



March Newsletter

Worship with us Sundays at 10:30 am.

Each 10:30 am service is livestreamed on YouTube for those that are unable to join us in person.

Church Office Hours:

Monday - Friday: 8:30 am - 1:30 pm

Micah Kearney, Pastor

mkearney@holyc.org

Beka Forst, Deacon of Discipleship

rforst@holyc.org

Greg Cline, Organist /Choirmaster

gclinea440@aol.com



**Pastor
Micah Kearney**

In a sermon recently I restated a phrase that I've used many times, and at some point I should figure out where to attribute this, that a life of faith is about becoming, not being. The idea is that none of us...

[Read](#)



March Birthdays

We recognize and celebrate these birthdays! We are thankful for the Life and Spirit of those we celebrate. May the blessings of God flow in the life of each of you.

March 4	Dean Halvorson
March 5	Rob Ratchford
March 6	Debbie Baker
March 6	Ashley Hyman
March 6	Jo Singleton
March 10	Dee Smith
March 12	Veronica Bryant
March 13	Raini Kimball
March 14	Tracey Nault
March 14	Nancy Powell
March 17	Brittany Lewis
March 18	Jodi Nerret
March 20	Mike Wesson
March 24	Mollie Caldwell
March 25	Pat Koehler
March 26	Cheryl Grant
March 28	Callum Nance
March 31	Pat Long

Monthly Gatherings

- “ Lenten Dinners & Worship - March 6th & March 13th, 6:00pm & 6:45pm
- “ Church Council Meeting- March 10th, 12pm
 - “ Kid's Club - March 10th, 4pm
 - Small Group 1- March 10th, 4pm
 - “ Small Group 2- March 12th, 7pm
- “ Prime Timers- March 14th, 10:30am
- Christian Education Meeting- March 19th, 7pm
- “ Outreach Meeting- March 21st, 7pm
- Lenoir-Rhyne Choral Concert- March 21, 7pm**
- Maundy Thursday Worship- March 28, 7pm**
- Good Friday Worship- March 29, 7pm**
- Easter Egg Hunt-March 30th, 2pm**
- Easter Sunrise Service- March 31, 7am**

Sundays:

- “Sunday School - 9:30 am
- “Church Choir - 10:10 am
- “Worship - 10:30 am
 - “ HCY - 5 pm
- “Adult Handbells - 5 pm
- Church Choir - 6 pm

Mondays:

- Book Club - 7:00pm

Wednesdays:

- Youth Handbells - 5:30pm
- Chamber Choir - 7:00 pm

2nd & 4th Tuesdays:

- “Nar-Anon Meeting - 7:00 pm



All of our choir ensembles have been hard at work preparing for the Lenten, Holy Week, and Easter season. We began this process the first time we saw each other in 2024. The music ministry is ...

[Read More](#)



For a long time, people have asked me how did I know I wanted to be a deacon, or why didn't I choose to do the real thing and become a pastor, or why didn't I ...

[Read More](#)



Students will learn more about God's grace and forgiveness and why it's so important to the Christian faith. Podcasts are live for a month, reflections required for credit. This is a one credit elective course. Check out our podcast by clicking the button below.

[Podcast](#)

It's about Love

Rianna Nance lives in Stanley to raise chickens and attends Holy Comforter to be surrounded by love. In both cases she does this for her family.....



LENT MEAL MARCH 13TH
YOUTH FUNDRAISER

TACO-BOUT A FEAST!

Dinner is a Love Offering!
Support how you can, eat
with your friends!
Join us for Dinner at 6 pm
and worship to follow!





We have officially launched our youth mission trip fundraising for our ambitious goal of sending all our youth on a mission trip this summer! Our goal of \$14,000 dollars

needs to be met by June 1st. We recognize not everyone does their giving through the physical offering plate. To donate online please use the link below!

[Donate Link](#)



@HOLYCOMFORTERUPDATES



THE DWELLING COMES TO VISIT!

On March 17th, we will welcome
Pastor Emily Norris from the Dwelling to
share the good news!

"Where God and God's People Meet"

Holy Comforter has acknowledged our call to love our neighbors living without. To compassionately and effectively serve and support members of our local community facing housing and food insecurities. We hope to practice radical compassion and empathy for our neighbors in Gaston county.

For the last two summers our youth have visited the Dwelling, served alongside, heard the stories love, and became friends with those who are experiencing homelessness or living below the poverty line.

