



# The Branch

February 2019

The monthly newsletter of Christ Lutheran Church

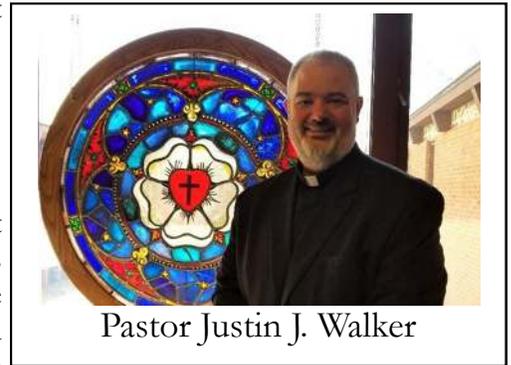
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## “More Fishing in the Season of Epiphany”

When [Simon and his friends] had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. + Luke 5:6

Greetings members of CLC!

Thank you to all who commented on my last Branch article about fishing. Here I would like to follow up not only with the season of Epiphany, but also with fishing. I often say there is one thing about fishing which always holds true: when you set out to go fishing you never know what you are going to get! I remember many mornings which were filled with preparation for a day of fishing. We would get our tackle together; we



Pastor Justin J. Walker

would make sure the line on our reels was not frayed; and we would make sandwiches for lunch. Then, at the hopeful peak of readiness, friends, family, and I would set out in a boat or canoe to try our luck at a day's fishing. Sometimes we would bring home a great number of fish. Other times we would – to use a word from my childhood – get skunked. But either way, we would always return richer for the day's efforts and better off for the set of experiences a day of fishing can bring.

Jesus called people who caught fish for a living as his first followers, and this was not by chance. For casting nets for people with the Word of God is a lot like casting nets for fish. Their efforts – even after the Resurrection of Christ – might bring in a number of people or none at all. Sometimes the first Christians would come to a receptive group of people in a new community and the Word of God would take hold. Times like this would be like throwing nets alongside a boat and it would be full of fish. Other times, the followers of Jesus would do the exact same thing, share the same Word of God, but come back without any new followers. They would get skunked. And the words of Jesus and Paul were very much alike at this point. They encouraged the faithful and said that they should not worry about anything but continue in their prayers, in their efforts and keep faith in God.

This image of casting nets for people is not out of line [pun intended] with our work in Christian discipleship. We live and act in ways that reflect the love of God every day. This may be through prayer, by helping people in need, sharing words of encouragement, or by something else. In response to these efforts we may see a growth in our Christian community, but we may not. The good news is that God is with us no matter what. And following the words of both Jesus and Paul, we should not be discouraged but be persistent in our prayers, efforts, and keep faith in God. That is how Christianity spreads now and how it always has – a great message for us in the season of Epiphany and always.

May the light of Christ be with you!

Yours in Christ,

*Pastor Justin*



# Mardi Gras

Please join us on **Tuesday, March 5, at 6:00 p.m.** for food, fun, fellowship, music and crafts. This is a fun way to get together before we begin our more solemn Lenten season. There will be pancakes, a King Cake, and other great food. Activities include a craft for the kids, a confessional (where you can write down your sins on a piece of paper), and a short service where the connection between Mardi Gras and Easter is explained. After the service our sins and the palm branches from last Easter will be burned. The ashes will be used to make the sign of the cross on our foreheads at the Ash Wednesday service the next evening.

The only “cost” to attend is the donation of a package of NUT FREE cookies to be used for our Sunday morning coffee and cookie time.



## Nursery Attendant(s) Needed

We are looking to hire one/two adults who have a love for our Lord and His children from age 8 months to 3 years old to oversee our church nursery on Sunday mornings from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The nursery ministry is to provide an environment that is safe, comfortable and nurturing for children so that their parents may attend worship and other church activities. Responsibilities include caring for the children, keeping the room and toys clean, and scheduling additional volunteers from our church membership. A complete job description can be found at [www.clcwoming.org](http://www.clcwoming.org).

If you or someone you know is interested in this position please contact Vicki Blubaugh, [vmusnd@gmail.com](mailto:vmusnd@gmail.com).

