



Jesus is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

We have made our way through the season of Lent and now are entering one of the most holy times in the Church year – Holy Week. It is a time that begins in celebration, turns to suffering and death, and then returns to celebration as the tomb is found empty. It is a week of new followers, old friends, new friends, and friends that break trust in betrayal and abandonment. A week where we see what happens in speaking out against the establishment, even when it has become something that lives for its own survival instead of lifting up those for whom it is responsible.

And now we enter into the season of Easter, yes, the season. A season 50 days long where we see the power that has been unleashed in the world through the resurrection. A time when the rules that we thought we knew become opportunities to see the world in a new way. Even the certainty of death has been called into question. What does it mean for us to live in this new world of resurrection?

It calls us to live as a community centered in Christ. It calls us to live as a community that gathers to bless the world. It calls us to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the places where we are. It calls us to love, to live with grace, to live in hope. It calls us...

We often talk about “call” when we think about pastors or deacons. We hear talk about “the call to ministry” and we think that it is not something that is a reality in our lives outside the church. The truth is that we are all called. We are called into a life of service in the waters of Baptism. We are called to be a blessing to the world. We are called into relationship with those around us that we might share the gift of God’s love. We are called to lift up the power of the Resurrection in our world as it struggles.

Where are you being ‘called’ in your life today? Who is God putting on your heart that needs to hear from you today? What change can happen today that glorifies God tomorrow? How can you live a life of resurrection where all things are possible?

Living the Resurrection,
Pastor Scott

Join us in Celebrating Laurie Julius-Carver - Sunday, April 2



We give thanks for the 35+ years of dedicated service in so many ways of directing the music ministry here at Anacortes Lutheran Church. It is through music that the life of the congregation is enhanced and through Laurie's commitment to forming and directing a team of gifted persons, we are blessed through your sharing of gifts and passion. We thank you and Jim for ministry you provide through the medium of music.

Thank you for bringing music to our ears & hearts for all these years!



ORDER YOUR EASTER FLOWERS - In memory or honor of loved ones

Altar Guild will be purchasing flowering plants to adorn the sanctuary on Easter Sunday

Forms & Envelopes will be available at the Opportunity Desk & on the Bulletin Board by the church office

If you wish to purchase a plant in memory or in honor of someone, place your completed form with money (*in the attached envelope*) in the offering plate on Sunday or bring it to the office by **Sunday, April 2 / Each plant costs \$15.**



HOLY WEEK Schedule



Palm Sunday
April 2
10:00 am

All children are invited to line up for the Palm Processional



Maundy Thursday
April 6
7:00 pm



Good Friday
April 7
7:00 pm



Easter Sunday
April 9
10:00 am

OUTSIDE EASTER FLOWER CROSS

On Easter morning please **bring any fresh cut spring flowers like daffodils, tulips** etc. from your yard or the store to put on the flowering cross outside the church. The free standing seven foot cross is covered with chicken wire so you may place your flowers on it as you come in for Easter worship.

Take a photo in front of it and send it to our email so we can post them on our Website. We'd love to see your beautiful faces.



WOULD ANYONE LIKE A RIDE to Church for a Maundy Thursday, Good Friday Service?

Call the office 360-293-9586 and we will arrange a ride for you.

(Don't worry it will most likely not be in a sidecar, LOL)

1ST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

PRAISE SUNDAY - 1st Sunday of the month

We will be singing contemporary Christian Music the 1st Sunday of the month.

Led by the **Praise Team**: Matt Kerschbaum, Dana McCoy, & Kenny Holzemer with our lead singer Rock star himself, Pastor Scott Peterson.

FAMILY SUNDAY - 1st Sunday of the month

The **first Sunday of the month is Family Sunday** where children are encouraged to assist in the Worship service.

You can sign up at our Opportunity Desk for future months in the year

We are looking for the following support in service

- Entry Greeter (2)
- Welcome Desk Greeter (1):
- Usher (2)
- Acolyte (2)
- Reading (1-2)
- Communion Assts: (+1)
- Noisy Offering Attendant (2)
- Personal talent of instrumental/poetry reading
- Fellowship Treats
- Assist serving/clean up with fellowship hour.

To encourage active listening with children during the service 5 words are chosen by the Sunday schoolers to be used in the Pastors sermon.

Thank you for allowing us to support your children's growth in their faith in our Lord.