The Dwelling is Kingdom people seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice; church people often put church work above concerns of justice, mercy, and truth. Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might



Isle of Palms Annual Trip

It's time to reserve your room(s) for the Isle of Palms Coastal Retreat! This retreat is open to everyone at Holy Comforter. Rooms are available May 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th. The cost per night is \$135. We have rooms that include one queen and a set of bunk beds. We also have rooms with 2 double beds. You will need to provide your own linens (towels and sheets). Reservations must be made through Holy Comforter. If you are interested in reserving a room, please pay the church for the number of rooms and nights. We will also need to know what type of room you would like to reserve. You must indicate on the envelope or check that it is for Isle of Palms Coastal Retreat. Payment must be received to book your room. If you have any questions please contact Shelia Kelly (704-718-6161) or Amanda Kelly (828-429-6601).

Note: If you pay electronically through the church site please notify Shelia or Amanda so we can ensure your reservation is completed.

Deadline for reserving rooms is: April 21st, 2024.

2024



**SIGN UP TO BE A
WORSHIP VOLUNTEER**

A huge THANK YOU to our volunteers. We appreciate your involvement & all your help! 2024 Sign Ups are open!

Altar flowers are the flowers that are on the altar during worship. They can be given *in honor or memory* of someone and are a reminder of the resurrected Christ. Once worship is over, you are able to collect the flowers that you sponsored. The price per vase is \$22.50 or \$45 if you purchase both.

**2024 Altar
Flowers**

Being a Lector is an easy and important way to lead during worship. It would be most helpful for you to sign up for a month at a time, or as much of the month as you can. Readings will be sent to you the Monday before your Sunday.

2024 Lectors

Children's Church is available for pre-k- 5th graders every Sunday during the readings, the Gospel, and the Sermon. Children's church takes place in the fellowship hall making it available to parking lot worshippers and sanctuary worshippers. Materials for children's church are found in the binder in the fellowship hall marked "children's church binder" or at the website below. Caddies with tools, and a basket with construction paper are located in the fellowship hall for CC use. The supplies in the binder is meant to be photo copied.

Children's Church



Altar flowers are available to be sponsored. If you would like to do so in honor or memory of a loved one or to celebrate a milestone please click the button above.

- March 3** - Pat & Bob Koehler
- March 10** -
- March 17** -
- March 24** - Kathy Barker & Carole Jolley in memory of Sybil Jolley's birthday.
- March 31** - Julia Gunter

March Sunday School Teachers

- Pre-k & K: Jill Cassel
- Elementary: -- **need volunteer** --
- Youth: Deacon Beka
- Adults: Pastor Micah



Children's Church

- March 3** - Deacon Beka, Mason Morton
- March 10** - Jennifer Kearney
- March 17** - -- **need volunteer** --
- March 24** - Shelia Kelly
- March 31** - Jill Cassel

Children's Church is available for pre-k-5th graders every Sunday during the readings, the Gospel, and the Sermon. Children's church takes place in the fellowship hall.



Lectors

- March 3** - Anne Reese
- March 10** - Anne Reese
- March 17** - Anne Reese
- March 24** - Anne Reese
- March 31** - Anne Reese

Treasurer's Report for January 2024

Financial Category	2024	% Increase from	% Increase	2023	2022
	\$Amount	2023	from 2022	\$Amount	\$Amount
Offerings Year to Date (YTD)	22,410	8.5	-19.7	20,654	27,901
Expenses YTD	27,739	-2.8	19.4	28,548	23,224
Budget, YTD	30,279	4.8	15.5	28,902	26,222
Annual Budget	363,342			346,819	314,664

Holy Comforter's operating deficit (expenses in excess of offering income) during January was \$5,328.79. Total giving to support Holy Comforter's routine expenses for the month was \$22,410.25. The budget estimate of the amount needed each month in 2024 is \$30,278.33. The foregoing table provides additional perspective and comparisons with offering income, expenses and budgets in prior years.

-Warren Heller, *Treasurer*



Lenten Season at Holy Comforter

You can hardly read the gospels without noticing how often Jesus seemed to be sitting down and eating with people. You may have heard the comment, 'Jesus ate his way through the gospels.' Jesus seemed to think it mattered to eat with others, and he built it into his ministry. Makes sense if we build meals into ours too!

Please join us for a **meal and fellowship** each Wednesday evening prior to our Lenten worship services!

