

The Epistle

Trusting in God's Power



It is difficult, when there is so much wrong in the world: from pandemic and illness to hurricanes, hate, and division, to trust that the world is still in God's hands.

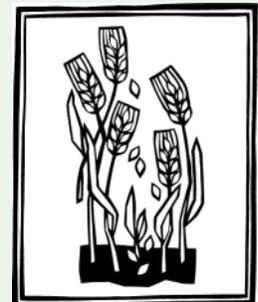
It is difficult under such circumstances like we are enduring to feel thankful, to

be grateful, and to trust God. Perhaps that's how the lepers in Luke 17:11-19 felt. Because of their illness, they had lost everything—they were forced to isolate themselves to prevent spread of the disease, they couldn't have visitors, they couldn't go to work or do the things they used to do, all while their bodies were decaying. They kept their distance from Jesus so they wouldn't infect him; they were slowing the spread of leprosy. Social distancing to slow the spread, isolation and quarantine, families separated, life-threatening illness that deteriorates the body—sounds a lot like a COVID-19 pandemic.

No doubt the lepers wondered if God had abandoned them or was punishing them. Everything changed when Jesus visited them.

Like the lepers, you may feel lonely, isolated from friends and family. When we are in our own churches worshipping with

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less people in person than there were in February, let alone 10 years ago, or we worship only online, it can often seem that we are all alone. But we are never alone. Just as Jesus visited the lepers and healed them so that they could be restored to their families and communities, Jesus visits us tonight through his Word. Now that he ascended into heaven and sent the Spirit into our hearts, there is never a moment we are alone. Never a moment we are without God. Because of Jesus, no one in this pandemic is dying alone; God is with them. There is never a moment we are without one another; the Spirit binds us together as the Body of Christ. Not only do we have each other, there are Christians throughout the world and God is working through us all to restore creation.

That can be difficult to see. *Like the lepers, you may wonder if God has abandoned us, whether this pandemic is God's*

punishment, or whether God has any power at all. Jesus visited the lepers. Jesus had mercy on them. Jesus healed them. Jesus' compassion shows us God's compassion. Jesus did care about them. God didn't abandon them, God rescued them. God didn't punish them, God healed them. The healing shows that Jesus really does have power to save; Jesus really does have power over creation and everything in it from governments and nations to viruses and forces of nature.

What Jesus did for the lepers is not an anomaly. The Bible is full of stories of how God saved his people from destruction and brought new life out of death. When there was only darkness, a cold void, God created light the universe and all that is in it. When the earth and all its creatures were distorted by evil and violence, God cleansed the world with a flood. When his people were enslaved under a harsh dictator, God freed them and gave them their own land. When his people were taken into captivity to Babylon, God brought them back home to Israel. When the early church was persecuted, God brought them to eternal life and used their witness to bring others to faith. When Christ was crucified, God raised him from the dead. Now all things are under Jesus' feet. All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose. You can trust that you, those you love, this country, this whole world, are in God's hands.

Like the lepers, you may find it hard to know how to live after this experience. What will life be like after the pandemic, will it ever be the same again, and how

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do we not lose sight of what we have learned? Lepers returned to their families. One remembered that his health came from Jesus. Historically, this story of the 10 lepers has been preached and taught that we ought to give God thanks. True, but not out of fear of God's retribution—the nine who don't thank Jesus don't experience any consequences. We ought to thank God because we need to thank God. We need to thank God for our own sakes and for the world. (1) For our own sakes because thanking God for what we have reminds us that God has provided for us so that we will remember in the future when times are hard that God provided for us in the past so we can trust God to provide again for us in the future. (2) We need to thank God for sake of the world because thanking God reminds us that everything we have and everything we are comes from God, it doesn't belong to us, therefore, we have no right to keep it exclusively for ourselves. Since it belongs to God, we are called to share it. God himself promises in 2 Corinthians 9:8: God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything you may share abundantly in every good work; God promises to provide you with all that you need. You are free to give what you have away, because God will always make sure you have enough. And in your generosity, you will glorify God and others will know Jesus. In the midst of this pandemic, and once it is over, we must not thank science, nor ourselves, but God so that in our thanksgiving, our hearts and minds and the hearts and minds of our neighbors might trust in God.

