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Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

one@ourecma.com.

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Topic Articles

***Editor's Note:** This month we asked our writers, "If your denomination observes the season of Lent, describe the purpose of the Lenten season, how it is practiced in your church, and the importance to your denomination? If you do not observe the season of Lent, discuss any traditions you or your church may have surrounding the lead up to Easter? You could also discuss the role waiting/anticipation/patience have in our lives as Christians."*

Preparing for the Resurrection

Written by:

Father Damian Richards

Lent is a 40-Day period of preparation for the Resurrection of Christ at Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, which is on March 5th this year and ends at Easter. The Lenten season is based on the forty days Christ spent in the desert after His Baptism. Just as Christ fasted in the desert for forty days, we fast for forty days as well.

All Catholics are expected to give something up and to do something extra during the Lenten season. Most notably, we don't eat meat on Fridays in Lent. This is

because Christ died on a Friday and so every Friday we remember the sacrifice He made for us.

These devotions stem from the three classic practices to grow in God's grace. In ancient times, if you wanted to grow closer to Christ, there were three things to look at doing. These three things are Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

So, we have extra prayers and devotions during Lent. Stations of the Cross, Adoration, and going to Confession are all Lenten prayers.

We fast or abstain from

foods. We either fast by not eating as much, or abstain, by not eating a certain type of food. Since we abstain from meat, Friday night fish fries are a common sight. So many Catholics will abstain from candy during Lent that national candy sales actually decline in the spring.

We give alms as well. Giving to the poor was commanded to us by Christ Himself, so we give to the needy. We give out Rice Bowls during Lent, especially to the children in our parish. These are cardboard boxes where you put your spare change during Lent. At Easter, you bring those Rice

Preparing for the Resurrection (Continued)

Bowls to Church and the money is given to the foreign missions.

Why do we do these things? A man named Ephrem the Syrian put it best. Ephrem was from Syria and lived in the 300s. He was a mystic and a poet. This is what he wrote on the Power of Fasting: "If someone abstains from meat, the Devil's own flesh wastes away until he makes him stumble. The Devil's blood, too, is drained when he is unable to

douse the faster with wine. If the Devil does not see our passion inflamed, in an oven he is tormented and burned. In a great stove the Devil is burned if he sees human desire tamed. If the Devil goes without hearing the sound of mockery, he becomes deaf. If the Devil sees no licentious behavior, he becomes blind. If the Devil sees the estranged in harmony, he is like one who has lost his other half. If the Devil sees friends, sorrow

rests upon him that he saw love on earth."

By our simple Lenten fasts, we discipline our wills: to imitate Christ and the fasts He took on for us; to learn the virtues of self-control; and to drive the devil far from us and our family.



Fr. Damian Richards, Pastor of St. Nicholas of Myra in Hays & St. Francis of Assisi in Munjor.

Celebrating Easter More Joyfully

Written by:

Rev. Jon Anderson

Lutheran churches observe the common liturgical year, including Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, the Sundays after Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and the Sundays after Pentecost. We observe the festival of the Transfiguration on the last Sunday after Epiphany (the day Jesus was visited by the Magi, or wise men). Traditionally, Transfiguration was celebrated in August, but we moved it to the last Sunday after Epiphany as a final day of celebration before the solemnity of Lent. Lent begins each year on the

Wednesday following Transfiguration, which this year is March 5th.

It is called Ash Wednesday because of the imposition of ashes that takes place during the service. Following an extended confession of sin, the pastor invites those who so desire to come forward and receive ashes on their foreheads, as the pastor says the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" Genesis 2:19 (NRSV). The ashes remind us of our mortality, our sinfulness, and our utter dependence upon God.

Lent goes on for forty

days. During Lent, the word "alleluia" is not used in worship-its note of joy is reserved for the coming celebration of Easter. Normally in our churches "Alleluia" is sung before the Gospel for the day is read, but during Lent another acclamation is sung: one such traditional acclamation is "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love," Joel 2:13 (NRSV). The mood of the services is subdued and meditative, and the Scripture readings focus on difficult periods in Jesus' life leading up to His passion and death. Traditionally, on

Celebrating Easter More Joyfully (Continued)

the first Sunday in Lent the story of Jesus' temptation by the devil is read from one of the Gospels.

