# March 2025 Life Together Newsletter





# A Message from Pastor Karen

Have you checked your spiritual health lately?

Does an honest personal assessment find you in need of repentance and redirection? Are your prayer life and Biblical study habits lazy or halfhearted? Are you spending more time worrying about your own needs than you are about the needs of those who are struggling to make ends meet?

If any one of these symptoms describes your current state of spiritual health, then the upcoming Lenten season is designed to be the trigger to revitalize your identity as a child of God.

If you are interested in taking a critical look at your relationship with God, then there is no better time than the present to dust off the cobwebs and get yourself in shape for all the challenges that life presents.

## Let's begin with REPENTANCE...

Repentance means turning away from sin in order to walk towards God. It requires self-examination and a review of your actions in order to get yourself back on track with God's love.

Here are some ways in which we can repent:

- DO SOME INTERNAL HOUSEKEEPING Examine your actions considering the Ten Commandments and ask God for forgiveness and renewed direction according to his purposes.
- 2. **CLEAN UP YOUR RELATIONSHIPS** If there is conflict between you and someone else, seek to resolve it so that it does not become a stumbling block to your faith and spiritual growth.
- 3. **GET BACK TO BASICS Renew your prayer life.** Prayer is our half of a conversation with God. Like any form of communication, it is not only speaking but listening. Prayers do not need to be cluttered with fancy phrases. Writes Martin Luther, "The fewer the words, the better the prayer".

Here are some suggestions for Lenten Devotions:

# Abiding Hope Lutheran Church

2402 W Grandview Blvd Erie, PA 16506 814.868.8685 www.abidinghopeerie.org Office email: ahadministrator@hotmail.com

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### Pastor Karen Parsh

Cell: 814-881-3266 pastorparsh@gmail.com

#### Church Hours:

Office:
Monday & Tuesday
9:30 to 3:30;
Wednesday 9:30 to 12:30

Sunday Worship: 9:30 Bible Study: 11:00

Sunday services can be viewed, live streamed, at 9:30 on Facebook or anytime on the website.

# Staff

Office Assistant:
Denise Miller

Coordinator of Music: Sheryl Williams

> Sexton: Kayla Miller

March 2025

Page 1 of 10

- **1. Stop.** Jesus often stopped everything he was doing to go off by himself and pray. After-all, your relationship with God is more important than anything else.
- **2. Reflect.** Remembering how God is at work in our lives is essential. Keep a journal discern how God is working in your life record answered prayers.
- **3. Confess.** Be real with God. Give him your hopes, worries, frustrations, or failures. He wants your honesty.
- **4. Respond.** As you pray and spend time in Scripture, God may present you with an invitation to act. When you sense him calling you to do something, respond. Don't sweep the invitation—whether it's to pray, serve, forgive, submit, generously give, etc.—under the rug. Act on it. And notice how God uses that.
- **5. Forgive.** Scripture tells us that we shouldn't even bother worshiping until we work out our conflicts with one another (see <u>Matthew 5: 23-24</u>). Unforgiveness, bitterness, and hate are like poison to our souls. If we have experienced God's grace in our lives, we must be willing to extend God's grace to others.
- **6. WORKS OF LOVE.** Works of love are meant to reflect God's love for us, not as a means to buy our way into heaven. Loving actions on behalf of our neighbor help us to actively participate in God's kingdom NOW.

Consider these suggestions:

- 1. Go out of your way to do something nice for somebody at least once a day; especially remember the needy!
- 2. Volunteer a portion of your time with a local service organization; or offer to adopt a shut-in as your special friend.
- 3. Share what you have been given when you can ... Take time to be God's hands here and now. Putting God first is never a burden, and always a journey that moves you closer to the heart of God.
- So, let's get busy... Fold your hands... Sing His praises... Open your heart. Do whatever it takes to become spiritually fit and deeper in love with the God who loved you first.

