



St. Luke Lutheran Church  
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# St. Luke Lutheran Church

*Connect, Grow and Serve.*

## Parish Times April 2020



### *The Pastor's Perspective...*

After realizing I submitted my newsletter the day of the COVID 19 outbreak, I had to re-think and update things based on our new reality. I too, feel the world has been turned upside down and navigating my days without a clear direction has been very difficult. It has been hard for all of us; we have entered uncharted waters. I have been praying for all of you morning, noon and night, because I believe and know that we can only get through these challenging days with God and each other.

I hold to the scripture from Romans 8:38-39: *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This is Good News!

Oddly enough, the COVID 19 pandemic is happening during the season of Lent. These forty days are moments in which we are called to intentionally refocus and redirect our lives to God. Lent is my favorite season of the church year **because** the heart of it lies in the journey to the cross. This new COVID 19 pandemic journey feels like a long road ahead of us where we cannot see the end in sight. There is a lot of uncertainty and we know that there will be sickness, despair, sadness, loneliness, fear, anxiety, and death. My guess is this is exactly how Jesus felt at times throughout his ministry, but he did this for one reason; so that nothing could separate us from the love of God. Again, this is Good News!

Everything I love about Lent, I won't be able to experience in our physical buildings in the near future; music played and sung in minor keys, the color purple on the altar, and mid-week Wednesday night soup suppers and singing the Holden Evening Prayer during worship together. These days in which we are separated by distance, but not by Spirit, continue to be central to our Lenten journey because they focus on the movement towards the cross and the resurrection. Easter is where we are headed because we are resurrection people!

Holy Week will look different this year because we are not physically together, but I ask that you still walk with our communities on-line or via phone. Please remember, when using Zoom, if you do not have a computer you can dial in via phone and participate. I will send this information in an email blast and as a Facebook message. We will journey through Holy Week together and yes, we will celebrate Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Christ's resurrection on Easter morning.

The COVID 19 pandemic **will not** stop us from being resurrection people. In fact, it gives us a bigger voice as we cry out in the midst of our struggle. Death does not have the last word. Nothing can separate us from the love God has for us. COVID 19 is not the end of the story, but is part of our story. The ways we move through this narrative are a part of what will shape us as people of God. The Spirit has been hard at work and the Good News is reaching into places we never imagined.

I encourage you to make time to celebrate and participate in these Holy Days which lie ahead. Jesus will show us where we are going. Jesus will make sure we are not alone because **nothing** can separate us from the love Jesus has for us. As we are reminded in the Holden Evening Prayer; the light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.

Oh, and by the way, we'll celebrate Easter twice this year. On Easter Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, the first Easter celebration will take place ON-LINE/PHONE using the on-line application Zoom. The "second" Easter will be celebrated when we return to worshipping together in our physical spaces, whenever that will be. At this point, we do not know when that will be, but please stay tuned as I and the St. Luke and St. Mark councils discern when it is safe to return to our congregational buildings. Thanks for your understanding.

Please keep our congregations in your prayers as we continue to seek new ways of being the church while being distanced from each other.

May God bless and keep you as we journey together towards the Easter celebration and season,

Pastor Emily



### April Birthdays

- 1 Joan Holtz
- 2 Beth Peterson
- 3 Barb Jensen
- 5 David Elliott
- 6 Tom Gaarder
- 7 Michael Arndt
- 11 Samuel Elliott
- 21 Tracy Arndt
- 22 Vivien Cendra
- 26 Jen Fredrickson  
Abby Klein
- 28 Emily Rova-Hegener
- 30 Eddie McGrew



### April Anniversaries

- 5 Volker & Jodi  
Landenberger
- 7 Mary Dybvig & Mel Sward
- 8 David & Nahoko Person
- 11 David Elliott &  
Susan Lorenz
- 24 Raul & Becca Ruiz
- 25 Bob & Pam Ballis



### LOAVES AND FISHES

100 hungry men, women and children were fed dinner on January 24th at the Loaves and Fishes program at St. Matthew's Church. Workers from St. Luke were Sandy Berger, Larry Litzkow and Sue McNeill, along with Pr. Emily, Pr. Joel, Nestor and Johan and volunteers from St. Mark.