Some Lutherans follow the practice of "giving up" something for Lent, although this is not required. Many churches, including two of the ones I serve, offer Wednesday night services during Lent. In those services, our liturgy is Holden Evening Prayer, a service written for Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center in Washington state written by Marty Haugen. I met Marty once at a conference, and he told me that he was surprised that the service had become so popular. We've used this service in our congregations now for nearly thirty years.

Each year's services also have a theme, and this year's is "Silent Witnesses." Each week's message will be an account of events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion and burial, from the perspective of an object that was used there: a nail used to nail Him to the Cross, the stone rolled against the tomb, etc. Services begin at 7:30 each Wednesday March 12th through April 9th at both Bethlehem, WaKeeney and St. John's, Ellis.

Ash Wednesday services will also be held at each church. The last Sunday of Lent-April 13th this year-is called Palm Sunday. The service begins with a procession with palms, as we remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and

includes a full reading of the Passion of Jesus from one of the Gospels, as we recall what happened to Jesus following that triumphal parade. The following Thursday, Maundy Thursday, we remember Jesus' last supper with His disciples, and the next day, Good Friday, we remember the crucifixion. Remembering our sin, and Jesus' suffering for our salvation, prepares us to celebrate Easter more joyfully.



Rev. Jon Anderson serves Prairie Faith Shared Ministry, a group of four Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America (ELCA) congregations in Western Kansas.

Starve the Flesh, Feed the Spirit

Written by:
Rick Claiborn

"No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize," 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NIV).

"Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. Three

times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me," 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (NIV).

The church I grew up in did not participate in the

practice of giving up something for the period of time leading up to Easter, Lent. Some of my friends back then did and I know people now who do so through their church, and I know some people who do so individually.

I am not terribly gifted in the area of patience and waiting. I guarantee my wife is laughing at that sentence.

Starve the Flesh, Feed the Spirit (Continued)

That is probably why I struggle giving up something. Back in the day when I knew what exercise was, I used to agree with the saying "No pain no gain." Exercise hurts. Maybe that is why I don't do enough of it, which ironically means that I have pain due to lack of exercise. But when I think about the amount of pain I used to put myself through just to get better, I wonder what happened to that determination. In essence, I used to be willing to give up comfort knowing that it did not guarantee that I would be successful. In a sport, as an example, it would only give me a chance, but I was willing to endure almost anything for a reward that was not guaranteed.

For the most part, humans are spoiled. We have more than we need. We have food on shelves to buy and gas to make our cars go. We have air conditioning and Tempur-edic mattresses, jobs that pay us money, houses, cars, phones, coffee, and a lot more. There is nothing "wrong" with any of those things. But we do not tend to list those as easily as we can mentally call up the trouble spots - our struggles and fights.

Giving up a comfort is

difficult. When you think about it, the easier it is to give up, the less you are tested by its removal. The harder it is to give up, the more you are tested. The more you are tested, the more you realize that you are not strong enough. You need help. The more help you realize you need, the more you will search for the only thing that can help with anything, Jesus Christ.

If you are in a battle physically, mentally, or spiritually, tell Him you are willing for Him to use it. God does not need our permission. But I believe that He does want our alignment. The person God needs you to tell about Jesus may already be in your life, or they may be waiting just around the corner.

Maybe the issue is whether or not our pain, or sacrifice is voluntary or not. If we think of it as just random it is harder to endure. But just like exercise physically gives you a chance to succeed, spiritual exercise gives you a chance for a better relationship with God, even if you do not see the purpose for something. We have absolutely no idea why most things happen in life, but volunteering spiritually is much better than feeling like

we are being randomly dragged through life.

Jesus was not dragged through life or even through His crucifixion. Jesus volunteered. I think He wants us to volunteer - our entire life. You don't even need to come up with something new. You could volunteer a struggle already in your life for the purpose of growing closer to Jesus.

Why then, in life, do I lack enthusiasm to do without something? Jesus gave up the perfection of heaven to come save me, maybe I could give up sugar in an effort to draw closer to Him.

Challenge:

Denying the physical to accentuate the spiritual does not mean pain stops. I think it just means denying pain the victory it seeks. Ask God to point out something you may have too tight a grip on to let go if He asked. Consider being willing to endure the pain of physical or emotional issues for the gain of spiritual exercise and let God have your issue.



Rick Claiborn is a longtime resident of Hays who loves Jesus and attends High Plains Baptist Church.