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# Lent begins Wednesday, March 5th

- Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, with the presentation of ashes with our friends from New Hope. Abiding Hope services will be at 12:15 and 6 pm; New Hope will worship at 2:30.
- This Lent, during our Wednesday Lenten Luncheons starting on March 12 and running up to Holy Week, we will be exploring the story of JONAH THE LEGEND, THE MYTH, THE LESSON AND THE CONNECTION TO JESUS...
- Pastor Clay, Pastor Karen, Rabbi Morrais and Damian Santabene will be sharing perspectives on his life and his purpose and how he continues to deliver a significant message... even though he was probably the most contrary prophet of them all... his message is still vital to our modern faith. Each of us will retell his message with specifics from history and our understanding of faith.

Lesson begins at 12:15 followed by a soup luncheon.

March 2025	Page 2 of 10	



#### AS LUTHERANS, WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO DO?

"Climate change to obliterate \$1.5 trillion in U.S. home values" "2024 first year to pass 1.5C global warming limit"

Headlines in the news! What does it all mean? Why are U.S. policies changing? Are you confused? Scared? There's nothing to be worried about, is there? WHAT IS GOD CALLING US TO DO?

"The foundational creation stories in Genesis 1-2 express God's love for creation and how God commands humans to participate in the creation God declares good."... "God's charge for humans to "have dominion over" and "subdue" the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28) has been woefully misunderstood and misused to justify rapacious economic exploitation, human subjugation, and racist notions of manifest destiny. That interpretation betrays and undermines why God creates and how God acts in the Scriptures. Both the Creator's model of dominion in Genesis and the example of our Lord Jesus, teach us to serve others rather than dominate and degrade them. Created from the earth's dust (Genesis 2:7), human beings are given the responsibility to keep or care for the earth just as God keeps and cares for us (Numbers 6:24-26). The Hebrew word shamar, translated as "keep", means to protect and sustain Earth's life for future generations." Source: "A Social Message on Earth's Climate Crisis" elca earth's climate crisis social message -Search Copyright © 2023 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Americans." "For Christians, care of the Earth is not an "environmental cause." Rather, it is central to our holy calling to treasure the Earth and to care for it as our common home, fully integrating creation-care into our love of God and neighbor." Source: "Why Lutherans Care for Creation" 180911WhyLCareForCreation BuildingOnOurFoundations.indd ELCA September 2018

- 52 Ways To Care for Creation 2025 CREATION JUSTICE MINISTRIES
- Devotional resources for use with the Bible and nature Lutherans Restoring Creation
- "Our Kairos Moment:" An ELCA Climate Care Study Guide Lutherans Restoring Creation

Lord, preserve your people. Maintain righteous government everywhere, so that all things may take place in an orderly way and peace may not be destroyed by revolution or secret enmity, nor the eternal good order be corrupted by debased living or disturbed by other offenses. Amen. Source: Attributed to Martin Luther, modified slightly from http://www.antiochchurch.ca/famourQuotes.html.

The Green Team's purpose is to "raise awareness of and advocate for the care of creation." Our mission is to support and encourage creation care ministries, raise awareness, model creation care advocacy consistent with ELCA teachings in our faith communities and public life.

Like and follow us on Facebook: Northwestern PA Synod Green Team – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com

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### Please keep these members and friends in your prayers: Maury and Linda

Allen, Norma Burek, Pastor Bill Cox (Prince of Peace), Lexi, Desi Davis, Shelly West, Dan Kaeberlein, Damian and Marcia Santabene, Court Cratty, Dick Brucker, Ellie Cherpak, Evelyn Senger, Judy Johnston, Pat Kerr, Judy Nordin, Marjorie Wonner, Ron Froess, Larry & Barb Ruhlman, Esther Klakamp, Tom Cirillo, Kathi (Cindy Filson's sister), Don & Donna Holder and requests from our Little Library friends.

Please contact Pastor Karen with prayer requests. <u>pastorparsh@gmail.com</u>, cell phone: 814-881-3266 or contact the church office: <u>ahadministrotor@hotmail.com</u> or 814-868-8685.



