



THE *Disciple*

February 2015

The Odds of Life

The race goes on by many astronomers to discover whether there is life on other planets in the universe. Is there intelligent life beyond our planet? If there is, then does that prove the Bible false? As a pastor and maybe as a Christian you would get those kind of questions. What's the answer? The Bible never says this is the only planet with life on it. So whether there is such a planet or planets exist beyond our own with intelligent life neither proves nor disproves the Bible. Yet, the thought of extra terrestrials is irresistible to many and the hunt continues.

Recently, I came across a devotion from Lutheran Hour Ministries that put the uniqueness of planet earth and the remoteness of the existence of alien life into perspective. I have included it below. I think you too will find it extremely interesting and solid, giving glory to our creator God.

Sidenote- You can do no better in your devotional time than to use

the free daily devotional from Lutheran Hour Ministry. You can find it at www.lhm.org. Apps for IOS and Android are available.

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: (Psalm 8:3-6 NIV)

That Bible passage, and others like it, let us know we are valuable because of God's love and His Son, who has come to rescue us.

Still, years ago, the uniqueness of humanity was shot down when the science-popularizer, Carl Sagan, announced a planet needed two things to support life: the right kind of star, and for the planet to be the right distance from that star. Sagan

Continued on page 2.

Mark Your Calendar

2.1

Food Pantry Sunday

2.10

Community Meal

2.14

Valentine's Day
VBS Coordinators Meeting

2.18

Ash Wednesday Worship 7:30 PM

Disciple Newsletter

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
(LCMS, SELC District)
4041 W. 120th St.
Alsip, IL 60803
708.597.5209

Office — Mon.—Thurs. 8:30 am—12:30 pm

Web— www.hc-lc.org

Email— hclc@hc-lc.org

Pastor Chris D. Ongstad

Worship— 8 & 10:30 AM Sundays

Sunday School— 9:15 AM Sunday

Bible Studies— Sun. 9:15 AM

- Mon. 4:30 PM

- Tues. 7:30 PM

said with one octillion (that's 1 followed by 27 zeros) planets in the universe, about one septillion (1 followed by 24 zeros) of them ought to have life.

Those numbers made Christians feel small and scientists feel confident. They were pretty sure if they listened hard enough, one or many of those inhabited planets ought to say something we could hear. That's why Congress funded SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. Using radio telescopes they tuned into the universe and waited for someone to say, "Hello! I'm here."

Congress stopped paying for SETI in 1993. They stopped paying because, after all those years, the listeners never heard anything that indicated there is life out there.

That was disappointing, but what was more disappointing was this: Carl Sagan had been wrong. His checklist of the items needed for a planet to support life went from 2 to 10 to 200. The increase in those numbers meant a decrease in the number of life-sustaining planets.

Today, the number of planets that mathematically can contain living creatures is not in the thousands,

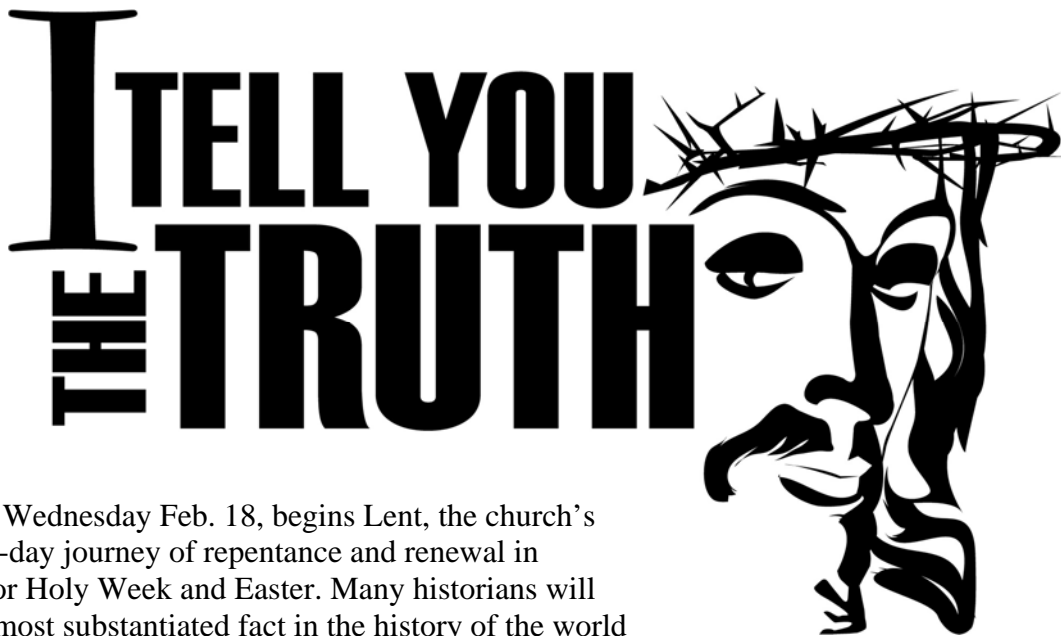
or hundreds, or tens. It is not even at zero. It is less than zero. It is a negative number. All of this means it is impossible for you and me to be here.