March 6 & 13

Meal: 6:00 pm

Worship: 6:45 pm

We need a team of three volunteers weekly to prepare and serve a **simple** meal. If you are unable to cook but would like to help, you can sponsor a meal with a monetary donation.

Once you sign up using the link below, the Congregation Life Team will contact you with details!

[Sign Up Here](#)



The church calendar is updated weekly and can always be found on the church website under the events tab. Take a look!

**Church
Calendar**

Holy Comforter Lutheran Church | 216 N Main St, BELMONT, NC 28012

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 FROM THE
PASTOR

 The
Holy Comforter
Comment

Grace and peace,

In a sermon recently I restated a phrase that I've used many times, and at some point I should figure out where to attribute this, that a life of faith is about becoming, not being. The idea is that none of us have, or will ever, entirely understand God, or entirely be who God has created or called us to be. A faithful life is better judged by whether or not we continue to grow, whether we strive for knowing God and being who God created and called us to be, than it is whether we ever entirely achieved it. I think that's true for congregations as well. Another favorite quote of mine is that the church is a hospital for sinners, not a hotel for saints. We don't always get this church thing right as disciples together. Sometimes it is because we struggle to put the time and energy into that it deserves. Sometimes it is because our sinfulness and selfishness get in the way and we struggle to be the best versions of ourselves in this community just like we do in others. Sometimes it is because the world we're in, our context, changes, and the way we've been church in our context no longer works like it did. And so just like an individual life of faith is more about becoming than being, so too is life as a community of faith.

In fall of 2023 we identified three goals for 2024. One was a financial goal to be able to support the ministry Christ is doing in and through Holy Comforter. Another was about developing ministries to reach out to those experiencing hunger, homelessness, and otherwise affected by poverty. The last is a goal name and develop strategies around evangelism, reaching out to people in our community. We're early in the year, but I am excited about some of the work that we've already begun in these areas.

We continue to work with GSB for stewardship, learning how to tell the stories of faith in Holy Comforter to show what we are financially supporting through our giving. We are also working on strategies to help people know the best ways to give consistently to the ministry here.

In January we had an interest meeting for our goal related to hunger, homelessness, and poverty, and had a speaker come in who works with homelessness in Gaston County. Rianna Nance, our champion of this goal, listened to the questions, the interest, and the ideas of our members who attended the meeting. It was a promising start. Rianna is working to build relationships with ministries in our area and is interested in finding ways to educate our congregation on the situations our neighbors are in, and to help us engage in helpful ways going forward. This work will build on things we're already doing like donations to SOCKS Crisis Ministries, Angel Tree donations during Christmas, assistance through benevolence fund, and our support of The Dwelling, which we will be taking a third mission trip to this summer.

For our third goal, we have named both LGBTQ folks and young professionals as target groups for our work. Young professionals are estimated to be the largest growing demographic in Belmont over the next 5-10 years. They're the neighbors moving in, so we will be thinking through how best to build relationships. For my part, I am looking forward to work to reach out to LGBTQ folks because it is a group of people who the Church at large has too often made to feel like there is not a place for them in Christ's church, and often not a place in Christ's love. Holy Comforter is a unique community that already has been a place of healing, connection, and community for folks who have experienced this

rejection, and I look forward to discerning how to extend that work to others. Karen Hinkley is the champion for this goal, and either will be holding, or just has held (depending on when you read this article) an interest meeting to talk about the direction of the work.

We are engaging these goals to continue our work of “becoming,” becoming more faithful disciples of Christ and becoming the community of faith God calls us to be. It won’t be perfect, we won’t get it right all of the time, but together we will faithfully take the next steps on our walk with Christ.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Micah



Music Notes

All of our choir ensembles have been hard at work preparing for the Lenten, Holy Week, and Easter season. We began this process the first time we saw each other in 2024. The music ministry is always preparing months in advance. For this reason, we have to constantly remind ourselves what is happening in the coming week. It can become a bit challenging from a calendar point of view.

Music Week at Lutheridge

For over 7 decades many of our members have journeyed up the mountain to Lutheridge for days or weeks of camp, retreats, meetings, conferences, and campfirmation clusters. Just to remind parents that Holy Comforter still offers 50% scholarships to music week at Lutheridge, July 7 - 12. These scholarships are endowed through generous gift offerings, honorariums, and memorials to the church music fund. Child members of Holy Comforter of grade school age may apply for these scholarships. Contact Greg Cline for details...but you may google Lutheridge to also learn more. Registration is already in progress. Available space is limited.



