

February 2018



From Pastor Aleese

Promises. Many are well-intentioned. But how many are kept “to the t”? Many of us made promises on behalf of our children in baptism, and some of us have publicly made promises to continue as disciples of Jesus as a part of our affirmation of baptism. But how many of us, *consistently, 100% of the time*, keep the promises that we have made toward God?

As broken people living in a broken world, we will never fully keep any promise we make toward God. We'll abandon our promises that we've made to God in baptism, in our affirmation of baptism, and in our daily walk as disciples. In all, we'll turn away from the promises of God. But thanks be to God that *God always, always keeps God's promises*. Though we may not hold up our end of the deal, *God always, always upholds God's promises to us and to all creation*.

In Scripture, we hear God make promises with God's people time and time again. These promises are often called “covenants.” What makes a covenant a covenant? Simple. Three things:

1. Two people or groups of people
2. A set of promises
3. A sign

Throughout the season of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14), we'll intentionally listen for the covenants and promises that God still makes with us today and look for those signs among us. As Lutherans, we confess that the promise of God's grace is *always given to us through the Word*, through

Holy Communion and through Baptism. But how else are we listening to the promises of God? Where else do we experience God's promises? And have we stopped to *listen and heed* those promises of God for us, and for the world, lately?

On Sunday mornings, we'll engage with the scheduled lectionary readings, pointing us to God's promises in the Gospel and New Testament readings. Then, on Wednesday nights, we'll dive into the covenants God made with our ancestors in the Old Testament (transferring the previous Sunday's OT reading to the following Wed.). Our worship will follow an Evening Prayer service written by one of my colleagues, Pastor Dave Efflandt – a former music educator who now serves as pastor in MN. In worship, we'll cry out for God to have mercy upon us, will seek God's pardon and rest in the promise that Christ writes God's love onto our hearts forever. Then, following worship, those who would like further engagement with these stories of promise will be invited to join us after worship for various interactive learning activities.

In conjunction with the overarching emphasis at SOTC to “listen to God” as we re-ground ourselves in Christ and in God's mission for the world, this season of Lent will serve as a reminder for each and every one of us that *God's promises have been given for you and for the world*. Though we are unable to keep any promise toward God, we rest in the assurance of God's greatest promise: the gift of Jesus Christ, who *always, always promises to love us, no matter what, and promises us fullness of life, now and forever*.

OUR MISSION TOGETHER

Led by Christ, and transformed by his love and grace, we welcome all to join us as shepherds, in praise, worship and compassionate service to others.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

2nd	Carly Dunham Elyse Eichelberger
5th	Kortney Drake Grant Jorgensen
14th	Glenn & Gladys Reif
17th	Kurt & Sara Guhn
19th	Benjamin Burger Eric Reist
23rd	Dave Bakke
24th	Mike & Cathy Bermel
25th	Penny Burger
27th	Sandy Hill
28th	Tom & Penny Berger

Board Meetings

- Lay Ministers
February 6 @ 5:30
- Education
February 6 @ 6:30
- Evangelism
February 8 @ 5:30
- Property
February 13 @ 5:30
- Stewardship
February 15 @ 6:30
- PPC
February 27 @ 6:30

Jesus Wants YOU!

Each September, SOTC works with other area ELCA churches to give back to the community. But who says that service should only happen once a year? God works through our hands to make a positive difference in the name of Jesus every day. On the "God's Work. Our Hands" bulletin board, you'll find opportunities to serve the community, thank you's from organizations that we've supported, and a blank sheet of paper for you all to share people/organizations that need help. Think of this board as a connection and listening point – connecting the gifts and needs of SOTC to the gifts and needs of the community. If you have something that you'd like highlighted on the board, talk to Kathy Dunham.

Upcoming Events

SOTC Monthly Faith Formation and Worship Schedule

Worship and Music

Worship - Sunday, 9:00 a.m.
The Way - Wednesday, 5:00 p.m.

Education

Sunday School and Adult Education - Sunday, 10:20-11:30 a.m.
FINK (more information below) Wednesday, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Bible at the Brew (BATB): 1st Thurs. of the month, 5:30 p.m. at
Missipi Brewing Company
Women's Group: 2nd Sat. of the month, 8:30 a.m. at SOTC
Christians Underground: 3rd Wed. of the month,
11:30-1 at Geo John's

Christians Underground is Back!