### **Church Staff**

Pastor Justin J. Walker  
pastorjustin@clcwyoing.org

Patrick Blanchard  
Outreach Ministries Coord.  
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Audrey Geers  
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Suzanne Snider  
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Marilyn Burgard  
Organist/Handbell Director  
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Steve Lundquist  
Director of Youth Activities  
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Casey Huls  
Junior Choir Director  
hulscas@mail.gvsu.edu

Sara Miller  
Minister of Music  
sara@clcwyoing.org

### **Executive Council**

President  
Jim Ward  
Vice-President/Personnel  
Curt Johnson  
Treasurer  
Vicki Blubaugh  
Secretary  
Michael Phillips

### **Council Chairpersons**

Education  
Aimee Paulson  
Evangelism  
Mike Evele  
Fellowship  
Nikki Diaz & Rylee Huston  
Mission Support  
Katelyn Conat  
Property  
Bill Houseknecht  
Technology  
Michael Phillips  
Well-being & Social Concerns  
Tamara Wright  
Worship, Music & Arts  
Vicki Blubaugh  
Youth & Family  
Aimee Paulson  
Recording Secretary  
Dave Harris

### **Contact Information**

Phone: 616-532-2774  
Email: office@clcwyoing.org  
Fax: 616-532-6488  
[www.clcwyoming.org](http://www.clcwyoming.org)

"You don't have to wait  
until Valentines Day to show  
someone how much they  
mean to you."

StoDive.com

### **Did You Know?**

All loose quarters put in the collection plates on Sundays  
are collected specifically to benefit  
ELCA World Hunger. Your quarters  
make a difference!!



### Notes From the Office

#### Office Hours:

Monday: 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.—Jim  
Tuesday: 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.—Audrey  
Wednesday: 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.—Audrey  
Thursday: 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.—Jim  
Friday: 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.—Audrey  
\*\*If you need to connect with us outside of these  
hours, please give us a call and make an appoint-  
ment.

#### Weekly Announcement Deadline:

Friday morning, 10:00 a.m.

#### Next Branch Deadline:

Tuesday, February 26, 2019, 10:00 a.m.





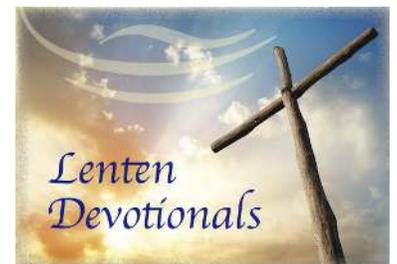
Much to my chagrin, it finally looks and feels like winter here in Michigan! I have to say though, there is something much more cheerful about seeing the sunshine bounce off of white snow than seeing gray clouds over brown leafless trees and icky grass. I can do without the freezing temperatures, but the sunshine and cold temps go hand in hand in the winter!

We finished out January with a nice opening Sunday School lesson of “The Fruits of the Spirit.” Thanks to Vicki Blubaugh, Melanie Jernberg, and Sarah McKenney for stepping up to teach our youth this unit. They will finish out their unit the first Sunday of February and then we move on to “The Widow’s Offering.” I love this story, as I think it is one that kids can relate to really well. The widow had hardly anything to give in comparison to others, but it was EVERYTHING she had. And she gave from her heart. Kids don’t often have much more than change to offer up, but the important thing to remember is to offer it, and offer it freely, knowing that God will take those pennies and dimes and turn them into something wonderful. We have been collecting our offering at home this year and bringing it in just a couple times through the school year. I think it shows how just a few coins a week can add up to so much more in a short amount of time.



It is a lesson we need to remember as adults as well. It’s not the amount we are giving, so much as it is that we are giving freely, joyfully and giving all that we can. Do we do that? Or do we stash extra aside for ourselves thinking that you might need an extra cup of coffee this week, or want to go play a round of golf? I know I can be guilty of this as well. The lesson I have learned over and over is, God will provide. He wants us to be responsible with the gifts we are given. He wants us to enjoy life when we have worked hard to earn it. But he also wants us to have a giving heart. We have had times when I think we won’t be able to afford one thing or another in our life, and God has proven me wrong and has inevitably made those funds available. So I need to continue to trust that he looks after us, and give freely to the church so that we can look after others.

This season in Lent we will be offering up devotionals for you to purchase. For one dollar, you will be able to take home a devotional for the season of Lent that fits your needs. We will most likely have a couple options to choose from. Check out the Gathering Space this Sunday to put in your order. I hope you will be able to find something that speaks to you and focuses your heart on the cross this season.



But before Lent comes the month of February, and we have LOTS to do this month!! The first event is a fun one. Much like the tributes I asked for last year about moms and dads, I am asking for your love stories!! Let’s celebrate the gift of love God gave to us!! The stories of how you met your love, a funny story about you and your mate, a memory that stays with you about your lifelong partner! We have so many amazing couples that have been a part of this congregation, and I would

love to celebrate the things that make those relationships so special. Perhaps your loved one has passed on already, but your love story never should fade away, so whether you've been married for 6 months, 60 years or any other length of time, whether you are married, or have just been in a



long-standing committed relationship, whether you still spend your days in each other's company, or whether you await the day you reunite with them in heaven, I want to hear your stories!! Please email me or send me a hard copy of your memory along with a picture if you have one by February 14<sup>th</sup>. I will display these on Sunday, February 17<sup>th</sup> for all to enjoy. And in case you didn't know, I am a HUGE fan of weddings, so if you happen to have a wedding picture, please send that one along! Especially those members that

have been married for a long time. I love to see the fashions from the time. You may think – "We didn't have a big wedding, just at the courthouse before my husband shipped out for the service." Perfect! Each picture and story tells about the time and place you lived in and I think that adds to every aspect of what we are celebrating!! I look forward to seeing our gathering space filled with all sorts of stories of love on the 17<sup>th</sup>! If you do turn in a photograph that you would like returned, please make sure to put your name on it for me.

