

Agapegram

April 2026



A NEWSLETTER OF
ETERNAL SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH
& LITTLE LAMBS PRESCHOOL

www.eternalshepherd.org



Easter and the End

Stay alert all the time, praying that you may be able to escape all these things that are going to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 21:36 EHV

Easter is upon us and we remember and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord even as we await sharing in that resurrection on the Last Day. And, the Last Day seems to be on many minds in recent times. Between globalism, increasing government surveillance, A.I., digital currency trends, and increased conflict in the Middle East, many are wondering if the end times and the Last Day aren't all that far away.

A 2021 article by Lutheran writer Gene Veith speaks to the intersection of Easter resurrection and the End Times. Veith writes:

...I came across a fascinating and provocative article by the Catholic theologian Brett Salkeld entitled *The Beginning of the End of the World*. It discusses the concept of resurrection (as opposed to resuscitation) as held by the ancient Jews, the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead in the last days.

The author then ties all of this into the Sacraments:

If the resurrection is the inauguration of eternity, then we begin to participate in eternity as soon as we begin to participate in Christ's resurrection, that is to say, when we are baptized. For surely, Paul teaches us, if baptism unites us with Jesus in a death like his, it also joins us to his resurrection (see: Rom 6:5). . . .But baptism is only the beginning of our participation in eternity.

He then quotes the German Catholic theologian Gerhard Lohfink, from his book *Is This All There Is?: Resurrection and Eternal Life*:

In baptism Christians have died with Christ and been raised to the communion of the saints. The real “location” of present eschatology is in the sacraments. Every baptism immerses someone in the fate of Christ and the communion of believers. Every reception of the sacrament of reconciliation means placing oneself even now before the Last Judgment, and in that judgment, through the mercy of God, being set free. Every reception of the Eucharist is participation in Jesus's Last Supper, and the bread that is broken and eaten is a participation in his death, the breaking of his life, his self-surrender. At the same time, the eucharistic meal is the beginning of the eternal wedding feast with God (253).

These thoughts are from a Catholic perspective, but I think that Lutherans and perhaps some other Protestants can agree.

The baptized have been joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). So they picture the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. And they are numbered with the "communion of saints" already in Heaven.

In an ordinary Divine Service, we confess our sins and are forgiven, an enactment of the Last Judgment, in which—because we are united to Christ by faith—the verdict will be "Not Guilty."

And Holy Communion, in which the resurrected Christ is present for our forgiveness, is also an anticipation of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as the joys of eternity are described as a feast that He has prepared for us (Revelation 19:9).

So the End Times have already started, and we are already participating in them. And the Sacraments, among other things, are thus, as we sing, a foretaste of the Feast to come. [The Resurrection, The Sacraments, & The End Times | Gene Veith](#)

Since we do not know the day or the hour of Christ's return nor can we control the world at large, we simply remember our baptism, receive the Holy Supper, and live in light of the end that has already begun in Christ by the power of His resurrection trusting the Lord in each new day and doing the good that loves our neighbor.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

1 Peter 1:3 EHV

~ Pastor David

Palm Sunday March 29th

8:30 am & 11:00 am Communion both services

Holy Thursday Service April 2nd - 7:00pm

Good Friday Tenebrae Service April 3rd - 7:00 pm

Easter Sunday April 5th

8:30 am & 11:00 am Communion Both Services

9:45 am Easter Breakfast hosted by ESLC Youth



Deaconess' Musings

Death is Trampled. Life is Restored.

I hate death.

Death is not something I like. Death makes me angry. Death tears apart things that should remain together. Death is our constant companion.

It's easy to get caught up in, this overwhelming feeling of loss, anger, and emptiness. We see death and decay permeate this world and its creatures, and cry out, "Why?!" We see all of it and know that this is not natural. It was never supposed to be like this, a once perfect creation rotted away by death.

Once, at the very beginning, there was no death. No brokenness. No imperfection. God, our Creator, walked with Man, and Man talked with God. All was well.

But then, humanity listened to a lie and bought it, no questions asked. Trust in the perfect, all-loving God was broken, and thus sin, decay, and death became our prize. Separated from the Creator God, Man was forced out of perfection and into a world now saturated with disease, to face death. Hope seemed forever lost. Death came forward to claim its throne.

Even while carrying out justice against His beloved creation, God loved them, us, more. Promising a future Redeemer that would one day carry upon Himself the sin of all people, becoming the sacrifice of sacrifices with enough blood to cover all sins and wash them away, God promised His Christ, the Messiah – His own Son, Jesus.

Death now had an enemy. This future Promised One soon came, and our Savior appeared. That perfect life of obedience you could not, cannot, keep – He did. That perfect life of love toward others that you cannot dream of ever fully acting out – He did. The perfect, all-loving God did what was (is) unthinkable – He paid the price for our salvation. He exchanged His very life, perfect, spotless, and sinless, for our deaths.

He died so that we might live. Shocking, yes. Unbelievable, yes. Truth? Yes.

Death, thinking he had won, yelled victory. Our Lord, however, holds the final word. Raising from the dead, Christ Jesus accomplished for us sinners what no sacrifice had fully done – completely and wholly removing the stain of sin upon our lives. Now restored to our Father God, Death cannot have sway over us. No longer does it define us. Found in Christ, we are in return granted life that knows no end.

While the Lord carries, we will one day die. And while I'm still not the biggest fan of death, I know that because of Christ's death and resurrection it is sanctified. I, and all believers, will be brought through to everlasting, perfected life with the One who loved so much to die for His Creation and to win for them His own perfection. No more to ever face Death alone.

Christ died for sinners to take their death. Christ rose to life to grant sinners life eternal.

Christ is Risen! (For you!) He is Risen, Indeed! (For you!) Alleluia!

~Deaconess Holly

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD NEWS



You're Invited to Our CELEBRATION EVENT!

- Date:** Friday, April 17, 2026
Time: 6:30– 8:30pm
Location: Utica Baptist Church, 4056 Wells Hwy, Seneca, SC
RSVP: <https://forms.gle/EQ3SgKg3iZPaQ6fRA> , the QR Code below, or JudithPEdwards@outlook.com

Join us at this free event to go “Beyond the Box” to hear first-hand stories of how God is working through Operation Christmas Child in proclaiming the gospel to children around the world! Come hear our guest speaker, Joseph Veeravalli, who received an OCC shoebox as a child and now serves OCC by sharing the impact story that one shoebox had on his life! It will be an amazing evening!



The Operation Christmas Child Committee hopes to see all of you there!
Talk to Terri Baumann for more information!!



Join us for the Annual Little Lambs Preschool Spaghetti Supper & Silent Auction Fundraiser



**Saturday, April 18th
5:00-7:00pm**



Get ready for an evening of food, fun, fellowship, and fundraising! Little Lambs Preschool needs your help to continue our ministry of bringing God's love to the little children in our community. Over the past 24 years, we have provided a Christian foundation to over 1,000 children in the greater Seneca area. For some, this is the only Christian education they will ever receive.

Come and enjoy a great meal and take home some incredible auction items for yourself or as gifts, while supporting the preschool.

All tickets are \$15. You will have a healthy portion of spaghetti, homemade sauce, bread, fresh salad, drinks, and dessert! We will have plenty of amazing silent auction items to bid on! New this year, we are accepting credit card payments for all auction item purchases.

Can't make the supper/auction, but you still want to donate? No problem. Just fill out an order form, but don't order a meal. Check the donation section and return it with your check payable to LLP to the address on the form. Place all order forms in the special box located on the church office manager's desk.

You can also make a donation online on the church website www.eternalshepherd.org. Click on ONLINE GIVING and scroll down to Little Lambs Preschool and click on Contribute. And don't forget about Thrivent Choice Dollars if you have an account.

April is Little Lambs Preschool month at Eternal Shepherd, and we want to thank the many donors we rely on each year to help us continue bringing the love of Jesus Christ to area two-three-and four-year-olds.

Little Lambs Preschool Information



Little Lambs Preschool C.A.R.E. Tuition Scholarship Update First Quarter 2026

Since its inception in August 2024, the Little Lambs Preschool's Compassionate Assistance Response Effort (C.A.R.E.) has been able to support the tuition needs of students whose families have experienced a catastrophic and/or life altering situation resulting in a significant loss of income and/or extraordinary increases in expenses. The C.A.R.E tuition scholarship funds are immediately available to address these special circumstances, helping to ameliorate the stress on the family as they strive to recover.

In its first 20 months of operation, C.A.R.E. has come to the aid of 7 families (9 students), awarding a little over \$10,000 in tuition funds.

Your donations are needed to help these students! You can help by giving to the dedicated C.A.R.E. Little Lambs account, which is used solely for this effort. Over these 20 months we have been blessed to receive over \$12,000 in donations to this fund.

HONDURAS NEWS

The ESLC Honduras Mission team has returned after another successful mission trip to Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. The Brigade churches were a bit more rural and rustic than some of those in the recent past but we were still able to bring the gospel to many Hondurans who did not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This year's team consisted of 19 missionaries, many who had been part of previous year's teams but also some who participated for the first time. Being a short-term missionary is an awesome experience and one that will be remembered for years by those who have made this commitment. It is having direct contact with the people of Honduras and seeing how the people of that country live. It is an eye-opener, to the North American missionary, to see that a family lives in a one room building, some with dirt floors, and no running water. But they also get to see the joy and excitement when a water filter is installed, or medicine given, or a Salvation bracelet presented, or eyeglasses fitted, but most of all the joy in seeing Jesus in the hearts of the people.

Becoming a missionary is simple. It begins with having a desire to serve the people of another country. The missionary then raises the funds to cover the cost of the trip and is instrumental in the fund-raising efforts to raise money for the supplies needed for the mission. Your ESLC team is thankful to all those who supported this week-long effort with their generous contributions. This mission trip is only possible because of the support of this congregation and the commitment of the team members to go and serve in another country. We are called to "go and make disciples of all nations" and that is what the people of ESLC do each year as they travel to Honduras. You too can be part of this blessing. If you would like more information contact John Co-chell or a member of one of our mission teams.

Dios te bendiga, (God Bless You), Your Honduras Mission Team

STEWARDSHIP NEWS

As we remember the service that Jesus Christ did for us during this Holy Week with the Last Supper and the washing of feet, the Crucifixion of Jesus in our stead, and then His glorious resurrection this Easter Sunday and the gift of salvation, please consider serving others also.

The JOBS, Joyous Opportunities for Believers, lists new and continuing chances to serve within the Eternal Shepherd family. We have already filled several of our service needs including accounting assistance for Little Lambs and assistance with Prison Ministry.

Do your skills and heart lead you to consider any one of these positions? If so, please contact the person listed to find out more information.

One reason that Eternal Shepherd is such a great community of believers is because of all the service that we freely give within the church and in the community. Thank you for seriously considering fulfilling some of our needs.

Please watch the JOBS bulletin in the hallway which also promotes these service needs.

Sue Hauser, Stewardship

Eternal Shepherd J.O.B. Board Joyous Opportunities for Believers

Youth Board Chair

If you are organized, friendly, and great at delegating, you'd be a fantastic youth board chair! This is not a "youth leader" position. As chair, you will facilitate youth board meetings, discuss activities and ideas with the board members (who are fantastic!), manage the budget, and delegate leaders and planners to lead and attend youth events throughout the year. The chair reports monthly to Council. Please contact Amy Rebholz at 412-327-7621 with any questions.

Church Website Webmaster

The webmaster manages and maintains the Eternal Shepherd's website. Key responsibilities include ensuring that the site is running smoothly, updating contents, maintaining security and troubleshooting technical issues. Please contact Pastor Hammer or Terri Baumann at 864-882-3209.

Property Management Volunteers

If you are concerned about the upkeep and maintenance of the church facility and property, please consider assisting with special projects or on an as-needed basis. Please contact Paul Sherman at 864-602-3262 for more information.

Ushers and Readers.

If you are interested in servicing during worship services, please contact the church office at 864-882-3209 or email office@eternalshepherd.org.

Eternal Shepherd J.O.B. Board

Joyous Opportunities for Believers

Handicap Ramp Building Assistance

If you like to build things, please join the team that builds ramps throughout the community. Please contact Deek Decker at 864-356-2135 for more information.

Christian Outreach Chair

If you are interested in directing our evangelism and charitable services to the community, this job is for you. You will lead monthly Christian Outreach Board meetings and attend Council. You will also request disbursement to various charities that the church supports. Please contact Ann Miller at 864-637-8353 for more information.

Hospitality Members

If you like to cook or entertain, please join the team that assists in the kitchen preparing food for various church functions, please contact Colleen Hesemann at 864-784-0421.

Altar Care Members

Serve as a member of the Altar Care team. Timeframe is one month a year and training is provided.. The main duties include preparing the altar before the service and changing paraments during the assigned month. Please contact Tracy Cochell at 404-433-7338 for more information..

Toys for Gods Kids Volunteers

Help is needed in cutting out the car bodies using a scroll saw or band saw. If this is something that you would like to do, please contact Pastor Ray Ramsburg at 904-583-1214 or Mike Hauser at 864-719-0474 for more information.-

Music and Worship Committee Information

The Music and Worship Committee invites interested members to serve as ushers. This role is an important part of our ministry to the congregation, helping to create a welcoming and orderly worship experience. A handbook outlining the guidelines is provided, and the Elder Liaison to the committee is available to offer individual guidance and support.

In addition, we are seeking additional readers for both worship services. Proclaiming God's Word is a vital and meaningful part of each service. Readers are given advance notice, and we are happy to assist anyone who would like more information or encouragement in this role. Our congregation is strengthened through the generous sharing of time and talents by our members. We prayerfully encourage you to consider how you might serve in these important ministries.

OUR MISSION IN HAITI – SCHOOL PAS BONBON

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you so much for your message and for your continued concern, prayers, and support. It truly means a great deal to us.

Regarding the school at Pas Bonbon, by the grace of God, the school remains safe and continues to function, although within a very challenging context. The teachers are doing their best with the limited resources available. Nevertheless, the overall situation in the country still creates uncertainties and logistical difficulties.

As for the broader situation in Haiti, the country is currently facing a very difficult period marked by political instability and widespread insecurity. In several areas, armed gangs exert significant control, which affects daily life, including access to education, transportation, and basic services. The influence of Gangs is very strong in many regions, particularly in and around Port-au-Prince, Artibonite and some in the Central-Plateau.

Despite these challenges, we continue to trust in God, and remain committed to our mission of education and service. Our 323 children continue to receive a good education. The church is growing up with more members. Your prayers and support are deeply appreciated.

Please feel free to share this update in *The Agapegram*.

Thank you again for your love and partnership.

You are blessed to be a blessing!

In Christ,

Walta Clercius

Pictured here are two of the many classrooms for the 323 students.

We continue to feed every student every day through Trinity HOPE at a meager cost of 38 cents per day per child. Yes, that adds up to a lot and covered because ESLC is Blessed to be a blessing! More information contact Lars Helland



Comfort Dog News

This April marks the 7th anniversary of Seth joining our Eternal Shepherd family and beginning his work in our community. He has been a blessing to many as he shares love and comfort wherever he goes. I think we all can be thankful to our Lord for giving us this beautiful creature whom we have been blessed to walk alongside these past 7 years.

I prefer not to focus on the numbers but rather on the impact we have on those we visit. Nevertheless, it is good to look back and see how far we have come in this ministry. Seth, with his team of 18 human partners, has completed 2,282 visits to various facilities and locations in 7 years. He has >3000 Facebook followers and has gone on 5 deployments as well. We may never know how many lives were touched by Seth and his team, but we pray each time we go out that Jesus' light, love and compassion is with us and in us. We trust Him to show us who needs an extra dose of love, a prayer or a hug. And sometimes, Seth teaches us who needs comfort by snuggling up to them or pulling us towards them. In those cases, we later learn that the person was going through a difficult time.

We will recognize Seth and his team's 7th year of ministry with flowers on the altar and cake in the fellowship hall during the coffee hour. Please be sure to give Seth a gentle pat or hug when you see him at church to thank him for blessing us with his presence and his hard work throughout these 7 years! Also, if you see a team member in a purple shirt on April 19, thank them also because without a team of caring volunteers, Seth wouldn't be able to do the work he does in our community and beyond!

To God be the Glory,
Kyra Carbone, Top Dog
864-932-8308





Feed The Hungry Dates in 2026

Saturday, January 17

Saturday, April 11

Saturday, July 11

Saturday, October 10

Please add these dates to your calendar and remember that we will also need cookie bakers for those dates as well.

Our next Feeding the Hungry Ministry Event is Saturday, 4/11/26. To prepare for this event, we need approximately 8 volunteers to help assemble the sandwiches and pack the lunches.

PLEASE NOTE THE SCHEDULE: We will meet at church in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30am on Saturday, 4/11/26. It will take approximately one hour to complete this task. Then later on that same morning, Saturday, 4/11/26, we will need approximately 8 volunteers to assist with the delivery, set-up, and handout of the lunches to the Our Daily Bread home. We need to be there by 11am. If you would like to volunteer for either of these times, please call Mark Kunkel at (248) 766-8002 and let me know? Thank you for your support!

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE FINANCIAL SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE.

Unfortunately, there is not sufficient interest to sponsor the Financial Seminar. Instead, we are planning to develop an overview that would point to resources available that would provide a starting point for further research on the various financial topics in which you might be interested. It will take time to develop and will not be available until fall when we would have had the Financial Seminar.

If you have expertise in various financial areas and would like to help with the development this document, please Contact Sue Hauser.

Sue Hauser, Stewardship

FOOD BANK NEWS: Please help us in collecting preferred needed canned, or boxed grocery items each month to help restock the Golden Corner Food Pantry's shelves. **April's** preferred product is "**Spaghetti Sauce**" (Please place your items in the containers marked Food Bank down by the Fellowship Hall). ~*Thank you for your generosity and support.*



Daniel's Ballad Dinner Event

Mark your calendars for the **Daniel's Ballad Dinner Event** from 5:30-8:00 pm on Saturday, May 9, 2026. All are invited!

A live musical presentation of **Daniel's Ballad, A Folk Opera** will be offered in ESLC's Fellowship Hall. This musical event takes us further into the fascinating Old Testament book of Daniel. While the last experience celebrated the stories of the exiled Judeans as recorded in Chapters 1-6, the coming presentation reprises those events and delves further into Daniel's dreams and visions as described in the later chapters of Daniel.

Ellen Sheppard (Scottie's sister) has written a lively and entertaining score for Scottie's lyrics concerning the challenges facing Daniel and his friends during the Babylonian exile, then reaches further into the descriptions of Daniel's own visions and revelations as described in chapters 7-12.

Sometimes toe-tapping, sometimes emotionally dark, the historical events of the Judean exiles, as well as Daniel's vivid descriptions, are interspersed with the Gospel message to further illustrate God's plan for His children.

Prior to the 6:45 pm musical presentation, a pot luck supper will be held 5:30-6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Donations are encouraged! All proceeds from **Daniel's Ballad Dinner Event** will help support the Missions Programs of ESLC.

Please join us for this first-ever presentation of **Daniel's Ballad, A Folk Opera**.

*"...Daniel always ends all his visions and dreams, however terrible, with joy, namely with Christ's kingdom and advent."
~ Martin Luther ~ As quoted p. 1394 The Lutheran Study Bible*



Little Lambs Tales

“As the earth brings forth its shoots, and a garden makes its seeds spring up, so will the Lord God make justice spring up, and praise before all nations” (Isaiah 61:11)

Spring is a wonderful season in which we celebrate birth and new life. It reminds us that winters are temporary, and that cold winds will always give way to warm air and summer breezes. Spring is a time for hope and the promise of new beginnings. All of us here at Little Lambs Preschool are ready to shed the jackets and spend much of our time outdoors celebrating God’s beautiful creation.

We begin April looking ahead toward the end of our school year. We have seen a lot of change and growth with all of our children at Little Lambs Preschool. In the 2’s class the students didn’t want to share their toys or play with one another at the beginning of the school year. They were not vocal and had trouble communicating using words. Sitting on the mat to listen to a lesson was a near impossibility. Today, they not only share with one another (for the most part!) but enjoy playing with each other and are now able to sit on the mat for an extended period listening to a story read and singing songs. They are communicative and use words to tell their teachers lots of stories. And I am sure Pastor David and Deaconess Holly appreciate the way they are now able to sit still and listen during Chapel time!

Our children in the 3’s class have grown in so many ways. From expanding their vocabulary to beginning to learn their letter sounds they are more than ready to enter our prekindergarten program. They have also grown in their kindness and love for one another. They love doing crafts and sitting around the teacher table engaged in art and drawing! They may have started the school year shy and unsure but now practically run into school ready for the day.

Our prekindergarten students are more than ready for kindergarten! They love reading, writing, coloring, and absorb learning with zest and enthusiasm. They enjoy one another and play with their friends with kindness and love. They especially love their chapel time where they have the privilege of being the Acolyte. They take this job seriously showing reverence and love of God. This year we began learning new scripture verses each month using song and motion and it has been such a wonderful addition to our curriculum. There is no doubt that these scripture verses have been imbedded into their minds and hearts and they will carry the word of God with them as they leave our school.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and love from all our staff. And a special thank you to Pastor David and Deaconess Holly as they support our school so lovingly day in and day out.

We are very fortunate to be involved in a Christian ministry where we share God’s gifts with so many. Thank you for your continued prayers for our school and faith community.

Blessings in Christ,

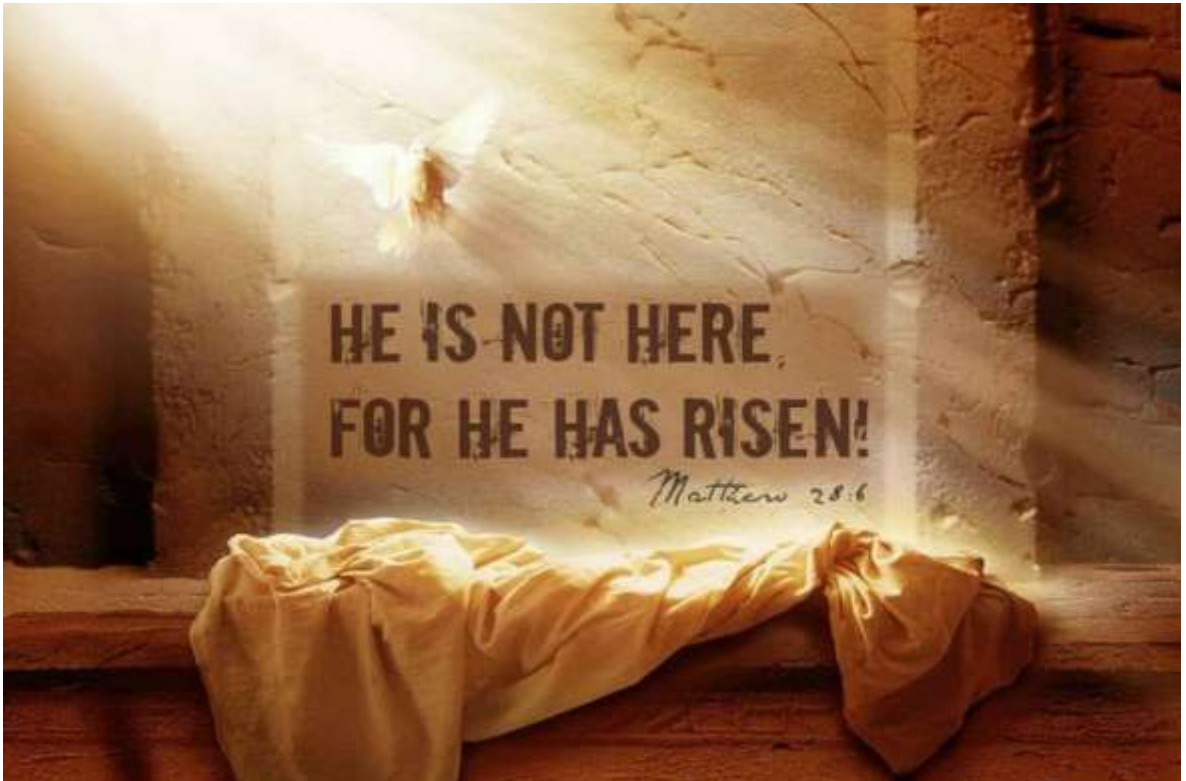
Gina

April Birthdays

1 - Wayne Parrish	18 - Dave Kuhlman
2 - Teresa Todd Tammy Wood	20 - Jim Zwahlen
4 - Sandy Kunkel Jonette Stupke	21 - Linda Nichelson
5 - Shannon Cox	22 - Harold Coale
6 - Rudy Carbone Leo Rebholz	23 - Craig Bergeson
7 - Capt. Bert Wise	24 - Dan Arkfeld Jim Bluhm Bob Massa
8 - Joanne Smith	25 - Sherwood Drexel
11 - Fred Bell	26 - Arline Ray
12 - Patsy Drexel Arthur Eslinger	27 - Jean Dombi Kristin Morriss
15 - Shirley Woods	28—Mark Bonagura John Cochell
16 - Suzanne Lucas Jim Walker	30 - Joseph Louderback

April Anniversaries

1 - Reed & Sandy Severance
7 - Mike & Joye Dittmer
20 - John & Kristin Gemkow
27 - Paul & Susan Sherman
29 - Harold & Shirley Coale
30 - Curtis & Jean Dombi
Carlos & Bobbi Hagler



SERVICE TIMES

8:30 a.m. Worship Service
(Communion 2nd & 4th Sundays)

9:45 a.m. Sunday School
& Adult Bible Study

11:00 a.m. Worship Service
(Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays)



THOSE WHO SERVE

Pastor: David Hammer

Deaconess: Holly Cox

Secretary: Terri Baumann

Preschool Director: Gina Cote

Choir Director: Rick Schmidt

Choir Accompanist: David Phillips

Organist: David Phillips

MISSIONARIES

Nate Esala, Lutheran Bible Translators

David & Dr. Arianna Shirk, Kenya

S.E.D. Missionaries to Peru

Eternal Shepherd Lutheran Church
220 Carson Rd.
Seneca, SC 29678