Looking for a way to find renewal in the middle of the week? Join us for Christians Underground on the third Wed. of each month starting Feb. 20. Meet at Geo John's (203 E 2nd St.) at 11:30a.m. We'll have some time for fellowship as we gather and then dive into our "study" for the month by 12p.m., wrapping up by 1p.m. For our study, we'll look at the Gospel text from the previous Sunday. Participants will be encouraged to discuss how that text has come to light in their everyday lives and in current events since Sunday. Pastor Aleese will come with a few questions to get us started, and we'll see where discussion takes us from there!

FINK Corner

Schedule

February 7, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	Theme Night @ Grace
February 14, 7:00 p.m.	Ash Wednesday Worship
February 21, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	Individual Congregations
February 28, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	Individual Congregations

The first Wed. of the month we'll complete our romp through those tough topics that teens encounter by focusing on "Sex and Love." (Yep! You heard us right!) Our hope is to integrate what teens are learning in school and at home while bringing their faith into the conversation.

Beginning in Lent, FINK youth and families will be expected to partake in Lenten midweek worship services and interactive learning activities.



Upcoming Events

Chocolate Fest!

February 11th, before heading into Lent and giving our attention to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and giving, we're going to celebrate! All are invited to bring their favorite chocolate delicacy. There will be no education this Sunday.

Pasta For Dinner!

Annual Candlelight Spaghetti Dinner
Saturday, Feb. 17, 5:00-7:00 PM

Intimate dining, servers, excellent homemade food, fellowship!
What more could you ask for?

This annual event will provide funding for youth to go to camp this summer.

Normally we have members sign up for food needed for the dinner, this year we will have Thrivent Action Team so the food list will look a bit different. We will ask what ingredients you need for sauce and bread, then provide those for you to make your speciality. These and other items will be purchased with the \$250 Visa Card Thrivent gives the team. **Sign up sheets for ingredients and workers will be available February 4.**



Re:Vitalize

Sat., Feb. 24, 8-2:30 p.m.

There are exciting things happening by the power of the Spirit at SOTC! And congregations around the synod are showing signs of vitality in so many ways. So rather than learning from a "professional" about what it means to "listen to God" and to be "church" in the 21st century, we've been invited to join the conversation with other leaders who are doing innovative and creative things. As a part of our focus to "Listen to God" at SOTC, we hope to take a team of people with Pastor Aleese to Cedar Rapids for this event to engage in large group presentations, workshops and time for connection with other congregations. Interested in learning more? See the poster on the bulletin board, talk to Pastor Aleese, and/or go to seiasynod.org/revitalize/

Witness for Peace

The facts don't lie. As of Jan. 24, there had already been 11 school shootings in the US alone. That's about one every other day. Though statistics vary, the point is the same: violence, in many forms, is happening near and far. As people of God, we are called to make a positive difference in the name of Jesus and promise abundant life to those who experience violence. If you're interested in joining the conversation, join others from the greater Muscatine area on the second Sunday of each month at 3pm in the Discovery Park Environmental Center. We'll gather in conversation, Scripture and prayer, witnessing to peace and the common good, and remain open to what God might be calling us to pursue in Muscatine in response. Join us as you are. All are welcome.

Ways to Listen to God this Month



Beginning at our Semi-Annual meeting, we began a journey to intentionally focus on "listening to God." Looking for some opportunities to do just that? Consider these:

- **Small Group Bible Studies:** Join Women's Group, Bible at the Brew or Christians Underground to take a pause and hear God's word in scripture. Each group's study will not be the same, so feel free to bop in on more than one!
- **R&R with God:** Sometimes we need a place of stillness and silence to actually listen to the voice of God. R&R is time to learn new prayer practices that encourage us to rest in the presence and promises of God.
- **Re:Vitalize:** Join with others from SOTC and congregations around the synod to listen to each other, listen to God, and ponder how the Spirit is moving the church in 2018. Details to the right.

Not able to join us all together? No problem! This month, take advantage of those few moments of silence, whenever they come. Our lives are busy. But what about turning off the radio on the way to work? What about those few moments before hitting the pillow at the end of the day? There are periods of time in each of our days that could be moments of silence.

Challenge yourself to be silent for a time and listen to what's going on around you. Listen to what your heart is telling you. And listen for the voice of God's Spirit, stirring within you.

