

Notes From Cheryl

February 2026

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

At the heart of the Christian faith is Jesus. The New Testament gospels all tell his story. Matthew and Luke begin with stories of his birth. Luke includes a story from when Jesus was 12 years old. The gospels tell us about Jesus' teaching and ministry, his words and deeds over the three years of his earthly ministry. But the focus of all the gospels points toward his final days: his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. You cannot understand Jesus without understanding his crucifixion.

What does it all mean? Why did Jesus have to die? For our sins? What does that mean? It is a mystery. The New Testament authors offer at least ten different metaphors for the meaning of his death on the cross. But most Christians do not fully understand the atonement, or Jesus' saving work on the cross to reconcile us to God. Most churches focus on forgiveness, which is important but not the entirety of the story.

During Lent this year, our worship will focus on Adam Hamilton's book, *Why Did Jesus Have to Die: The Meaning of the Crucifixion*. I believe this message will make a lasting imprint on all who hear. Start inviting friends and family to worship during Lent, which begins with an Ash Wednesday service on February 18th at 7pm. As is our tradition, the service will be preceded by a pancake supper which is a fundraiser for youth to support their mission activities this summer.

Begin praying now for the people who will attend out of curiosity, for the family members who might come if you ask them, and for the people we have yet to meet who are yearning for a place to belong and serve. Jesus' death on the cross was not only a transaction but it was an important message from God about who we are and to whom we belong.

Sermon Titles for Lent:

The Mystery and Meaning of the Cross

Lift High the Cross: The Crucifixion as God's Word

O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done? Passover, Covenant, and Redemption

Agnus Dei: Penal Substitution or Selfless Offering?

Were You There: Selfishness or Selflessness?

What Wondrous Love Is This: The Crucifixion and God's Love

Christ the Lord is Risen Today: The Victory of Christ

Financial Update as of December 2025

General Operating Fund

Income Sources	December	YTD
Member/Visitor Contributions	\$33,880	\$206,595
Endowments (oil royalties)	\$471	\$6,872
Little Ark Building Contributions	\$21,581	\$21,581
Little Ark Reimbursement	\$3,131	\$38,515
Conference Refunds	0	\$1,830
Children's Ministry Contributions	\$1,162	\$1,607
Building Maintenance Refund	\$300	\$300
Custodial Supplies Refund	0	\$350
Total Operating Income:	\$60,525	\$277,650
Total Operating Expenses	\$30,606	\$310,560
Difference	+\$29,919	-\$32,910