
Our LENTEN JOURNEY

Melissa's Desk

Persevering Through Winter as We Begin Lent

As we enter the season of Lent, we are reminded that this is a time of reflection, renewal, and drawing closer to God. The end of January brought extremely cold temperatures and snowfall, creating challenges for many in our community. We are grateful for the dedication and perseverance of the teachers and staff at CELC, who worked through missed days and disruptions with patience and care for our children.

We are also excited to announce a new Bible study for elementary-age children launching at the end of this month. This program will offer our young members a meaningful opportunity to grow in their faith and learn God's Word in a supportive environment.

As we await the replacement of our church boiler in the coming weeks, we continue to pray that all members of our church and community are staying warm, safe, and well. May this Lenten season be a time of hope, strength, and renewed faith for us all.

In His love,

Melissa Boreman

4725 Old William Penn
Hwy
Murrysville, PA 15668

724-327-2898



Worship Hours:

Sunday - 8:30 am
Sunday - 11:00 am
Monday - 5:30 pm

Pastor Joshua
Obermann

Words from Pastor

Proverbs 16:2-3 says, *"All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established."*

On February 15th, we will begin Lent with the service of Ash Wednesday. Our theme for Lent this year is "Here I am, Send Me." For five weeks will examine God's calling us into a communion with Himself, where He establishes a work for us to do, not for our salvation, but rather because He has chosen us to be saved. He has chosen us to be His royal priesthood and Holy nation (1 Peter 2) so that we by His power and might can share His love with others.

This year it is also my goal for Hannah to establish a monthly youth event for our elementary aged children. We have good high school, middle school, and preschool age programs at the moment. We love our movie nights and our Bible studies. Now we feel like we have any opportunity to do more for those who are not yet in middle school. Therefore, Hannah plans to meet with the elementary aged families on the fourth Sunday of every month at 12:00pm. It should be fun!

This year we have invited our confirmation class to join the Adult Bible Study. I think that it is at the heart of our Christian faith that we learn and grow together as a community. I hope that both our young and old will learn and grow together. This is your opportunity to get to know some of our young students. It also is an opportunity for you to share your faith with another generation. These things need to happen. They a part of God's design for His church. (Proverbs 22:6)

This summer we are planning and preparing to send our youth on a mission trip. We hope that we can send them to a new community where they will meet other Christians and have opportunities to share God's love. Youth mission trips where a formational part of my faith life and Hannah's. We want to see these youth experience it as well.

I have a lot of plans for 2026. My ambitions are pure and just in my own eyes. But God knows my faults. He knows my strength and my weaknesses. He also knows yours. And we must realize that we are not doing these thing to fulfill our own ambitions. We certainly do not make plans to puff ourselves up and make ourselves feel good or earn any kind of merit. The merit of salvation has already been given to us. The crown already won and placed on your head. You are righteous because you have been baptized in to Jesus Christ. So we make our plans for God. He will establish them according to His will.

So please pray for our plans, those listed here or otherwise. Pray also for your own plans. Pray for how God may use you. Because everything you do faithfully in His name, He promises to establish according to His will.

In His Service,

Pastor Josh

Love That Binds Us Together

February often turns our hearts toward love—but Scripture reminds us that love is far more than a feeling. In **Colossians 3**, Paul encourages believers to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, and then adds these powerful words: *“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

Christian love is what holds us together as the body of Christ. It is lived out in forgiveness, in bearing with one another, and in choosing unity even when it is not easy. As a church family, this kind of love is not only something we talk about—it's something we practice as we grow together in faith.

One way we've been living this out is through intergenerational connection. In 2026, we've had our confirmation class join the adult Bible study, where they are learning about the Creeds alongside fellow Christians of all ages. This has been a meaningful way to pass on the faith, encourage conversation across generations, and live into our mission of being a church family that learns and grows together.

As we move forward in 2026, here's a reminder of our ongoing youth and family opportunities:

- High School Bible Study meets the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 6:30 PM
- Middle School Bible Study meets the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 6:30 PM
- Elementary School Group meets the 4th Sunday of each month following the late service—and yes, pizza is provided!

We're also excited to offer a Drop-Off Movie Night on February 13th from 5:30–8:00 PM. It's a great opportunity for kids to enjoy a fun night at church while parents enjoy a well-deserved date night. Sign up on our website to reserve your spot.

As we continue through this season, may we be a church clothed in love—love that binds us together and points us always back to Christ.

-Hannah Obermann



Youth & Family

Drop-Off Movie Night

Friday, February 14, 2026 5:30PM-8PM

Date night plans for Valentine's Day? Leave the kids with us!

We will have crafts, food, and fun! Any older youth are encouraged to come and help out!

