

# That's The Spirit!

Rev. Greg Hartman,  
Pastor

New Spirit Lutheran Church  
*Our faith is in Jesus.  
Our hope is in grace.  
Our strength is in love.*


April 2023

Dear Church,

Every time I sit down to write one of these articles, I think "where has the past month gone?" It is hard to believe that we are just a few short weeks away from Easter. Our Lenten journey for this year is quickly coming to an end. I had planned on writing about the plans for the 50 days of Easter, but my soul is troubled by a subject that needs to be addressed.

Every Sunday when we gather, we recite the New Spirit Lutheran Welcome Statement that was crafted sometime during Pastor Alan's time here. It is a beautiful statement of welcome, and honestly one of the reasons I entered the call process that eventually resulted in you calling me as your pastor. There are two lines that have often stuck out to me "Welcome to all who have no church home, who want to follow Christ, have doubts, or do not believe" and "Welcome to people of every age and size, color and culture, sexual orientation and marital status, ability, and challenge." These are powerful words, especially to people that have been harmed by churches. We proclaim together every Sunday that regardless of who you are, what you are, or where you are on your faith journey, you are welcomed here.

Yet, I am struggling and asking myself "what good is that welcome, if no one hears it on Sunday in our worship space because they are attacked on their way here by other churches?" That is a question that has kept me up the last few weeks. Often the loudest voice of "the church" is one of judgment, exclusion, and anything but welcome. If you are repeatedly told by a church that you are not welcome, vile, dirty, or worse, eventually it feels like all churches are saying that regardless of what their welcome statements may say.



If we as a community believe in our welcome statement, and more importantly believe that Jesus dined with all people, regardless, then we must proclaim this welcome and love outside of Sunday morning. If we believe that Jesus' death and resurrection changes everything, then we must venture outside of our walls to stand against those things that do not extend God's love. If we believe that Jesus' death pays the price for all of humanity, then no person is outside of God's love and forgiveness. If we believe the words written in John 3:16-17, then we must say that all who believe are loved and saved regardless. There is no asterisk when it comes to God's love shown through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, even the thief that is being crucified with Jesus enters the kingdom.

In 2019, at the ELCA's national assembly the delegates present voted 863-26 to approve the social statement titled Faith, Sexism and Justice: A Call to Action. Part of that social statement calls to "advocate for and support laws, policies, and practices that respect diverse bodies rather than discriminating against, objectifying, or devaluing them" (p. 60). In practice that means as a faith group, even though there may be points of disagreement as individuals, we are to advocate and uphold the dignity and humanity of all people. This is what it means to say that all are welcome, and that God loves all of humanity. John 3:17 reminds us "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

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I am not sure what the answer is to the question of how. All I know right now is that I am tired of having the Christian faith being used to exclude and spread hate, things that I believe are the exact opposite of what Jesus came here to do. Jesus welcomed all into the kingdom and simply asks us to live a life of love in response to that gift. In Matthew 22 we read <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

New Spirit Lutheran Church, now is the time for us to take bold action to extend those two new commandments that Jesus has given us beyond what we are currently doing. We have an opportunity and responsibility to proclaim God's love to our neighbors, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to stand against those things that do not extend God's love.

Let us act boldly together to respond to the love that has been shown to us through the events of Holy Week so that all the world may know the love that they have from God! Know that you are a beloved child of God.

Pastor Hartman

### Holy Week Schedule

Holy Week is April 2-April 9.

**April 2 - Palm Sunday**

**April 6 - Maundy Thursday**, 6:00pm Dinner Church worship. (Congregation members are being asked to bring side dishes and desserts.)

**April 7 - Good Friday**, our evening service at 6:00pm, Tenebrae worship service

**April 9 - Easter Sunday**, Worship service at 10:00am.



**The Christmas Tree Cross** is our Lenten symbol of Christ's mission on earth. On Easter Sunday we will transform the cross into the radiant "**Easter Flower Cross**". We ask everyone to bring cut flowers from your gardens, so we can create the flower cross.

