



## “Not afraid of burning in hell”

While watching a Democratic debate in January, I was amazed to see Ron Reagan, the son of the late President Ronald Reagan, in an advertisement from the Freedom From Religion Foundation declaring that he is, “not afraid of burning in hell.” I was appalled at Reagan’s brashness and mocking of religion. I was also struck by what I believe is a misinterpretation of the “threat of hell” in religion. For the record, I’m not afraid of burning in hell either. The word hell appears in the Bible only 16 times, 7 times in Matthew, 3 times in Mark and Acts, and once in Luke, James, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. The word hell does not appear in the Old Testament at all. The realm of outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth is referred to seven times. (Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, and Luke 13:28)

Theresa F. Latini, former assistant professor of Congregational and Community Care at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, explain hell as it appears in the Bible this way:

What is hell?

Ineffable. Scripture depicts hell with a variety of images, metaphors, and phrases. In the Old Testament, hell is likened unto eternal darkness, a returning to dust, deafening silence, the absence of joy, strength or vitality, and utter powerlessness. In the New Testament, hell is depicted as the deep, prison, fire, utter darkness, and total separation from God. Taken together, these images suggest that hell is not so much a place as it is a state of being (or non-being).<sup>2</sup> It is a state of utter passivity, complete chaos and inner disorientation. It is the complete absence of hope and the cessation of one's life energy. It is nothingness and non-being, the loss of all connection -- connection to God, others, and self. Therefore, it is qualitatively distinct from any human experience.

[<sup>2</sup>Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Ignatius Press, 2000).]

What I would tell Ron Reagan if I could, is that Christianity is not a religion of fear of hell, but it is a religion of connection with God and with one another. We are connected to God through Jesus, because God loves us so much that God wants to be in relationship with us. Always. This love does not end with death. The resurrection of Jesus is about how God’s love is stronger than even death. I am not a Christian because I am afraid of hell. I am a Christian because Jesus loves me and I, in my imperfect human way, love Jesus. I am connected to God and to other people through the love of Jesus. I will live in that love always. I invite you to live in that love and connection.

# FISHER NEWS

Women <sup>of the</sup> ELCA 

**March 9th & 10th:**

9:00 AM Quilting

**March 18th:**

9:00 AM WELCA Bible Study

**March 23rd & 24th:**

9:00 AM Quilting



May the sun  
shine all day long,  
everything go right and  
nothing wrong. May those  
you love bring love back  
to you and may all  
the wishes you wish  
come true!

If you are interested in providing a plant/s for Easter, please let Sheryl Tinkham know by March 22nd. You can either call/text her at 701-740-8484 or email her at [sheryltinkham@gmail.com](mailto:sheryltinkham@gmail.com). Checks need to be made out to Fisher Lutheran with "plant" in the memo line. Payment is due upon ordering. Plants are \$12 each.

*Easter Lily (5-7 blooms) 6" pot*

*Hyacinths 6" pot*

*Tulips 6" pot*

# WALK DUSTY

As we enter the season of Lent let us remember that it is a long and dusty road. It is on this journey that we reflect on those who have gone before and those who will come after. We identify with the hurt and the pain. We live in the messiness that comes with the often-dirty road that we must travel. Let us also remember that it is this dust we call life that shapes and forms us into resurrection people. Just as we walk wet in recognition of our baptism and the promise that it holds, you are encouraged to Walk Dusty. Remember that in the brokenness, we are healed. While the journey is long and tiresome, resurrection promises are greater. In our dusty walk we claim the promise of new sandals and clean garments. As we walk dusty, we remember that we have come from dust and dust we shall return.

**WALK DUSTY – ASH WEDNESDAY**

**WALK TOGETHER – MARCH 4**

**WALK IN FAITH – MARCH 11**

**WALK IN HOPE – MARCH 18**

**WALK WET – MARCH 25**

**WALK IN GRACE – APRIL 1**

**WALK IN FORGIVENESS – MAUNDY THURSDAY**

Walk Dusty is a study series for Lent published by Old Lutheran. Used with permission.



PRAYER



FASTING



ALMSGIVING



It's a tradition in rural communities across the Midwest, people weathered hardship by being there for each other – Neighbor for Neighbor. When times get tough, we draw together and reclaim our sources of hope: our faith in Jesus Christ, our resilient communities and services, our legacy of being there for each other.

Come and experience a revival of hope in our heartland featuring Red River Worship! Discover best practices for moving forward in stressful times! Hear an encouraging message of being there – God for us and all of us for one another – Neighbor for Neighbor!

**Sunday, March 15th at 7:00 pm**  
**Concordia Lutheran in Fertile**



Take advantage of the early bird discount before March 15th!! This is not only for kids but there are programs for every age. Brochures are in the narthex of both churches.