We also will be starting our First Communion Instruction beginning February 16<sup>th</sup>! We will have a second class on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, both from 9-11:30AM and it is open to any child that wants to learn more about this amazing sacrament where God meets us at the table each week. If you have questions or want to include your child, please email me ASAP! First Communion will be celebrated this year at both services on Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. So there is lots going on this month!



On a final note, I made an announcement during the combined service last week, but in case you were not there, I wanted to make the congregation aware that I have turned in my resignation from the Family Ministries Coordinator position at CLC. This was not an easy decision, but one that I made to hopefully benefit my family. It has gotten increasingly harder to divide my time between my two jobs and other things I am a part of, and it seems my family always falls to the end of my priority list, which is not the way it should be. I only have a handful of years with my kids at home and I would like to make the best of them. I appreciate so much the love and support this congregation has shown me and the Christian Ed program. I inherited a wonderful program from capable hands and with all of your love have been able to keep it running and hopefully doing a decent job of it for the past three and a half years. Don't fear, I won't be gone completely. You are my family and I can't imagine worshipping anywhere else. I will certainly have my hand in various things, just in a volunteer aspect rather than paid staff. Thank you so much for your understanding. I know God will take good care of this program and our congregation as he sends us the next person to lead our Christian Education program and I will be there to help transition in any way I can.

Blessings,  
Suzanne

## Musical Notes: A Place in the Choir

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by Sara Miller, Minister of Music

The exciting news for February is that the Adult Choir is getting started again! We begin rehearsals on Feb. 6 at 7:00, and we will provide a musical offering in worship on Transfiguration Sunday, Mar. 3 and regularly thereafter.

A fair number of people (and I am one of them) have been waiting for this with bated breath. A fair number of others are not sure if choir is really for them.

For those of you in the latter camp: Here's why you might consider singing in a choir, even if you have never done it before and even if you don't consider yourself a singer.

**It is good for your health.** Studies have been done! Singing can improve immune-system function; strengthens the lungs, throat, soft palate, and brain; improves posture; reduces levels of cortisol and increases the production of oxytocin and endorphins – so it lowers stress levels and increases feelings of connectedness and well-being.

**It is a community.** By the mere fact of working together toward a common goal, a choir forges bonds among its members. Our choir prays together, shares fellowship, and supports one another.

**It is a learning opportunity.** “The expert in anything was once a beginner,” right? If you have a great ear but cannot read music,

you could learn in a choir. If you play an instrument but are uncomfortable singing out loud, you could sing in a choir. If you can't carry a tune in a bucket, choir is a great opportunity to learn to match pitch. If you are a professional musician, choir is a place to experience different styles and expand your repertoire.

**It strengthens congregational worship.** The second-best leader of congregational singing is an organ. The best leader is a choir. Congregations led by confident choirs are more comfortable singing, better able to learn new hymns and songs, and empowered to lift their hearts and voices in song.

Most importantly, **it is an offering of time and talent to God.** Choral singing requires work – to prepare the music, to stay focused on balancing your own voice against the rest of the ensemble, to bring your own experience and emotion into the artistry of shaping sound. When we sing in worship, we take the natural gifts of our different voices, our strengths and experience, that work invested in the process, and we offer it back to God, the giver of all good gifts.

I look forward to singing with you soon!

In peace,

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# Seaside ESCAPE™



WHERE WOMEN BASK IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Do the gray skies and cold temperatures have you down already? Here's something to mark on your calendar to help brighten your day! Join us for a day and a half retreat where we will come together to bask in the everlasting light of God and warm ourselves in the stories of his faithfulness to us. How awesome to know that all he asks of us is to

**"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10**

So if you need some time to "Be still," join us on Saturday, March 17 beginning at 9:00am and stay with us until Sunday, March 17 at noon!

Pine Ridge Bible Camp, Cedar Springs, Michigan

Join us for the entire retreat, or just a portion.

Watch for sign ups coming soon!

"FOR GOD  
SO LOVED THE  
WORLD THAT HE GAVE  
HIS ONLY  
BEGOTTEN  
SON, SO  
THAT WHOEVER  
BELIEVES IN HIM  
SHALL NOT PERISH  
BUT HAVE ETERNAL  
LIFE."

♥ JOHN 3:16