### *April Birthday & Anniversary Celebrations*

4/2 Jay Schreiber

4/17 Ron O'Connor  
James West

4/20 Steve & Linda Lamb  
(Anniversary)

4/11 Henry Kwapich

4/21 Shereen O'Connor

4/12 Theron Nesler

4/25 Jenny Kwapich

4/14 Deb Klink

4/30 Ken Dobbs



To: The New SPIRIT Community,

As we kickoff the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2023, I would like to take a moment to thank everyone for their contributions and hard work towards a successful 1st quarter here at New SPIRIT Lutheran Church. Our strength comes from the gifts God has provided and all of those in our community who dedicate their time, talents and financial resources. It takes our entire community to complete Gods work!



A quick highlight of New SPIRIT's accomplishments (Jan – March):

1. Homeless Outreach – Serving 100+ homeless and food insecure individuals/families through our monthly outreach events, distribution of care bags and special deliveries.
2. Blessings in a Backpack – Provided over 3,250 Snack Packs to underprivileged students in nearby community schools.
3. Continued focus on Campus Improvements. These improvements will allow New SPIRIT to better serve our community now and in the near future.
  - a. Patio Wall Upgrade; Shade Structure; Monument Sign; Refresh of the playground
4. Focus on Growth – We have added (3) New Members in 2023.
5. Focus increasing member involvement on key working groups; including Stewardship Team, Evangelism Team and others...
6. Increased engagement of children during service
  - a. Implemented noisy change offerings (Every 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday) – Opportunity for children to participate in the offering while supporting causes focused on children inside and outside or our community.
  - B. Established a "Prayground" in the sanctuary – Creates an intentional space in the sanctuary focusing on our children.
7. Intentional Small Group Gatherings - Weekly Bible Study, Monthly book club & Sunday Small Group Discussions.

All of these successes are only possible because of stewardship; continuing to use the gifts (time, talent & financial resources) God has provided New SPIRIT wisely.

***"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*** Ecclesiastes 4:12 NIV

This verse reminds me of New SPIRIT; it's not about the individual contribution, but the contributions of the community, coming together as a rope with multiple strands working together. Each one of us represents a single strand and together we form the rope of God's Strength. There will be times when individual strands fray and weaken requiring other strands to take on a heavier lift.



I encourage each one of you to consider the lift your strand is taking on at New SPIRIT. Are there opportunities to help take on a heavier lift?

New SPIRIT is just getting started! We will continue to focus on Stewardship and how we can better serve our community through the gifts that God continues to provide.  
STAY TUNED, GET ENGAGED, BE AMAZED!

God Bless,  
New SPIRIT Stewardship Team

## WOMEN'S MINISTRY GROUP MARCH 2023

Women's Ministry Group (WELCA Bible Study Group) met at 1:30 on March 8, 2023, at the church. Our Bible Study was Reviving the Soul, reviewing commandments three and four. Considered the "hinge, commandments"-rules that work both ways, helping us to love and serve God and our neighbor. Keeping the Sabbath well will encourage us to worship God regularly and to enjoy the company of family and friends at least one day a week, without the compulsion to always be "doing" something. Honoring our parents well allows us to also honor God, who first gave life to our ancestors. We also reviewed Jesus' teaching of the "greatest commandment", reminding us that all the commandments function in both directions, encouraging us to return God's all-encompassing love, and direct practical love toward our neighbor.

We assembled Easter cards to be mailed.

Volunteers are needed to straighten up the shelves in the church library.

We finalized details for leading the devotions based on Psalms 31:24, at the Kino Conference to be held at Desert Hills of Green Valley March 18, 2023. Theme is "You've Got the Power, Women of Hope, Courage and Strength". The focus will be on five women of the Bible and their modern-day counterparts.

