

We are about to begin our journey through Lent – the season of preparation. During this season, we examine our relationship with Christ. We reflect on how we worship Christ, how we listen to him, and how we follow the call He gives each of us. This season is a time to center ourselves and readjust or even restart our relationship with God.

Most people think that Lent is a time of giving something up (supposedly to show our dedication to God). We like to give up some food or activity (that many times we don't really like) and say we are doing it for Lent, for God. But that is just cheapening this season. It is not meant to be a season of "giving something up" but rather a season of "building ourselves up." Build up rather than give up! I mean, let's be realistic and honest with ourselves. What does giving up chocolate, or desserts, or alcohol have to do with our faith? The other question we should be asking as Lutherans is, where does Christ ask us to give something up for Lent? The intention behind giving something up is honorable – we sacrifice something important to us to remind us of the sacrifice that Christ made for us. The reality is that the things we give up don't really feel like a sacrifice and don't remind us of our faith. So, what should we do instead?

Lent should be a season to build up our faith. We should look for activities to do to make our relationship with Christ stronger, more meaningful, and sustainable. How can we become better disciples of Christ? Could we start a reading program to read through the bible? Could we participate in a Bible Study – either through the church or through an app or book? Could we start listening to a Christian podcast or maybe even binge-watch "The Chosen?"

Can we become more active in our worship of Christ – maybe go to church more often or become part of the worship team or choir? Could we become more involved in the life of the church through one of its many committees, ministries, or leadership opportunities? Could we make a commitment to better support the church and its ministries financially? Building ourselves up could be as simple as making a commitment to improve our prayer lives. It could be adding prayer to our lives in the morning, at meals, or at bedtime. Maybe we can use our commute time to work as our prayer time.

So this Lenten season, how about you give up giving up and rather decide to build up yourselves, and your faith lives? Together, let's build up our church, let's build up our ministries, let's build up our commitment to worship and serve Christ.



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, February 1, 2026

(this was postponed from Sunday, January 25)

Immediately following the worship service, lunch will be served in Fellowship Hall. The congregational meeting will begin after lunch.

In case of inclement weather:

CANCELLATION INFORMATION

**Please check your email,
our website (www.schwarzwaldlutheran.org),
Facebook page (Schwarzwald Lutheran Church),
Channel 69 — WFMZ-TV Stormcenter,
or our answering machine (610-779-3480).**

SOUP GROUP

Monday, February 16

From 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**We will make soup,
have some lunch, and package
the soup for distribution!**

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

• • •

.. from Mt. Penn Fire Company—We would like to thank you for your donation and your support. It is because of your generosity that we are able to continue to provide the prompt and professional life saving services you expect and deserve from your local volunteer fire company.

.. from ELCA—Thank you for your gift to Lutheran Disaster Response. No matter the disaster, no matter the need, your gifts to LDR enable people to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Thank you for your generous gift.

PARLOR COFFEE CAFÉ / GREETERS

Scan the QR code below or use the Sign-Up Genius link to sign-up to bring a baked good for the coffee café or to be a Greeter on a Sunday morning:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050C4FA9AD2FA7FD0-60582416-schwarzwald>



PRAYER GROUP

The February meeting dates for the Prayer Group are
the 3rd and 17th at 11:00 AM.

Please contact Joanne Rutherford for additional information at
610-406-9355 or jmr14290@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Brad Darlington, Linda Strain
- 2 David Foster, Kevin Kennedy, Ian Carr, Marcia Kennedy, Rosalie Heller, Christopher Thompson
- 3 Barry Hoover
- 4 Linda Allwein
- 5 Anita Heydt
- 6 Layken Ramus
- 7 Brayden Zackon
- 8 Richard Allwein, Nolan Fayewicz, Judith Merkel, Barbara Quick
- 9 John Burkhardt
- 10 Aimee Oswald, Hailee Oswald
- 11 Gary Wegman, Leroy Bossler, Layla Schaeffer
- 13 Janet Hafer, Susan Kent
- 14 Jeremy Kerber, Ken Bryant
- 17 Karlotta Werner
- 19 Carmon Dobbins, Cadence Werner
- 20 Margaret Worrall
- 21 Shaun Schaeffer
- 23 Dennis Karas, Carter Ramus
- 24 Amy Rahn
- 25 Susan Lee
- 26 Juryl Sele
- 27 Cynthia Diehl, Cheryl Specht, Tyler Thompson
- 28 Miles Brumbaugh



If your birthday is in February
and is not listed here, please call the
church office,
610-779-3480, with your full birth date
M/D/Y. Thank you.

