

# *St. Paul Lutheran Church*

## *Chimes*

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*June 2020*

### *From the Pastor*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Having been sheltering in place these past two-and-a-half months, most of us are anxiously awaiting the move from “red” to “yellow” to get back to worship in the sanctuary. “I just want to return to normal” is what people tell me. “When do we get to have church as we know it?” That may be the wrong question to ask and cause us to miss the opportunities (amidst all the tragedies) that this pandemic is giving us. Better we

should ask, “How does our strategy for making disciples meet the challenge of a ‘new normal’?”

I recently took part in an online webinar that discussed the seven shifts that will define a “new normal” for the local congregation. Tellingly, the first shift is the movement from analog to digital. The Zoom technology I was using to watch the webinar is now used by 90% of churches to hold virtual meetings and classes as we’re doing with council meetings and cate-

chetical classes. Likewise, congregations either stream or record Sunday worship for upload to their stay-at-home members. This crisis is waking up churches to a different approach to reaching people.

A second shift moves from teaching to equipping. The role of the pastor and teacher, Paul writes in Ephesians 4:12, is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” not simply lecturing students about the Bible but helping people engage the Bible themselves—equipping them to go on a personal journey with Jesus. It’s a question of making our teaching more action oriented—being a disciple and making disciples. In this shift, how many people show up is less important than how many are taking that next step in their spiritual walk.

Which brings us to the next step: moving from gathering to connecting. Getting people to events is not enough. We need to see real spiritual transformation. Relationship building is key here: connecting people through various ministries and small groups that affects generosity.

People give more when they have a clear sense that what they’re doing collectively has real meaning and purpose.

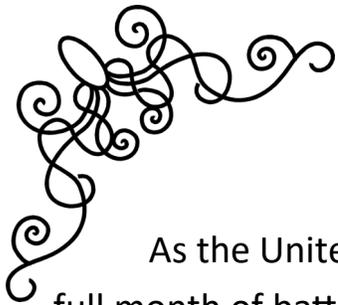
Another shift has us moving from a global focus to a more local emphasis for our mission outreach. The Lord knows that, as a former missionary to Tanzania, I believe wholeheartedly in the Great Commission mandate to “go into all the world,” but from a cost effective standpoint, could our outreach funds be better spent by tilting the balance closer to home?

All this begs the question of moving from complexity to simplicity. Simply filling the church’s calendar with more and more programs doesn’t in itself promote spiritual formation. Complexity in a congregation can actually impede a clear path to making disciples of Jesus Christ.

So, we want to minimize the importance of counting attendees to accentuating real engagement, moving along the path of engaging our relationship with God, then our brothers and sisters here at church, and finally with people outside the walls of the

church.

And then, from the perspective of stewardship, there's the shift from overspending to generosity. Have we aligned our resources with what is truly our mission and vision? Churches in decline, for instance, have 34% more staff than growing ones. Generous church members value the fiscal responsibility and integrity of those who steward their



### *Council Corner*

As the United States enters its fifth full month of battling the COVID-19 coronavirus, we find ourselves embroiled in a debate over the best way to move forward from this devastating pandemic. If you are like me, you have probably invested much of your time in viewing a variety of newscasts trying to make some sense of this silent but deadly virus. And, if we had the opportunity to view all of the circumstances from a fresh perspective (like the typical Monday morning quarterback), I'm sure we would find ways to do many things differently. However, that's not where we are as a nation and that's not where we are going to be at any time in the near future. As so many media analysts

offerings.

As I prepare to finish my stewardship of this great congregation, I want to commend to you these seven shifts in emphasis as you move confidently into God's "new normal".

Your pastor and friend,

Carl W. Filer

and politicians have already stated, there will be a time in the future to reassess our pandemic response fully, but at this time we are still in the early stages of what must be recognized as a long battle. To those of us here at St. Paul, part of that battle involves evaluating our circumstances for providing worship opportunities for our congregation and community.

By the time you are able to read this month's column, Governor Wolf will have moved Monroe County from the red phase to the yellow in the process of reopening the state. In addition to opening up some additional areas of commerce and employment, the yellow designation permits churches through-

out the Commonwealth to resume in-house worship activities with specific guidelines for social distancing, the wearing of masks, and the holding of worship-related activities for churches, synagogues, and mosques. From early March to the present, the ELCA and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod have provided specific, helpful guidelines for establishing safe and healthy ways for congregations to provide worship services and worship materials to all in need. Bishop Zeiser and Pastor Nielsen have circulated several sets of documents to guide congregations as they plan for a “new normal,” and Pastor Filer and our Council have been planning for a safe return to our sanctuary for a few weeks now.