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# Prayer Shawl Gatherings continue at 10a-

12noon for prayer, good conversation, knitting or crocheting shawls, prayer squares, or lap robes for the homebound. Start a new project or complete a piece you've started, but not quite finished. Experience not necessary, yarn and instruction available to all.

The group will meet Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17th (the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month) in the Conference Room.

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**KASP update from Rich Filson** ~ On Wednesday, February 12th due to a reset in their system at Second Harvest Food Bank, our delivery was a day early and I was unavailable at that time. I want to thank everyone who stepped in for me in my time of need. I was told that we had a good turnout with 54 shoppers and volunteers from New Hope Presbyterian and the Temple. Because of the newsletter deadline, I will provide an update for our February 27th shopping event in the April newsletter. Rich Filson

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KAFP Project Dignity: The KAFP continues to provide food and personal care items bimonthly to over 110 Millcreek families in need. Each month members are invited to donate personal care items for distribution the following month. Donations can be placed in the basket on the shelf in the Heritage Room. March Item, Dish Soap.

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Attan Flowers: Anyone who wishes to donate flowers for Sunday worship, weekly sign-up and request forms are on the table on the narthex. Arrangements remain at \$20 each. Place completed form and payment in the offering plate or to the office by the Monday prior to your chosen date.

Prayer Warriors ~ "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray".

Luke 5:16. Due to Holy Week activities, Prayer Warriors will pray FROM HOME in March on **Wednesday, March 19** between **1:00-3:00**.

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March 2025 Page 4 of 10

# Healing Service on March 23rd at 9:30

On March 23, at the 9:30 service Pastor Karen will conduct a unique kind of worship experience – called a HEALING SERVICE. Trained individuals from our Care Team and our church leadership will help by anointing and praying with those who come forward for God's healing touch... Our entire congregation will participate in this ancient rite of healing as suggested in James 5:13-16.

Are you hurting? Pray. Do you feel great? Sing. Are you sick? Call the church leaders together to pray and anoint you with oil in the name of the Master. Believing-prayer will heal you, and Jesus will put you on your feet. And if you've sinned, you'll be forgiven—healed inside and out. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

SUNDAYS AFTER WORSHIP - 11 AM

LUKE
A BIBLE STUDY

BY N.T. WRIGHT

N.T. WRIGHT

N.T. WRIGHT

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New Bible Study on Luke ~ On February 23rd,

Pastor Karen began an exciting new study of "Luke for Everyone" by N.T Wright. With a scholar's mind and a pastor's heart, N. T. Wright guides us through the New Testament book of Luke, showing how we can participate in Luke's story by making it real in our own world. For good conversation with friends join this bible study group on Sundays after worship.

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Thrivent Choice Dollars ~ Thank you to the

eligible Thrivent members who direct their Choice Dollars to Abiding Hope Lutheran Church! This money is being used to carry on the mission and ministry of our congregation. If you are a Thrivent member and have questions about this program, please contact your Thrivent Financial Representative or go to <a href="https://doi.org/10.1001/jhr/10.2007/jhr/

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Thank you from the Filson's ~ Rich and I would like to thank everyone for their good

thoughts, prayers, cards and texts during his recent emergency. Your prayers worked! After some investigation by the doctors, it was found that he had a 99% blockage in his Widow Maker artery.

Doctors said he would have had a heart attack at any moment. He had a catheterization, and 2 stents were placed end-to-end. Miraculously, and no doubt because of all the prayers, he survived with no heart damage whatsoever. Special thanks to Pastor Karen for being there during his procedure. We needed you! We can't tell you how much the love from our Abiding Hope family means to us. You are all special! Thank you. Cindy Filson

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March 2025 Page 5 of 10

A Mission Planning Retreat for the Erie Lutheran Conference Council members (and other congregational leaders) from all our Erie Lutheran Conference congregations are warmly invited to attend this day of mission planning, fellowship, and worship. We will be looking at our common mission in Erie County and developing recommendations for future shared ministry, partnerships, and cooperation among the congregations in our conference.

#### FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Lunch and morning refreshments will be provided (suggested donation--\$5.00). Please sign up on the sheet in your narthex, or online via the QR Code or bit.ly below. Please register by Sunday, March 23. Any questions: email Pastor Jean, Conference Dean, at faithlepastor@gmail.com.

#### Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Parish Center 9261 Lake Pleasant Road Saturday, March 29~9:00am-3:00pm

- What will the congregation landscape be in 5-10 years?
- How can we strengthen our Lutheran witness?
- How can we share human and physical resources?

Sign Up Online: https://bit.ly/ELCMission

# FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS a MISSION PLANNING RETREAT

Council members (and other congregational leaders) from all of our Erie Lutheran Conference congregations are warmly invited to attend this day of mission planning, fellowship, and worship. We will be looking at our common mission in Erie County and developing recommendations for future shared ministry, partnerships, and cooperation among the congregations in our conference.





#### for the Erie Lutheran Conference

Saturday, March 29 9:60am-3:60pm Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Parish Center 9261 Lake Pleasant Road

What will the congregation landscape be in 5-10 years? How can we strengthen our Lutheran witness? How can we share human and physical resources?

Lunch and morning refreshments will be provided (Suggested donation--\$5.00). Please sign up on the sheet in your narthex, or online via the QR Code or bit.ly below.

Please register by Sunday, March 23.
Any questions: email Pastor Jean,
Conference Dean, at
faithlepastor@gmail.com.

Sign Up Online: https://bit.ly/ELCMission

# Luther Memorial Academy Open House

Luther Memorial Academy (K-8) will be hosting an open house on Sunday, March 23 from 1-3pm.

As they prepare for their 50th Academic Year, LMA will use this opportunity to showcase their amazing...and unique...school for those who are interested. LMA is the only ELCA K-8 in the Commonwealth! That's something all Lutherans should be proud of. There is also a discounted rate for any Erie Conference member family on tuition!



#### Celebrating our 50th Academic Year in 2025-20261

Discounted Tuition for Erie Lutheran Conference congregation member families!





March 2025 Page 6 of 10

# Hospitality Team March Update

The hospitality committee is busy preparing for the Mardi Gras celebration on March 2. We will be meeting after church in the fellowship hall for a Fat Tuesday Celebration. Dust off your best Mardi Gras outfit and prepare to party. Bring a Mardi Gras inspired dish or your favorite food. If you need help finding a Mardi Gras dish, please see Carolyn. The sign-up sheet is in the narthex. After the celebration we will be entertained by Sax-o-Friends, a saxophone quartet. As Sheryl is involved, this promises to be an outstanding performance.

Don't forget... We will be having soup lunches every Wednesday during Lent after the service at 12:15 PM. If you need transportation, please contact us and we will be happy to accommodate your needs. Carolyn Hayes

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# Council Recap of February Meeting & Retreat

We welcome Paul Mirone as our newest council member. Looking forward to another year of representing the members of Abiding Hope. Remember to help us to be your voice.

- Requesting that Readers sit up at the altar until after the prayers. This will allow a better flow of the service
- Due to the never-ending winter, we have additional billing from the landscaper service.
- Our lights are not LED. To replace bulbs would be a cost of \$4.80 each bulb
- Discussed "Rental Agreement" and number of hours being used based on contract

Council also had a retreat after service on February 9. At this meeting we discussed where our congregation is in the life cycle and ways to renew, reinvest and restart. There are many things that we are doing well with outreach within our congregation and our community. Yet, based on the average age of our members, several new ideas were discussed. Our hope is to have a Congregational Lunch to present these ideas and to welcome input from the congregation.

