



# Central Lutheran Church

*Come Share the Spirit!*

## Central News - April 2020

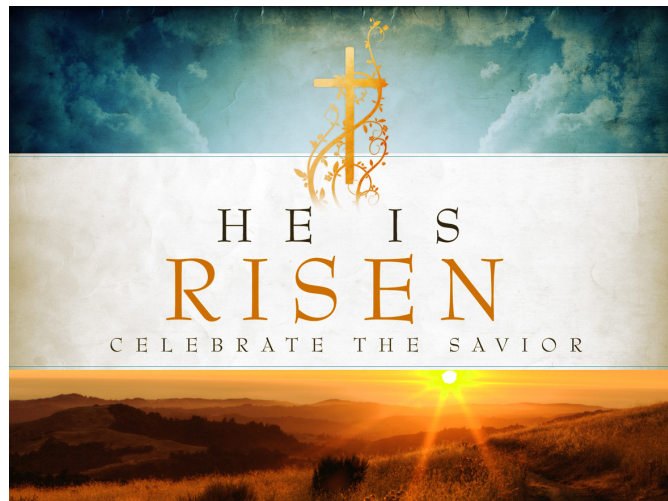
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## The Resurrection of Our Lord

**Sunday, April 12th**

Whenever the opportunity to worship as a community arrives join with one another in the celebration of Easter Sunday!

During Holy Week check our website for a Maundy Thursday message and the Good Friday presentation of "The Way of the Cross."



## The Weight of the World

It is impossible for us to comprehend Jesus' love for humanity and his devotion to God. Not only is it difficult to imagine such love, but also the reality humanity doesn't deserve it makes Jesus' actions impossible to understand. The human mind cannot grasp the level of Jesus' devotion to God's covenant promise -- willingly being the sacrificial lamb for a sinful people.

Jesus faced not only the pressure of his walk to the cross, but also the realization he would be forsaken by everyone. Before his crucifixion Jesus chose to face that burden in a place called "Gethsemane." The hours Jesus spent there help us understand more about his love.

Gethsemane was an olive grove on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. The word "gethsemane" comes from two words meaning "a place for pressing" and "oils." A gethsemane was an olive or oil press, therefore because of the presence of a large olive press the area was known as Gethsemane. The press crushed olive pulp placed in baskets and stacked several layers high. Great weights put enormous pressure on the pulp, which squeezed the oil from the pulp that was collected in clay jars.

Because of his love, Jesus willingly faced the agony of arrest, torture, rejection, and death. He spent his last week focused on the needs and concerns of others. During his last meal he encouraged his disciples and taught them the importance of giving oneself for others. His message emphasized a trust in God and a certain victory of all who follow.

After the meal, Jesus walked to the very place he was sure to be found. There he directly faced the reality of what was to come. In prayer he expressed himself openly to God -- his fears, his despair, his agony. The agony of those hours tear at our souls as we discover the imagery of a gethsemane showing what Jesus faced because of our sin and his love for us. We see the compassionate Savior with the weight of the world on his shoulders.

Jesus loved his people so completely he would go to the cross alone. The awareness of this reality led him to the depths of anguish that his sweat became like blood, as if a gethsemane's enormous weight pressed blood from him.

It is difficult to appreciate the depth of the love Jesus has for us. We realize his agony because of our sin. We pray to be faithful servants in appreciation of the price Jesus paid. We admit the need for Jesus to give us compassion to face our suffering and stress in order to love others and to act according to what is best for them. We pray for strength and wisdom to follow Jesus' path when facing sorrow and agony in our own lives.



from Pastor Thom

...for being a part of the journey of our congregation

...for your commitment, investment and trust

...for volunteering your time and

talent to lead, teach and learn

...for worshiping with praise and celebration in word and sacrament, prayer and song

...for giving generously toward congregational, local and worldwide causes

...for laughing, groaning and puzzling looks when not getting the punchline at all

...for your prayers and gifts for me and my family

...for inviting me into your homes, lives and hearts

...for sharing your grief, pain, sorrow, questions, happiness, joy and wisdom

...for the embrace of the youth, sharing their generation and letting me talk about mine

...for supporting the many ventures of our ministry together over the years

...for expressing encouragement and appreciation for my pastoral leadership

...for teasing me back

and, finally...