Middle School Bible Study

Sunday, February 8th & 22nd 6:30PM-8PM

Calling all 5th–8th graders! Join us for a new Middle School Bible Study where we'll dig into God's Word, grow in faith, hang out with friends, and enjoy pizza! Come hungry for truth and a great time!

We meet the 2nd & 4th Sunday!

High School Bible Study

Sunday, February 1st & 15th 6:30PM-7:30PM

Designed for 9th grade and up, with games, snacks, and conversations on how faith connects to real life.

We meet the 1st and 3rd Sunday!

Elementary Bible Study

Sunday, February 22nd at Noon

Join us for our new Elementary Bible Study for K–5th grade! A great time to learn about Jesus, build friendships, and enjoy pizza together. All are welcome!

We meet the 4th Sunday!

Circle of Moms Returns!

Circle of Moms is back and we'd love for you to join us! A great time for moms to connect, support one another, and grow in faith together.

See the bulletin board for dates or contact Shannon Getkin for more information.

✨ Young Adult Bible Study ✨

When: Wednesday February, 4th

Place: Our church

Time: 5:30 PM

We'd love to see you there!

Elder's Corner

Here it is February 2026 and two major events occur in February. The first event is Valentines Day on the 14th. That is a day where we publicly ask that one true love or want to be true love to be with us. We send cards and notes and do lunches and dinners, movies and even a big night out to show that one special person that we care for them. The second event in the month is four days later on the 18th and is Ash Wednesday which marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. A time of deep repentance, reflection, fasting and prayer leading up to Easter.

It seems with these two events that one appears very joyous and happy and the other very somber and quiet. Valentines Day appears to be a very joyous event. It really not that joyous of an event. It has been suggested that the holiday has origins in the Roman festival of Lupercalia, held in mid-February. The festival, which celebrated the coming of spring, included fertility rites and the pairing off of women with men by lottery. At the end of the 5th century, Pope Gelasius I forbid the celebration of Lupercalia and is sometimes attributed with replacing it with St. Valentine's Day, but the true origin of the holiday is vague at best. Valentine's Day did not come to be celebrated as a day of romance until about the 14th century.

In fact, the idea of cards and letters, or valentines, appeared in the 1500s, and by the late 1700s commercially printed cards were being used. The first commercial valentines in the United States were printed in the mid-1800s. Valentines commonly depict Cupid, the Roman god of love, along with hearts, traditionally the seat of emotion. Because it was thought that the avian mating season begins in mid-February, birds also became a symbol of the day. Traditional gifts include candy and flowers, particularly red roses, a symbol of beauty and love. Before all of this, it was a celebration of pagan Gods. Not something I'd like to put on my calendar.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting, repentance, and spiritual preparation leading up to Easter. This does not sound like a very joyous event. Although Ash Wednesday is rich in Christian symbolism, you won't actually find it mentioned in the Bible. The tradition developed over time, starting with the Council of Nicea, which established a 40-day fasting period before Easter. There was some debate about when this period should start, but in the fifth century, Pope Gregory officially moved the beginning of Lent from a Sunday to Ash Wednesday. While the holiday itself isn't directly from Scripture, its core practices—fasting, prayer, and repentance—are deeply biblical.

The heart of Ash Wednesday and Lent is about turning back to God. The 40 days of Lent reflect Jesus' time in the wilderness, where He fasted and prepared for His ministry. For many Christians, this season is a time of self-reflection, letting go of distractions, and drawing closer to God as they prepare their hearts for Easter, the celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. After being baptized, He spent 40 days fasting while Satan tempted Him three times, trying to take advantage of His hunger and exhaustion. But Jesus stood firm, responding with Scripture each time and refusing to give in. His victory over temptation is a powerful reminder that we can rely on God's Word and strength in our own struggles, too.

I think that of the two events in February, the beginning of Lent is the powerful and Joyous event on the calendar. The blessing of Ash Wednesday is the reminder that though we are born from dust and return to dust and that sin brought the curse of death to the world, on Good Friday, Jesus paid the penalty for the curse with his death on the cross. Our sins are forgiven on the cross. Then, on Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead, and we have been given the gift of eternal life with Him in new heavenly bodies that will never turn to dust! Let's look at a few Scriptures that can encourage us on Ash Wednesday and throughout the Lenten season. A time to celebrate our savior and our redemption from sin. Happy Ash Wednesday!

-Tom Harbaugh

Calvary Early Learning Center



National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW) provides more than 1,800 preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

We thank God for the opportunity to provide excellent academic preparation for the children we serve. We are most grateful for the opportunity to share Jesus' amazing love with children and their families.

National Lutheran Schools Week gives us an opportunity to proclaim these great blessings within the communities we serve.