Respectfully submitted by: Analee Cree - Council Secretary

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# March Dates to Remember

Mar 2 Mardi Gras Party @ 11 Sax-O-Friends 12:30

Mar 3 & 17 Prayer Shawls 10-12noon

Mar 5 Ash Wednesday @12:15 & 6 @ AHLC, 2:30 @ New Hope

Mar 12, 19 & 26 Soup & Worship 12:15

Mar 29 -9-3 Mission Planning Retreat See page 6 \*\*\*\*\*

# March Birthdays

3/1 Vicki Saska

3/4 Kerigan Saska

3/5 Andrea Petrone

3/6 Kevin Petrone

3/7 Evelyn Senger

3/13 Marjorie Wonner

3/13 Shirley Englert

3/14 Bill Overmoyer

3/18 Nancy Cunning

3/23 Andy Saska

3/29 Jake Runyan

3/31 Don Fuller

#### March Anniversaries

3/11~ Bill & Sharron Sontheimer ~ 36 years

3/26 Roger & Irene Owens ~ 59 years

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# Thank you Note

Thank you to the many volunteer hands that made so many peanut butter sandwiches and stuffed the 60 lunch bags to feed our local homeless neighbors. Thank you, too, for your donations of snacks - and to the Thrivent Financial Action Team program for funding this service project.

March 2025

Page 7 of 10

# Little Free Library and Pantry

During the month of February, it was with great joy that approximately 30 valentines sharing "Jesus Loves Me" were taken by visitors. There was an increase in visits by two homeless males who visited separately but eagerly selected items from the pantry that, from what could be seen in the camera, were ready-to-eat items like cold cereal, granola bars, dried fruit. Their visits have been 3-4 times a week. Donations of body and hand warmers have been available and taken by both these men. A gentleman stopped by with a large bag donation containing packages of 'instant mac and cheese' requiring only water. After the expiration dates were verified, several have been placed in the pantry throughout the week and are currently popular with visitors. A young mother stops by every few days to exchange children's books; the 'Pajama Lady' is now wearing a heavy coat over her pajamas during her visits for a book and snack (Whew!) but has come less frequently, most likely due to the cold. Please include all our visitors in your prayers. We may be the only Jesus they may see right now...

March should bring some warmer weather! It is still too early to put canned goods (soups, pasta meals, vegetables, fruits, etc.) but if you see some good sales, consider purchasing a few for the increased temperatures to come! In the meantime, the following would be appreciated: dried fruits in individual packages, instant hot cereals, small jars of peanut butter in plastic jars, peanut butter/cheese crackers, graham crackers, ready-to-eat "pouch meals" (tuna especially), pastas, pasta sauces in plastic containers.

The generosity to this mission has just been overwhelming. Blessings and Gratitude for the food donations (Heritage Room) and the lovely, handcrafted bookmarks! Please consider selecting a book for yourself whenever you like! There is a good variety rotating through continually and this library is for our entire community!

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## 1 Music Notes 1

Lent is just around the corner, but first we will celebrate Mardi Gras on Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. The worship service will be followed by a luncheon with festive food and activities, and then an exciting concert by the "Sax-o-Friends," a saxophone quartet with percussion! This group plays an amazing variety of music from jazz, ragtime, classical and sacred music. Founded by Christina Murnock (Sheryl's daughter) and David Wasson, the members perform locally and as far as Edinboro and Mercer County, where they have combined with over 25 other saxophones and are regularly featured with the Northwest PA Concert Band and the Mercer Community Band. Please come and bring family and friends to enjoy the festivities of Mardi Gras right here at Abiding Hope on March 2nd!

There will be two services on Ash Wednesday at 12:15 pm and 6:00 pm. The choir will be singing at the 12:15 service and has been busy rehearsing for the coming Lenten season. Paul Sontheimer and Howard Lyon will be providing special music on March 9<sup>th</sup>, followed by weekly choir anthems throughout March.

Combined weekly Lenten Services with New Hope Presbyterian Church on Wednesdays at 12:15 pm at Abiding Hope. More information will be coming in the April newsletter regarding Holy Week Services.

May you have a reflective Lenten journey this year!