[pathways@pathwaysbiblecamps.org](mailto:pathways@pathwaysbiblecamps.org)



## March Special Offering is for Valley Senior Living

***"Valley Senior Living provides  
compassionate Christian care and service  
to enhance the quality of life  
for those we serve."***

Welcome to the Valley Senior Living communities. Owned and operated by local Lutheran churches, Valley Senior Living has been preserving the dignity and independence of those we serve since 1924. At Valley Senior Living we will offer a relaxed, comfortable environment that contributes to healthier, happier and more productive living.

Valley Senior Living consists of six communities located on three campuses. There is a true sense of community in all of our facilities. A variety of programs and services offered include [Country Estates](#) and [Cherrywood Village](#), senior apartments, [Wheatland Terrace](#), assisted living, [Tuftes Manor](#), basic care, and skilled nursing, [Valley Senior Living on Columbia](#) and [Woodside Village](#). All of these components provide a full continuum of long term care services within our organization.

Fisher and Bygland churches are corporate congregations who co-own Valley Senior Living. Our board members are Ken Miller from Fisher and Wendy Waller from Bygland. Please prayerfully consider a gift to Valley Senior Living for our March special offering.

**Saint Patrick** was a fifth-century Romano-British Christian missionary and bishop in Ireland. Known as the "Apostle of Ireland", he is the primary patron saint of Ireland, the other patron saints being Brigit of Kildare and Columba. He is venerated in the Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran Churches, the Old Catholic Church, and in the Eastern Orthodox Church as equal-to-the-apostles and Enlightener of Ireland.

The dates of Patrick's life cannot be fixed with certainty, but there is broad agreement that he was active as a missionary in Ireland during the fifth century. Nevertheless, as the most recent biography on Patrick shows, a late fourth-century date for the saint is not impossible. Early medieval tradition credits him with being the first bishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, and regards him as the founder of Christianity in Ireland, converting a society practising a form of Celtic polytheism. He has been generally so regarded ever since, despite evidence of some earlier Christian presence in Ireland.

According to the autobiographical *Confessio* of Patrick, when he was about 16, he was captured by Irish pirates from his home in Britain and taken as a slave to Ireland, looking after animals; he lived there for six years before escaping and returning to his family. After becoming a cleric, he returned to northern and western Ireland. In later life, he served as a bishop, but little is known about the places where he worked. By the seventh century, he had already come to be revered as the patron saint of Ireland.

Saint Patrick's Day is observed on 17 March, the supposed date of his death. It is celebrated inside and outside Ireland as a religious and cultural holiday. In the dioceses of Ireland, it is both a solemnity and a holy day of obligation; it is also a celebration of Ireland itself.

From Wikipedia



# Herbert Chilstrom, first ELCA presiding bishop, dies at 88

The Rev. Dr. Herbert W. Chilstrom, 88, the first presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), died Jan. 19 at his home in Green Valley, Ariz. He was born in Litchfield, Minn., on Oct. 18, 1931.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Corinne (Hansen), also a Lutheran pastor; a daughter, Mary Cress of Mesa, Ariz.; a son, Christopher Holt of Baltimore; and four sisters, Winnifred Christenson of Robbinsdale, Minn.; Virginia Francis of Pickens, S.C.; Martha (Charles) Anderson of Ashby, Minn.; and Janet (Frederick) Sickert of West Linn, Ore. He was preceded in death by his son Andrew; brother, David; and sisters Adeline Christenson (Earle) and Lorraine Juul (Dick).

Chilstrom completed academic degrees at Augsburg University, Augustana Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Princeton Seminary and New York University, where he earned a Doctor of Education degree.

He served Lutheran congregations in Pelican Rapids, Elizabeth and St. Peter, Minn. He was professor and dean at Luther College, Teaneck, N.J., from 1962 to 1970. In 1976 he was elected bishop of the Minnesota Synod of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). At the 1987 merger that created the 5.2-million-member ELCA, he was elected the first presiding bishop.

Chilstrom was awarded 15 honorary doctorates by 15 colleges, universities and seminaries. He was named a commander of the Royal Order of the North Star by King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden and received the Pope John XXIII Award for Distinguished Service from Viterbo University, the Servus Dei Award from the ELCA, and numerous other honors and awards. Chilstrom served on numerous boards of directors, including those of the Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, Switzerland (as vice president); Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota; Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.; and the National Council of Churches.

He also authored numerous books and articles. After retirement he continued to be active in church and community, preaching and lecturing in many parts of the country. He became a Minnesota Master Gardener, volunteering and serving as interim director at the Linnaeus Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College.

The family prefers that memorial gifts be given to the Herbert Chilstrom Chair in New Testament Studies at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, or to one of the Chilstrom student scholarship funds at Luther Seminary; Gustavus Adolphus College; Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Minn.; or Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn.