No matter what the coming months bring, do not be afraid. Jesus who visited the lepers and healed them is with you. God will provide for you and through you, God will provide for the world.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Emily Beckering

YOUTH GROUP ZOOMS ON

Our youth were busy during the months of January and February. In January we discussed what Jesus' childhood was like before the miracles. Pastor Emily was gracious with her time to shed some light on what his childhood was like, especially since not much is known in the Bible about it.

In February we met early due to upcoming commitments for our youth. We discussed what the Bible says about good trees versus bad trees. Mark your calendars for Saturday March 27th from 7 PM to 9 PM on Zoom. Our topic is to be determined. We look forward to seeing our youth soon.

Chelsea, John,
Chrison, & Donald



AED COMING SOON

There's nothing worse than being caught in an emergency unprepared. Thanks to the work of the Safety Committee, St. Paul's is more prepared for an emergency. We will soon have an AED device in our narthex. Though we hope we won't have to use it, we can be grateful that it might potentially save lives. Several members who are in the professional healthcare field will be trained on how to use the device. Once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, a general training will be offered to the whole congregation for those who

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Technology Upgrade Committee At Work

In January the Worship and Music Committee appointed a subcommittee to study and recommend methods to improve the use of technology. The committee consists of Carroll Mayhugh (Chair), Donald Harris, Eric Bardes, Noah Moorhouse, Nick Huitger, Kris Keith, and John Cathcart.

The committee met for the first time this month and several members attended a mentoring program with the synod's Out of the Box team to discuss how other congregations are dealing with using technology as an integral part of the worship service. We found this to be very informative and walked away from it with a better understanding of the task. The Out of the Box Team services are

provided free by the synod using funds raised in the Thrive! Campaign, and we are applying for a grant from the Synod to help finance the needed upgrades.

At our next meeting we will be establishing priorities and delegating individual members to study and recommend on specific areas. In the 2021 budget you have generously included money to upgrade our system.

We will be investigating the issues we are having in all areas, sound on the streaming service, focus issues with the video, and readability on the screen in the sanctuary. Anyone with ideas, suggestions, or complaints, please feel free to contact a committee member.

Celebrations in March

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | Emily Nutt | 21 | Sean Coulehan,
Drew Harbaugh |
| 5 | Leah Miller, Katie Sturgill,
Maryhelen West | 22 | Shirley Harbaugh,
Faith Pirrmann |
| 11 | Maddie Lohmeier | 23 | Molly McDowell |
| 15 | Joyce McDowell | 24 | Ed Hirt |
| 16 | Adam Winkle | 25 | Liam Cathcart, Karen
Koehl, Maggie McDowell |
| 17 | Samara Bronner, Patrick
Cathcart, Terri DeAngelis | 30 | Pr. Emily Beckering,
Kathy Hirt |
| 18 | Rick & Britt Hedges | | |

A Spiritual Home for Future Leaders



Stuck in traffic at West Virginia University (WVU), when seemingly all of Morgantown's 28,000 students are trying to get to class, you'd be hard-pressed not to notice the fire engine red Lutheran Campus Ministry Chapel with its curved roof, just south of the main crosswalk.

"The building was very interesting; that was probably my

first impression," sophomore Lilly Simmons said.

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are interested. A special thanks to the Safety Committee and those individuals who did the research and work needed to help make this possible. Thank you to all of you for your offerings; the increase in giving pledges this year allowed us to

In 2020, we gave 3% (\$5,040) of our offerings for Mission Support through the Southern Ohio Synod. This is a story of what our Mission Support did.

The architectural oddity might draw students for a brief chat with Tony Setley, campus pastor, but however they come, he said, "they are comfortable enough to ask questions, and that can always lead to something bigger."

Graduate student Nathan Blake recalled his first visit. "I was at a really rough place spiritually, and the time for normal

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acquire this device. We can all come to worship and to serve with greater Peace of Mind.

See the AED in action at youtu.be/MMhSWnu0ST8!