One scientist said the odds against us being here are about the same as flipping a quarter and having it come up "heads" 10 quintillion times in a row. Folks, that's 10 followed by 18 zeros.

So, what do all these big numbers mean? Fred Hoyle -- that's the guy who came up with the term the "big bang," said, "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with the physics, as well as the chemistry and biology The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."

In other words, some scientists are forced to conclude, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

Now, when they also can say, "Jesus is Savior and Lord," that will be something.



Ash Wednesday Feb. 18, begins Lent, the church's 40-day journey of repentance and renewal in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Many historians will note that the most substantiated fact in the history of the world is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our faith is dependent on this truth. If Christ had not been raised, our faith would be futile. But thanks be to God, He is alive. Since Christ rose from the grave, we can be confident that all of his other claims are true. This sermon series focuses on some of Jesus' attention-getting and faith-building "I tell you the truth" statements, a translation of the Greek word amen. May Jesus' "amens" lead us to sound our own "amens" in response.

LENTEN MIDWEEK WORSHIP SERVICES begin Wed. Feb. 18, **7:00 PM** and continue for 5 Wednesdays. (Note the time change to 7:00 PM).

Ash Wednesday worship will include the imposition of ashes. Representatives from neighboring churches will take turns leading the worship services. Refreshments and fellowship will occur after worship the 2nd—6th Wednesday evenings.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE HUNGRY

By Pat Minet

During the week on a morning news show, I caught a reporter speaking about a woman from another country, who went to where homeless people live out of cardboard boxes under the bridges downtown. Every night, not just once in a while, she would make a pot of the soup that was well known in her country and go to where the homeless people lived under the bridge and gave them a hot bowl of soup.

Before long another person started bringing blankets to warm the homeless, and from there, more and more people came to feed the homeless and helped them to stay warm.

As time went on, more and more people started to come to help the less fortunate, and now each and every night someone is there to give of their time and sharing what they have with those in need.

There has now been started a program to help the homeless learn trades and help them find employment, and help them to get off the streets and have a better life. All of this has been made possible because of one woman.

Just think if you gave of your time to help the hungry, and someone followed your example and this kept getting passed on and on. Not only would this be practicing good Stewardship, but you would be helping the hungry get back the respect they deserve.

If one woman could do this, imagine what we can do as a church.

Lord, please help me be a leader of Stewardship to feed the hungry as You feed so many with five loaves and 2 fishes. Amen.