## **Time of Transition**

At this time congregational leaders, along with the guidance of Bishop Deborah Hutterer, are making excellent progress with the selection of an experienced and talented pastor to serve our congregation following the retirement of Pastor Thom. More details will be shared in the days ahead.

Pastor Bob Kleinke will serve as a supply pastor during the last half of April and first part of May. He will provide a sermon each week that will be posted on our

website(<http://centrallutheranaz.org/church/worship-2/sermons>). It is unlikely worship services will resume until a Sunday in May or, perhaps in June.

During this period your help may be needed in different areas:

- preparing paraments, banners, decorations and flowers for worship
- providing office assistance in creating and printing bulletins, taking phone calls and messages
- helping with financial records and reports
- placing orders and keeping up with supplies
- continuing personal contributions and offerings, even when not worshipping
- submitting newsletter information to Pat Jones, sent to [plrmjo@gmail.com](mailto:plrmjo@gmail.com)

Keep your eyes, ears and hearts open to how you can help with this transition. Prayerfully remember everyone in our congregation during this time of change.

## Loving Our Neighbor

During this unique time it is ironic that we must unite in a shared commitment to separation. It seems strange to focus on our individual distancing to support the health of our community.



With the ongoing uncertainty regarding the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) we have suspended all worship services and congregational gatherings. With our neighbors we are taking these practical measures to protect the most vulnerable among our community.

Coronavirus is a respiratory illness that can easily spread from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between individuals who are in close contact with one another (within 6-10 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when the infected person speaks, coughs or sneezes.

It is also possible to get the coronavirus by touching another person or surface that has the virus on it and then touching one's mouth, nose or eyes.

Those infected have suffered from mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath.

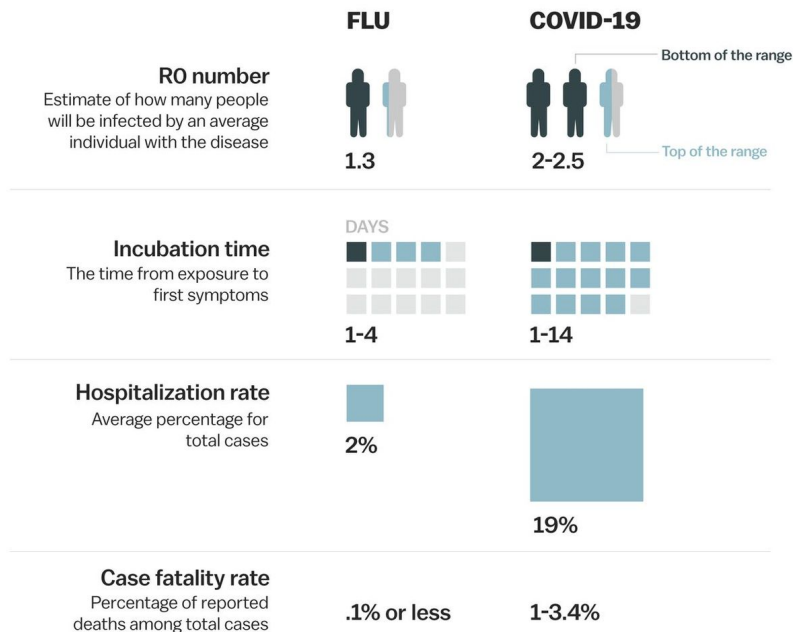
Everyone should take preventative actions. Maintain social distancing, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and wash your hands frequently with soap and

water for at least 20 seconds (hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol is effective as well).

We will continue to monitor the scientific news to address the issue. For more information go to the website for the Centers for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19).

For church wide information from the Grand Canyon Synod visit [www.gcsyond.org](http://www.gcsyond.org).

## How seasonal flu and Covid-19 compare



Sources: CDC, WHO, NCBI

Vox

## Upcoming Events



### Emergency Blood Drive

On Friday, April 24th a blood drive will be held at Living Hope Church on Sunland Gin Road in Arizona City. Donations will be made by appointment only between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

To make an appointment go online at [Redcross.org](http://Redcross.org) and find this event using location code 85123.

### Arizona City Seniors

The senior activity program will be suspended until further notice.