New Contact Info for Ruth Lohmeier

Ruth has moved to Maple Knoll Village and can be reached at the address below:

Maple Knoll Village
Breeze Manor
11200 Springfield Pike
c/o Ruth Lohmeier, Room H402
Cincinnati, OH 45246-4476

513-782-5710

A Spiritual Home for Future Leaders

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Sunday services had already passed, and I was like, 'I need something, but I don't know what.' I remembered that 6 p.m. service time, and I wandered up the hill, snuck in the back [pew] and I just kept coming. It was exactly what I needed."

In and beyond worship, Setley encourages students to set the tone for campus ministry. Simmons said she's loved leading monthly social activities such as ax-throwing or miniature golf. The gatherings make a difference. "I can't overstate the importance of having a place where you can experience spirituality, but also having a group of people you can experience it with," Blake said.

In addition to serving as students' spiritual home, Lutheran Campus Ministry at WVU plans this fall to offer a literal rent-free home for some people discerning calls to ministry. The student housing,

called Luther House, is located behind the chapel in a building that was formerly the parsonage for St. Paul Lutheran Church of Morgantown. Luther House students will lead chapel and explore seminary through a partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

"Hopefully out of that, students will have some of the financial burden taken off, but also to have that ability to discern and engage with their faith in a way that will give them more answers to the questions about what God is calling them to do in this world," Setley said.

Thank you for your generous gifts of Mission Support, which made this story of faith in action possible. Mission Support is the portion of your offering your congregation shares with your synod, and your synod shares with the churchwide organization. To learn more or watch a video of this ministry, visit [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).

PAINTING PROJECT: Bridget's Eagle Scout project is coming along great! She and her helpers are painting and redecorating the Sunday School rooms upstairs. Thank you, Scouts & friends!



7 Pray that the theology, values, traditions and practices of our church and congregations will be centered in the good news of Jesus Christ and the ways of God, and that God will guide us back to this center when we are distracted or drawn away from our purpose and identity as the body of Christ.

8 *International Women's Day* Pray for women everywhere, for gender equality and equity, for the elimination of gender bias and stereotypes, and for opportunities for women to develop and use their gifts, skills, insights and passions without barrier or discouragement.

9 Pray that in the sign and symbol of the cross we will see the power of God at work for our salvation through Jesus Christ — a gift of love and mercy for all people and nations.

10 Lift up prayers of joy for, and find ways to reach out to, those celebrating birthdays, marriages, anniversaries and other special occasions without being able to share those moments with others in person.

11 Give praise and glory to our wonderful God, whose ways and commands are revealed to us with clarity and who is merciful and gracious with us when we stray from them.

12 Pray that we will continue to gain ground on vaccinating people against COVID-19, especially those who are most vulnerable and those who provide essential services for the sake of our health, well-being and daily needs, here and globally.

13 We are a publicly engaged church that participates in God's work of pursuing justice and peace and of restoring and reconciling communities. Give thanks for ELCA Advocacy, ELCAvotes, the Lutheran Office for World Community and the teachings of our church, which help us to understand the needs of our neighbors, equip us for social concerns and encourage us to respond as God calls us to serve and act.

14 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." This is welcome news for everyone! Give thanks and praise to God!

15 Give thanks that God has created us to do good in the world and that, even in complex and difficult circumstances, the Spirit is always at work teaching and emboldening us to love and serve our neighbor.

16 Give thanks that God loves us, hears our pleas — spoken and silent — and grants us hope, comfort and relief amid our troubles. Ask that the Spirit will show us how to respond with wisdom, compassion and hope when our neighbors experience difficulties.

17 Pray for our ELCA missionaries serving alongside companion churches and organizations in Africa, including the Rev. Elisabeth Johnson (Cameroon), Anne and Willie Langdji (Madagascar, West Africa and Central Africa), the Rev. Alex Lachapelle (Kenya), the Rev. Brian Palmer and the Rev. Linda Johnson Seyenkulo (Liberia), the Rev. Lancelot Themba and Kwena Mkhabela (Madagascar, West Africa and Central Africa), and the Rev. Amanda and the Rev. Grant Applehans (Madagascar).

18 Ask God to prepare and equip congregations and communities — physically, emotionally and spiritually — to respond to the severe weather that often comes in spring, and to help one another endure.