**The Lenoir-Rhyne University Choir will present a concert of
sacred repertoire:
Thursday, March 21 at 7:00
Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter Sanctuary**

We hosted the L-R choir 7 years ago as part of our Centennial year celebration. They enjoyed singing in our worship space so much that they asked if they could return as part of their spring 2024 tour. The choir has been an ambassador for the University

since 1935, and they have toured throughout many states, as well as many countries around the world.

There will be a free-will offering to help defray the choir's expenses. We would like to ask each member of our church family to mark your calendars and invite your neighbors, family, and friends. This wonderful evening should not be kept a secret! Help us spread the word!




Catawba Valley Brass on Easter Sunday

The Catawba Valley Brass Ensemble will accompany our 10:30 Easter Service of Worship again this year. The quintet features two trumpets, trombone, french horn, and tuba. When combined with the 1883 pipes from our pipe organ, choir, and assembly, it's hard not to know it's Resurrection Day!

Greg Cline M.D. (Music Director)



Beka's
Buzz 



For a long time, people have asked me how did I know I wanted to be a deacon, or why didn't I choose to do the real thing and become a pastor, or why didn't I go all the way so I could do sacraments? And recently I have found better words for that than I thought I would ever know. As y'all know, recently I got the treat of presiding over communion for the first time, with permission of the synod. It was an experience I never thought I would have, especially since my call doesn't include sacraments. Yet, there I was in front of all of you blessing the bread and wine for us to consume as a means of God's grace and love for the world.

Let me start by saying, I am immensely grateful that this congregation continues to be a space of grace and learning for me, and that you all continue to be faith community that help shape who I am as a leader. I wouldn't be the leader I am without you. I loved the laughter and grace we shared on Transfiguration Sunday. As we celebrated Jesus revealing himself to the disciples, Jesus revealed himself to me, through you. Y'all are a treasure. Let me continue by saying, I LOVE being a deacon. I love what my call to this church and the larger church is. I love the image of being a bridge between the church and the world. Finding avenues to bringing and being the Body of Christ in the world and bringing the world to the church. Currently for me that looks like raising disciples through youth group and kids club. It takes shape in our outreach efforts by finding faith forming experiences that serve the community and our siblings who live without or in need.

Often when I'm asked why I didn't choose to be the 'real thing', I will say that I don't feel called to do ministry behind the altar, but I feel called to bring the altar to the community. I love our traditions and sacraments. They are beautiful and meaningful means of grace and where God meets us, and I feel called to build the bridge between the church and the world. I feel called to build God's kingdom in the community through equipping disciples, so that when communion is celebrated, we know that all of God's beloved are welcome at the table. That the communion table has a seat for you, and all our siblings. This seems to be a story of where diaconal ministry and communion meet. I'm grateful that God gave us this experience.

Deacon Beka
rforst@holyc.org



It's About Love

Rianna Nance lives in Stanley to raise chickens and attends Holy Comforter to be surrounded by love. In both cases she does this for her family.

Like many of us, Rianna questioned her faith during her college years. After meeting her soon-to-be husband, Tom, they attended a Lutheran church near their homes in Virginia. They were impressed when the pastor included the LGBTQ community in a prayer. Both Tom and Rianna liked the idea of a theology that emphasized loving all of God's children.

Rianna found that same love at Holy Comforter. "When we moved here I was pregnant with our first child", says Rianna. She and Tom, however, experienced a horror that would forever change them. Their child died in utero. Rianna was devastated. "This was the saddest moment of our lives. Micah came to visit. He was just so present for us." Even though they were new to our church and had not really met many people, members of the Holy Comforter family surrounded them with love and compassion. "I feel God brought us to be with these people," says Rianna. "This was going to happen, but God led us here to be comforted."

Rianna continues to be active at Holy Comforter because of the people and how they impact her family. "My kids can be a bit rambunctious at times," Rianna laughs. "But the people here, like Beka, Jill (Cassel), Jen (Kearney) and Mallory (Morton, Holy Comforter's nursery attendant) can be so patient. They meet my kids where they need to be met".

The love and compassion of the Holy Comforter family impacts the lives of so many people. So does your generosity. It allows your church to fund a loving youth program that meets all children where they need to be met. Thank you.