

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Chimes

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April 2020

From the Pastor

Dear Friends of the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ,

With what can we compare the events of the last few weeks? From the speck of a darkening storm cloud in faraway China last November to the first cases showing up here in America the end of January, the advent of the coronavirus as a full-fledged pandemic has come upon us with lightning quick ferocity. And yet, while its economic, societal and psychological impact has reached everyone regardless of their status in life, its actual medical conse-

quences are felt by comparatively few. That's what makes this experience so damnablely depressing: that most of us are walking around feeling absolutely fine and yet so constricted in our freedom to live out our normal routines: work, school, worship, leisure activities.

For us who are Christians, it's counterintuitive. While we tout togetherness—the building of relationships and community—dealing with the virus means enforced separation. When my daughter, Allison, and I met for our customary aerobics class on the very day, as it turned out, that our

fitness club was forced to close, she wanted me to give her a hug. My refusal to comply with her wish because of “social distancing” left her visibly upset; her mother had hugged her just the night before, she said.

There is precedent, however, in our Christian faith for this notion of separation. The desert fathers of the early Church were drawn away from society in order to draw closer to God. There’s an ebb and flow among the mystics of the Middle Ages between self-isolation in order to get grounded in their fundamental identity as believers and reaching out beyond themselves to engage the wider world in acts of loving service. I often quote the philosopher Kahil Gibran when I do pre-marital counseling: “Let there be spaces (six feet?) in your togetherness.” And I suppose that that saying is more poignantly apt just now because of the particular dynamics of the coronavirus.

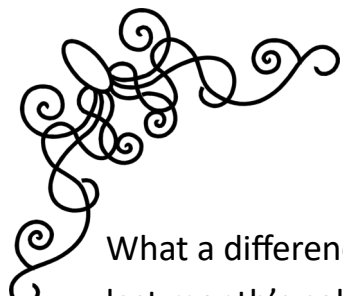
What all this means for us as a congregation is, at least temporarily, the need to “do church” differently. Since worship with more than ten people can’t happen presently, we are recording Sunday services for upload on Facebook and our web site. I’ll be systematically reaching out to

you by phone or email to see how you’re doing and, if there is a need, hooking you up with a volunteer to provide assistance. But don’t wait for me to contact you. Please call the church if you need help as well as if you can provide volunteer assistance to get groceries or medical attention for others.

We all must be creative and resilient, qualities for which Americans have always been famous. And one other request: In spite of the dislocations we all face, keep up with your offerings. The church of Jesus Christ is still in business with its mission and ministry even in the absence of public worship, the normal venue for collecting offerings. So, join me in continuing to fill your weekly envelopes and either mail them or drop them off at church. In the words the Lord spoke to Joshua upon the death of Moses as the Israelites were poised to enter the Promised Land: “Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Your pastor and friend,

Carl W. Filer



Council Corner

What a difference a month can make! In last month's column I wrote about the preparation of the *Ministry Site Profile* for St. Paul and how it will be used to guide the selection of a new pastor for our church. Although we're well aware that this process may take a considerable amount of time, we can understand the need for patience, trusting that the process will yield a satisfactory result for our church community. And suddenly, because of the coronavirus pandemic, most of us have more unassigned time than we would have thought possible.

Patience and trust are essential ingredients in a world now facing a serious disease.

What was normal activity two weeks ago is now oddly distant, and we have been in a self-quarantine for only a short time. I'm sure that Pastor Filer will continue to address our spiritual needs as we move forward, so I won't attempt to stumble through that territory. Instead, I'd like to suggest that you stay informed by watching a variety of news programs—perhaps three networks-- to allow you to form a balanced opinion of what's happening. However, don't become a "news junkie." For the next month or so, much of what we see and hear will not be good news. Finally, our Good News is not of this world but the next. With God's help, we will make our

way through this crisis and, time permitting, we will emerge from it with a much stronger moral and ethical compass.

And now to the Council news for March:

Council commended Leanna Wickline for making a smooth transition to the Parish Administrator position. Thanks to Terry Fouts' excellent instruction (and a willingness to continue taking phone calls) Leanna is adapting very well and learning how to care for St. Paul—the building and the people—every day.