19 Give thanks that God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, rescues us from darkness, sin, death and all that separates us from our loving and merciful Creator. Pray that we will take to heart Paul's reminder that "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

20 Thank God for our special relationship with the Reformed Church in America, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, and pray that together we will find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these uncertain and challenging times.

21 We grieve the suffering and death of Jesus, yet we also rejoice in his resurrection and the promise of salvation that comes with it. Pray that we will follow Jesus wherever he leads us — through challenges and joys — and that our lives will glorify God throughout the journey.

22 Pray for the lay leaders of our church, who respond to God's call to serve, accept invitations to share their gifts and skills, and give of themselves to grow the church, serve neighbors in need, nurture the faith of others and equip disciples of all ages.

23 Pray for God's mercy and love every day. Ask that God will instill in us joy and hope, create in us a faithful spirit, teach us truth and wisdom, and stir gratitude in our hearts for all that God has done and continues to do for us and all humanity.

24 Due to the lasting impact of COVID-19 and the uncertainty surrounding vaccine rollout, the ELCA has decided not to send Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers for its 2021-22 program year. Pray for young adult applicants who are eager to serve and share their faith, and for the enduring relationships we have with our companion churches and partner organizations around the world.



PRAYER VENTURES

MARCH 2021

25 Pray for all those who grieve and suffer the loss of a loved one, friend, co-worker or neighbor, especially those impacted by the death of someone from COVID-19.

26 We see humility, sacrifice and unconditional love in the suffering Jesus endured for our redemption. Pray that the Spirit will make us humble, loving servants willing to sacrifice convenience, reward and emotional comfort for the sake of sharing the gospel and caring for our neighbors in need.

27 Pray for our ELCA missionaries serving alongside companion churches and organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Albert (Gustavo) Driau and the Rev. Rachel Ringlaben (Argentina and Uruguay), Karen Anderson (Chile), Linda Gawthorne (Colombia) and the Rev. Claudia Lopez Ortega (Nicaragua).

28 *Palm Sunday* Jesus endured persecution, inner conflict, betrayal by his closest followers, arrest and an unfair trial leading to his death — all for our salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises and love. Give praise and thanks to the Son of God!

29 Pray that we might reconcile our differences and embrace, teach and act on our values, appreciating the diversity of humanity and our communities, attending to our neighbors in need, practicing mutual respect and care, and pooling our diverse gifts, skills and perspectives to change our society, church and world.

30 Prayerfully reflect on who Jesus is and what we profess to believe about Jesus as Savior, teacher, servant, example, source of truth, man and Son of God.

31 Give thanks to God that "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" who support and encourage our faith and accompany us in our baptismal journey of service and witness.

These petitions are offered as guides to prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the ELCA, as well as for the needs and circumstances of our neighbors, communities and world. Thank you for your continued prayers for the life and mission of this church.

1 *Women's History Month* Give thanks for women throughout history and in our lives who have shared their gifts and leadership in the church and society, raised and cared for us, taught us and nurtured our faith, and fought for justice, equality and healing. Pray for women everywhere who suffer injustice, demeaning stereotypes, violence and poverty, that they will not lose hope but will be delivered from their suffering and persecution to live freely and boldly.

2 Give thanks that we can trust completely God's promises, love and forgiveness, especially when we feel unlovable, unfaithful or uncertain.

3 The Spanish word *amparo* means protection of a living creature from suffering or damage. Pray for the ELCA's Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy, and pray that we will join in serving the most vulnerable children and their families as they seek safety and the opportunity to live in welcoming, humane communities and congregations.

4 Pray for our synod bishops, the presiding bishop and the secretary, who are meeting online for the Conference of Bishops. Ask that the Spirit guide and inspire their discussions, prayerful deliberations and decisions, which impact the ELCA, the work we do together and the Future Church goals and structure being implemented in the churchwide organization.

5 During our Lenten journey, pray that God will help us reflect on aspects of our life and faith that we find difficult to examine and confess, and that we will remember we are always loved and made new through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ — our Savior, redeemer and source of hope.

6 Ask God to bless and guide our efforts to worship, commune, study Scriptures, socialize and care for each other online, and to find safe ways of gathering in person. Give thanks for the inspiration of the Spirit and the creativity of our siblings in Christ, who help us envision and practice new ways of being church together.