Leadership Interviews

Thy Will Be Done

Written by:
Terri Braun

Rev. Chris Prater, Pastor at First Baptist Church, grew up in Indiana with a large (39 aunts and uncles!) tight knit family. Chris vividly remembers one Sunday the summer before his junior year. There was a man in front of him who missed a lot of services and Chris was certain that the Pastor was preaching to him, but Chris was the one that went forward that day and gave his life to Christ. By his senior year, he felt the call to serve the Lord. But being a teen, this did not match his agenda. So, Chris simply didn't listen. He jokes that he became Jonah, running from God...only for much longer.

After graduation, Chris enlisted in the Marines where he discovered that God had a sense of humor. Chris was appointed to pray with his troop every night and even was steered to help the chaplain. But Chris continued to ignore God. After a medical discharge from the Marines, Chris did what Chris wanted to do. He met a woman, married, and got a degree in Business Management.

Life moved forward and Chris began a family and a career. He made every excuse to feed his anger towards God as Chris refused to let God have His way. Chris became jaded and tired from the weight of the daily worldly chains. He began hating

his life and making his wife and children miserable in the process. One day he thought to himself, "This isn't where I want to be." He was tired, unhappy, and wanting to be freed from the negativity. He had run out of excuses. After 10 long years of running from God, Chris decided to listen. God's will be done...finally. Chris was hesitant about telling his wife, but her response surprised him. She said, "It's about time you answer."

Chris attended Christian Theological Seminary in Indiana and graduated in the beginning of May 2009. He was ordained later that month into the American Baptist Churches USA. He currently is working towards obtaining a Doctor of Ministry in Creative Leadership at Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Chris went from hating his life to serving God and loving it. God kept leading Chris to unexpected places where each church he pastored needed guidance and renewed vitality... and Hays was no different. Chris was called to bring new life to the congregation, fan the flame inside each one of them, and help them see their full potential. "The church isn't the building; the building is where the church meets," and like a true shepherd Chris has been beside them each step of the way.

His wife said she would move "anywhere but Kansas." Well...



Pictured: Pastor Chris Prater

that was not God's plan. His will be done. Here Chris is today and he and his wife have found that they love the Hays community. He said his time in Hays "has been the most fulfilling five years of ministry and it is because of the church members. Their passion has been rekindled." First Baptist Church may not be the big family he had growing up, but he states, "They are amazing people, and we are a church family, and they are loved." Today Chris shows no resemblance to that young man that was running from God but rather is listening contently and running with perseverance the race marked out for him (Hebrews 12:1).

Terri Braun is Editor of ONE Magazine.

Ecumenical Events

March 4: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

March 4: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

March 6: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

March 6: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office (3002 Northridge Court). See *below for additional information.*

March 9-11: Speaker/ Author Joel Stepanek speaking on "Trust and Freedom" at St. Nicholas of Myra Church at 7pm each night (2901 E. 13th). Reception following each night. See *below for additional information.*

March 11: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

March 11: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

March 11: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

March 13: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office (3002 Northridge Court). See *below for additional information.*

March 11: Hays Lions Club Sausage and Pancake Feed, 7am-1pm and 4:30pm-7:30pm at Hays National Guard Armory (2nd and Main). Adults \$7 and kids \$5. See *below for additional information.*

March 18: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

March 18: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

March 20: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

March 20: Laundry Love by First Call for Help, 4 - 6pm at 27th and Hall St. Laundromat. Up to 5 free loads of laundry per household per month. Please note a time change for this event.

March 20: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office (3002 Northridge Court). See *below for additional information.*

March 25: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

March 25: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

March 27: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

March 27: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office, 3002 Northridge Court. See *below for additional information.*

Ecumenical Events: Additional Details

Grief Share Group

GriefShare is a support group offering hope and healing to those who have lost a loved one to death. North Oak Community Church is hosting this 13-week grief recovery program beginning February 6, 2025 – May 1, 2025, on Thursdays from 6:00 – 8:00PM at the North Oak Community Church Center Office, 3002 Northridge Court in Hays, Kansas 67601. Each week you will view a 30-minute video filled with helpful guidance, discuss grief related issues, and gain personal recovery tips through your workbook in a safe, comforting environment.



