



FAITH FORWARD NEWSLETTER

Faith Lutheran Church of the Verde Valley
& Hilltop Christian Preschool
2021 E. Fir Street P.O. Box 3732 Cottonwood, AZ 86326

MARCH/APRIL/MAY 2026

BUILDING ON FAITH

God wants us to grow in Christ so we can build up His church in Cottonwood, the Verde Valley and to the ends of the earth.

Pastor:

Karl Schloeman

President:

Gene Sucharski

Vice President:

Richard Watson

Treasurer:

Roseanne Jackson

Financial Secretary:

Marina Wolfgram

Recording Secretary:

Kathy Wagner

Board of Trustees:

Claud Blackburn

Board of Christian Ed:

Terri Mickle

Board of Elders:

Les Mickle

Deacons/Elders:

Deacon Les Mickle

Deacon John Schaefer

Bill Jackson

Tony Johnson

Mark Ritter



God Never Fails

Springtime often comes upon us early here in Arizona. Usually after many “false starts” of warmer, sunny weather, broken up by intermittent rains and cold, eventually, the days are longer and warmer and we know that Spring has finally arrived. This is also the time of year in which we observe Lent, that time in which we meditate on what our relationship with God cost Jesus to redeem for us. This is a time of refocusing our lives on how we are to be God’s treasured and loved children. How we are supposed to act, speak, and think. Through renewed commitment to Bible Study and prayer is how we are led by the Holy Spirit to lead a God-pleasing life.

Often times we may begin our Lenten disciplines with enthusiasm and vigor, and begin to experience the blessings of seeking the Lord. Almost as frequently, we can then become satiated, less enthusiastic, and begin to allow other things to displace our new-formed habits of prayer and meditation on God’s word. I would encourage you to ever try and return to your Lenten resolves and not become too discouraged by what seem to be “false starts”. Just as the seasons do not change from winter to spring in one day, neither do our spiritual disciplines, maturity, and the blessings that come from them occur in a single hour or a day – discipleship is a life-long journey.

Above all, we must remember that even though our faithfulness to God may wax and wane, God’s faithfulness to us, His children, never fails. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

God’s peace, Pastor Karl

Holy Week Worship Services

Resurrection Sunday

Sunrise Service 6:00am – Worship Service 9:00am

See page 8 for additional Holy Week Services

SPECIAL THANKS TO.....

- Those who help behind the scenes to make the church function smoothly
- All who improve and maintain the church, preschool and fellowship hall
- Those who visit and pray for our homebound
- Those who clean the church

Faith Lutheran Church is truly blessed. Please join is in a Thank-a-Thon. Find members of our church family to that in the coming weeks for their service

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



For privacy purposes, birthdays and anniversaries can be found on a hard copy of the newsletter.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



If your birthday or anniversary has not been included in the newsletter, please visit the church office and complete a "Family Information Sheet."

Faith Lutheran Church - Giving Corner

Look for our Giving Corner coming soon! Let's continue giving to our community. Please prayerfully consider donating to one of the bins in the narthex as they become available. Hilltop Christian Preschool, the Homeless Coalition, House of Ruth and Old Town Mission, are some examples. This is a one stop place to donate to our community in need. Thank you in advance for your support. *Thank you, Faith Lutheran for having generous heart!*



From the Council President.....

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In the last Newsletter, I spoke about the gift of Jesus that God gave to the world. Jesus *is the greatest gift ever given*, but He is not the only gift God has given us. James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote in his letter: Every **good gift and every perfect gift is from above**, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

The Apostle Paul also talks about **gifts** in his first letter to the believers in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11: Now concerning **spiritual gifts**, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

The writer of Hebrews also mentions gifts in chapter 2:3b-4: It [salvation] was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit** distributed according to his will.

Paul again speaks of the gift, in [Ephesians 2:8-9](#): For by **grace** you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift of God**, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. And again, in [Ephesians 4:7](#): But **grace** was given to each one **of us** according to the measure **of Christ's gift**.

And what is faith? The writer of [Hebrews 11:1](#) puts it this way: Now **faith is the** assurance of things hoped for, **the** conviction of things not seen. (ESV) The King James Version puts it this way: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We all have faith, in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and in the Resurrection. We hope for Jesus' return and read the evidence in the Bible but must believe with faith for the things we cannot see.

