



St. Luke Lutheran Church
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Connect, Grow and Serve.

Parish Times May 2020



The Pastor's Perspective...

"You do not need to know precisely what is happening or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope."---Thomas Merton

Learning to live in the present is something I have had to embrace since the beginning of the COVID pandemic in March. It is something I strived to do before this period of time, but never really mastered well. ☺ You see, I love my calendar and planning things out weeks in advance. It gives me a sense of rhythm, control and simply helps to make sense of what is going on around my life, as a mom, wife, and pastor. Looking at my schedule, I felt secure knowing that I could see the bigger picture of a month. Writing down details of various tasks that needed tending to and finding ways to be flexible and adapt were important to my routine. Since March 12th, (both my son's and husband's birthday, so it is a day I will never forget), I have not known exactly what is happening or where it is all going. That was the day that everything turned upside down and COVID came into our lives like a wind, knocking us down and changing the ways we understood life. We have had to think differently about everything and especially the ways we interact with each other. We have had to stop congregating in groups and have been really focusing on socially distancing, for the sake of our neighbor and ourselves.

The above quote from Thomas Merton recently came in my e-mail inbox and reminded me that the moments of today are all we have, nothing more, nothing less. We don't know what tomorrow will bring and trusting God in the here and the now is the gift of the present. What kinds of things will God open to us today? In the midst of a global pandemic, the challenges will overshadow the possibilities of what could be.

Thomas Merton tells us to recognize the possibilities AND challenges offered by the present moment and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.

Physically embracing is something we are not doing right now, but for most of us, an embrace is being surrounded by arms of love. When we lean into an embrace, we extend our arms around the other person. The embrace is mutual and in those moments, we are able to both give and receive.

Embracing courage is about leaning into the day, not knowing what exactly will unfold, but pushing forward. Courage is socially distancing. Courage is calling someone you haven't spoken to in a long time. Courage is writing a letter of love. Courage is wearing a mask when others are not. Courage is finding ways to financially support those who are struggling. Courage is learning how to join a Zoom conversation and finding new ways of being part of a community. When we embrace courage, we are doing something new in which we have to take a risk. If we lean into courage with Jesus at our side, it becomes much easier.

Embracing faith is putting God first. Have you ever done a trust walk? This past fall during our Deep Dive confirmation, the confirmands practiced this with each other. They were paired up with a partner; one was blindfolded and the other had to guide them through the forest. The one who was blindfolded had to trust that their partner would communicate about where to step and would not lead them into harm. Faith is trusting that God goes before us, behind us, next to us, above us and below us. God wants the best for us, always. When we embrace and lean into our faith in Christ, the challenges are easier to see as opportunities.

Embracing hope is the essential piece in these pandemic days. Without hope, we have nothing. With hope, everything and anything is possible. Leaning into hope reminds us that there is a future and Jesus is guiding us forward. Our hope is in the risen Lord.

As Easter people, we are called to embrace today. As Easter people we do not need to know precisely what is happening or exactly where it is all going because we can lean into courage, faith and hope. God will see us through. This is Good News!

You are in my thoughts and prayers today, tomorrow and always. May God bless and keep you!

In Christ,
Pastor Emily



May Birthdays

- 1 Jodi Landenberger
- 3 Alivia Mathis
- 4 Michael Amundson
- 6 Reginald Czech
- 9 Kent Peterson
- 10 Maleah Mathis
- 11 Ian Holmly
- 12 Julie Ellingson
- 18 Katy Eggert, Larry Litzkow
- 21 Dan Vigdal, MaryJo Brandt
- 22 Lucy Pilgrim
- 26 Kayla Stadem
- 28 Patricia Stadem, Sue Palm



May Anniversaries

- 11 Robert & Lois Porter: 1968
- 22 Dan & Deborah Vigdal: 1971
- 30 Tom & Julie Gaarder: 1992



*Do not fear,
for I am with you.
Do not be afraid,
for I am your God.
I will
strengthen you,
I will help you.
I will uphold you
with my victorious
right hand.
--Isaiah 41:10*

Congregational Coaching Opportunity Begins for St. Mark and St. Luke

In early January, three leaders from St. Mark and St. Luke along with Pastor Emily, met with our synodical bishop, Patricia Lull. In our conversation with the bishop a congregational coaching opportunity was presented; it will provide ideas about ways in which we can grow in our ministry as individual congregations and together. This is a resource to provide support and care for both congregations and pastor.

