



Blackberry Beacon

*“Let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father in heaven.”*

Matthew 5:16

April 2025

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The Minor Prophets: Amos and Obadiah

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During 2025, we will be journeying together through the minor prophets. Last month I forgot to include one, so you get to read two this month. Don't worry; one is only 21 verses!

Amos

This month I invite you to read the book of Amos. You might be familiar with Amos from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in which he quotes the prophet: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

God, through Amos his prophet, has no patience for false worship – in particular: worshipers who say one thing but then do another, particularly when it comes to oppressing the poor.

Amos has words of judgment both for the nations surrounding Israel, and for Israel itself. We should take that to heart: God judges all nations according to *his* standard for justice and righteousness.

We often conclude worship with ancient dismissal: "Go in peace. Remember the poor." I cannot think of a better summary of the book of Amos.

Obadiah

This month I also invite you to read the book of Obadiah.

It's the shortest book in the Old Testament, only 21 verses! It tells the story of the tension between the nation of Israel and the nation of Edom. The relationship between these two groups of people goes all the way back to the story of the Israel (Jacob) and Esau, sons of Isaac and Rebekah and grandsons of Abraham and Sarah. Israel became the people of Israel and the descendants of Esau became the nation of Edom.

If there was tension in this family, between Israel and Edom, it got ramped up in a terrible way when the Babylonian Empire conquered Israel and defeated Jerusalem. The Edomites not only stood by and watched it happen, they even participated in hurting their brothers and sisters, including Israelite refugees. But their pride and self-exaltation became their downfall. Verses 1-14 in Obadiah are directed at them.

But then Obadiah takes a turn. In verses 15-18, God's judgment directed at prideful Edom is expanded to include all nations who are full of pride and exalt themselves. Not one nation is exempt. Pride goes before the fall, as the saying goes. All prideful nations will be judged.

But Obadiah does not end with judgment. God promises to keep a remnant and, through that remnant, to restore a New Jerusalem (Mount Zion) according to his ways. The short book of Obadiah reminds us that God will deal with evil and bring his kingdom of peace.

Justice and Peace,

+ Pastor Matt

P.S. If you're wondering where I learn a lot of this, check out the website for the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com>.

+Holy Week Worship +

April 13	Palm Sunday
April 17	Maundy Thursday at St. Luke's, 7pm
April 18	Good Friday at St. Peter, 7pm
April 20	Easter Sunday, 7am and 8:45am

Stewardship Reflections

Helping Jesus

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Matthew 26:41

Most of us can remember "helping" our parents when we were children. For me, helping usually consisted of my holding a tool while my father worked nearby. Sometimes I'd get to turn a wrench or finish pounding a nail, but my father could easily have done those tasks without me. Eventually I realized that this time spent helping my father was an opportunity for me to learn and practice skills that I would one day teach my children.

I think that Jesus was doing the same thing with his disciples in Gethsemane. "Watch and pray so you will not fall into temptation," Jesus says to them after they've fallen asleep. Jesus is not asking them to do this for his own benefit but for theirs.

Just as my father used my help to teach me the things I would need to know as I grew into adulthood, God invites us to participate in serving the world. Whether through prayer and worship, caring for the poor, looking out for those who are alone, or providing for those without housing, God uses these opportunities to shape us into mature disciples.

God includes us not because the job can't be done without our help but because God has chosen to involve all of us in the work of the kingdom.

Every circumstance is an opportunity to learn how to serve God.

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Salem Tuesday/Easter Meal – We Need Your Help!

We will be cooking, serving, and cleaning up at Salem's Tuesday Meal on April 8.

We will need cooks (11am); servers (2:30pm); cleanup (4:30pm).

We will need homemade cakes, cookies, or brownies delivered to St. Peter on Sunday, April 6 or by 10am on Tuesday. These meals are SO appreciated by the community and are our way of showing Christ's love to others.

Note the **Weekly Outreach Opportunity** that is included in each week's bulletin. These are suggestions that you can do on your own, as a family, or with other members of your church family. God presents us opportunities EVERY DAY! Be ready to let your Light Shine.

A BIG thank you to all who have collected bedding and pillows for **Let's Build Beds**. They are GREATLY appreciated by the organization. The need seems to continue to grow.

CHURCH PICNIC - Sunday, April 27 @11:45am

We will gather at St. Peter's to share a meal, fellowship, and play some games. We will provide Hot Dogs, Sloppy Joe's, and a beverage. Please bring a dish to share and come have a grand time with your church family. We look forward to having folks from St. Luke's and St. Peter's. We anticipate the event to last until around 2pm. Hope to see you there!