We all have been given grace, but what is grace? One writer defined it this way: “Grace is receiving a present we know we don't deserve, we never thought we would receive, and we never saw coming. Grace is a gift, pure and simple. The love of God is shown in His grace to people who deserve nothing.” From [Walking with God](#) by David Jeremiah. (A Daily Devotional I completed last year.) Put another way, GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. We might also be able to substitute Righteousness for Riches.



Jesus sacrificed Himself to gift us with *His* gifts, grace, faith and righteousness, and the hope of everlasting life with Him in His kingdom. As we look forward to Holy Week, and then celebrating His Resurrection on Easter Sunday, may the **gifts** of the Spirit and of the Lord fill your hearts with love. And may the Peace, Strength, and Love of our Lord Jesus be with you all.

Yours in Christ, Gene Sucharski

Update from the Council and Trustees

I just wanted to thank the Trustees for all their hard work over the last several months.

In 2025, three workdays resulted in many potholes in our driveway and parking lot being repaired. Many thanks to Gary, Claud, Randy and John W.

Protective plexiglass panels were installed over the East side Sanctuary windows and the windows above the main entrance.

Three toilets were replaced in the women's (2) and men's bathrooms (1).

This year, the Trustees uncovered the septic tank in the courtyard to facilitate it being pumped out. They then installed risers and safety inserts and returned the play area to good condition.

As I have mentioned at previous Congregational Meetings, a water mitigation project has been proposed by our neighbor, Columbia Self Storage. The goal of the project is to slow the water shed across our front landscape and reduce the erosion and damage it causes to our property and our neighbors. Randy Nelson, Director of Operations for Near-Cal Corp., the general contractor for the project, met with Council on Jan. 27 and presented detailed plans for what the project will look like. After many questions were answered by Randy, the Council gave the OK to proceed. They are now in the process of getting permits from the City and are looking at possibly starting the project soon after Easter. If anyone has any questions about this, please see me or a Council member.

Yours in Christ,
Gene Sucharski

Our Newsletter Has a New Look!

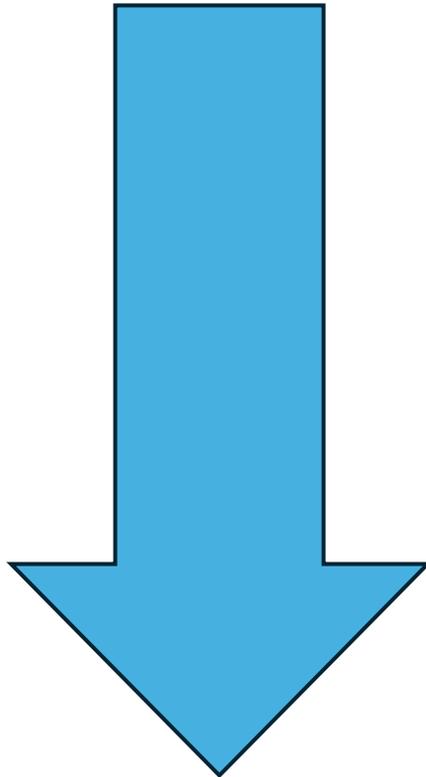
The church uses Microsoft Publisher for the Faith Forward Newsletter. This program will no longer be in existence and is expiring this year. This means users will no longer have access. We are getting ahead by using this optional format. Stay tuned, as there may still be some minor changes and improvements as we familiarize ourselves with the program.



Treasurer's Report

Treasurer's report can be found on the hard copy of the newsletter.

Continue to the next page.





Board of Christian Education News

Board Chair - Terri Mickle

Sunday School is provided from 10:45-11:45. The Sunday School class recently wrapped up their study of the Book of Job and has now begun exploring Psalms. Students are actively reading selected Psalms on their own and engaging in discussions about their historical background and what sets them apart from other books in the Bible. Tony Johnson has discovered a series of brief YouTube videos called “Bible Walk Through,” each lasting about 3 to 7 minutes, which align with the material the class is covering. These videos are organized by topic and by book of the Bible, making it easy to find ones that complement the current lessons.

The Youth have a few more Bible teachings on temptation. They recently made Valentine Cards for members who are unable to make it to church. A heartfelt thank you goes out to Pastor Karl and Joanne for their ongoing commitment to leading the Youth Group every Sunday. Additional appreciation is extended to Pastor for his guidance of the confirmation students during Thursday afternoon sessions.