What does this mean for the congregations at large?

The council leadership of both congregations has voted and agreed to enter into a relationship with Mary Frances, ELCA pastor and congregational coach, based out of Chicago. Once a month, each congregational team will connect on-line, to work and envision, creating healthy environments and communication in the overall ways in which we do our ministries as St. Mark and St. Luke Lutheran Churches. The initial conversation started in March and will continue for six months.

Pastor Emily is also receiving individual coaching from Mary, as she sets goals and discerns creative ways to support, learn from, and care for the congregations.

The congregations will learn more about this process as it unfolds in the coming months. Your participation will be important as we continue to minister within our individual congregations and seek ways to work together. The congregational coaching ministry teams are as followed: Jackie Brueggemann, Eric Michelson, and Karen Larson from St. Mark and Sue McNeill, Becca Ruiz, and David Tews, from St. Luke.

Please keep these folks in your prayers and stay tuned for more information to come.

Thank you!



Financial Report



The receivables were \$29,519.00 and expenses \$34,146.92 for the first quarter.

We budget \$250/year for Second Harvest and Neighborhood House; I sent each of them \$100 in March. We collected \$500 for the March Food drive so each has been sent another \$250.

Please send me a note if you would like a copy of the Treasurer's Report or have any questions about it.

Thank you for your support!

God's Work. Our Hands.

--Ruth Carlson

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are you interested in reading/book club? Do you like to sing? Do you like trivia? Is there something else you are "keen on" that you would like to connect with a small group about? During these COVID days and beyond, we are all about connecting through relationship and interests! Please send an e-mail to secretary@saintlukechurch.org and let us know!

President's Corner



After several weeks of social distancing, I'm getting used to wearing a mask in public, carrying wipes in the car to wash my hands, and Zoom is now a familiar communication tool. I appreciate seeing tape on the floor in stores to remind me to stand back in line or away from others while in the aisle shopping. I hope that you are continuing to do what you can to stay safe and well. The changes created by COVID-19 have not changed our congregation and the life we share whether at church or not, nor the plans we need to continue to discuss. This period of isolation has proven to me that St. Luke Church is not a building....it IS the people that call it home.

We stopped meeting in our building March 15, but church life has continued! During Lent, Pastor Emily provided a Wednesday night monolog online and a link to the Holden Evening Prayer. On Easter Sunday, we had a Zoom online service. You can still "see" everyone by downloading the Zoom app and logging in at 9:20 or so for the 9:30 am weekly service. Or if you have a bad hair day, you can just be a black box on the screen with your name. Zoom is an easy and free app for your computer, tablet, or phone. Jo sends an email to everyone on Saturday to include a link you can click on. She also includes a bulletin page so we know about something special happening and our members on the prayer list. The Easter flowers were distributed the Saturday before by Julie Gaarder and I accepted food donations (to make up for our missed March Food Drive). All flowers were picked up and we collected \$45 and 10 bags of groceries that were delivered to the Francis Basket. Jo Klein emails a Daily Devotional prepared by Pastor Emily. If you missed one, you can find them on the St. Luke Facebook page. Pastor has also hosted Talk-O Tuesdays just so members can see and speak to each other on any topic; and she also continues Bible Study at 9:30 am on Wednesdays. We had our first Zoom Church Council meeting on April 16 and completed business as usual. I have attended one Synod meeting and a coaching meeting on Zoom. I will probably host a Zoom meeting for our Church Directory Committee by the time you read this article. Our church groups are exchanging many emails to get things done. Thank goodness for the internet. David Tews and others are working on making online offerings possible. Vanco is the name of the link on our webpage and currently, it is set up to accept envelope offerings for your pledges. You can make a single offering each week, a different amount each week, the same amount each week, many options. It will be enhanced to accept specialized donations like Food Shelf, Easter Flowers, etc. We only pay a 1% fee if you use your bank with Vanco (as opposed to a credit card) for your offering. It is safe and used by many churches around the country. Thank you for mailing your offering to the church. Jo and others stop by the church during the week and put the mail in the church office. Our Treasurer Ruth Carlson picks up checks and makes deposits, and pays the bills.