When the program resumes we will continue to welcome participants from the entire community. Activities will include exercise programs, dancing, board and card games, with a library providing the opportunity to borrow books. Each day coffee will be served. Contact person is Gary Linafelter.



## Study and Discussion



### Friendship Center Ministry

#### Robson Ranch

Sunday Inter-Denominational Worship  
9 a.m. Worship Suspended  
Laredo Room

Central Lutheran Church is sponsoring and assisting the Friendship Center ministry for the Robson Ranch community under the direction of Pastor Ron Hunt. The ministry's focus is being a welcoming and supportive spiritual environment

for the residents of the community. It offers the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus and make a difference in the lives of others through personal callings.

Our congregation shares in prayer, outreach, administrative needs and financial support.



### Ladies Quilting Ministry

Thanks to all the women who contributed to this valuable ministry during the past months. The program provides a message of care and comfort to women and children of our community through the sharing of quilts.

Your donations of blankets, sheets, fabric and yarn are greatly appreciated!

## Youth Night Class



Our youth group will continue with regular activities at a later date. Our program includes our elementary, middle school and high school students.

### Good Grief

*"Grief never ends, but it changes.  
It's a passage, not a place to stay.  
Grief is not a sign of weakness,  
nor a lack of faith.  
It is the price of love."  
(Author Unknown)*

Because of all the people and things in life we love, life is full of sorrow, sadness, distress, pain, suffering, and, adversity. Life is full of loss in many different forms. Unique in many ways. Common in many ways.

These gatherings are intended to provide opportunities to share grief. To be comforted, to comfort. To be helped, to help. To be supported, to support others.

Watch for an announcement of a new meeting time in Arizona City. Please contact Judy Smith for any questions or needs.



### Our Stewardship

We continue to celebrate our growth reflected in a greater number of worshipers, worshipers who have met their monthly offering goal (even when missing a worship

service), and, those who have doubled their offering on the second Sunday of each month.

We have held the belief that many of us have had the ability to grow in our giving. Continuing to ask ourselves, “how come I don’t give more?”

Your contributions have made it possible for us to extend our benevolence to many areas of need. This year the council will designate contributions to:

City of Joy Rwanda -- sponsoring a student in Rwanda for an entire school year;

Refugee Program -- Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest supports the resettlement of families from around the world in Arizona;

Florence Immigration and Refugee Rights Project -- providing educational materials, sports equipment, school supplies, pregnancy and new parent support;

Maricopa Lutheran Church -- assisting the congregation's efforts to establish a permanent location in their community;

Friendship Center -- sponsoring the start-up ministry for the Robson Ranch community.

Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry, helping us to grow our ministry within our congregation, to the Grand Canyon synod and the national church, and to those in need around the world.

## **ACSTO**

The Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization offers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for donations to education. Anyone who pays Arizona state taxes can request to have your tax dollars help make a child's tuition more affordable to a family.



Donations must be made anytime prior to April 15th and will be applied to taxes paid. The Private School Tax Credit does not take money from public school funding.

Merle and Rachel Grack invite you to learn more in how you can support their grandson, Keaton. More information is available at both church sites.

## **A Fragrance Free Environment**



We are now encouraging that everyone please avoid wearing scented products, such as perfumes, colognes and aftershaves, during worship and other congregational events held at our two sites.

Many people have sensitivities and respiratory difficulties that are triggered when exposed to personal fragrances.

Thank you for your cooperation.

## Council Members

Members for this year are:

Peg Brady (Sec), Gary Erickson (Vice Pres), Steve Gal, Ina Johnson, Dick Jones, Bob Kleinke, Gary Linafelter, Leticia Luse, John Pieschl (Pres), Mary Pietrini, Skip Simes, and Carolyn Torr (Treas).

Next meeting is Tuesday, April 21st at 6:30 p.m.



## Community Ministries



### Shield a Badge

Central Lutheran Church joins with many congregations and organizations in the area participating in the "Shield the Badge" support ministry. Volunteers agree to pray daily for a member of the Casa Grande Police Department.

Pick up an information card and contact Sandy Carpenter ([carpesm56@gmail.com](mailto:carpesm56@gmail.com)) and you will be assigned a badge number. For one year pray for the safety and well-

being of the officer using the badge number.