Social Ministry Committee

For many years, volunteers from Schwarzwald were part of Soup Teams. Each month, specified soups would be prepared, frozen, and then donated to the New Journey Soup Kitchen in Reading. The majority of the teams did the cooking individually in their homes and placed the gallons of soup in the church's freezer to await delivery to New Journey. We thank all of the soup team members, past and present, for their commitment and dedication to this ongoing project.

As you may recall from January's *Pulpit & Pew* article, the Penn State Extension offered a food safety seminar this past fall, which detailed procedures that should be utilized in order to assure foods are prepared in a clean and safe environment. It has been decided that these recommendations will be adopted by SLC. To comply with the guidelines, all meals will now be prepared in SLC's kitchen. Gloves, hats, and aprons will be worn during the preparation. Items used for correctly cooling hot foods for freezing and storing have already been purchased.

Our committee is in the process of brainstorming and developing new ways to continue our food ministries. We are pursuing projects that would involve the congregation. For instance, monthly soup teams could meet at the kitchen to prepare their soups.

Please know that your ideas and input are always welcomed. If you have an idea to share, we would love to hear it. Also, if you'd like to join our committee in this planning, our next meeting is on Monday, February 9, at 10:00 in the Fellowship Hall.

Thank you for your continued support.

Carol Gunzelmann, Doris and Bill Jaeger, Jan Krommes, Judi Merkel, Mary Phillips, Barb and Denton Quick, Pat Ruffner, and Peg Gumpert.

GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS!

FIRST COMMUNION CLASS

The class will be held on **Sunday, February 15**. We will meet in the church kitchen at noon. Please call the church office to reserve a spot for your child/children.



Christian Education Update

The new year has welcomed some new traditions and the continuation of some established favorites. We started 2026 with a bang by wishing Jesus a happy belated birthday at the beginning of epiphany. We enjoyed some cake, watched the video of our Christmas pageant, and learned about the 3 wisemen's visit.

We are thrilled to bring back our Sunday School breakfast, Souper Bowl for Caring collection, Mardi Gras/Lent event, and a visit from Bear Creek Camp. All of these take place in February! We invite our Sunday school families to the breakfast that will take place on February 1st in Fellowship Hall. We look forward to yummy food and a mini talent show from our children! You may continue bringing soup cans in on this date to help your class win the soup collection competitions. All proceeds go to our local foodbank! We will celebrate our efforts at the Mardi Gras/Lent event. We are excited to have Collin Grooms visit us from Bear Creek Camp. He is the camp director and will join us for part of Sunday school and Worship. Our families always enjoy his energy for sharing God's Word.

Please join us for the spaghetti dinner on February 20th. The youth attending the summer Nashville trip are hosting all aspects of this event and would appreciate any and all support! Look for more information in the bulletin.

Mark these spring dates on your calendar!

Upcoming Events & Info

Youth Chimes & Choir

Youth chime rehearsals resume in February! The rehearsals take place in the sanctuary every Sunday at 9:00. All youth grades 4 and up OR who have learned to read music are welcome to join us!

Sunday School Breakfast - February 1

Our Sunday School children will be hosting our 2nd annual breakfast! Our Sunday School families are invited to join us for the fun morning event. The menu includes waffles, ice cream, and drinks with some other fun sides. The best part of the morning is seeing the mini talent show!

Souper Bowl of Caring

Our Souper Bowl of Caring collection runs from January 11 - February 8. All cans will be donated to our local foodbank. Please bring in all of the cans to support the needs of our community. Bonus - there is a special surprise for our winning class.

Bear Creek Camp Visit - February 8

Collin Grooms will be visiting Schwarzwald on 2/8. Parents, please come to Sunday School with your children. We will all meet in the choir room at 9:30 for activities and some information about Bear Creek Camp. Collin will also join us to lead the Worship service. Our kids always agree that he is engaging and full of life. Don't miss it!

Mardi Gras & Lent Event - February 15

Join us for the final hurrah before Lent settles in. We will celebrate our efforts in bringing in soup cans, and we will learn what the season of Lent is all about.

Coffee Parlor

Please enjoy the coffee & hot chocolate cafe! It is located in our parlor and is open to our youth after Sunday School with the exception of our BFF group (post-confirmed) who meets there weekly at 9:30. Parents, please grab a drink and snacks from the coffee parlor at any time!