For more information contact Rich Matzke at (785)650-2946 or email: richardmatzke48@gmail.com



Trust and Freedom Presentations

St Nicholas of Myra will be hosting Joel Stepanek, international speaker, and author. The theme this year is “Trust and Freedom.” He will be speaking from 7pm -8pm. March 9, 10, and 11.

On Sunday, March 9, the topic will be “What Love Demands.” The topic on Monday, March 10, will be “The End of Suffering.” The topic on Tuesday, March 11, will be “Trust Beyond the Horizon.”


There will be a reception and an opportunity to meet Joel following each session. The public is invited. There is no charge.

Hays Lions Club Sausage and Pancake Feed

Hays Lions Club will be having a sausage and pancake feed on March 11. It is from 7am-1pm and 4:30pm-7:30pm at Hays National Guard Armory, 200 Main Street.

Adults are \$7 and kids are \$5. Proceeds support Hays community organizations and projects.





Hays Lions Club
Standlee Dalton
Sausage & Pancake Feed
and Broom Sale

Tuesday, March 11, 2025
7:00 am to 1:00 pm & 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Location: Hays National Guard Armory
2nd & Main • Hays, Kansas

All proceeds support:
4-H, Boy Scouts,
Sight Conservation,
Dan Rupp Park,
Community Assistance Center,
provide eyeglasses for children
and other community projects.

You can contact Der Bodine at (785) 623-0333 or any Lions Club member about getting tickets delivered to your business. Lions Club meets Tuesday at noon at Verdant Bistro, 230 E. 8th.

\$7.00 Adults
\$5.00 Children under 10

Opportunities to Serve

Donations Needed! **HELP!**

Items Needed:
Non-perishable/Non-expired

Canned Green Beans	Canned Chicken/Tuna
Canned Corn	Ramen Noodles
Canned Soups	Spaghetti Sauce/Pasta
Canned Beans	Saltine Crackers
Canned Fruit	Granola or Fruit Bars

With the rise in price of groceries, we have seen a big rise in need for food boxes through our pantry. We are struggling to keep up with the pace our food is going out! Please help if you can!

DONATIONS CAN BE MAILED OR DROPPED OFF AT
607 E 13TH STREET
HAYS, KS 67601

FIRST CALL FOR HELP

Donations for First Call for Help

First Call for Help is asking the community to help keep their pantry stocked as they have seen a increase in the need for food boxes as the prices for groceries rise. You can drop off groceries at 607 E. 13th. Their office is open Monday-Friday 8am-12pm and 1pm-4:30pm Anything helps!

Items needed (non-perishable/non-expired):

- Canned green beans
- Canned corn
- Canned soups
- Canned beans
- Canned fruit
- Canned chicken/tuna
- Ramen noodles
- Spaghetti sauce/pasta
- Saltine crackers
- Granola or fruit bars

Part-time Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Hays, KS

A part-time Pastor position will soon be available for the Presbyterian Church of Hays, KS. As one of the oldest churches in Hays, KS, the congregation numbers hold steady at just under 100 members. The part-time Pastor will have a desire to help and encourage the church members to continue to carry out God’s mission for our community. We are looking for individuals who are self-motivated with good communication skills that will engage with and empower our members to discern God’s calling.



A few of the responsibilities of the part-time Pastor will include working in concert with congregation members in leading worship, providing pastoral care and moderating session and church activities. The part-time Pastor will also work alongside our part-time administrative assistant and as needed, the part-time Pastor will perform weddings, funerals and baptisms.



For more information, please contact Melanie Hancock, General Presbyter with the Presbytery of Northern Kansas at 785-825-1654. You can send your resume to Melanie at Presbytery of Northern KS, PO Box 3287, Salina, KS 67402-3287.

On February 1st at North Oak Community Church, Jim VanSteenhouse of Houston shared his story of faith and survival after a grizzly bear attacked him and left him with massive injuries.



On February 8th at the Unrein Family Building at the Ellis County Fairgrounds, United Way had their annual fundraiser. Tickets sold out! Thank you to the sponsors and everyone who attended the Dueling Pianos event and supported the United Way.



On February 7th, Celebration Community Church hosted the Night to Shine, Hays. Night to Shine shares the love of Jesus and celebrates the worth and values of people with special needs. Many volunteers are needed to make this event special so a big thank you to all who volunteered and Celebration Community Church for hosting!