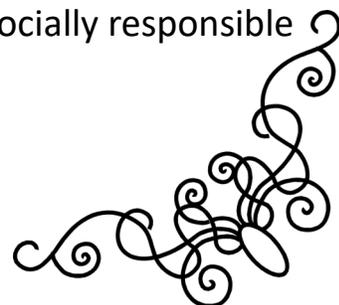
St. Paul will return to the sanctuary for Pentecost on Sunday, May 31. To be sure, worship may look and feel a little different for the foreseeable future, but with the appropriate precautions, it will be both safe and spiritually nourishing; and those members who are reluctant to return at this time will still be able to worship by viewing a recorded version of the service online. As one of our Council members, Carl Reindl, put it, “If we can go to Walmart, Lowe’s, or Home Depot, we should be able to go to church.” Of course, some aspects of the service will not be the same,

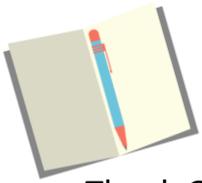
and we will all be learning the new safety guidelines and procedures in the next few months. Perhaps most important is an awareness that our changes will have been made for the long-term; we don’t have the luxury of simply tolerating a few minor inconveniences for the summer with a return to normal by Labor Day weekend. Despite some overenthusiastic predictions of a COVID-19 vaccine by December or January, it is probably going to take much longer than that. (It would make me very happy to be proved wrong on this point!)

Singing quietly through a mask is probably not going to produce the most joyful worship experience, and greeting our fellow worshippers with simple hand gestures is not as fulfilling as a handshake or a hug. Still, it will be fulfilling to return to our place of worship, to hear the Gospel, and to share in the awareness that, despite a pandemic, we can and will continue the worship of our God and the service to our community.

We look forward to greeting you once again (from a socially responsible distance)!

**Bill Below**





## *A Letter from the Parish Administrator*

Thank God for the beautiful weather!! The sunshine and warmth brought with it (for me) a sense of renewed hope, energy and excitement. I can be outside tending to the yardwork with my husband, plant new plants, and feel the winter slog be warmed away with the temperature change and the brighter spring sunshine. I hope that as the pandemic subsides (at least for now) and we move into Phase Yellow and into Green, that we may all have a sense of this renewed hope, energy and excitement.

Coming together again to worship as a body of Christ in one place, even if it is six feet apart, holds excitement for me. This building in which we meet has felt very empty for these past few months. The precautions we have taken to keep each other safe have been like a long, dark winter. As we begin to join together again, hope springs up in our hearts, joy floods our soul and a renewed sense of energy fills our bodies to do God's work in this place and spread his love through our community.

Excitement at joining our brothers and sisters in Christ together again, in lifting praise and thanksgiving to God for seeing us through this time of physical and social distancing and bringing us through the hardship of uncertainty, shortages and fear blossoms within us as the flowers blossom in the spring. This reminds us once again that God knows our fears, holds us as we experience them, and comforts and strengthens us as we work through the challenges of this life. We only have to accept his love and help.

He has brought so many wonderful and caring people to St. Paul Lutheran Church. I am grateful for all of you. Thank you for the support and assistance each of you have given me. Whether it is a helping hand, a smile or words of encouragement, please know I am thankful for each of you. I hope to see you all soon!

Blessings of safety & health!  
Leanna Wickline,  
Parish Administrator

## *The Walter & Alice Strunk Food Pantry*

Thank you for your continued support of the food pantry! We continue to operate as a curbside pickup service.

If you are inclined to donate food products, we are in need of peanut butter, canned potatoes, corn, peas, carrots, fruit,

tuna and meats, and breakfast cereals.



# SYNOD NEWS

## Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

### More Stories of Being the Church in a Time of Pandemic



#### Masks for Health Care Workers

**Kourtney Keim from New Life, New Tripoli** is a sophomore at Northwestern Lehigh High School. Seeing a need for protective gear for healthcare workers, she organized a community effort to make and distribute masks and headbands.

"It reminds me of the story of the fish and bread where the collections of few created plenty for many. Some members of our group could sew beautifully but had no material. Some had material and no sewing machine. Some had a machine, but not the skills or time

to use it. Some had fabric, others thread, still others (the coveted) elastic. Some had time to cut or money to donate materials. All of these efforts came together to provide more than 7000 masks, and counting."