Building Use requests, usually a simple matter of review and prompt approval, suddenly took on a new dimension with Governor Wolf's social distancing mandates. One large group cancelled its request prior to our meeting, and Council conditionally approved two smaller groups pending developments in the next 6-8 weeks. Small groups for AA were approved provided they clean their meeting area with disinfectants before leaving. In short, almost all building use will come to a halt for the immediate future.

Mattie Morales detailed emergency plans for the St. Paul Food Pantry. The need for food donations will continue to increase as the quarantine

continues, and the congregation is reminded to continue providing food donations by bringing them to the church building. The pantry workers will be bringing food to cars in the parking lot instead of allowing those in need to enter the building (a take-out approach).

Pastor Filer and Council discussed possible changes to Palm Sunday and Easter services pending events in the next few weeks. One suggestion was to have an outdoor service with safe distancing. Of course, these ideas will depend on the coronavirus and the local weather. We will be making decisions weekly as we plan for the next few months. Many churches are providing a simple online worship service, and St. Paul made its first worship video last Wednesday night. Our website may become the best way to share worship with the largest part of our congregation for a while.

Regardless of the daily use of the church building, the Property Committee always has something to do. Recently they conducted a complete review of the fire alarm and emergency lighting system for the building; this review was in response to a repair estimate from our licensed emergency lighting/alarm company. Property was able to save the congregation more than \$2000 by completing much of the work themselves. Of course, all repairs must be reviewed by the inspecting company.

In another property concern, Council reviewed an estimate for the replacement of the Trane heat pump that services the church office suite. The original unit (28 years old!) has failed and can no longer be repaired. The cost of a new unit is approximately \$6600, and Council voted to contact Affordable Comfort and reserve an installation time for the fall. The cooling function will work for the summer, allowing us to delay the expenditure for a few months.

The Emergency Response Team reported on the recent CPR and “Stop the Bleed” training offered by the Lehigh Valley Health Network. St. Paul now has nine members certified in the two essential first aid skills and is in the process of purchasing a set of multi-casualty kits—kits that we hope will never have to be used.

Finally, Council developed a list of six people to serve as a Call Committee for the selection of our next pastor. Ron Unternahrer has agreed to serve as the Call Committee chair, and he will be contacting the possible members to seek their participation. (Council members are not permitted to serve on the Call Committee.) With the self-quarantine restrictions we are now facing in

Pennsylvania, much of the committee's work will need to be done through technology.

In contrast to the life and death news of the coronavirus, the monthly Council news may appear commonplace and dull. However, we need to look beyond the troubles of these times to a return to normal church services and weekly activities. *Please don't forget to provide your weekly offerings for the ongoing expenses of St. Paul. Many of*

our expenses continue whether or not the church is open. You may send your offering checks to St. Paul Lutheran Church, PO Box 196, Tannersville, PA 18372.

Stay home and stay well!

Bill Below

Council President



A Letter from the Parish Administrator

One phrase that keeps reverberating in my head is "Do you want to make God laugh, make a plan." It seems like every day, we make a plan, the coronavirus progresses, the President or Governor speaks, and plans change. Despite these changing plans, Pastor and I are attempting to change with the times, to get creative in ways that we can meet your spiritual needs, provide support and be a blessing to the community.

One of the things we have initiated is to video record a service and post it to our website and FaceBook page. Our first attempt was a challenge in learning the newer technology, but it came out okay. We have had the suggestion that we email out the bulletin so you can follow along and participate with the video. That will be enacted for our second service.

We are going to video record a Lenten liturgy and discussion, so watch for that. With everyone working from home and entertaining themselves on the internet, it

has been a little slow in downloading and uploading this week. That has been an additional challenge, Wednesday Lenten service was not up on Wednesday, which was my intent. I am doing my best.

The creator of The Red Letter Challenge, Zack Zander, is posting on FaceBook #21DaysTogether.

Blessings! Different Lutheran Pastors from 21 different congregations will each post a message three times a day. They can be watched "live" or replayed. Search #21DaysTogether on FaceBook, and "Follow" to get notified when one goes "live".

Members of our congregation have volunteered to do grocery shopping, drug store runs etc., so if you have a need, contact the office and we can connect you.