Ministry Connection

The Water and The Witness

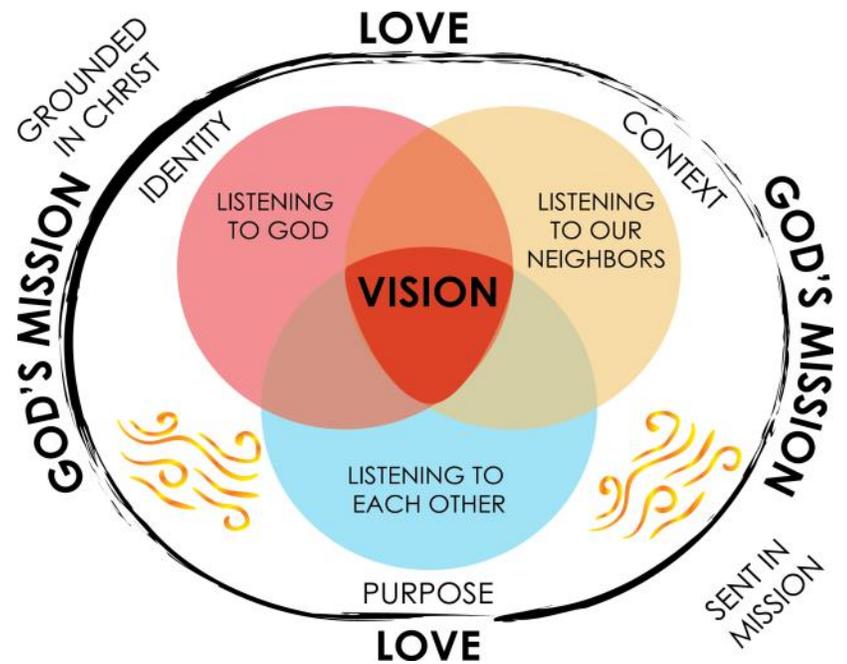


Used for garden tools, sidewalk salt, water balloons or to feed the chickens. You might have one laying around in the garage, basement or shed somewhere. The five-gallon bucket is a simple ubiquitous tool of Iowa life in both urban and rural environments. And beginning this February, bright blue five-gallon buckets will be spread throughout the Southeastern Iowa Synod with four simple words on them "The Water The Witness."

We take for granted that we can quench our thirst at any water tap anytime without worrying about illness. Globally, 1 in 4 people – about 1.8 billion – drink from contaminated water sources. And even domestically in the US, we don't have to think very long to remember the Flint water crisis, that is still ongoing. In response, congregations across the synod are being called to make the connection between the waters of our baptism and the world's water-related need.

So here's where we come in: Pastor Aleese has *already* picked up a bucket for SOTC! By taking a bucket, we commit ourselves to raise *at least* \$500 toward a special offering at the Synod Assembly. Beginning in Lent, we'll prominently display our bucket in the narthex. We'll focus on this service opportunity during Lent, and potentially until the Synod Assembly in May.

At our Semi-Annual Meeting, we remembered that we are "children of God, worthy of love and respect, and capable of making a positive difference in the world today." Connected with the Southeastern Iowa Synod, we have the ability to make a difference in the lives of many, many people. Will you help?



Grounded in Christ, Sent in Mission

At our Semi-Annual Meeting Pastor Aleese led us through a brainstorming session to dive further into our identity and purpose at SOTC. Grounded in the Good News of Jesus Christ, we trust that we are given our identity as beloved children of God, worthy of love and respect, and are capable of making a positive difference in the world today in the name of Jesus.

As we move forward, PPC has encouraged us to continue thinking about these themes. Why? Not because we're disappointed in where the congregation is at today. And not because we desire anybody to change for the sake of change. Rather, we're exploring these themes of identity and purpose to...

- focus our energy on listening for God's voice
- experience transformation
- re-center ourselves on God's call
- and discern how our identity and purpose fit within God's mission

So how are we going to do that? We begin by Listening to God. Looking for ways to partake in our congregational wide effort this month? Check out some opportunities on page 3. We pray that you consider joining us on this journey and remain open to the work of the Spirit!

Wonder Years Preschool

Registration for fall 2018 is now open. We have a morning 3s class that meets on Tuesdays & Thursdays, a morning 4s class that meets Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays, and an afternoon 4s class that meets Tuesdays through Fridays. Registration can be completed by contacting Michele Rogers or by registering online through the Muscatine Schools website. For more information, call Michele Rogers at 563-260-5585.

Parish Planning Council

January 23, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Present: Heather Allen, Amy Bakke, Pastor Aleese Baldwin, Kathy Dunham, Roger Luff and Barb Williams.