Congregational Recruitment Meeting

Sunday, April 6 at 11:30am. Come to share your ideas on how to increase church attendance and membership.

Family Time

It will be April 13 at 1:30. "We will do some Easter crafts, learn the Bunny Hop, play games and have some fun snacks." See you there!

Youth Bowling

It will be April 27 at 1:30pm. Stay a little bit longer after our church picnic for some more fun.

Many have stepped forward to volunteer as **Worship Assistants** for our Sunday Services as well as Lenten Services. This is much appreciated. Please consider signing up to be a Greeter, Usher, Communion Assistant, or Host Fellowship Hour - not sure what this entails? Just ask a member of The Outreach Ministry and we will be happy to fill you in.

Phillip the Blue Barrel Food Collection **April – Donor's Choice for Lutheran Social Services**

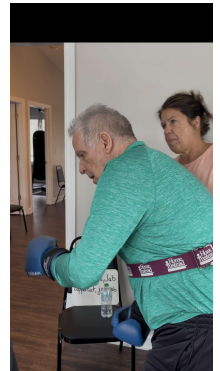
North Central WELCA Spring Assembly @ St. John Lutheran Church Social Hall, Saturday, **May 3 @ 9:00 am** (registration begins at 8:30 am) \$10 registration fee is due by April 26. Contact: Margaret 419-836-7384 *Further information is on the church bulletin board.

Jean Witt is busy working on the **Instant Church Directory**. This is something new for us and we are excited with the possibilities. Please let us know if there have been any changes in your Name, Address, Phone Number, E-Mail address, etc. When we have gathered all of the information we will begin to include pictures so that a new Picture Directory will be created. This will include St. Luke's as well. Thank you Jean and Pastor Matt for all of your efforts.

Update on Bill Ackerman:

Bill has been involved in boxing therapy twice a week and is showing some improvement in his abilities since September. They also work on the volume of his speech and his ability to repeat numbers.

We are starting a **picture board** for 2025. Please share your pictures of church related activities. It's always fun to look at previous years and take a walk down memory lane.



Cindy Bench received the following message March 10th:

Good morning my sister Cindy, how are you doing, we are all doing well at Mlenga. I'm sending greetings to you and the congregation members of St. Peter's Blackberry Lutheran church. At Mlenga we are doing the work of our Lord with big efforts. We are building a new church house as the old one had one of its wall destroyed by rains. The walls of the new church house are at the level near the ring beam. Also we are doing without clean water as our water pump in the well is out of order. Mr. Naftali Mandi is doing big efforts in searching for the new one and helping us to know its price.

Pass our greetings to all friends.
Your brother in Jesus Christ,
Hudson Kiwia
Partnership Coordinator

Church Finances

For February 2025, we had a beginning balance of \$6,828.48, receipts of \$23,241.46 and saving accounts withdrawals of \$4,000.00 from capital improvements and \$1,594.55 from building/maintenance for a total income of \$28,836.01, expenses of \$35,561.23 and an ending balance of \$103.26.

In February, we incurred a large expense of \$12,603.12 for several HVAC system items. This was the reason we had to make savings withdrawals of \$4,000.00 from capital improvements and \$1,594.55 from building/maintenance. In the last 14 months, we have had to spend over \$40,000.00 for HVAC issues. It is our thought that we should have our HVAC systems at proper operating levels now. We still have an annual HVAC contract renewal in the Fall of 2025 in the \$5,000.00 neighborhood.

Also in February, we had an annual Boiler System Backflow Test performed. Unfortunately, our backflow protection failed. Repairs will cost \$1,757.00 which includes materials for the check valve rebuild kit and labor provided by a licensed certified repair person. This work needs to be completed as soon as possible.

Gary Diefenthaler



8 - Jessica Brown
Mary Ann Siefke
9 - John Wolf
12 - Alyssa Smith
13 - Robert Beyer
16 - Matt Amonette

19 - Cora Kapp
20 - Jillian Schneider
23 - Kane Peeler
25 - Alyse Sorg
27 - Simon Amonette
Dylan Diekman

28 - Maria Beamer
Mila McQueary
29 - Ethan Bench
Jordan Diekman
30 - Carol Ann Foss
Priscilla Lehma

10 - Jeffrey & Robbin Large
13 - Jim & Norma Coy
16 - Bob & Judy Brown
23 - Mike & Kathy Jasinkowski
24 - Carlos & Susan Lowell
- Thomas & Cynthia Reinhart
26 - David & Amy Behlmer
29 - Don & Janet Radsick