Masks were donated to Lehigh Valley Health Network, St Lukes Health Network, KidsPeace, visiting nurses, Children and Youth Centers, dialysis centers, rehab clinics, homeless shelters, banks, grocery stores, and others. They have continued to donate to various healthcare workers as well as provide masks available to the general public. Asking for a \$5 donation to a local food pantry in exchange for a mask, they've raised over \$5,000 in just a few weeks - while helping to keep everyone safer.



#### Muhlenberg Chaplaincy Responds to the Pandemic

The worldwide coronavirus pandemic has shown how very important our grounding in the Lutheran theological tradition lived out in a multi-faith environment has been. At the forefront of decision making, has been the care and support for all people, including students, faculty and staff. While most students left campus by March 16, around 100 students initially remained for various reasons (30 will remain on campus for the summer). In some cases, they are international students unable to travel to their homes, or students with no primary residence outside the college. During the pandemic, the work of the Religious and Spiritual life team of the college has been grounded in a collaborative effort with many different colleagues, to provide care, counseling, support and programming for students online—as well as actively supporting students who have remained on campus.



Here is the story of one student, Kate Ekanem, who remained on campus. "Since the outbreak, I've honestly been in a constant on and off panic mood. I am a first generation student, a single-mother to a six-year-old daughter, and an international student from an economically underserved family in Nigeria. It is the first time in many years that I'll feel like I don't have anything under control because I am afraid of failing in my usual responsibilities to myself, my child and my elderly father back home.

"Since the pandemic, the college has gone beyond what's expected of any institution to express genuine care and love for students like me on campus. I have seen love, felt it deeply, and I cannot begin to explain how my heart bursts in joy to have a school that cares

## The Food Pantry at Friedens, Oley

For almost 30 years, **Friedens, Oley** has been serving the surrounding community by hosting a Food Pantry. Allowing clients to enter the building, grab a grocery cart, and shop through the aisles of food was our mode of operation. All that changed during the pandemic! Like many congregations, we struggled how to allow this vital, life sustaining ministry in the midst of fear, regulations and hope. 75% of our food pantry volunteer force were identified as falling in the "most at risk" category. This included our food pantry directors! We did not want to put anyone in danger!

We decided to invite folks in the "least at risk" category to help us continue this important ministry. Our young people stepped up and volunteered with the understanding that strict safety standards and regulations would need to be followed. There was no hesitation! The volunteer hours were long, noon to 8pm. There was unloading trucks, repackaging food into boxes, delivering food to waiting vehicles and clean up all while maintaining physical distancing and wearing a mask and gloves. No time for rest while we created a new way of serving the community.



I like helping with the food pantry because unfortunately, so many people need it. Ethan Hohl (9th grade)



I like that we are helping with the food pantry during COVID-19 because people need food! Jacob Hohl (6th grade)



The Covid 19 pandemic caused me to come home from college. , I was pleased for this opportunity to serve in my community. -Jenna Reed (senior in college)



My grandparents and Mom work during the regular food pantry. Since I do not have school or sports, I have time to help! Kristina Kauffman (10th grade)

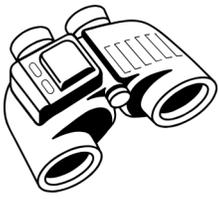
## Lunch for a Homeless Shelter



**St. John's downtown Easton** was asked by Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter to provide 24 bagged lunches for people who usually come to the shelter to eat at noon but are not residents of the shelter. Because of the virus and fear of spreading, a table is set up at noon at Safe Harbor and the take away bagged lunches are available (and taken) by people who stop by. Some are homeless, some are temporarily sleeping at the homes of friends, some are food insecure. St. John's adjusted how the lunches were made as the rules of social distancing evolved. They began making the meals every Wednesday at the church and then started making the lunches at individual homes. Vicar Matthew picks the lunches up and transports them to the shelter. The program began March 25 and will continue until Safe Harbor no longer requests the help.

Synod News is published monthly by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA  
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View the full color edition online at <http://nepasynod.org>.



## Sunday Worship Schedule for June

June 7, 2020 Holy Trinity Sunday

9:00 am Worship Service

10:15 am Catechism Class

June 14, 2020 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost

9:00 am Worship Service

10:15 am Catechism Class

June 21, 2020 Father's Day

9:00 am Worship Service

10:15 am Catechism Class

June 28, 2020 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost

9:00 am Worship

10:15 am Catechism Class

***Don't Forget!***

***Office Hours***

***Monday—Thursday 9:00am to 1:00pm***

***Food Pantry Hours***

***Every Tuesday 11:00am to 1:00pm***

***Operating as curbside pickup.***