Lenten Blessings,

Sheryl Williams ~ Music Coordinator ~ <a href="mailto:sheryl4013@yahoo.com">sheryl4013@yahoo.com</a> ~ (814) 882-2830

| March 2025 Page 8 of 10 |
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# March 2025 Abiding Hope Calendar



2402 W Grandview Blvd. Erie, PA 16506 ~ 814-868-8685 ~ www.abidinghopeerie.org

| Sunday                                                                                                                         | Monday                                             | Tuesday                                                                | Wednesday                                                                                 | Thursday                                                                         | Friday       | Saturday                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Our W                                                                                                                          | 1<br>M Lessons 8-12<br>Overeaters 10:30            |                                                                        |                                                                                           |                                                                                  |              |                                                                                   |
| 2 Transfiguration<br>of Our Lord<br>Worship 9:30<br>Choir @ 9<br>Mardi Gras<br>Party & 11 &<br>Sax-o-Friends<br>12:30          | 3 Prayer Shawls 10-12 M. Lessons 4-6 Al-Anon 7:30  | 4 Ministry Team 10:30 Easter Flock 12:30 M Lessons 4-6                 | 5 ASh<br>Wednesday<br>AHLC 12:15 & 6<br>New Hope 2:30<br>Wednesday                        | 6                                                                                | 7            | M Lessons 8-12<br>Overeaters 10:30<br>Turn your clocks<br>ahead 1 hour<br>tonight |
| 9<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent<br>Worship 9:30<br>Choir 10:45<br>Bible Study 10:45                                        | M. Lessons 4-6<br>Al-Anon 7:30                     | 11<br>Ministry Team<br>10:30<br>Council 6:30<br>M Lessons 4-6          | Soup & Worship 12:15 AHLC                                                                 | 13<br>KAFP 9-11                                                                  | 14           | 15<br>M Lessons 8-12<br>Overeaters 10:30                                          |
| 16<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent<br>Worship 9:30<br>Choir 9 & 10:45<br>Bible Study 10:45                                   | 17 Prayer Shawls 10-12  M Lessons 4-6 Al-Anon 7:30 | 18 Ministry Team 10:30 Care Team 12:30  M Lessons 4-6                  | 19 Soup & Worship 12:15 AHLC Prayer Warriors 1-3 from home Men's Night Out 6:30 & Chico's | 20<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Day of<br>Spring<br>Ladies Night<br>Out 5:30 D<br>Brewerie | 21           | M Lessons 8-12<br>Overeaters 10:30                                                |
| 23 Healing Service<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent<br>Worship 9:30<br>Choir 9 & 10:45<br>Bible Study 10:45<br>LMA Open House | DL Newsletter  M. Lessons 4-6 Al-Anon 7:30         | 25<br>Ministry Team<br>10:30<br>Easter Flock<br>12:30<br>M Lessons 4-6 | 26<br>Soup & Worship<br>12:15 AHLC                                                        | 27<br>KAFP 9-11                                                                  | 28           | 29 M Lessons 8-12 Overeaters 10:30 Erie Conference Mission Planning Retreat 9-3   |
| 30<br>4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent<br>Worship 9:30<br>Choir 9 & 10:45<br>Bible Study 10:45                                   | M. Lessons 4-6<br>Al-Anon 7:30                     |                                                                        | Receiving C<br>lenge for you to co<br>ne usher and you v                                  |                                                                                  | eceive commu |                                                                                   |

March 2025 Page 9 of 10









Below is a thank you note to Abiding Hope & Analee for sponsoring the Feb 7<sup>th</sup> **Night to Shine** event. Analee Cree, Vicky and Andrea Saska, Jackie Seib, and Nancy Cunning volunteered as "buddies" for participants.

Analee ~ It means so much to me that you were able to experience Erie NTS 25. We feel it was the best one yet and the presence of God was strongly felt. You and Abiding Hope are a blessing to us. Thank you for all your support in celebrating our friends with special needs. We are excited for Erie NTS 26 and having you join us again.











March 2025

Page 10 of 10