

Quick Recap: Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church: Sunday, March 15, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

The worship service focused on the theme of Jesus and Pilate, with a special emphasis on understanding the historical and theological context of the Gospel reading. Pastor Janet provided a reflection on the meaning of truth and the crucifixion, emphasizing the power of love to overcome sin and death. The congregation shared personal experiences of encountering God in various aspects of daily life, including sports and family events. The service included a Lenten Affirmation of Faith, prayers for various concerns, and a celebration of Holy Communion where all are welcome. The worship concluded with birthday wishes for Pastor Janet and a message of support for those experiencing loss or health challenges.

Summary of Worship

Lenten Service: Jesus and Pilate

The theme of worship on the Fourth Sunday of Lent was "Jesus and Pilate." Pastor Janet led the service, welcoming attendees both in-person and at home. The service began with the call to worship, confession, and a prayer. Holy Communion was offered for those at home, with instructions provided on how to prepare their communion elements. Pastor Janet also commended the reflection from Assisting Minister Tim Kirchoff, which was printed in the at-home worship bulletin.

Interpreting John's Gospel with Care

The sermon focused on a Gospel reading from John, with an introduction to the Gospel lifting up the historical context and interpretation of references to Jews in the text. Pastor Janet emphasized the importance of reading these passages with awareness of how they have been misused to foster discrimination against Jewish people throughout history. The reading concluded with reflections on the story of Barabbas and its relevance to modern issues of exclusion and marginalization, encouraging the congregation to live out God's love and truth in their actions and relationships.

Lutheran Atonement and Shalom Sermon

Following the Hymn of the Day, the sermon resumed, with focus on the concept of atonement in Lutheran theology, explaining that it represents God's act of love rather than vengeance, bringing people into a new relationship with God called shalom. Pastor Janet described how Jesus took humanity's place, experiencing pain willingly so that the world could experience resurrection and new life.

Congregational Sharing: Adult Baptism and Faith in Sports and Worship

During the sharing time, a congregant shared a personal story about attending their 91-year-old uncle's baptism in Minnesota, which coincidentally occurred during a family visit for another relative's funeral service.

Pastor Phil shared his observations of faith expressions during basketball games, noting the presence of crosses and stars of David in the audience and players pausing to pray. Lori responded by sharing examples of faith in sports, including a story about players praying after a hockey game and a Venezuelan baseball player making the sign of the cross before batting. The group discussed the importance of being bold in their faith and making it visible to others, followed by a Lenten Affirmation and prayer led by Assisting Minister Tim Kirchoff covering topics including church guidance, environmental protection, and healing for the sick and troubled.

Lenten Service and Community Prayers

The meeting was a religious service that included prayers, a sermon, Holy Communion, and hymns. The service focused on the Lenten season and included a blessing for those facing challenges, including Clare and Dorothy who lost their eldest dog, and Jim and Sally's grandson who is struggling with health issues. The congregation celebrated Pastor Janet's birthday during the service, and shared in prayers and well-wishes for various individuals and situations. The service concluded with a Lenten blessing and the hymn "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace."

Marked by the cross of Christ forever, we gather in love, grow in faith, and share God's love and grace.
We are empowered to boldly proclaim and witness God's word.

**Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (ELCA)
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