## Community Education Ministry

Progress continues to be made as 13 students have passed the math test, 12 language arts, 13 science, 12 social studies, and, 15 civics. Twelve

students have completed all of their GED requirements.

You can help by volunteering as a GED or English tutor or making a donation -- designate as "adult education." Thank you for the donations received for this ministry!

#### Donation of Home Furnishings

Sometimes the families of our participants are in need of furniture, and small and large appliances. You can help them by donating these items. Contact Alyson to help.

For information of all our programs contact Alyson Stephens:  
mailto:alysonstephens@q.com

Number of passed GED tests	Previous Progress	Current Progress
Math	13	13
Language Arts	10	12
Science	11	13
Social Studies	11	12
Civics tests	13	15
GEDs earned	11	12

#### Manna Bags

We continue to work with the Casa Grande Police Department providing Manna Bags for officers to distribute in our community.

You can pick up Manna Bags to carry in your car to be shared with someone in need that you may meet in the course of your day.

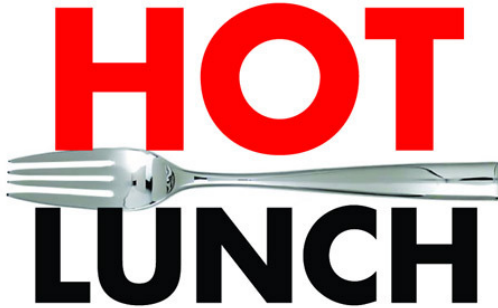
Manna Bags generally include the following items:

two 16.9 oz water bottles, packaged tuna, sausage, crackers (plain, with cheese or peanut butter), energy bars, PayDay candy bars, fruit cups, hand wipes, plastic forks and spoons, in a gallon plastic bag.



## Community Food Pantry

Our congregation has donated thousands of food items to the Casa Grande Food Bank. The second Sunday of each month has been designated as a day to support those in need. You are encouraged to make it a practice to bring food items each month for the food bank. Food bins are located at both of our sites.



## Hot Lunch Program

You can help the Eloy lunch program on Wednesdays by providing 25-50 homemade or purchased "treats." For information talk with Sandy Christopher. You can bring your "treats" to worship on Sunday and they will be delivered to the program site.

## Request to Travelers

Contribute shampoo, conditioner, lotion, soap, toothpaste and coffee packets to Helping Hands, which assists families through mentoring, healthcare, nutrition, and emergency programs. A container is located in the entry at both sites.



## City of Joy Rwanda

God's grace is on daily display and the Holy Spirit continues to build up the ministry taking place in Rwanda. You can support this inspirational ministry by sponsoring a student and supporting the graduates of the sewing program by purchasing items that have been created.

After visiting with us in January, the Ellingson family briefly returned to Rwanda and have now settled in the Phoenix area.

Todd Ellingson, President and Founder of City of Joy

todd.d.ellingson@gmail.com

<http://cityofjoyrwanda.org>

<https://youtu.be/oDUbpBEfokk>



## "Good Gifts" Ministry

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland. The topography of the country is defined by highlands split by the Great Rift Valley and enormous Lake Malawi, which takes up about one-third of Malawi's area.

The population of Malawi is estimated at a little over 18 million. This estimate takes into account a lower life expectancy, and higher infant deaths, due to AIDS.

Malawi is among the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, with a largely rural population. The government depends on outside aid to meet development needs. There are challenges in building and expanding the economy, improving education, healthcare, environmental protection, and becoming financially independent amidst widespread overpopulation and unemployment.

Our congregational campaign raised \$8,783, which has been increased to \$10,000 by the church council. These funds will allow us to partner with the Malawi Health and Wellness program. Through the direction of the Lutheran Church of Malawi our funds will be used to provide access to clean water, sanitation, livestock, farm equipment, fruit trees, medical supplies and medicines, school materials, and mosquito netting.

This is a specific breakdown of expenses:

- 2 simple water wells
- 4 latrines
- 1 fish farm
- 1 fruit tree nursery
- 4 women attending farming school
- 20 sets of farm tools
- 4 piglets
- 10 chicks



5 roosters  
2 pair of goats  
4 colonies of honey bees  
1 month of medical supplies  
1 classroom of school supplies  
1 community of mosquito netting.