Confirmation

Confirmation classes continue to take place on the 4th Sunday of every month. Students meet in Fellowship Hall from 12:00 - 2:00. Please note: the February class will be held from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. Are you able to provide a meal for our confirmed? If so, please let Crystal know your preferred month. Open months include March, April, and May.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
1 9:00am Youth Chimes reh. (S) 9:15am Adult Sunday School (FH) 9:30am Sunday School Breakfast (FH) 10:45am Worship Service 11:45am Lunch/Annual Cong. Mtg. (FH) 11:45am Sr. Choir reh. (FH) 7:00pm AA meeting (SR)	2 5:45pm Girl Scout 11135 (FH/SS) 6:15pm Girl Scouts 1909 (FH/SS) 7:00pm AA mtg. (SR)	3 10:00am Tuesday morning Bible Study / Work Group (FH) 11:00am Prayer Group. (FH)	4 7:00pm NA Meeting
8 9:00am Youth Chimes reh. (S) 9:15am Adult Sunday School (FH) 9:30am Sunday School (SS) 10:45am Worship Service 11:45am Sr. Choir reh. (FH) 1:00pm Sinfonia rehearsal (S/FH) 7:00pm AA meeting (SR)	9 10:00am Soc. Min. Comm. mtg. (FH) 7:00pm AA mtg. (SR)	10 10:00am Tuesday morning Bible Study / Work Group (FH)	11 7:00pm Church 7:00pm NA Meeting
15 9:00am Youth Chimes reh. (S) 9:15am Adult Sunday School (FH) 9:30am Sunday School (SS) 10:45am Worship Service 11:45am Sr. Choir reh. (FH) 12:00pm First Communion Class (FH/K) 5:30pm Sinfonia reh. (FH/S) 7:00pm AA meeting (SR)	16 10:00am Soup Group (FH / K) 5:45pm Girl Scout 11135 (FH / SS) 7:00pm AA mtg. (SR)	17 10:00am Tuesday morning Bible Study / Work Group (FH) 11:00am Prayer Group. (FH)	18 12:00pm Exeter (FH) 1:00pm Ashes d 6:30pm Lions Club 7:00pm Ash Wednesday 7:00pm NA Meeting
22 9:00am Youth Chimes reh. (S) 9:15am Adult Sunday School (FH) 9:30am Sunday School (SS) 10:45am Worship Service 11:45am Sr. Choir reh. (FH) 12:00pm Confirmation Class (FH) 7:00pm AA meeting (SR)	23 5:30pm Girl Scout #1867 (FH) 7:00pm AA mtg. (SR)	24 10:00am Tuesday morning Bible Study / Work Group (FH)	25 7:00pm Lenten 7:00pm NA Meeting

Key: **HC**—Holy Communion **FH**—Fellowship Hall **SR**—Scout Room **CR**—Choir Room **PCC**—Parish Center
EAB—Exeter Schools Admin. Bldg. **SS**—Sunday School room(s) **PL**—Parking Lot **LGI** - Large Group

AY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
eting (SR)	5 2:00pm Worship/Music Comm. mtg. (FH) 6:30pm Handbell rehearsal (S)	6	7
Council (FH) ting (SR)	12 9:00am Breakfast Bunch (BH)	13	14
Senior Citizens drive thru (PL) ub meeting (FH) d. service (S) eting (SR)	19	20 2:00pm Exeter Area Food Pantry (EAB) 5:00pm Youth Spaghetti Dinner (K/FH)	21
Service (S) eting (SR)	26	27	28

FEBRUARY 2026

Parlor Coffee Cafe PV—Pavilion S—Sanctuary P—Parlor N—Narthex K—Kitchen Z—Zoom
up Instruction Room SCA—Schwarzwald Cemetery Assoc. YR—Youth Room CO—Church Office

Pasta Dinner



FUNDRAISER

To support the
Schwarzwald Lutheran Church's
Youth Mission Trip

Friday February 20th 2026

5 pm – 6:30 pm

Schwarzwald Lutheran Church
250 Church Lane Rd
Reading, PA 19606

garlic bread

desert

Pasta Buffet

salad

refreshments

A FREE WILL OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN.

CALENDER FOR LENT / HOLY WEEK / EASTER

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 15

1:00 — 3:00 p.m. “Drive-thru” Imposition of Ashes

Front driveway near the office

7:00 p.m. Worship Service in our Sanctuary with Holy Communion
and the Imposition of Ashes

MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICES

Wednesdays — February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25 — 7:00 p.m.

We will be using the *Holden Evening Prayer Service*

PALM SUNDAY

March 28

10:30 AM Worship with Holy Communion
Reading of the Passion

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 2

At St. Mark's 6:00 PM Seder Meal

At SLC 7:30 PM Holy Communion Service — Stripping of the Altar

GOOD FRIDAY

April 3

7:30 PM Worship Service

EASTER

April 5

8:00 AM Early Service with Holy Communion

9:00 AM Breakfast in Fellowship Hall

10:30 AM Festival Worship with Holy Communion

FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

MUSIC MINISTRY

During the month of February, the musical groups in the church start to rejuvenate! AS always, I remind everyone that YOU TOO are welcome to be a part of these amazing groups! Even if you dedicate a lot of time to the group, I think it should be apparent that I space things out during each month to give each group built in breaks – so – no excuse there! If this is absolutely not your thing. Then I once again encourage you to make good use of the offering envelope marked specifically for the music program to enable us to further enhance our worship services with outside guest musicians.