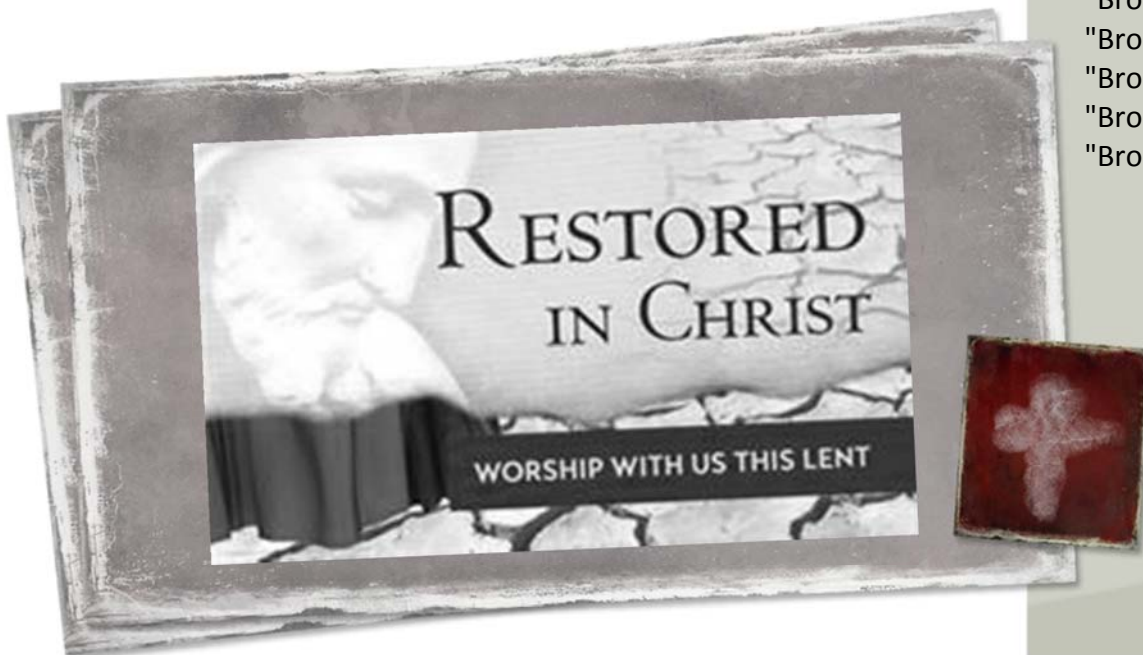
LENTEN SUNDAY

SERMON SERIES

A Series of Special Sunday sermons for Lent at Holy Cross begins Feb. 22.

The season of Lent is a time for us to face together the brokenness of our lives and our world, and then turn that brokenness over to Christ so that we can be restored by him through the cross. Each sermon in the series focuses on certain events in the Lenten story and takes a good, hard look at a broken element from that particular story. Coming to an understanding of how each of these broken elements in these services leads to restoration in Christ is key to understanding what it ultimately means to live today as new creations in Christ.

The titles of the sermons are:
"Broken Vessel Restored",
"Broken Trust Restored",
"Broken Bread Restored",
"Broken Promises Restored",
"Broken Justice Restored".



THE TOOL BOX

By Bille Salzman

Those who have faith in God and His Word in Scripture are blessed beyond measure! We have the confidence of salvation by His grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all eternity!

In Bible study we see God's love for us reflected throughout, and we are eager to share what we know to be true. If we are asked why we have this faith and confidence in God's Word we need not be caught off-guard. When a doubter may question the validity of the Bible, 1 Peter 3:15b tells us to "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

Pastor Chris uses the analogy of the tool box. The one needing a tool has just the right one ready for use. Attending Bible study gives us the "tools" we need when speaking to a "doubter."

It opens our eyes of faith to the truth of God's Word and we can do this with "gentleness and respect" as God instructs us. Philemon 1:6 says, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."



THIS & THAT

OUR FOOD PANTRY IS IN NEED OF THESE ITEMS: Jelly, peanut butter, crackers and tuna. You can bring them to church and place them before the altar Feb. 1 - food pantry Sunday. Thank all of you who give to help those less fortunate than we are. Our food pantry patrons are very thankful.

REMEMBER TO SIGN UP to help with the Community Meal, Feb. 10.

DINNER CLUB is scheduled for Feb. 21 at 5 p.m. It will be at "Isabella's" 17211 S. Oak Park Ave., Tinley Park. All are welcome. Questions? Please call Faith Schulz at 708-957-9293.