Abigail Circle

Monday, April 21
7:00 AM @ the church

Hannah Circle

Thursday, April 10
10:30 AM @ the church

Sew Group

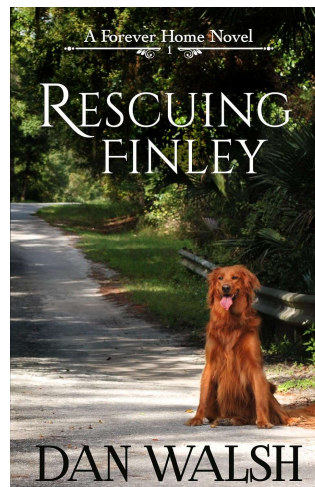
Every Tuesday
9:00 AM @ the church

Book Discussion Group

Wednesday, April 9
10:00 AM @ the church

Bible Study

No April or May Study



Amy Wallace has made plenty of mistakes in her young life, but she didn't see this one coming. Chris Seger is a marine serving in Afghanistan. His life is forever altered by a single, fateful step. A mother of another Afghan war vet suffers a devastating loss, which changes the course of Finley's life for good. Finley is a mostly golden retriever, who suddenly finds himself alone and confused in a dog shelter. Could this prison actually become the place where Finley finally finds freedom? Rescuing Finley tells the story of how one rescue dog powerfully impacts three tragic lives and puts all of them on a road toward redemption and healing.

ST. PETER LUTHERAN COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, March 10, 2025 at Church

Attendance: Cindy Bench, Mark Cuthbertson, Gary Diefenthaler, Al Gahler, Jody Kapp, Jon Overmyer, Kim Reif, Karen Schanke, Pastor Matt Musteric.

The meeting opened with devotion on the First Article of the Apostles' Creed & Prayer by Pastor Matt. Gary made a motion seconded by Jody to approve minutes from the February 10 council meeting. MC. Mark made a motion seconded by Cindy to approve February Treasurer's Report. MC.

Pastor's Report: Pre-school program on February 23 went well; **March & April:** Lent Wednesdays Round Robin; **March 23:** Ryder Nino Baptism; **April 13:** Palm Sunday; **Maundy Thursday:** April 17 at St. Luke's; **Good Friday:** April 18 at St. Peter; **Easter:** April 20; **Alice Bowersox** Funeral: February 14; Transfer: **Mark Starkey** to St. Peter, Norwalk per his request on February 25; February Pastoral Care & Visits total was 24; Continuing Education dates were listed; **Sabbatical application** for 2026 will be resubmitted by March 12 deadline.

Education: Gary reported that they are reviewing **Sunday School material** for next year; Gary made a motion seconded by Mark to have **Family Time Gathering** at 11am on April 13. MC.

Finance: Mark reported that they discussed routine monthly matters; tabled Accountable Reimbursement Policy discussion; discussed the overwhelming **HVAC costs**; possible **Memorial Project:** enhanced altar area lighting; discussed copier costs, office security issues, and custodial supplies. Mark made a motion seconded by Cindy that Maundy Thursday and Good Friday offerings go to wherever St. Luke's designates for Maundy Thursday. MC.

Property: Al reported that John, Wade, Al, and Joe handled **snow removal** from parking lot and sidewalks during winter; Randy contacted Northwood Door for repair to **main entrance door** and will look into repair to kitchen exterior door; **Boiler system** in basement failed backflow test and requires rebuild kit for check valve and must be repaired or could be shut off by state. Cindy made a motion seconded by Gary to repair the check valve backflow system at cost of quoted price of \$1757. MC.

Outreach: Cindy reported that will be collecting green foods for **blue barrel** in March which will go to Elliston Food Pantry; continue to encourage signing up for **worship assistants**; **Picture Board** is up and encourage sharing of photos of church events; **Caring Shepherds** have not met but discussed communion training; Rufena needs **greeting cards**; plan on holding seminar in May or June concerning **End of Life Legalities**; offering **weekly outreach opportunities** in the bulletin; March 28: **packing lunches** and distributing them in Junction area on March 29; collecting **toilet paper** for ERCU during Lent; will be **cooking and serving** at Salem on April 18; working on **Instant Church Directory**.

Worship: Jody reported that they have not met.

Old Business: discussed the alarm system codes which are being worked on.

New Business: The committee (Mark Cuthbertson, Kim Reif, Karen Schanke, and Pastor Matt) interviewed three candidates for **Office Administrator position** and recommended hiring Yvette Simpson. Jody made a motion seconded by Gary that Yvette be offered the job starting April 7 and both she and Shirley be paid same salary during training. MC. Al made a motion seconded by Kim that Office Administrator will have no vacation or sick pay leave until January 2026. MC. Kim made a motion seconded by Jody that incoming cash each Sunday be deposited as cash rather than a check. MC

NEXT MEETING: April 14, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Karen Schanke, Secretary