The week of September 18, 2023 – Triennial in Phoenix.  
Our next meeting will be held on April 12, 2023, at 1:30, at the church.

Linda Lamb – Secretary



## New Spirit Women's Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (WELCA)

Our mission is to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings and engage in ministry and action to promote healing and wholeness in the church, society, and the world. Some of the missions that we here at New Spirit have supported are: Lutheran World Relief, ELCA Good Gifts (i.e. God's Global Barnyard, Honeybees to support families, water filters for safe drinking water), Mercy Hospital Ship, Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, Women of the ELCA, Navajo Mission, Shriner's Transportation Fund which provides rides for children from Mexico to US hospitals, New Spirit

Ministries - Homeless Blessings, Blessings in a Backpack, Sunday School, we reach out to our church members that are celebrating a special event, are shut-in, ill or need cheering up. We are not an auxiliary of the church; we are financially independent and are responsible for our own financial affairs. Financial support comes from individual and group offerings and gifts.

**THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU IN THE NEW SPIRIT WOMEN OF THE ELCA.**



**Ellie Thompson passed away January 30, 2023.** The memorial service for Ellie will be held April 8, 2023 @ 10:00 am, followed by a lunch reception in Fellowship Hall.



# AZ Fact Sheet from Bread for the World

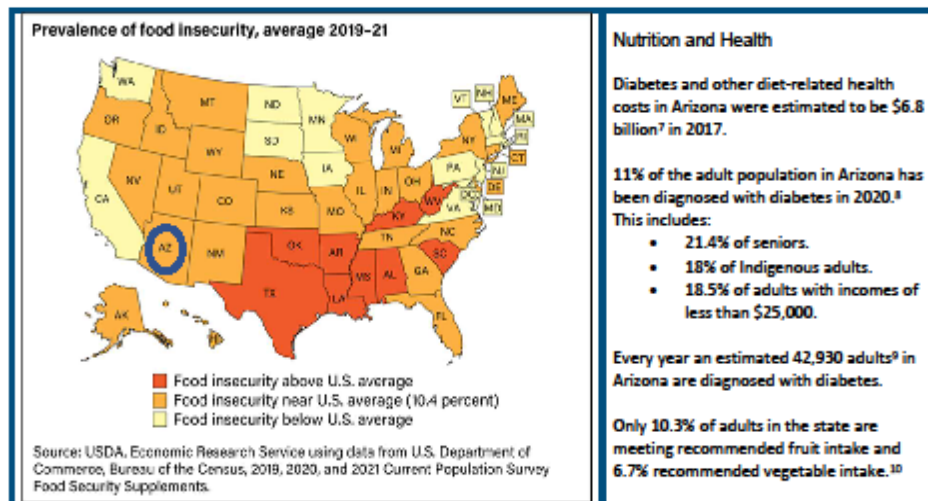


## Arizona

### A Hunger and Poverty Snapshot

Between 2019-2021:

- Food insecurity in Arizona averaged 10.10%.<sup>1</sup>
- Arizona's food insecurity rate was slightly lower (0.3 percentage points) than the national average of 10.4%.<sup>2</sup>
- The official poverty rate (which does not account for income from safety-net and tax-support programs such as SNAP, EITC, and others) in the state averaged 11.2%.<sup>3</sup>
- But using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (which does include safety-net and tax-support income), the poverty rate falls to 9.0%.<sup>4</sup> In other words, these programs reduced the poverty rate in Arizona by 20% and the number of people living in poverty by 160,000.<sup>5</sup>
- SNAP, alone, lifted 204,000 people above the poverty line in Arizona, including 104,000 children, per year between 2013 and 2017, on average.<sup>6</sup>



### Why Bread for the World is Focused on the Farm Bill

The Farm bill is scheduled to be reauthorized in 2023. No legislation has more impact than a farm bill on the US food system and the nation's ability to provide healthy food at affordable prices to everyone.