Devotion: Devotion was led by Pastor Aleese (John 1:35-51) a dialogue was read with the central message being, Love.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Aleese provided the board with a report on how her time has been spent over the past two months at SOTC with her focus being on: Advent Adult Ed series, R&R with God, Advent-Christmas "Prepare Ye the Way! The King is Coming!", Welcoming of New Members, Muscatine Ministerial Association - Witness for Peace, Ashes to Go, Reached out to Trinity Hospital, Prep for Semi-Annual Meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Anonymous donation for the Roof Fund has been deposited. One of our furnaces is needing attention. HVAC fund has \$2,600 available for repairs or replacement of the furnace.

Board Reports:

- **Education:** Themes are set for the rest of the school year for Sunday School. Looking at camps for confirmation and funding. Spaghetti Supper plans are under way. Dave will request Thrivent funds with Amy leading the effort. No one will be attending the Youth Gathering this time. Interest in an EWALU camp is being explored.
- **Evangelism:** Delivering cookies to community employees went well and Game night was fun for all who attended.
- **Lay Ministers:** Advent went well. New Members were welcomed Sunday, Jan. 21st. Musicians are covered with help from Patti Oestmann. Confirmation and Baptism dates continue to be gathered from members. If needed Lay Ministers will jump in to help with Lenten services.
- **Property:** Plans for replacing the roof continue. Two of our furnaces are in need of repair, parts have been ordered for one. Heater in women's restroom has been installed. No smoking policy has been sent with new signage coming soon.
- **Stewardship:** Report not available.

New Business: Semi-Annual Meeting will be Sunday, Jan. 28th. "Grounded in Christ's Love, Sent in Mission" will be presented to help explore our identity and purpose at SOTC.

Next meeting will be February 27th @ 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn was made by Amy Bakke, seconded by Barb Williams. All in favor, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.



Worshiping Across Generations

At the Semi-Annual Meeting, we took time to think about the things that define Shepherd's identity. One theme that was added to the list was "intergenerational." Looking around, intergenerational activities happen all the time at SOTC! Here, in worship, Holden Brockert is learning from Gary Grete. How might we continue to teach our children and youth by example? And how might the wonder and energy of children inspire adults?

Community Events

Tubing with Zion Lutheran

Sun., Feb 18 from 4-6pm - Interested in tubing at Snowstar with Zion Lutheran? (meet at Zion at 3:15pm). There will be a cost for tickets, but will be reduced due to a group rate. Interested? Sign up in the narthex or talk to Pastor Aleese.

Food Pantry Needs

Every time you do your grocery shopping, please consider purchasing an item or two that can be donated. Bring it to church and add it to the collection box in the narthex. We will be sure that donated items are taken to the Food Pantry on a consistent basis.

For the month of February you are invited to bring canned meats (tuna, chicken), box meals (Hamburger Helper)



SOTC Hours

Pastor Aleese: Tues.: 8-10 a.m.
Wed.: 2-5 p.m.
Fri.: 3-5 p.m.
Office Hours: Mon.: 1-5 p.m.
Tues. 4-6 p.m.
Wed.: 4-6 p.m.

For clarification, we will be working throughout the week, these are the times that you can expect to find us in the office. Monday is Pastor Aleese's day off.

Products of the



Why we are "hooked."

Of course we enjoy creating items to sell. But it goes much deeper than that. It's the sharing of ideas, the fellowship, the story telling, and yes, maybe even the treats but, week after week it's the helping of

those in need in our community that keep us coming back.

Bill Dyar, coordinator at the Muscatine Food Pantry (MFP), joined us one evening to tell us how much our efforts were appreciated and to share with us some information about what happens at the MFP. He explained that the funds given to the MFP do not buy meals for families. The funds help people create healthy meals. People that go to the food pantry are given food items to complete meals. A lot of the time it is through networking, sharing of resource's and ideas that meals are made. Not only sharing of food, but sharing of information and job opportunities. Bill also pointed out that whatever is donated to the food pantry is given, free of charge to those in need. This includes, coats, hats, gloves, clothes, shoes & socks, cleaning supplies... and the knowledge that someone cares and is willing help those struggling.

So, yes, we do have a good time creating together, but more importantly, assisting those in need for the greater good is why we are "hooked."

Weekly Giving

December

December 3	\$1715.00
December 10	\$2533.00
December 17	\$4596.00
December 24	\$2570.00
December 31	\$ 865.00
Total	\$12,279.00

January

January 7	\$2091.00
January 14	\$2143.51
January 21	\$1367.00
January 28	\$1205.00
Total	\$6806.51

Thank you for your continued support of the mission of Shepherd of the Cross! Because of your generosity, we continue to share the Spirit and share the story of Jesus! Thank you!