NOISY OFFERINGS - 1st Sunday of the month

This is another highlight of Family Sunday and is to be designated for a youth activity.

What great lessons learned about tithing and saving? WOW...what a family of givers in our congregation.

Thank you all!

**So save your change for the next
NOISY OFFERING — SUNDAY, APRIL 2**



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Every Sunday at 9 am

CONFIRMATION CLASS

(Grades 6-8) In conference room #2

SUNDAY SCHOOL

(Grades K-5th) in Sunday School rms

ADULT ED CLASSES

(Adults & High School teens) in Fellowship Hall

PROPERTY WORK PARTY - 1st Saturday of the month

At this time we do not have a Property Committee chair person. That means that there is no one to take the lead in the Property work Party the first Saturday of the month.



If you feel a calling to take on this day of service in and around the church please speak to John Parker or call the church office.

MEN'S THURSDAY BIBLE STUDY

EVERY THURSDAY MORNING

7 am in Conference room #1

Led by: Boyd Veer

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

THURSDAY, APRIL 13

6:30 pm in Conference room 2

Committees please remember to send minutes & updates to Anita prior to Council meeting.

ASD—KINDERGARTEN ROUND-UP

All incoming Kindergarten families are invited to join Anacortes School District for free health and academic screenings, help registering your child for Kindergarten, and more information about the 2023-24 school year.

APRIL 26 - 28,

9:00 am—1:00 pm

Anacortes Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall

Registration paperwork can all be found on the Anacortes School District website: [New Student Enrollment page](#).

Appointments required; sign up for a 1-hour time slot: [Schedule a time here](#) or call 360.503.1628

WELCA BOARD MEETING

Friday, April 7
10:00 am in Conference Room #1

WHAT IS WELCA?

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

OUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY CIRCLES

CIRCLES MEET TUESDAY, APRIL 11

Feel Free to attend any circle.

Hannah: 10 am - Conference Room #2
Led by: Linda Walker 928-963-3879

Ruth: 10 am - Conference Room #1
Led by: Helene Fink 630-293-7544

Anna: 4 pm - Conference Room #1
Led by: Nancy Loftis 360-333-8111

WELCA GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, APRIL 25
1:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

All women are invited to our afternoon tea. Join us for fellowship, prayer and an interesting program with guest speaker Ingrid Ford. She will speak about her experiences in Africa with Doctors without Borders. Invite a new member or friend!

Devotions: Hannah Circle
Hostess: Ruth Circle

SEWING NEWS - Come & Join Us!

SEWING DAYS—TUESDAYS

TUESDAYS, APRIL 4 & 18

Starting at 9 am till 2 pm
Come & Join us, we are in the Fellowship Hall

We would love to have new ladies join us
we have lots of fun, bring a lunch and stay!

If anyone has regular or flannel sheets they want to donate, we use them for quilts.

We are also in need of:

- 4 oz Bars of Ivory or Dove—for Baby kits
- Any kind of Bar soap — for Personal kits
- Sleepers—up to 24 months size
- Hand towels - dark colors (No white please)
- Bath towels - dark colors only (No Bath sheet size)
- Baby Socks
- Flannel
- Combs -Big ones

Please place in the basket in the Narthex.

Serving in Christ,
Julia Rogers 360-293-4232

Lutheran World Relief KNITTING NEWS

NEXT MEETING—MONDAY, APRIL 17
1—3 pm in Conference room 1

Please call me to get yarn between meetings and to give your sweater counts, Thanks.

Our Year To Date 2023 Totals are:

Sweater/hat sets – 84
Sweaters – 9
Hats – 0



One sweater/hat set goes into each layette set.
We use a fun one piece sweater pattern.
Beginners are welcome and teaching is available.

~Linda Anderson 360-588-1730

ALTAR GUILD MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 24
10:30 am in Conference room 2

OUTREACH - SHARING AND CARING

OUTREACH COMMITTEE NEWS

We continue to work on our Care Team program.

Lacee Smith is still looking for volunteers to assist in the tasks that will be undertaken. The Care Team will endeavor to provide meals, rides, and visits for our congregation members who may have a need. If you feel like you could cook a meal, give a ride, or spend a few minutes visiting a fellow member, please let Lacee know. Should you be in need of any of these services, please contact Rachel in the Church office.