WORTH TOWNSHIP YOUTH

- ⇒ Open Gym for ages 3-6, Mondays & Wednesdays Jan. 26-March 4.
- ⇒ Story Time Jan. 29-March 5th (Thursdays) 10-11:30 am.
- ⇒ Babysitting Class Jan. 27-Feb. 12th (Tuesdays & Thursdays).
- ⇒ Play Time: Jan. 27th-March 3rd (Tuesdays) 10-11:30 AM.
- ⇒ Game Nights for school aged children. Jan. 26-March 4 (Mondays & Wednesdays) 4-6 PM.

These activities have various fees. Call 708 -371-2900 for more information. Worth Township facilities are located at 11601 S. Pulaski Rd., Alsip.

SUFFERING FROM THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE? Little Company of Mary offers help at 2800 West 95th St., Evergreen Park, IL (708) 422-6200. "Living: When A Love One Has Died" (for adults) begins Feb. 25, 7:30-9:30 pm. "The Heart Connection" (for youth 5 to 18 years old) begins March 9. Early registration is required.

STEWARDS OF THE HUNGRY

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Sharing Spiritual & Temporal Food

Upon leaving a complex of fast food restaurants, I noticed a bearded middle-aged man bending over a trash can. "He couldn't be rummaging for food?" I queried. He was. He fished out a half eaten hamburger and put it in his pocket. I walked over and asked him, "You're hungry, aren't you?" "Sure am," he replied. I bought him a meal. As he eagerly and happily ate away, he profusely thanked me. "Don't thank me." I replied. "Thank Jesus. He's the one feeding you through me. He gave me the money and moved me to buy you a meal." I then shared the Gospel via Jesus, the Bread of Heaven. After a number of explanations, he finally understood and embraced the Gospel grace of salvation.

Caretakers of the Hungry

The word, "steward", means "caretaker". Jesus, the perfect steward, cared about the hungry He fed over 5,000 on one occasion (Matt. 14:13-21) and over 4,000 on another (Matt. 15:29-39). With a promise of reward, Prov. 25:21-22 encourages us to feed even our enemies. The widow of Zarephath was rewarded with food during a famine and the restoration of life to her son because she shared whatever little food she had with the prophet, Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-24).

Natural Disasters Are Deadly

An 1896 drought in China killed as many as 13 million people. Other disasters, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and floods, also produce death thru starvation. Hunger, however, is produced not only by natural disasters. It also results from economic and social conditions. The US Division of Agriculture issued startling statistics for 2008-09 ... "14.6% of US households (49 million people) struggle to put food on the table; nearly one in four children is at risk of hunger." Yes, there is much Christian stewards of the hungry can do!

Congregational Food Drives

Congregations are responding to meet hunger needs with food drives. One was recently held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Parma, OH. As part of a Thanksgiving Service celebration, worshipers placed multicolored paper leaves on a sanctuary "Thanksgiving Tree" and nonperishable food beneath it. The event was so successful, members will have the opportunity to donate food in the narthex any Sunday.

Hunger Centers

The donated food at Holy Trinity was in turn given to the Parma Hunger Center located at Parma Lutheran Church, Parma. Chartered by the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland, the center serves four communities offering free food to approximately 3,500 families per year. Churches, schools, clubs, stores and businesses contribute food as well as money which is used to purchase reduced-price food from the Cleveland Food Bank, a network distributor of various government and community food sources. The church provides the space and utilities free; 45 individuals donate their time.

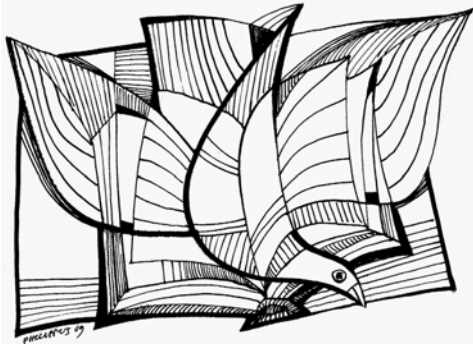
LCMS World Relief & Human Care

On an international level, Missouri Synod's World Relief & Human Care provides food as well as many other services to meet human needs domestically and internationally. Financial gifts from individuals, congregations and other sources enable grants to assist the needy - especially during disasters. For example, funds were given to centers in Haiti established by missionaries to help meet monumental disaster needs. Contributions may be sent to : LCMS World Relief & Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166.(888-930-4438) Visit <http://givenowlcms.org>.



CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES HILITES December, 2014

- * November Council Minutes were accepted.
- * Treasurer's Report– Two furnaces were paid off from the Anniversary Fund, Report accepted.
- * Elders reported that the church directory was printed and distributed.
- * Christian Organizations reported that the Carson's Community Days fundraiser netted \$145 for the year.
- * The 2015 budget was presented and accepted.



WHAT GOD DOES THROUGH SCRIPTURE

by Jonathan Rusnak

Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) described Scripture as God's throne, school, hospital, arsenal and hand. These descriptions can be helpful for grasping what God does through Scripture.

Scripture is God's throne because through it He speaks to us (Heb. 1:1–2). Not only do we have the words God has spoken through prophets and apostles, we also have the words of God's own Son. We have the Son of the Father speaking to us by the Spirit.

Scripture is God's school because through it He teaches us. We do not learn about God primarily through our experiences, emotions, or imaginations, but by listening to Him (P. 25:4–5). We learn that we deserve nothing from Him but that He has done everything for us through Jesus. We also learn to fear, love and trust in God above all things.

The Bible is God's hospital because through it

He heals us. Every person is born sick with the diseases of disobedience, pride and self-absorption. These lead to eternal death. But God does not desire death for anyone (Ezek. 33:11). He is the Author and Giver of life who has diagnosed our disease and promised to cleanse, heal and make us whole. All of that begins when we spend time in God's hospital.

The Bible is God's arsenal because through it He arms us. We need to be equipped by Him to fight the battles against all His enemies (Eph. 6:10–20). Our greatest weapon in this battle is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Finally, the Bible is God's hand because through it He guides us (Ps. 31:3–5). God's guidance is not only for today. It is for eternity. So, the hand of the God who sent His Son to live, die and rise again, reaches out from all eternity to hold onto you and lead you: today, tomorrow and forever.

God's Word is His precious, powerful gift. It gives and does so much, everything we need for this life and the life to come. You can count Gerhard's five descriptions of Scripture on your own hand and at the end you have the image of God extending His hand to grasp yours. May we take up God's Word, hold it in our hands, read it, hear it, learn it and love it to our good and to the glory of God.

DINNER CLUB

This is an invitation from the members of the Holy Cross Dinner Club to any and all who would enjoy an evening to dine with friends and enjoy good food and fellowship. We meet once a month at a variety of local restaurants and have enjoyed finding many new and diverse places. If you are not sure you are able to attend but at the last minute decide to come, a phone call is ok there is always room for more at our table, however if you sign up and then are unavailable to attend, just out of courtesy to our fellow diners and the restaurant, please call to inform us so an adjustment can be made on the reservation. If a call is necessary please contact Faith Schulz, Pauline Griffin or Dorothy Lux. Thank You.

The next Dinner Club will be going to Isabella Italian Café on Saturday, February 21 at 5:00 p.m. This restaurant is located at 17211 S. Oak Park Ave. in Tinley Park. The menu along with a sign-up sheet are on the bulletin board.