This resource may be copied and shared among members and friends of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Contact info@elca.org for additional information. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4101. Telephone: 800-638-3522, ext. 2458.

Our Life Together

For emergency pastoral care, please call the after-hours line at 513-760-5884.

If you have requests for the Prayer Chain, call Penny Huber, 513-931-6420. To remove people from the list, contact the office.

We pray for **Mary and her granddaughter Kyra** (friend of Paul Pieper); **Berkeley** (Carol Curless's great-grandson); **Jeannie Allen** (Faith Pirrmann's friend); **Pr. Lisa Bernheisel; Louise Barry; Teresa Bell** (former member); **Beth** (Elinor Schieman's daughter); **Stephen Black** (Kim Coulehan's nephew); **Bobby** (Christian Lohmeier's friend); **Nancy Bose** (Kathy Hirt's friend); **Brett** (Kings' step-nephew); **Nicole Bucknam** (friend of Millers); **Jodie Calhoun; Christian; Frances Clemons** (Portmanns' friend); **Colin** (Millers' grandson); **Sandy Cordes; Kathy Curless; Katie Demopoulos** (Diana Hawkins's niece); **Dick** (Linda Miller's brother); **Jeremy Doan** (Jean Winkle's grandson); **Jerry Doan** (Jean Winkle's son-in-law); **Lee and Jane Erbeck; Larry Faulkner** (Freda's son); **Justin Feldman** (Bess Sturgill's father); **Micki Ford** (Fords' niece); **Jeanne Fuller; Scarlett Gally** (Beth Wernery's great-niece); **Clara Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's sister); **George and Sherry** (Shirley Harbaugh's cousins); **Nathaniel Gibson** (Les Eckerle's step-nephew); **Steve Gollehon** (Elinor Schieman's cousin); **Hannah; Matthew Harrison** (Seals' neighbor); **Sandy Hatcher** (Linda Holt's sister); **Elain Heskamp; Richard Hoffman** (Cindy Mayhugh's brother); **Andrew Horton; Mary Ann Hudecki** (Linda Miller's sister), **Ellen Hunter** (Jeni Cathcart's grandmother); **Jo and her daughter** (Jeanne Fuller's friends); **Joan** (Penny Huber's friend); **Kate** (granddaughter of Dennis King's friend); **Dennis King; Jay King** (son of Jamie King); **Loretta Kombrink** (Marilyn Portmann's aunt); **Lewis Laine** (Chet Laine's brother); **Richard Lane** (Elinor Schieman's nephew); **Nelson Langefeld; Ruth Lohmeier; Yvonne Lowery** (St. Paul Players); **Revea and Jim Mayhew** (Millers' sister & brother-in-law); **Carroll Mayhugh Sr.** (Carroll Mayhugh's father); **Samantha Mersch** (Mayhughs' daughter, Sarah Papin's sister); **Ann Miller** (Millers' niece); **Jessica Mink** (Donald Harris's cousin); **Doris Minton; Barbara Moorhouse; Jean Nolte; Ervin, Carol, Jim, and Jeannie Oerther** (Portmanns' sister and family); **Ann Ohr** (Barbara Moorhouse's

cousin); **Richard Osborn** (Betty Pack's brother); **Rosie Osborn** (Betty Pack's sister); **Tom Pack** (Betty Pack's son); **Eric Papin; Christian & Suzie Pereira** (Carolyn Koehl's granddaughter & grandson-in-law); **Richard Peterson** (Shirley Harbaugh's brothers); **Don Pflieger** (Kings' brother-in-law); **Ginny Pape; Linda Perin** (Moorhouses' cousin); **Paul Pieper; Faith Pirrmann; Pat Popplewell** (Dennis King's friend); **James Savoy** (Jean Winkle's great-grandson); **Shawn Schnetzer** (Sturgills' cousin); **Sheila Schultz** (Betty Pack's friend); **Shannon and Dane** (friends of Riddle family); **Shear family** (Kings' daughter & son-in-law); **Kate Sheridan** (Kings' family friend); **Keith Shupe** (father of Kelly Shupe); **Jason Simpson** (Freda Faulkner's grand-nephew); **Patricia Smith** (Teresa Bell's mother); **Scott Songer; Judy Songer** (friends of Jean Winkle); **Crosley Spelman** (Spelmans' grandson); **Frank Sturgill** (Jim's dad); **Britney Jean Teems** (Jean Winkle's granddaughter); **Teresa** (friend of Marty Lohmeier); **Randy Thaman** (friend of Marie Calhoun); **Geri Toland** (Carole Replogle's neighbor); **Treasure** (Les Eckerle's cousin); **Ralph Turner** (friend of Dennis King); **Tereasa Vogel** (Freda Faulkner's friend); **Jack Wagner; Jeanne Wagner; Daryl Wesselman** (Betty Pack's granddaughter); **Jean Winkle; Susan Winkle** (Jean Winkle's daughter-in-law).