We are in this together. We are here for each other. There is a telephone chain organized into small groups with call leaders. Everyone is on the list. It is just a quick call once a week to say hi and offer help. Cards and calls to our sick and shut-ins continue, just as before. I know that each of you are sending prayers to your church family too. Thank you. The power of prayer is a strong force. Pastor Emily is available for your spiritual needs. Feel free to call or email any council member if you have questions or concerns.

Be well and safe,
Sue McNeill



I have talked to many of you over the phone in the last month and the question that is most often asked is: ***when will we return to worship in our buildings?***

We do not know when we will physically be back together as congregations and we do not know how that process will unfold right now. Together, the council leadership and I will discern the ins and outs of how we will gather, when that becomes possible. It may not look like it did before and we must be intentional about the ways we prevent the spread of COVID. Our congregations have a large portion of people in the high-risk category and for the sake of all, we will be socially distancing for quite some time. Please be patient as we work out what this means for us, as far as worship, community and fellowship events.

As for now, we will continue our on-line worship. We will send the Zoom link via e-mail, along with the worship order, in case you would like to print that out beforehand. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact secretary@saintlukechurch.org and let us know you would like to be on our e-mail list.

--Pr. Emily

Saint Luke Appreciates Your Continued Donations

Even though church services are currently suspended, you can still donate to St. Luke to help support our mission to serve the people in our congregation and in our community. A new "Ways to Donate" page on St. Luke's website explains how you can donate in three ways—by mail, online, and using a mobile app.

Giving online and through a smartphone or tablet is now possible because of St. Luke's new account through Vanco, a company that processes donations electronically.

You can make electronic donations using a credit or debit card or by withdrawal directly from a bank account (EFT transaction). EFT transactions are preferred because the fees are lower. For more information, go to our website (saintlukechurch.org) and click "Ways to Donate" at the top of the page. Your gifts are appreciated



GIVE FROM THE HEART



Musings from the Music Director

It is such a pleasure to see everyone who is able to join us for worship services, and I appreciate your patience as we've tried different things in our Sunday worship. Sometimes technology cooperates and other times it has not gone as practiced, but we have many options we can explore. Musically, I thought I would have more time to sit and ruminate with the piano, but time flew past me and suddenly I'm writing another newsletter article! If you would like to share music for our services, please contact me and I can help you figure out something we can use and the best way we can share that music. For our services, we have been using non-copyrighted music, except where we have had permission granted by the composer, while we determine the best licensing options. My hope is to put together another virtual choral piece for May. If you are interested in any of the above, please email me at: bunkamade@gmail.com.

-Becca Ruiz

To Everything There Is a Season

The St. Luke's Farmers' Market season begins Saturday, June 13, and extends through Saturday, October 3. Hours will be 8am to 1pm. Like grocery stores, farmers markets can be open during these uncertain times—with safety accommodations, such as social distancing, a controlled flow of customer traffic, a handwashing station and hand sanitizer, etc. These accommodations necessitate more volunteers per Saturday. This season, you may sign up to work an early shift (7:30am to 10:30am), a late shift (10:30am to 1:30pm), or a double shift (7:30am to 1:30pm). In addition to the market co-manager, at least 3 volunteers are needed during market hours to help create a safe, enjoyable shopping experience for our customers—and for our vendors and volunteers as well! Watch for an emailed signup sheet that will be sent the beginning of May. Without your help, this important ministry to our community cannot continue. Which Saturday(s) can you "work the market"? For more information, please contact Laurie Herrmann or Wendy Bjorklund.