In February:

Youth Chimes will begin rehearsal on Sunday mornings at 9:00 promptly in the sanctuary. During the first rehearsal I hope to have the music and performance dates for everything this group will do through the month of June.

The Adult Choir and the Adult Bell Choir will perform offertory selections during this month.

On 2/8 we will have a special guest musician. Robin Lilarose will accompany our anthem on the flute as well as present a prelude. Peg Gumpert will be doing a special postlude that day as well!

You will not want to miss a collaborative effort on 2/22. Get here a little early to catch some youth and adults at their very best!



GIRL SCOUT TROOP #1867
collects empty drink cans as a
recycling fundraiser for their troop.

Please help them out and bring your empties to church.
A box is provided in the narthex for the can collection.
(You can also pull the tabs off and place them in the can tab collection!)

Save the date...

Friday, March 27, 2026 6:00 – 10:00pm

Pastor Jim's 60th birthday wake - a gala fundraiser for Hopewell Love Community Services and Food Pantry.

The gala will be held at

BlackJax Restaurant and Event Center, Douglassville.

Tickets on sale soon. \$60 includes food, drinks, and entertainment. Cash bar available. Gift basket raffle.



The “Souper Bowl” collection is underway!!!

Our Sunday School classes are competing

for the big prize.

Bring in those cans to benefit our local food pantry.

May the best class win!

RAISE AWARENESS • CHANGE PERSPECTIVE

April 11 - 12, 2026

ECTIVES • BUILD COMPASSION • UNDE

STAND BETTER • SEE DIFFERENTLY

BOX CITY

Youth Event

Christ Lutheran - Harleysville

A SEPA multi-congregation event hosted at

Christ Lutheran Church, Harleysville

For Youth Grades 6-12 • Friends Welcome!

Learn • Raise \$ • Play Games • Worship

Details on Website <https://bit.ly/boxcity26>

Registration opens Jan 2, 2026

What is Box City?

Box City is a social justice learning experience designed for youth in grades 6-12. The event combines education, empathy-building, and community action by simulating aspects of homelessness and food insecurity. Participants engage in lessons and discussions that highlight real-world challenges faced by unhoused individuals, reflect on the social and economic factors contributing to poverty, and learn how they can make a difference through advocacy and service.

By spending the night outdoors (weather permitting) and raising funds for a local shelter, youth gain a deeper understanding of compassion and community responsibility.



COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS (December)

Treasurer's Report

2026 Proposed Budget was reviewed. The income/envelope giving was increased by 2.5%. The interest income is based on the changing market. The expenses include the salary for a full-time pastor, maintaining the synod \$12,000 and WBMD \$1500. Social Ministry didn't change. Administration/Office was increased to \$6500 and Seminars to \$2800. Property is about the same. Worship and Music is basically unchanged; supply services was lowered a bit. Salaries were increased by 3% on a decision by Council. Education/Youth ministry was increased to \$3500 for the youth trip. Family Ministry added \$400 for coffee bar supplies. Evangelism remains the same. .

November disbursements were approved by the committee.

Pastor's Report

We must sacrifice and be inconvenienced. With that in mind, we are giving out toys to over 500 kids. *Toys For Tots* needs volunteers. Please let Pr. Jim know if you can help.

Doris Jaeger / Toy Give

Thank you to everyone who helped set up for our Toy Give.

Old Business

Fire Protection Update - Because the church building is so busy in December, updating the system will start after the first of the year.

Security - We are working on a policy for insurance purposes using state and federal laws. The policy will be reviewed by legal counsel. The church should officially appoint a security team and have a security plan.

A Sign-up Genius has been created to use for signing up for Coffee Café snacks and for "Greeters" on Sunday mornings.

New Business

Congregational Meeting—We could use a Thrivent grant for lunch menu. People are leaving or not attending worship when we have a supply pastor. There is negative chatter. We will have a seminarian, perhaps a vicar and guest speakers on occasion.

Council discussed having community meals about once/quarter. We applied for a grant from Giant and received \$500 towards it.

Budget Information—Monthly totals (December)

Income:

Budgeted Income	\$16,154 (Current envelopes)
Actual Income	\$17,982 (Current envelopes)

Expenses:

Budgeted Expenses	\$28,165 (Amount includes a full-time pastor salary)
Actual Expenses	\$26,276

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LUTHERAN CHURCH
Serving and Loving Christ Since 1737

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Join our family, share God's love.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Pulpit and Pew

FEBRUARY 2026