We have provided a few meals to date and have made some visitations. It's actually a lot of fun; come join in the fun!
Thank you Kenny Holzemer for helping with visits.

PRAYERS

REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR THOSE IN NEED OF PRAYER:
The Sunday bulletin & Thursday Update email has a list of Prayer Requests for our Congregation. The list is also on our website under "Prayer Page." We can all give the gift of prayer by including these requests in our daily prayers each week.

RECEIVE the Gift of Prayer:

You can request a prayer by calling the church office during office hours at 360-293-9586.

You may call Peggy at 360-299-1184 for your prayer needs at any time, including Prayer Chain (confidential prayer) and updates to your prayer request.

As always Pastor Scott Peterson is available to pray with you or for you.

WELCOME VISITORS

We continue to look for volunteers to man the Welcome Desk for the 15 minutes prior to the worship service starting. Your mission while at the Welcome Desk is to watch for and assist any visitors, or congregation members, that are in need of information. The volunteer sign up sheet for the Welcome Desk is at the Welcome Desk.

We now have a blue "Welcome" folder with basic information about what programs and services we offer. To add information about your project, or program to the folder, contact Dave at 206-226-7182.

Please help out in this important mission! Many of the visitors to the church are prospective members. They may be just testing the water to see if they want to dive in. Let's make the water and the greeting, warm!

ADVERTISING

Outreach placed ads in the Anacortes American and Clam Digger for ALC Holy Week. If you need an ad in a local paper let us know! We will get-er done!!

ALC SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY
PRIME TIMERS Retirees gathering together for Fun, Food & Fellowship

GET-TOGETHER—MULTIPLE MUFFINS

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall.

The theme is: **"April Fools"**

Please sign up at the Opportunity Desk or call, text, or email Julie before Wednesday, April 12.



MOVIE NIGHT

FRIDAY, APRIL 21

6:30 pm in Conference Room #2.

No sign up is required - just come and enjoy.

Popcorn will be provided. Please bring your own drink.



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Special thank you to Beverly Landgraf, Helene Fink, Linda Walker, Paula Olson and Joy Walter for hosting Prime Timers while we were visiting family.

Have a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious spring, stay safe, and be happy.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Paul & Julie Dusenbury

Worshiping Together

Sundays at 9:00 am - Christian Education Time for Everyone

Sunday Service at 10:00 am - in person or live stream

Watch from your home by going to our website at <https://www.anacorteslutheran.org> & click tab "Online Ministry"

APRIL • FAITH AND SERVICE TOGETHER

To fill in an **empty spot** sign-up at the Opportunity desk, call / email the office or jump in the day of. Thank you!!!

	Family & Praise Sunday PALM Sunday	EASTER Sunday			
Dates:	2	9	16	23	30
Readings	Matthew 21:1-17 Psalm 118:25-29	Matthew 28:1-10 Psalm 118:19-24	Matthew 28:16-20 Psalm 40:9-10	Acts 10:1-17, 34-48 Matthew 9:36-37	Acts 13:1-3, 14:8-18 Matthew 10:40-42
Greeters	KIDDOS				Swanson Family
Ushers	John & Kathryn Parker	Bill & Diane Gusa	<i>Names were not available at time of printing</i>		
Reader	Joseph Pestar	Anne Barry	Elijah Kennedy	Mira Knowles	Evan Neuman
Acolytes	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Communion Assistants	1. Stacey Pestar 2.	1. Anne Barry 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. Marta Swanson 2.
Nursery	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Fellowship Hour — <i>After Worship everyone is invited to join us for coffee, juice and treats</i>					
Serve & Cleanup	1. Jeaneen Brogan 2. Lane Phelan	1. Jeaneen Brogan 2. Lane Phelan	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Treats	3. DeAnna Claus	3. Jeanette Christensen	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.

Sound Team	Kenny Holzemer, Pat Carrie Smith, Brian Hanrahan, Matt Kerschbaum, Harlan Eggleston
Live Stream Team	Pat Carrie Smith, Rebecca Eggleston, Anita Holzemer, Kevin & Kendra Kennedy, Gina Peterson, Joseph Pestar, Caden DeAtley
Altar Guild	Gunilla Wold, Grace Boggio, Diane Gusa, Norma Knutsen, Paula Olson, Jenny Remmerden, Karen Tavalero, Caroline Spehar

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SERVE? WANT TO BE INVOLVED?