Bread for the World's farm bill priorities include a focus on nutrition, equity, and sustainability. We believe Arizona has a lot to gain from a farm bill legislated with these priorities in mind.





# BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK

*Who will feed the kids this weekend?*



Our count is now 325 from Erickson, Ford, Steele, and Henry Elementary Schools, providing snack packs to take home on the weekend. The snack packs can include 2 breakfast (cereal, oatmeal, grits), 1-2 protein (tuna, sausage, beef stick), 1 noodle (ramen, macaroni 'n' cheese, can of ravioli), 2 dessert (pudding, fruit gummies, yogurt treats, rice krispie treats), hot cocoa mix, and chips/pretzels.

For regular contributions, please make your tax-deductible check to Blessings in a Backpack. You can drop it in the offering plate, drop it off at the church office, or drop it directly in the mail to BIB Lockbox, PO Box 950291, Louisville, KY 40295. **Remember to put Steele Elementary on the memo line.**

A very special thanks this month to volunteers Dave and Joanne Kingston for helping when they are here each winter!

Our team members are hard at work to keep up with the added students each week. Learn more about what we do and how you can help. **We need volunteers to help with fund raising, planning, purchasing, packing, delivery, and gardening. If you like to shop, join our team!**

Packing is done on Tuesdays from 8:00 to 9:30 AM. Deliveries are done in the mornings after packing (if you want to help deliver, you can pick the day you are available).

Contact Laurie Bernard at [lbernard2008@hotmail.com](mailto:lbernard2008@hotmail.com) with questions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THIS MINISTRY



## HOMELESS BLESSINGS

JOIN US THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
OCTOBER THRU APRIL 1PM TO 3PM

SOME PETS ARE HOMELESS TOO  
WE NOW COLLECT OLD TOWELS AND BEDDING FOR  
THE PIMA ANIMAL CARE CENTER

Meet Perdida, one of our clients near the Santa Cruz River who has lived under a huge tree complex for 10 years! We love to visit her and get all the "low down" information in the area. We have learned quite a bit about living on the streets from her.

***Our next event is April 8th.*** In addition to our monthly Saturday events, we hand out bags that include food, gloves, hats, socks and a few hygiene products to clients on the street.

***IF YOU ARE A THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBER, PLEASE CONSIDER SPONSORING AN ACTION TEAM FOR HOMELESS BLESSINGS. WE WILL RECEIVE \$250 TO HELP TOWARDS THIS MINISTRY.***

If you'd like to help our ministry with a cash donation, please make your tax-deductible check to New Spirit Lutheran Church with the notation for Homeless Blessings in the memo. You can drop it in the offering plate, drop it off at the church office, or mail it to NSLC, 8701 E. Old Spanish Trail, Tucson, AZ 85710.

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THIS MISSION

Want to help? Contact NSLC Office or Laurie Bernard at [lbernard2008@hotmail.com](mailto:lbernard2008@hotmail.com)

# New Spirit Lutheran Church

8701 E. Old Spanish Trail  
Tucson, AZ 85710

## Shout-Outs

***SHOUT OUT - To John Lukecart and Ken Dobbs for moving the pews to make the pray ground area possible.***

***SHOUT OUT - To Joyce Dow for her ideas and efforts regarding faith formation.***



Please submit words of thanks and praise to Nancy at [nancy@newspiritlutherantucson.org](mailto:nancy@newspiritlutherantucson.org) to be placed in the newsletter by the 15th of each month. Thank you!

### Sundays:

10:00 am Worship

You can currently watch each week's message on YouTube.

### *How to contact us:*

New Spirit Lutheran Church  
8701 E. Old Spanish Trail  
Tucson, AZ 85710

**Phone:** (520) 296-2461

**E-Mail:** [NewSpiritLutheranTucson@yahoo.com](mailto:NewSpiritLutheranTucson@yahoo.com)

**Website:** [newspiritlutherantucson.org](http://newspiritlutherantucson.org)