### Summer 2020 Learning and Mission Trip to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Opportunity

**What:** The ministries of St. Luke and St. Mark Lutheran Churches are offering a learning/mission trip this summer and we are looking to build relationships and have a life-changing experience, shaping who we are as people of God! We want YOU to come along!

**Who:** Anyone between the ages of youth and adult (10-100)

**When:** Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>-Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup>

**Where:** Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota

**Why:** To experience the Lakota culture, learn, listen and see how God is changing and molding the community of Pine Ridge.

**Cost:** \$500 (trying to keep this cost as low as possible!)

**Here are a few things we will be experiencing on the trip:**

- hear life stories from Native Lakota Elders
- visit "Thunder Valley": new native community rebuilding culture
- visit Chief Red Cloud school (where many children were placed when taken from their families)
- visit Basil Braveheart at his "Prayer/Ceremony" Center: hear his story, take part in prayer time
- see the famous "white buffalo" calf (white buffalo are considered sacred)
- visit the site (and burial grounds) of historic Wounded Knee massacre
- drive the area and enjoy the unique beauty of "Badlands" rock formations
- hear several Native artists tell about their art and see their work
- participate in project making "dream catchers" and MORE

We are looking for 8-10 (we could have up to 12) people total from both St. Mark and St. Luke. If you are AT ALL interested, please let Pastor Emily know. More information to come. This is going to be an amazing trip you won't want to miss!

*Here's a fun piece written about one way we could see these days of shelter-in-place and social distancing:*

And the people stayed home.

They read books, and listened, and rested and exercised and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. They listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced and some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently.

And the people healed and in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger had passed, the people joined together again. They grieved their losses and made new choices. They dreamed new images and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

--Kitty O'Meara



## President's Corner



What a difference a day makes! COVID-19 has changed all our lives. There is that word again...change. I cannot visit my sister in her senior living complex. Can't meet friends for coffee or breakfast or lunch. The biggest change is not being able to worship with you on Sundays and not meet for council or choir. The changes created by COVID-19 do not change our congregation and the life we share whether at church or not, nor the plans we need to continue to discuss.

On March 17, we notified all the groups that meet in our church that we are cancelling all meetings until further notice and asked them to respect this decision and not meet at St. Luke. All have agreed. There will also be a "deep clean" event prior to our reopening the building. Information will be available as soon as an opening date is determined. Hopefully a pop-up crew can wipe clean all the kitchen surfaces, knobs, doorknobs, light switches, tables and chairs before we gather again. I hope you'll find an hour or two to be there to help prepare our church to welcome all again to a clean and healthy environment.

While the "deep clean" will certainly make it possible to trust most surfaces you may contact, it might not include all the windows that need washing. Our two janitors certainly help on a weekly basis, but it may be best if we have another pop-up crew this spring to just wash those windows. Watch for any notices for this specific soapy event.

The Photo Directory will happen with the help of a core of organizers from both St. Luke and St. Mark. Once the basic details are agreed upon with the company providing the directory, there will be a need for a phone crew to set up appointments for each family, and another pop-up crew to greet families at their appointments. "Picture" yourself helping with this event sometime this year.

These pop-up crews are part of our agreement to be members of our church family: we worship/commune together, and we share our time, talents, and tithe. Remember that our weekly offering pays for our monthly expenses, whether we meet there or not. **Please continue to give what you can afford.** Everyone is important and has just the right talent to share when we regroup.

Unfortunately, the March Food Drive has been interrupted at a time when even more people are in need of food. Let's plan on making our first 4 weeks together as our food drive and bring food to share. It will be delivered to our local food bank. If easier for you, please donate to your favorite food charity.

And when the times seem so troubled and overwhelming with statistics of illnesses and deaths, remember to share your prayers to include our church family and all in the world as we fight disease together. If we shouldn't shake hands, we can certainly share our smiles. Phone calls or cards to those who live in assisted living or care facilities, and who have been in "lockdown," will help them to know they are remembered and loved. Trust in God to hear our prayers for cures and basic needs to be met. Oh...and remember to keep washing your hands...often!

~Sue McNeill

**Council Motions:** Motion passed to present a report by Parish Board on worship options to consider giving Pastor more time between services on Sunday morning. Motion passed to change the council meetings to the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm.



*So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my  
righteous right hand.  
Isaiah 41:10*



**Are you bored and needing something to do during these shelter-in-place days?**

Why not send a card or call one of our shut-ins? There are many people who are seeking to make connections with others during these days of isolation. Please let Jo (our office administrator) know and we can connect you to someone, along with their number and address.

**Opportunities to Connect:**

~ **Talk-O Tuesday** from 10am to 11am on Zoom! Please join us for a time of checking in with our people from St. Luke and St. Mark.

~ **Bible Study** will continue and start up again on Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. You can Zoom and dial directly into our group meeting. Email blast to follow!

*Please Give!*

Last, but not least....**WE NEED YOUR OFFERING SO WE CAN KEEP DOING OUR MINISTRY TO THE COMMUNITY AND WORLD! THANK YOU!**

Please remember that our congregations are continuing to minister to the community and world every single day. Your offerings are important and vital as we carry out God's mission. You can give by mailing in your check to the church. Please stay tuned as to how we will continue to offer new platforms for giving directly to our ministry at St. Luke and St. Mark. We truly appreciate the financial gifts you have given. We are deeply grateful and blessed by these gifts! **THANK YOU!** 😊





## Our Lenten Fast From Holy Communion

Some of you have asked if we could do “drive thru” or virtual communion. At this point, we are being advised against this by the head office of the ELCA bishop in Chicago. The reasons why are as stated:

"This disruption may actually be of benefit to us. The world has hit the pause button and now we have time to reflect more deeply on the evangelical understanding of the Word that was recovered during the Reformation. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate. The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. The question should be turned around from, 'How do we receive Holy Communion?' to 'How does the Word of God come to us and how do we receive the Word of God?' God comes to us in all these ways and is really present. Holy Communion is not the only way that the Word of God is communicated—it's not even the preeminent way that the Word of God is communicated.

This disruption also gives us the time and space to examine our understanding of and practices around Holy Communion. Some will remember times when communion was celebrated once a month. Now we have done such a good job of encouraging our people to receive the sacrament more frequently that many, if not most, of our congregations have weekly communion! Of course, the pandemic-forced physical distancing has interrupted this practice. But it hasn't separated us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39). We don't know how long this pandemic will last, but it won't last forever.

Fasting from Holy Communion for a time might be a good discipline. This absence makes God's presence more profound. During this limited fast we might become more aware of God's presence around us and in creation in ways that we have never noticed before. Even in times when a community cannot gather to share the sacrament, Jesus shows up, and we are still part of the body of Christ. 'The Use of the Means of Grace' reminds us that Holy Communion takes place in the assembly (Principle 39). We recommend that we do not urge people to employ virtual communion, that deacons, pastors, and bishops use this time as a teaching moment about the Lutheran understanding of the Word of God, and that we make use of the Service of the Word and Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer and Responsive Prayer. Let us spend time in scripture study, pray for each other, and contact others regularly by phone, email or social media."

So, we will continue forward holding God's Word and make this our Lenten fast. What a joyous day it will be when we will share in this meal again!

Pr. Emily



## Musings from the Music Director

*"There's no such thing as silence."* – John Cage

I'm sure that is not who you would expect me to quote in our newsletter, but it often enters my mind in life. I'm also sure by the time you read this, it will have crossed my mind many times as I sit to practice or to record services. I will think of *how much* has had to happen for these last Sundays to be so silent in St. Luke. How much had to change and the physical silence we are experiencing. As I write this, I have no idea what April will be. But I do know that I will find ways to bridge this silence to connect, and to use it to reflect. I hope to share about hymns I turn to, hymns written in uncertain times, and hopefully share my own take on those hymns.

A video went around from quarantined Italy, where people opened their windows and shared music together. While we can't open the windows of our homes and hear other St. Luke people singing, I hope you know that on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, I am singing in spirit with you. Maybe we're not singing the same thing, maybe you want to sing your own hymn of comfort or a favorite. Maybe you like to just listen to the Holden Evening Prayer on Wednesdays. For me, I hear us singing together as I listen or play. If we can't sing together on the last midweek service of Lent, I hope this opens the windows of your heart and you can hear St. Luke (and St. Mark) singing in our spiritual street. And then reflect for a moment after. Hear how much is not silent around us. Wind, rain, our breath, hums and chirps of our homes, chirping outside. It takes a lot to make silence, and so we know that we will also break the physical silence of our church and sing (or listen) together again at St. Luke. And until then, I'll keep opening my spiritual street window and singing with you. –

Becca Ruiz