie A.	#4 John C.	#5 Bill O.	#1 Bill E.
Media	<i>No Media</i>	<i>No Media</i>	<i>No Media</i>	<i>No Media</i>
Audio	Gerald O.	Max B.	Ray T.	Gerald O.
Altar Guild	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.

	Sunday April 11	Sunday April 18	Sunday April 25
Elder	Max B.	Max B.	Max B.
Acolyte	Emily H.	Eve H.	Malachi W.
Usher Team	#3 Lonnie A.	#4 John C.	#5 Bill O.
Media	Jackie A.	Melissa T.	Barbara S.
Audio	Max B.	Ray T.	Gerald O.
Altar Guild	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.	Evelyn M. & Bonnie T.

If you would like to fill in, trade, or substitute please contact the church office. Thank you.



# Immanuel Lutheran Church - March 2021



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>No Weekday/night Bible Study nor Lay Meetings (Boards, Voters, etc.) during Lent</i>	1	2	3 Dinner @ 5:30 pm <b>Usher Team #5</b> Lenten Evening Prayer Service @ 7:00 pm	4 <b>Handbells @ 7:00 pm</b>	5	6
7 <b>Usher Team #1</b> Divine Service @ 9:00 am Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	8	9	10 Dinner @ 5:30 pm <b>Usher Team #2</b> Lenten Evening Prayer Service @ 7:00 pm	11 <b>Handbells @ 7:00 pm</b>	12	13 
14 <b>Usher Team #3</b> Divine Service @ 9:00 am Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am <b>Daylight Saving Time Begins</b>	15	16	17 Dinner @ 5:30 pm <b>Usher Team #4</b> Lenten Evening Prayer Service @ 7:00 pm	18 <b>Handbells @ 7:00 pm</b>	19	20
21 <b>Usher Team #5</b> Divine Service @ 9:00 am Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	22	23	24 Dinner @ 5:30 pm <b>Usher Team #1</b> Lenten Evening Prayer Service @ 7:00 pm	25 <b>Handbells @ 7:00 pm</b>	26	27
28 <b>Usher Team #2</b> Palm Sunday Divine Service @ 9:00 am Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	29	30	31	April 1 <b>Usher Team #3</b> Maundy Thursday Divine Service 7:00 pm	2 <b>Usher Team #4</b> Good Friday Divine Service 7:00 pm	3 <b>Usher Team #5</b> Easter Vigil Divine Service 6:00 pm



Immanuel Lutheran Church  
1440 Cortlandt St  
Houston, TX 77008

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*Witness, Mercy, Life Together ✝*  
*In Christ, for the Church and the World*



Midweek Lenten  
Prayer Services  
Wednesdays  
March 3-24 7:00 pm



## Holy Week Divine Services

Palm Sunday  
March 28 ● 9:00 am

Maundy Thursday  
April 1 ● 7:00 pm

Good Friday  
April 2 ● 7:00 pm

Easter Vigil  
April 3 ● 6:00 pm

Easter Sunday  
April 4 ● 9:00 am