Here are some suggestions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altar Guild • Choir • Faith And Service Together - <i>fill in the blanks</i> • Men's Bible Studies • Monthly Property Work Party • Naomi ministry • Noon Bible Study • Outreach Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer Warriors • Prime Timers • Sewing group • Teaching Sunday School • Ushering • WELCA • Women's Bible Circles • Youth mentors • and more! |
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APRIL BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS!

1	Breann Morgenthaler	8	Lucy Sturgul	18	Harlan Eggleston	24	Scott Soes
1	Egil Pedersen	8	Kaelan Tornga	18	Inez Pedersen	25	Johanna Anderson
3	Isabelle Thomas	11	Rexanne Graham	19	Agnes Wicknick	25	Mahayla Thomas
4	Jennifer Elling	13	Steve Anderson	19	Fredrick Wicknick	26	Rachel Franulovich
4	Dale Geffe	13	Treva King	20	Malena Baker	27	Lauren Long
5	Daniel Richards	13	Kevin Kennedy	20	Diane Berglund	29	Anna Berentson
7	Micah Spehar	13	Kathy Khile	22	David Verrall	29	Rachel Nelson
8	Ginny Connelly	14	Kyle Fosso	24	Dorothy Engom	29	Blake Tornga
8	Klaus Schoebel	17	George Rockwood	24	Roselyn Payne		

APRIL WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES!

Date	Years	Date	Years	Date	Years			
2	Dave & Peggy White	24	9	Dan & Kathy Khile	12	20	Tim & Anne Hofferth	38
6	Robert & Lorna Higgins	21	11	Renate & Jim Beltz	30	24	Chris & Rachel Franulovich	19
6	Al & Judy Littlefield	55	13	Jerry & Gail Bongard	60	27	Anne & Bob Barry	55
6	Egil & Inez Pedersen	68	17	Randy & Lynn Arendse	41	27	Tom & Yvonne Paul	48

WORSHIP SERVICES - MARCH 2023

Date	Events	In-Person	Nursery	Live Stream
1	1st Wednesday in Lent	42	—	—
5	2nd Sunday in Lent	127	0	46
8	2nd Wednesday in Lent	54	—	—
12	3rd Sunday in Lent	117	6	74
15	3rd Wednesday in Lent	48	—	—
19	4th Sunday in Lent	112	5	86
22	4th Wednesday in Lent	45	—	—
26	5th Sunday in Lent	110	3	42
29	5th Wednesday in Lent	<i>Not available at time of printing</i>		



Dear Lane and the UFO Team,

The supper was a wonderful experience. Corbin was delighted to be there.

So many generous and talented cooks.

Thank you for all your hard work and the warm welcome to the church family.

Many Thanks,
Rosemary, Marv and Corbin Walter



Thank you all for the support, prayers, and assistance during this time of Gina's health challenge and recovery.

Thank you also for the continued offer of assistance!

At this time we have things in place for the present transition and continued recovery. If we are in need of additional assistance, we will be sure to make that known to the congregation.

We do ask for continued prayer as Gina works toward a full recovery.

Pastor Scott

A BIG
thank you



Dear **Awesome Loving Caring**
Sunday School Students & Teachers,

Thank you for the wonderful get well cards and presents you sent me. They really cheered me up.

I am very grateful for your prayers, I know they are helping me a Lot.

Love,
Gina

Attendees: John Parker, Lane Phelan, Jeanette Christensen, Jeaneen Brogan, Anne Barry, Anita Holzemer, Dave Bjornsen, Kathy Khile, Guest: Pat Carrie Smith

The meeting was called to order and opened with prayer. February minutes were approved. MSP.

Treasurer's Report: We are still waiting on financial reports from the new bookkeeper. They will come soon. We continue to operate in the black. It was proposed to designate our Lenten and Easter offerings to LWR Earthquake Relief and the local Salvation Army food bank. MSP.

Book Study: We shared our thoughts on the first chapter of the book "Life Together" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A good discussion was held. ACTION ITEM: Please read Chapter 2 before the council retreat at the end of March.

COUNCIL ROUNDTABLE:

Fellowship: Are there Easter breakfast plans? Jeanette, Jeaneen, and Lane will do cinnamon rolls again if there are no other plans. A request was made to use the facility in May to host an MJB representative to discuss the waterfront construction project. Council approved the request.