Blessings of safety & health!

Leanna Wickline,
Parish Administrator

American Heart Association CPR/AED & Stop the Bleed

We have nine people who completed the CPR/AED training and nine people who completed the Stop the Bleed Training; eight of them are the same people! We had two participants who were unable to attend both sessions of the training program. The bene-

fit of this training is increasing everyone's chance of survival in the case of a cardiac event, injury with bleeding or, God forbid, an active shooter situation. God willing, we will not need any of this knowledge, but we are prepared for a good outcome if we do.

The Call Process

The meeting originally scheduled for March 29th at 1:00 pm with Pastor Niels Nielson has been postponed.

We are able to continue moving forward with the call process, by assembling the call committee. Ron Unternahrer has been asked, and agreed to chair the committee. He is contacting people to serve on the committee that represent the congregation demographics.

Enclosed with this newsletter are two Congregational surveys that we are asking you to complete and return to the church office by Easter, April 12th. If we are still unable to hold in-person worship services, please mail it to the church office. For the same postage, you could include your offering envelop! What a bargain, voicing your opinion and your support for the cost of a postage stamp! While we say this jokingly, the expenses of the church do go on even during this pandemic.

During This Time of Isolation

With the effects of the coronavirus and the corresponding self-isolation, we are forced to be creative with ways to join together in worship. We have been employing the website and Facebook as means of bringing worship to you and will continue to do so, but are also exploring other ways of serving your spiritual needs as this pandemic continues.

Our Holy Week celebrations which are nor-

mally a time of larger attendance at worship services, with more gatherings than at other times of the church year will appear very different in this time of the coronavirus pandemic. The Stay at Home rule will still be in effect on April 5th, Palm Sunday. We do not know if it will be extended at that time or be lifted.



Office Hours During the Pandemic
Monday—Thursday 9:00am to 1:00pm

Food Pantry Hours
Every Tuesday 11:00am to 1:00pm
Operating as curbside pickup

Just Because

The month of April we will be collecting pencils for the students of Swiftwater Elementary. Even though school is suspended right now, they will be returning at some point. We will continue to collect items each month and hold them until they return to classes. What a blessing this will be to the students and teachers! Thank you for your continued support of Just Because. We received some lovely handmade thank you cards last month from the classes that benefit from your generosity.

Grocery Register Tapes

Please bring Weis and ShopRite register tapes to church each week. They can be placed in the box on the table in the narthex. However, we can only use Kinsley's ShopRite of Brodheadsville and they cannot be used after one year old. Weis tapes can be used after one year.



Don't forget to put St. Paul Lutheran Church Tannersville as your charity before checking out on Amazon. They will send us 1% of your purchase.



The Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir are interested in expanding their membership! Do you like to sing or ring? If interested, contact Bob Jones. Rehearsals are usually held Tuesday night but are suspended during the pandemic.



Sunday Worship Scheule for April

April 5 Palm Sunday—still under Stay-at-Home rule. Service will be videotaped and posted to the website.

These services are provisionally scheduled. If they must be cancelled, we will videotape them and post them to the website.

April 12 Easter Sunday Traditional Service

Greeter - Ed & Maryann Kenderline, Lector - Joan Rinker, Communion Assistant - Dawn Weiss, Ushers - Brad & Jill Pensyl

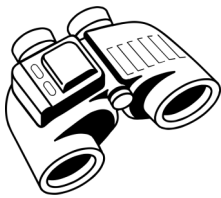
April 19 Contemporary Service with Holy Communion Easter 2

Greeter - Chris & Margaret Kinsley, Lector - Jim Werkheiser, Communion Assistants - Dawn Bartron & Leanna Wickline, Ushers - Bruce Orłowski & Charlie Hemple

April 26 Traditional Service 4th Easter 3

Greeters - Carole Stupf, Lector - Dawn Ladeas, Ushers - Deb Storman & Linda Below

Of course this is tentative based on the recommendations of the governmental agencies.



Looking Ahead to May and the eventual end of the Stay-at-Home Ruling!!

In the mean time, if there is a way that your church can help you or provide you with assistance, please contact the church office.