Hilltop Christian Preschool



We are grateful to celebrate another exciting and successful year at Hilltop Christian Preschool! This year, we proudly graduated 18 students and are thrilled that 12 students will be continuing with us in the 2026–2027 school year. As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunity to grow our classrooms and welcome new families into our preschool community.

This past quarter has been filled with meaningful moments. One highlight was expanding our *Build with Me Day*, allowing even more fathers and special male role models to join their children at school to build projects together. The joy and connection shared during this event made it truly special for our students and families.

We also enjoyed a wonderful Easter celebration. Sharing the message and miracle of Easter with our students is one of the greatest blessings of our ministry, and it was a beautiful time of learning and reflection for the children.

We are deeply thankful to the congregation of Faith Lutheran Church for their continued support of this ministry. We are especially thankful for Joanne Johnson. We look forward to every Wednesday she spends with us, helping in our Pre-3 classroom. Every volunteer and every helping hand that contributes to the care of our school and building plays an important role in touching the lives of children and families in our community. Your support truly makes a difference.

We have so much to be thankful for! Lisa Simpson—Director

Ministry Focus

Faith Lutheran Church is involved with a variety of community partners. Supporting and showing God's love is what we strive for. Learn more about  one of your supports **HOUSE OF RUTH PREGNANCY CARE CENTER** in Cottonwood was established in 1988. They are a Christian ministry serving women and families and protecting the lives of unborn children. Recently they purchased a five-bedroom home they named the Carpenter's House. This home offers a safe, warm place for clients and their children to start over. They also provide parenting classes. Faith Lutheran Church supports House of Ruth's Diaper Drive and annual Walk for Life. Thank you for showing God's love to this important ministry to our community.

A Bible Study Visitor

The men's and women's Bible studies had the opportunity to hear a presentation on hospice. Thank you to Accord Hospice for helping navigate these health decisions in advance. Although this may not be the time in life to need these services, it is helpful to have the knowledge and understanding of life's seasons.

Serving at Faith Lutheran Church

Serving teaches us to love others. We have been given a gift to serve others as Jesus served his people. All of us have gifts to share. Romans 15:1. There are many ways to help here at Faith Lutheran. Please prayerfully consider serving on the Altar Guild, as a greeter, a snack host during Fellowship sign up for cleaning tasks. Contact the church office if you feel led to serve.



Consider taking notes using the Sermon Notes sheet found on the shelf in the Narthex. Increase your retention of Bible teachings beyond the Sunday sermon. You may find this process helps summarize the Lord's Word to you through Pastor Karl or one of our Deacons.

Marauders Read is Going Strong!

The expansion of our preschool ministry to include Mingus Union High School, meets each Thursday. Junior and Senior High School students have the opportunity to read to and play with the preschool students. The preschoolers look forward to the visit each week. In addition, time in the classroom allows youth who may be interested in a career in the teaching field some hands-on experience. The youth are introduced to God in a Christian work environment too. Praise the Lord!

Bible Studies

Men's and Women's Bible Studies meet throughout the month at Faith Lutheran.



Refer to the Sunday Bulletin for dates and times. Please see Pastor Karl for the evening Bible study which meets once a month. "Faith in the Field" is for those currently working or just retired. This study focuses on glorifying God and leaning on God in times of work challenges as well as amongst loved ones.

Friends for Life

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) offers podcasts by pastors and deaconesses on topics such as loneliness, isolation, guilt and shame, lack of trust and more! <https://resources.lcms.org/multimedia/podcast-friends-for-life-season>.

Midweek Lenten Services

Wednesdays
March 4, 11, 18, 25
6:00 PM

Shingles for the Lord

Nine years ago, it was discovered the Sanctuary trusses were failing and we had to move church services to the Fellowship Hall while the roof structure was replaced.

Due to the age of the structure warranties were no longer valid. Faith Lutheran Church took out a loan from Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF).

We are thankful to our members who have faithfully kept their pledges to pay off the loan. Please plan to attend our congregational meeting on **Sunday, March 15th**, immediately following worship service to find out more, and to prayerfully consider how you might be a part of retiring this loan.

Mark Your Calendars

March 15th

Congregational Mtg
(following worship)

March 29th

Palm Sunday
9:00 AM

April 2nd

Maundy Thursday
Seder Meal 5:30 PM
Eucharist 7:00 PM

April 3rd

Good Friday
7:00 PM

April 5th

Easter Sunrise Service
6:00 AM
Resurrection Service
9:00 AM

May 10th

Happy Mother's Day



*Cut out the above and
post on your fridge.*