Our schools are amazing incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

CELC was set to celebrate NLSW January 26—30, but the extreme weather forced us to postpone our celebrations until February.



If you know children aged 2 – Kindergarten, that would benefit from a Christ-centered education, please have them contact Laura Hoff.

CELC will be looking for a teacher and an aide for our Twos class. If you are interested, please contact Laura or Hannah.

Evangelism/Hospitality & Fellowship Committees

Happy New Year to all!! Our board would like to take a moment to thank everyone who so generously donated their time and efforts to make this past year such a great one for so many! Every time we have a project, you are all so ready and willing to give of your time, talents and treasures. Amanda from the Dream Center in McKeesport wanted us to pass along her gratitude for all who donated groceries in the Blessing Bags and also gifts for the recipients of the Giving Tree. Your donations made the holidays so very special for those in need. In addition, Janice from Concordia in Monroeville was very grateful and surprised at the number of gifts we were able to deliver to the residents. She commented how Calvary always comes through with whatever they ask. She was also thankful for Kelly Duez and the singers who came out for Christmas caroling. Something like that may not seem like a big deal, but the residents are so thankful for the visit and holiday cheer! THANK YOU to all who shared of themselves this past year!!!

We are already planning events for 2026. Coming up very soon is the packing and mailing of the College and Military Care Packages. We need donations of snacks...cookies, chips, pretzels, granola bars, beef jerky or similar items may be placed in the box near the Donation Station. **All donations should be in by February 8. Packing day is February 9!** We would also appreciate donations to help with the cost of shipping.

Something else to keep in mind is the Palm Sunday breakfast. It seems early, but time goes quickly and we will be planning soon. Keep your eye out for info in the coming weeks.

We would like to extend an open invitation to all to help out on our board. We do some very fun and rewarding things, and we have such a great time together. We're always grateful for your help and support!

Blessings,

Tracy & Peg



THE SHIBATAS

Serving with Cru in the Susquehanna Valley

January 2026



Group photo at this year's Winter Conference in Washington D.C.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Praise God for the new life in Christ for Jarren and Madison! Pray for them to grow in community and in their new faith!

Pray for all of our students to grow in their surrender to Christ this semester and that we would see many decide to apply for summer mission trips.

Praise God for all the milestones and achievements of our kids. Please pray that they would grow deeper in understanding God's love and his gift of grace in their own lives.

Making All Things New

As we wrapped up our year in worship and anticipation of the gift of Jesus at Christmas, Joel and I (Jenn) had also still been in a short season of anticipation as we took time to prepare to welcome 2026. We were blessed to visit family in Pittsburgh, host family at home, watch Eli shine as "turkey boy" in A Christmas Carol, celebrate TJ's first year on the football team at their annual banquet and celebrate Hope's 4th birthday! Simultaneously, Joel was able to start the new year off with 55 college students from the Susquehanna Valley at the annual Winter Conference in Washington D.C. Praise God for this record-breaking number of students going to worship and learn from our scope!

After registration and getting acquainted the first day, all student in attendance at the Winter Conference (about 1,000) went out in to the D.C. area to initiate spiritual conversations in pairs. They were trained in a session in the morning using some helpful conversation starters and listening tips, and by faith walked up to people who looked like they might have a moment to spare. The gospel was shared that day countless times and students were able to share stories of conquering fears and leading with the confidence given by the Holy Spirit...and that was the first full day!

The rest of the conference was made up of main worship sessions with a speaker highlighting scripture and challenging students to walk by faith in light of the grace they are given, and smaller seminars to learn more about specific aspects of faith and ministry (such as overseas ministry, relationships, discerning God's will and loneliness). These are great opportunities for the Holy Spirit to meet our students and give them time to think about taking steps of faith.

Another major highlight for our specific campus groups was that 2 of our students who had come to the Conference for free (they had written their own support letters by faith but also were able to go because of partners like you to the ministry) did not know Jesus personally when they arrived, but went home with a personal relationship with Christ! Please praise God with us for Jarren from Penn College and Madison from Bloomsburg University! We look forward to seeing how their newly formed faith and new life will define the rest of their college careers and build God's kingdom here.

We wouldn't be able to share these stories with you if it weren't for your intentional prayers and generous support. Joel and I thank God for you and we consider it such a joy to partner with you to bring glory to the name of Jesus together.