Prayers of the People

Please remember the following people in your prayers this month:

Concerns

Members of SOTC who struggle with health concerns, including: Sara Guhn, Ruth Reist, Thelma Pendleton, Judy Braun, Margaret Hildebrandt and Fuz Miller
Colby DeBlaey, sister-in-law of Becky DeBlaey, diagnosed with breast cancer
Kenneth James, brother of Ruth Reist, recovering from hip surgery
Sharon Pugh, mother of Cathy Bermel, health concerns
Phyllis Martz, friend of the Grete's, diagnosed with breast cancer
Al Oestmann, receiving therapy at Lutheran Living
Those who mourn the death of Norma McConnaha

Joys

For the light of Christ, shining through this congregation
For women who gathered in fellowship and blessed our "home" of SOTC for the coming year
In celebration for new members who have joined our community of faith!

Sunday Fellowship Teams

February 4 ~ Team 5

Joanne Drinkall, Marlys Grete, Elizabeth Hill, & Sandy Hill

February 11 ~ Team 6

Amy & Dave Bakke, Margaret Hildebrandt, Glendola Reinier, and Ruth Reist

February 18 ~ Team 1

Betty Burch, Becky DeBlaey, Kaia Petesen, Melanie Wachtel

February 25 ~ Team 2

Heather Allen, Cathy Bermel, Leslie Eichelberger, & Patti Oestmann



Lenten Meal Schedule

February 21 - Lay Ministers	Chili & Chicken Noodle Soup
February 28 - Property	Baked Potato Bar
March 7 - Stewardship	
March 14 - Evangelism	Hot Chicken Sandwiches
March 21 - Education	Sloppy Joes

Worship Assistants

	Greeters	Ushers	Readers	Children's Sermon	Communion Assistants	Communion Set-Up	Fellowship/ Mid Week Meal	Acolyte
Sunday February 4 @ 9:00 a.m.	Ackers		Roger Luft	Dave Bakke	Ava Acker	Marlys Grete	Team 5	Ava Acker
Sunday February 11 @ 9:00 a.m.		Roger Luft	Josh Allen	Leslie Eichelberger	Josh & Zach Allen	Patti Oestmann	Team 6	Zach Allen
Ash Wednesday February 14 7:00 p.m.			Marlys Grete	X		Marlys Grete	X	
Sunday February 18 @ 9:00 a.m.			Leslie Eichelberger		Roger Luft	Marlys Grete	Team 1	
Wednesday February 21 7:00 p.m.	X			X	X	X	Lay Ministers	
Sunday February 25 @ 9:00 a.m.						Patti Oestmann	Team 2	
Wednesday February 28 @ 7:00 p.m.	X			X	X	X	Property	

February 2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 5:00 Weight Watchers 5:30 Bible @ the Brew 6:30 Stitching Group	2	3 7:30 Weight Watchers
4 9:00 Worship Service 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 11:30 R & R with God	5 5:00 Weight Watchers	6 5:30 Lay Ministers 6:30 Education	7 5:00 The Way 6-8 FINK @ Grace	8 5:00 Weight Watchers 5:30 Evangelism 6:30 Stitching Group	9	10 7:30 Weight Watchers 8:30 Women's Group
11 9:00 Worship Service 10:15 Chocolate Fest 3:00 Witness for Peace 5:00 R & R with God	12 5:00 Weight Watchers	13 5:30 Property	14 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service	15 5:00 Weight Watchers 6:30 Stitching Group 6:30 Stewardship	16	17 7:30 Weight Watchers 10:30 New Member Meeting 5-7 Spaghetti Supper
18 9:00 Worship Service 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 4-6 Tubing @ Snowstar 5:00 R & R with God	19 5:00 Weight Watchers	20	21 11:30 Christians Underground 5:00 The Way 6:00 Meal 7:00 Worship 7:45 Interactive Learning	22 5:00 Weight Watchers 6:30 Stitching Group	23 <i>Newsletter Deadline</i>	24 7:30 Weight Watchers 8-2:30 p.m. Re:Vitalize
25 9:00 Worship Service 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 5:00 R & R with God	26 5:00 Weight Watchers	27 6:30 PPC	28 5:00 The Way 6:00 Meal 7:00 Worship 7:45 Interactive Learning			
		<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px;"> <p><u>Upcoming Events</u></p> <p>March 29 Maundy Thursday 6:00 p.m.</p> <p>March 30 Good Friday 7:00 p.m.</p> <p>April 1 Easter Sunday Breakfast and Worship</p> </div>				