Personnel: New contracts will go out soon. They should be signed by April 1. An interview team needs to be organized for our new Youth position. The team should include representation from Education, Youth, and church members with youth age children.

Preschool: Preschool committee will meet in April. Hopefully plans for spending the Dusenbury donation will be solidified soon.

Properties: There was a small gas leak on one of the furnaces. Cascade Natural Gas was called and located the leak. It has been fixed. Property Work Day on March 4 only had 2 people show up. Hopefully more will come next month. Doors are still not locking reliably. If you are leaving the church after an event, please make a point of checking the doors behind you. It was requested that we set up a small workbench/tool storage area.

WELCA: The sewing group has made 20 quilts so far. We will not do a spring shipment due to increased shipping costs. Our next general meeting will be in April. Table set-up was discussed. If a specific table set-up is requested, please put a note with advance notice in Colleen's box or let Rachel know and she will contact the janitors.

Worship: Good Friday service will be one service at 7 pm. Easter breakfast times – will it be offered? John and Dave will contact Pastor Scott about this Sunday's service. Chris Anderson has volunteered to fill in as needed.

President's Report: In honor of International Women's Day, John made a point to thank the women serving on council. We are appreciated. Thank you, John.

Pastor's Report: See submitted report.

OLD BUSINESS:

Anita reported on open items still needing action.

Photo Directory Status: The directory is complete! 120 copies have been delivered.

Youth Director Search: The application deadline has been extended to March 31.

New Members Event: Kathy Khile is our new Fellowship chair. New member Sunday will be March 18. Kathy will look at ideas for welcoming them. Encourage all members to wear their name tags that day with possibly a special tag for our new members so they are easily identified.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reminder: Council will be in charge of soup for our Lenten soup suppers next week. Please come at 4:30pm for set-up and serving. Council Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, March 25 from 9 am – 3 pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Lunch will be provided. Sacristy back stairs/fire exit clean-up: Altar Guild has requested that this area be cleaned up. This has begun. Jeaneen will ask the janitors to look at this area for a once a month maintenance cleaning once it is cleaned up.

continued on next page

Council minutes cont....

Church Service Times Sign: Our corner sign is in need of repair. John will look into this.

Volunteer Signups: The clipboard sign-up sheet needs to be organized to prevent duplicates. Kathy has volunteered to help.

ACTION ITEM: Kathy will talk to Dave White and Deanna Claus to coordinate sign-ups.

Our next council meeting will be held April 13 at 6:30 pm.

The meeting closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Holzemer, Council Secretary

PRAY FOR OUR 2023 CHURCH COUNCIL & COMMITTEES

<i>President:</i>	John Parker	<i>Fellowship :</i>	Kathy Khile
<i>Vice-President:</i>	Brian Hanrahan	<i>Education:</i>	
<i>Secretary:</i>	Anita Holzemer	<i>Youth:</i>	
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Lane Phelan	<i>Preschool:</i>	Anne Barry
<i>Stewardship:</i>	Donald Devine	<i>Properties:</i>	
<i>Outreach:</i>	Dave White	<i>Worship:</i>	David Bjornson
<i>Personnel:</i>	Jeaneen Brogan	<i>WELCA :</i>	Lois Cassidy
<i>Josephine Delegate:</i>	Jerry Bongard & Bill LeDuc	<i>Council Youth rep:</i>	

THIS & THAT– BITS & PIECES

- ◆ Church Office Hours: Monday - Friday / 9:00 am – 2:00 pm
- ◆ Church Office email & phone #: 360-293-9586 / info@anacorteslutheran.org
- ◆ Do You Need to talk to the Pastor? Schedule an appointment by calling the office or email Pastor Scott Peterson: pastorscott@anacorteslutheran.org
- ◆ Get on our “Weekly Update” email list: Send your email address to the office.
- ◆ Worship Services, Updates & News: VISIT our website - <https://www.anacorteslutheran.org>
- ◆ Visit & “LIKE” us on Facebook / YouTube / Instagram pages: Anacortes Lutheran Church
- ◆ Has your phone #, address or email changed? Are you receiving emails from church? Call the office!
- ◆ Do you need help? Ride to worship, a friend? Call the church office - maybe we can help.
- ◆ Newsletter Deadline: The Third Monday of every month.
- ◆ Prayer Requests: Keep the church current on your loved ones who are or need to be named in our prayer list by calling or emailing the office.
- ◆ Altar Flowers: To give flowers in honor or memory of someone, sign up on the “Flower Chart” in the Narthex.
- ◆ Giving 5 Ways: Vanco Mobile App/TEXT 360-328-7521/mail a check /offering plate/ALC website ~ Giving tab
- ◆ Welcome Desk: (*located in the Narthex*) You can find new member information, newsletter publications, Sunday Scoops, “Christ in our Home” devotionals & additional information.
- ◆ Opportunity Desk: (*next to the Fellowship Hall*). Here you will find different ways to be of service throughout the church, Serving in Worship and Fellowship hour. Sign up sheets for Group Events, Prime Timers, Youth Events, etc. Preschool & Confirmation Registration forms.