Joel + Jenn

CONTACT US:

JOEL.SHIBATA@CRU.ORG | (814) 777-3782
JENN.SHIBATA@CRU.ORG | (814) 777-3943

WRITE TO:

1515 RITCHEY STREET
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701

WANT TO GIVE TO OUR MINISTRY?
GIVE.CRU.ORG/0573620

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 HS Bible Study 6:30PM	2	3 Ladies Bible Study 10AM	4 Young Adult Bible Study 5:30PM New Members Class 7PM	5 Elders Meeting 6:30PM	6	7
8 Middle School Bible Study 6:30PM	9	10 Ladies Bible Study 10AM	11	12	13 Movie Drop Off 5:30PM	14 Men's Bible Study 8:30AM
15 HS Bible Study 6:30PM Newsletter Deadline	16 President's Day School/Offices Closed	17 Ladies Bible Study 10AM	18 Ash Wednesday 7PM Service	19 Council Meeting 6:30PM	20	21
22 Middle School Bible Study 6:30PM Elementary Bible Study Noon	23	24 Ladies Bible Study 10AM	25 Lent Service 7PM	26	27	28 Men's Bible Study 8:30AM

February Birthdays

February Anniversaries

1-Nicolas Mackanick
2-Debbie Forschner
4-Amy Baird
 Zachary Crossland
5-Pat Jackson
9-Olivia Kuehn
11 -Peg Kibel
16-Nick Orlic
 Eric Crossland
 Shannon Getkin
18-Ryan Fasnacht
20-Eric Miller
23-William Crossland
27-Kitty Skaritka
29 - Pastor Joshua Obermann

2- Tracy + John Fasnacht

Donation Station

CELC (Calvary Early
Learning Center)

Shoebox Project

Post it Notes + mini notebooks

Dum-dum lollipops

Loaves + Fishes

Always accepting donations!

MOS Food Bank

Always accepting donations!

Mailing fees for Military + College
Boxes

Prayer Requests

Name:	Reason:	Submitted by:
Melissa Crouse	Cancer	The Kuehn's
Jules Yancy	Cancer	The Kuehn's
Bob & George	Cancer	Patti Orlic
V-Anne	Cancer	The Kuehn's
Bradley Bowers	Cancer	The Kuehn's
Missy	Cancer	Kelly Stivason
Michele Hunter	Cancer	Rose Shirer
Lynn Simeoni	Cancer	Peggy Waybright
Mike Opina	Cancer	Rich Hrivnak
Kevin	Lymphoma	Jean Orth
Sarah	Unspoken	The Wertz's
Chad Hensler	Unspoken	Kelly Stivason
Jerry Wilford	Cancer	
Lorri Nixon	Cancer/Surgery	
Ken		Lori Gulaskey
Shirley	Cancer	Sharon Hosaflook
Lanny Pilardi	Dementia	Charlene Hrivnak
Samantha Boreman	Snowmobile accident	Carolyn Harbaugh
Linda	Death of husband	Rose Shirer
Jenny Hosaflook	Bowel Obstruction	Sharon Hosaflook
Rhett Hildenbrand	Health concerns (child)	The Kuehn's
Darlene Pritt	Recovering from pneumonia	Sharon Hosaflook
Benita Horger	Breast Cancer	Horger Family
Kim Makey	Breast Cancer	Sharon Hosaflook
"Guppy"	Recovering from surgery	Sandy Denholm

Prayer Requests

Name:	Reason:	Submitted by:
Bob Jakub	Cancer & Kidney Failure	Randy & Cathy Glasser
Scott Traverso	Cancer	The Hrivnak's
Maelynn Tribendis		The Hrivnak's
Laura Hoff	Comfort & Strength	Calvary Family
Andy & MJ Schifino	Health Concerns	
Dawn Claar	Blood Cancer	Sharon Hosaflook
Tom Phillips		
Dave Alsing		
Sue Kemper	Upcoming Surgeries	Bob Kemper
Frank DiEugenio		
Norma Hite		
Steve Wutzke		
Bill Gibson	Triple Bypass	Diane Laurito
Niki Senchak	Recovery from surgery	Sharon Hosaflook
Myles Riston (child)	Needs therapy	Ellen Fetterman
Priscilla Miller		
Denise Roberts		
Lynn Martin	Cancer	Darren Kuehn
Keith Dorfield	Health issues	Sharon Hosaflook
Karen	Last round of chemo!	Sharon Hosaflook
Anthony	Paralyzed, dirt bike accident	Sue Kemper
Judy Hess	Healing-rare auto Immune disorder	The Harbaugh's
Annie	Childhood Cancer	Pat Jackson
Debbie Forschner	Upcoming Surgery	The Forschner's

Prayer Requests

The Unemployed, Caregivers, Military, Personnel & First Responders,
Mission Partners - Shiprock, NM – Navajo Reservation, Joel & Jenn
Shibata - CRU, Sonshine Kitchen, Loaves & Fishes, Veteran's Place,
Blackburn Center, Concordia Lutheran Ministries, Community Center
Taskforce

Our Shut-Ins: Kitty Skaritka, Gloria Batchner, George & Donna
Campagne, Peg Schultz