Thank you for your contributions to this ministry. You can continue to make individual donations to Good Gifts throughout the year. ELCA Good Gifts provide more than 50 different gift-giving options, starting at \$10, that fight disease and hunger, and transform lives around the world.

## Remember in Prayer

Harry Brink, Willie Bergren, Trent Blessing, Judy Burruel, Harold Bonde, Butch Burke, Sandy Carpenter, Carole Crain, Anne Decker, Wayne Eliason, Ellva Erickson, TJ Esco, Pam Gardner, Tom Gearhart, Ken Going, Rachel Grack, Gerre Graves, Harold and Peggy Hall, Darcy Hunter, Penny Jacobson, Dwight Jorgensen, Ron Jung, Tammy Kempke, Ruth Kramer, Gary and Bev Linafelter, Ken and Lois Morgan, Dick Mueser, Walt Neulieb, Red and Dede Parrish, Ruthann Raitter, Marcus Ramirez, Denise Shepard, Coby Snow, Julie Sternhagen, Linda Ward, Ski Wrybkowski.



Bereavement -- the family and friends of Gertie Kenyon; and, the family and friends of Sue Rhoades.

Military Service -- Caleb Ball, Grant Davis, Ryan Harrison, Sean Harrison, CJ Squires.

## Financial News

### “What You Have First Given Us”

*Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us - our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love.*

*Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

On the second weekend of each month we continue to prayerfully consider the challenge to double our offering. The reason for this proposal is the need to increase offerings and the belief many people have the ability to fulfill such a



request. As we consider this challenge we can ask ourselves, “how come I don’t give more?” Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry.

## **Internship Fund**

The \$20,848 of contributions received for the internship program have been invested in an ELCA Mission Investment Fund account. The council will continue to evaluate the possibility of participating in the internship program in the futures or applying to other staffing needs.

Special note: At the annual meeting in January, it was approved to use \$6,000 of the fund to support the work of our tutor for our GED program this year.

## **Casa Grande Land Fund**

Our property “growth fund” has a balance of \$16,699 for the purchase of a permanent Casa Grande site. Discussion of future possibilities is ongoing.

## **Council Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on April 21st at 6:30 p.m.

## **March Finances**

Account information:

Offering Income for the Month: \$18,877

Balance General Fund: \$22,455

Average Monthly Expenses: \$21,000

Capital Fund: \$53,100 (includes \$20,000 savings from General Fund)

Internship Fund: \$20,848

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## **Worship Schedule**

When worship resumes, services will be held:

### **Arizona City**

Sunday - 8:30 a.m.

### **Casa Grande**

Sunday -- 10 a.m.

### **Our Worship**

Our focus is on the good news shared by God through Jesus Christ, and is celebrated through the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday at all services.

Fellowship is held at both sites each Sunday.

### **Worship Assistants**

You are needed to help as accompanist, greeter, usher, reader, communion server, offering counter, and nursery care. Sign-up to help.

### **Altar Flowers**

Sign-up to provide flowers on the altar for a special remembrance or event.

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## **Our Mission**

*“We are a Spirit-filled community of loving and caring, light-hearted people who joyfully invite all to share, through the Gospel, the love of Christ.”*

### **Multi-Site Ministry**

- Draw upon resources to meet the needs of each campus
  - Use of congregational resources based on needs
  - Programs at one or both sites
  - One governing body, one budget
  - Staff active on both campuses
  - Capital projects at both campuses
- 

## **Church Family Photo Directory**

Click here to go to the church [photo directory](#)

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## **Contact Us**

**Church Office:** [churchoffice@centrallutheranaz.org](mailto:churchoffice@centrallutheranaz.org)

**Pastor Thom Stephens:** [pastor@centrallutheranaz.org](mailto:pastor@centrallutheranaz.org)

[www.centrallutheranaz.org](http://www.centrallutheranaz.org)

### **Arizona City Campus**

12921 S. Sunland Gin Road

PO Box 677

Arizona City, AZ 85123

(520) 466-5024

## Casa Grande Campus

324 N Sacaton Street

Casa Grande, AZ 85122

(520) 316-9659

**Note: for postal service use PO Box 677 Arizona City, AZ 85123**

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