We pray for those with ongoing health concerns who are unable to come to church every week: **Louise Barry, Barbara Moorhouse, Jean Nolte, Heather Segar.**

We pray for our armed forces members: **Graham Barton** (Fords' neighbor); **Paul Cordes** (Elinor Schieman's grandson); **Victoria Derry** (Elinor Schieman's great-granddaughter); **Jared Forst** (Jim and Loretta's grandson); **Beau Glenn** (Karen Koehl's son-in-law); **Kylie Hahn** (Gretta Hahn's granddaughter); **Donald Hosea** (Karen Koehl's son); **Samuel McLoughlin** (friend of Cindy Sieckman); **Scott Minton** (Doris Minton's son); **Jobeth Ramirez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Joshua Rodriguez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Trent Schwegman** (cousin to the Erbecks and Fords); **Dustin Silvey; Mack Thompson** (Freda Faulkner's grandson); **Alex Wisecup** (son of Nadine and Barry Wisecup).

HOLY WEEK & EASTER SERVICES

Palm Sunday March 28 • 10:30 am

Maundy Thursday April 1 • 7 pm

Good Friday April 2 • 7 pm

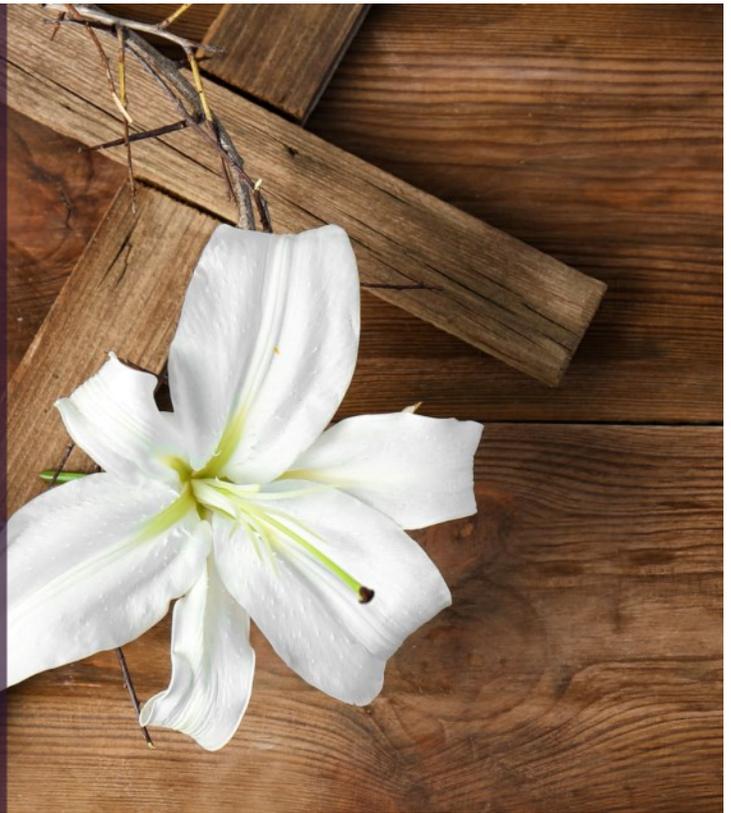
Easter Vigil April 3 • Online only

Easter Sunday April 4 • 10:30 am

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
READING, OH



*Services will be held in person and also
livestreamed, unless otherwise noted.*



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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE