**ANNOUNCEMENTS December 24, 2023**

**Welcome to Worship in the Wilderness**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent - Christmas Eve**

**Rev. Dr. M. Merritt Worthen, Senior Pastor**

*With Mary we sing: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47, NIV). Welcome to worship*.

With love, we are delighted to welcome you to our Worship in the Wilderness Service this morning. We invite you to join us every Sunday at 11 am and encourage you to bring family and friends. **All are welcome to praise God with us!!!!**

**HOUR OF POWER BIBLE STUDY**

Bible study is on hold through the end of the year.Please take this time to truly reflect upon and enjoy the **real reason for the season.** Reach out to loved ones, be kind to strangers, forgive enemies, and move into the New Year with God's peace. If the Lord allows, we'll gather again January 4, 2024!!

If anyone needs transportation to Worship in the Wilderness on Sunday mornings, please contact Jan Brecht at jsbpups@aol.com or at 937-572-3706 and arrangements to transport you will be made.

**FOR CHILDREN**

We’ve been providing spiritual games, coloring books and crayons during the service for the children who come with the parents. Please let Marva Gray or Josephine Laury know the age(s) of your child or children you plan to bring so we can have age appropriate items for them

“Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that he gave his only Son. The only requirement is to believe in him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life.”
—Corrie ten Boom

THANK YOU

Thank you for helping Carolyn Peter’s friend who recently lost her sight. She recently moved to the area with her ten year old son. We collected $293 last Sunday. Carolyn and her family rounded the total off to $400. Thanks to all of you, we doubled our target to raise. The gift was given last Wednesday and her friend asked that we thank everyone who contributed. It was such a beautiful blessing to her and her son.

**Meeting of the Minds**

***8****This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth;*

*you shall meditate on it day and night,*

*so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it.*

*For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.*

***9****I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous;*

*do not be frightened or dismayed, for theLordGod is with you wherever you go.’*

Joshua 1:8-9 (NRSVA)

Worship in the Wilderness is moving! Thanks be to God, and to all of the people who have brought us this far along our way. Before we go, there will be a **meeting on Sunday, January 7th, immediately following worship**. Pastor Worthen would like to provide an update on our vision, where we are going, and how we get there. It is important before we go any further together, to know and understand the direction that the Lord is leading our pastor and all who are open to God’s vision. Membership is not required, as everyone is welcome. Whosever will, let them come!

**Starting the New Year Off Right**

***21****There, by the Ahava Canal,proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journeyus and our children, with all our possessions.*

Ezra 8:21 (NIV)

Pastor Worthen is announcing a corporate fast for all who are willing to fast together! She believes the Lord is leading us to start the year with a spiritual, physical, mental and emotional cleanse. This fast would be for 40 days (doesn’t have to include Sundays) as Sundays are the Lord’s day. On Sundays you can fast, or break the fast in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Either way, we start on Tuesday, January 2nd and continue through Friday February 16th.

The type of fast? The Daniel fast (see attached sample, but not RULES!). See Daniel chapters 1, 9 and 10, and feel free to google it. The fast can be as strict or as lenient as you choose with God’s help and leading. However, the key is that the fast does not include meat! 😊 It can include everything else, or only things that were available during biblical times, i.e. no Doritos, chips, pastas, candy, or any processed foods. Do be sure to include protein which you can get from other non-meat foods (beans, soy, legumes, etc), along with protein powders. Pastor Worthen chooses to include eggs, as they are not fertilized, as well as cheese. But it is YOUR choice. (Consult a doctor before starting if you have any concerns or medical conditions that could be impacted).

We’ll talk more as we fast and learn together. However, the key is to pray and/or read the Word when you are struggling, and even when you’re not. It is a time of introspection and communion with the Spirit of God. InMatthew 4:4, while being tempted by the devil, rebukes him by saying *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* We need to feast on God’s word, just as often or more than we do on food! Take this journey with us, and see what the Lord will do!

**WHAT TO EAT AND NOT EAT**

**Foods to include in your diet during the Daniel Fast…**

**All fruits:** These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned (watch for added sugar). Apples, Apricots, Avocados, Bananas, Berries, Blackberries, Blueberries, Boysenberries, Breadfruit, Cantaloupe, Cherries, Coconuts, Cranberries, Dates, Figs, Grapefruit, Grapes, Grenadine, Guava, Honeydew melons, Kiwi, Lemons, Limes, Mangoes, Melons, Mulberry, Nectarines, Olives, Oranges, Papayas, Peaches, Pears, Pineapples, Plums, Prunes, Raisins, Raspberries, Strawberries, Tangelos, Tangerines, Watermelon.

**Vegetables:** These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned (watch salt content). Artichokes, Asparagus, Beets, Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery,Chili peppers, Collard greens, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Garlic, Ginger root, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Mushrooms, Mustard greens, Okra, Onions, Parsley, Peppers, Potatoes, Radishes, Rutabagas, Scallions, Spinach, Sprouts, Squashes, Sweet potatoes, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Yams, Zucchini.

**Legumes:** Dried beans Black beans, Cannellini, Pinto beans, Split peas, Lentils, Black eyed peas, Green beans, Green peas, Kidney beans, Peanuts, (includes natural peanut butter), Beans, Lentils, Lupines, White Peas.

**Seeds:** All nuts (raw, unsalted), Sprouts, Ground flax, Cashews, Walnuts, Sunflower, Sesame, Almonds, Natural Almond Butter.

**Whole Grains:** Whole wheat, Brown rice, Millet Quinoa, Oats, Rolled Oats, Plain Oatmeal (not instant), Barley, Grits (no butter), Whole wheat pasta, Whole wheat tortillas, Plain Rice cakes, Popcorn.

**Other:** Tofu, Soy products, Herbs, Small amounts of Honey, Small amounts of Sea Salt, Small amounts of Ezekiel Bread, Small amounts of Olive Oil, Spices (read the label to be sure there are no preservatives).

**Foods to avoid on the Daniel Fast…** All animal products including all meat, poultry, fish… White rice White bread. White flour, All deep fried foods, Caffeine Coffee (including decaf b/c contains small amount of caffeine), Carbonated beverages, Energy drinks, Foods containing preservatives, addtives, Refined foods, Processed foods, Food additives, Refined sugar, Sugar substitutes, Raw sugar, Syrups, Molasses, Cane juice, Margarine, Shortening, High fat products, Butter, All leavened breads, Baked goods, All dairy: Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, Cream, Eggs, Alcohol.

 \*\*As with anything else we do, pray and ask God on how exactly you are to participate in the Daniel Fast. These foods listed are suggestions, not the “law.”

**Use It or Lose It!**

***4****There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spiritthem.*

***5****There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.*

***6****There are different kinds of working,*

*but in all of them and in everyoneis the same Godwork.*

***7****Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

Romans 12:4-7 (NIV)

Do you know your spiritual gift(s)? It is the thing or things that the Lord has given you to bless others. It is something you excel at and/or are very passionate about. So, if you know your gift(s), are you using it to God’s glory? If you don’t know what it is, isn’t it time you discovered it?! And did you know that as you use your gifts, God often begins to multiply them?

Attached is a very basic spiritual gifts inventory to give you an idea of some of the types of gifts there are. This is not an exhaustive list. You are encouraged in your own devotional time to fill it out, even if you have done it previously. I also recommend a more detailed inventory at - type “ECLA RESOURCES SPIRITUAL GIFTS" in the search bar, click "Spiritual Gifts Assessment Tool - Evangelical Lutheran…"and then click "the printable PDF of the ELCASpiritual Gifts Assessment"

It is also helpful to have someone else who knows you really well to fill it out as well, to see what other people see in you. Pastor Worthen will be offering a class following worship in the new year to discuss your results with you, and to see where you think your gifts would best be used inside and outside of the church. If you would like a more customized an individualized meeting, please reach out to Pastor Worthen at past\_mer@yahoo.com and she will be happy to set one up with you.

**HAVE A BLESSED HOLIDAY EVERYONE!!!!**