I recently learned that the largest glacier between Mt. Rainier and Glacier Peak is no more. The reporter actually said that the glacier had died. Died. Gone. For thousands of years, the Hinman Glacier lived in the Washington Cascades providing much needed water to the Skykomish River. It is now gone.

A few months ago, my beloved dog, Gracie, died. She was thirteen. She was sick. It was time. But Gracie was with me through my cancer treatment, my children leaving home, my marriage ending, moving to a new city, beginning a new job, being in a new relationship ... and now she has died. She is now gone.

In this synod we recently had two churches close: Clearbrook Lutheran Church in Lynden and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Concrete. There are additional congregations who are discerning closure in this synod. All these congregations thrived in their communities for many years. Baptisms, weddings, funerals happened. People heard, shared, and lived into the good news of Jesus. And now these congregations have either decided, or are discerning, if their time lifecycle has come to an end.

All of these deaths are hard. They hurt my heart. There is grief and there is pain. And, while I might not know what you are grieving, I am sure that there is heartache in your life, too. Sometimes it seems that there is so much death. And sometimes it seems overwhelming.

As Christians we might say, “But I thought we were promised immortality. I thought “death has lost its sting.” Truthfully, it doesn’t feel that way. Death is real. It hurts. Where is this resurrection and new life we are promised?”

Dr. Brian Bantum, professor and author, writes regarding human immortality:

Our personhood, the body we speak of so confidently that was meant to live forever, is itself an arrangement of cells and tissues that are cycling through life and death. Our bodies are constantly undergoing changes, small transformations in our gradual development from infant to adult. Our bodies are no different and are connected to the cycles of life and death that are intrinsic to creation’s goodness. As Indigenous theologian Randy Woodley reminds us, ‘Death is simply another part of living.’ (Christian Century, Did God intend for Adam and Eve to live forever?, March 12, 2023)

On Ash Wednesday this year, I had a vision of God playing in the dirt. Kneeling down, mixing dirt into mud, molding and mixing, and forming each human. God – laughing and creating. God – loving and generating. I smiled at this sight. Later in the service, when I went forward to receive ashes in the shape of a cross upon my forehead, when I heard, “Dust to dust and ashes to ashes,” I had a vision of God scooping each beloved human into God’s arms at the end of their life. Holding the human turned dirt again. Loving and creating even more.

Dr. Bantum writes later in the same article, “Change, transformation, death, cycles of renewal and cessation—these are all part of God’s creation. And this change is beautiful and good.” Is it possible to move beyond the grief we feel when something ends and see the new life that might be coming?

Perhaps the glacier that died could be an impetus for us to take seriously the threat of climate change. I would hope so. I hope that the love my dog Gracie had for me will make me more loving towards others. In our synod, we are working with the closing congregations so that together we may begin new ministries and new ways of being church in this new day and age.

During this season of Lent – and into Holy Week and Easter – we know the truth of death. We know it in our bones. We acknowledge the pain, the difficulty, the fear, and the grief that comes with death. And yet, even more so, as people of faith, as people who celebrate Easter, we trust in God’s love through Jesus Christ who died and rose again for us and for the redemption of this entire world. Yes. There is death. And yes. There is resurrection.

God continues to play in the soil. God continues to create and nurture new life. God continues to hold and sustain life. And, fundamentally, without question, God brings life from death - each and every day.

May you have a blessed Easter. May we together, in this real world that we live in, trust in Jesus. And may we, with all the angels, archangels and all the saints, shout the good news together, “Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!”