SERVANTS IN WORSHIP - FEBRUARY, 2015

DATE	TIME	USHER	COMMUNION ASSISTANT	LECTOR	ACOLYTE	ALTAR GUILD	COUNTER	GREETER	PROJECTIONIST
1	8:00 am ----- 10:30 am	Martha Stevens ----- Tom Griffin	Terry Vrshek ----- -----	Donna Judd ----- Donna Meilahn	----- ----- Kaitlyn Shelton	Barbara Piekosz ----- Jeanne Simovic	T. Vrshek C. Vrshek	Donna Judd ----- Carole Vrshek	Mike Meilahn ----- Pam Rutkowski
8	8:00 am ----- 10:30 am	Martha Stevens ----- Tom Griffin	----- ----- Tom Griffin	----- ----- Faith Schulz	----- ----- Carly Potts	Barbara Piekosz ----- Jeanne Simovic	D. Meilahn F. Schulz	Donna Judd ----- Carole Vrshek	Mike Meilahn ----- Pam Rutkowski
15	8:00 am ----- 10:30 am	Martha Stevens ----- Tom Griffin	Scott Vrshek ----- -----	Joy Maddox ----- Sue Wilczynski	----- ----- Kaitlyn Shelton	Barbara Piekosz ----- Jeanne Simovic	P. Rutkowski M. Meyer	Donna Judd ----- Carole Vrshek	Mike Meilahn ----- Pam Rutkowski
18	7:00 pm	Jim Boltz	James Bahr		Carly Potts	Barbara Piekosz ----- Jeanne Simovic	P. Griffin N. Fehser	Donna Judd	Mike Meilahn
22	8:00 am ----- 10:30 am	Martha Stevens ----- Tom Griffin	----- ----- Bob Schulz	----- ----- Aimee Wilczynski	----- ----- Carly Potts	Barbara Piekosz ----- Jeanne Simovic	D. Lux D. Kracht	Donna Judd ----- Carole Vrshek	Mike Meilahn ----- Pam Rutkowski
25	7:00 pm	TBA			Kaitlyn Shelton	Barbara Piekosz ----- Jeanne Simovic	P. Griffin N. Fehser	TBA	Mike Meilahn

**“Serve the Lord
with gladness”**

FEBRUARY 2015

Church Office Hours: Monday through Thursday 8:30 am - 12:30 pm, 708.597.5209 hclc@hc-lc.org

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY 8:00AM Worship (C) 9:15AM Sunday School/Bible Class 10:30AM Worship	2 4:30PM Women's Bible Study 7:30PM Southwest Chorus	3 4:30PM Food Pantry 7:30PM Life Light Bible Study James Bahr (b)	4	5 9:00AM Senior's Group Gathering George Lux (b)	6 Pastor's Day Off	7 10:00AM Musicians 10:30AM Food Pantry 4:30PM Elders Meeting
8 8:00AM Worship 9:15AM Sunday School/Bible Class 10:30AM Worship (C)	9 4:30PM Women's Bible Study 7:30PM Southwest Chorus 7:30PM Church Council Peggy Medeiros (b)	10 5:00PM Community Meal 7:30PM Life Light Bible Study	11	12 9:00AM Senior's Group Gathering	13 Pastor's Day Off Giovanni Caban (b)	14 VALENTINE'S DAY 10:00AM Musicians 10:30AM Food Pantry 12:00PM VBS Meeting
15 8:00AM Worship (C) 9:15AM Sunday School/Bible Class 10:30AM Worship Newsletter Reports Due	16 PRESIDENTS DAY 4:30PM Women's Bible Study 7:30PM Southwest Chorus Practice	17 7:30PM Life Light Bible Study	18 ASH WEDNESDAY 7:00PM Worship (C)	19 9:00AM Senior's Group Gathering 12:30PM Stewardship Meeting	20 Pastor's Day Off Martha Stevens (b) Donna Judd (b)	21 10:00AM Musicians 10:30AM Food Pantry
22 8:00AM Worship 9:15AM Sunday School/Bible Class 10:30AM Worship (C)	23 4:30PM Women's Bible Study 7:30PM Southwest Chorus Practice Bill Love (b)	24 7:30PM Life Light Bible Study	25 7:00PM Worship Ron Wedster (b) Marye Potts (b)	26 9:00AM Senior's Group Gathering 4:30PM NEM Meeting	27 Pastor's Day Off Julie Wedster (b) Chris Fuller (b)	28 10:00AM Musicians 10:00AM Bd. of Education 10:30AM Food Pantry Chris Vrshek Jr. (b)

REMEMBER!

Please bring in your palms from last year to the church by Feb. 15 for use in making ashes for Ash Wednesday worship. Midweek services for Lent begin Feb. 18 and start at **7:00 PM**. Refreshments will be served after the Wed. Midweek services beginning Feb. 25.