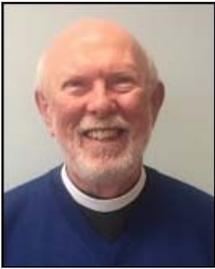


THE STAFF/BELLRINGER

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd • Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
April 2020



Pastor's Message

THE REV. LES SWENSON

Dear Friends,

When the writer of the Second Letter of John wrapped up his brief epistle (the second shortest book in the Bible, by word count anyway), he expressed something I've been feeling the last couple weeks:

Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. (2 John 12)

I'm sure I'm not the only one feeling that key thing missing these days — that opportunity to gather in the presence of others we care about deeply, to see them face to face across the room or across the table, to worship and sing and laugh with them, to bump elbows with them, or even shake their hands and embrace them with a warm hug. We are created to live in community with one another and when we are deprived of that intention, we realize what a gift it truly is.

In this swiftly changing, anxious time that is teaching us a whole new vocabulary and a whole new normal, we not only long for one another's company but for the opportunity to

listen and read the faces of one another, to offer or receive support and encouragement, to bear one another's burdens and to delight together in the joys we are given.

Yet even though we are physically separated from one another for the near future, there are things that we can be about to strengthen the bonds of this emerging community of faith.

The first, of course, is that we can be a community of prayer embracing not only one another but the ever expanding circles of people to whom we are connected — from our own families to the people next store and to the people who live in the far corners of our globe, none of whom are immune to this mean and menacing virus we now call COVID-19, all of whom we entrust into the loving arms of the Christ who on the cross "draws all people to himself." (John 12.32). Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that "A Christian community either lives by the intercessory prayers...for one another [and the world], or the community will be destroyed." Let us be that community of prayer in which all are bound together in abiding love and abundant care.

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OUR MISSION

Two congregations growing together as one in faith, welcoming others and serving Christ in Greater New Haven and throughout the world.

(Pastor's Message.....continued from page 1)

In coming weeks let us continue to be a community that continues to worship together, beginning with the devotional materials Pastor Marschhausen and I will be sending to you. As you sit down to read, reflect and pray, light a candle reminding you that you gather in the presence of Jesus the light of the world, and remember that you are not alone in your quiet worship at home. Picture in your mind the faces of the people of our congregations and think of them present with you in your home. You are together. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love!"

Wherever and however you can, be a sign of the care of Christ for this world, a reflection of this community of care. Perhaps your prayer for one another and for many others is all you are able to do. But if you are able and are presented with opportunities for acts of kindness and generosity for others, please consider how you might do them. We are not entirely helpless to help one another. Some communities need folks to help with Meals on Wheels for instance, or for grocery distribution at soup kitchen/pantry sites. Can you pick up groceries or other necessary items for a neighbor who can't get out as easily as you? At the least, pick up the phone, or even email one another, just to connect. Check in with one another. Act wisely with compassion.

In a New York Times opinion piece this month, Esau McCaulley wrote: "The church's absence, its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of trust in God's ability to meet us regardless of the location. The church remains the church

whether gathered or scattered. It might also indirectly remind us of the gift of gathering that we too often take for granted."

Be the church wherever you find yourself. Entrust your days to the Good Shepherd who leads us through the dark valleys of life. Embody the hope that is ours in the One who makes all things new. Be light for others in this time of fear and darkness.

I suspect we will be far into the Easter season before we will be able to gather together again. In the meantime I will long with you for that day when we will again meet face and face to rejoice together in the shining light of the One who shatters the darkness and whose unfailing love breaks death's grip on life.

With prayers and love for you that you are and will remain well, your partner along the way,

Les Swenson,
Transition Pastor

5-Church Committee Meeting Postponed

The 5-Church Committee, comprising representatives from Bethesda, Emanuel and Trinity Lutheran, New Haven, and Good Shepherd and Christ Lutheran, Hamden, postponed its Saturday, March 28, meeting at Trinity, due to city, state and federal mandates surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting will be rescheduled.

A Common *Prayer Chain* for Christ and Good Shepherd

With the movement of our two congregations toward merger now in full process, it seems most appropriate for our emerging congregation to develop a new framework through which we might submit special prayer requests. A group that prays together has the ultimate support system. We not only have our God on our side, but we also have one another offering up our prayers together.

During this enforced isolation from one another as we seek to knock down the threats of this COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic, our need to share a common forum for prayer and the benefits God offers to all of us through our prayers is all the more apparent.

We Christians know in our faith of our need to spend time with God in prayer, talking with our God as we would talk each other. Our time with the Lord is just as personal as each of our conversations with one another. Sharing our concerns and bringing them to God's heart and to our Lord Jesus Christ is important for each of us, for one another, and for others for whom we pray.

Christ Lutheran has had its monthly *Prayer Chain* and Good Shepherd has been adding its personal prayers weekly to the *Prayers of Intercession* during worship.

We would like to combine the best of these approaches to prayer. We would like to have an ongoing *Prayer Chain*, by which many might join our personal prayers during the week for those people and issues we might choose to add to the *Prayer Chain*. This seems particularly important during this time when we are unable to be together in prayer.

How might we accomplish this?

Linda Consiglio, who has coordinated Christ

Lutheran's *Prayer Chain* for many years, has agreed to coordinate a new *Prayer Chain* for both congregations. Linda's email address is: gramsews62@yahoo.com

Here is how the *Prayer Chain* will work:



If you have someone for whom you would want prayers – yourself, a loved one, a friend or neighbor – or if you have a concern, issue, worry, challenge, (for example: deliverance from

this pandemic, peace in our world, food for the hungry or strength for a wavering faith), you email that prayer request to Linda. She will compile those requests and send them weekly to the pastors who will see that the prayer list is emailed to everyone on our combined email-address list.

Of course, if situations arise that call for immediate prayers – such as a death of a loved one or dear friend, or a hospitalization, sudden illness, or a tragedy or disaster, Linda would contact one of our pastors with that information.

What to include when you submit a prayer request-

*First, the name of the person for whom you are requesting prayers or the concern/cause for which you would like prayers. If you are submitting a person, you may include just the initials or first name only *or* include last name. Please remember that if you are going to include a last name, it is not only

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*However bleak the moment,
God is there for you.*

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." -Hebrews 13:5

<Inspirations for Daily Life>

LCGS APRIL CELEBRATIONS

Anniversary

28-Frank & Penny Podgwaite 36 years

Birthdays

9-Tyler Knoob
 9-Robert Landino
 17-Jonathan Olson



Servant Ministry:

God's Global Barnyard Coin Boxes: I don't know about you; but while being "safe"; "cabin fever", for me, sets in very quickly. Home projects "keep me going" and thus I have been doing a lot of cleaning, sorting, and finding lots of COINS in random places; (drawers, closets, under sofa cushions, etc.) My coin box is getting heavier and heavier. I want to remind parishioners to keep collecting those coins! They will be sent sometime in the Spring or Summer...when our world returns to normal...hopefully sooner rather than later.

Speaking of "normal"- I was reminded on the news yesterday that food banks are also suffering from lack of donations. I called Keefe Center and they are open for contributions as long as you call them first. I plan to stop at Good Shepherd to load up collected non-perishables stored in our fellowship hall closet and deliver tomorrow.

I have also received notification that the Ingathering scheduled for May has been postponed, probably until summer or fall. We will be notified of a new date. This gives us an opportunity to continue to collect items for personal care kits. I have been reminded that the need will be greater than ever, and am looking forward to your continued generosity as we confront this worldwide crisis together.
 -Starr O'Connor

(Prayer chain... continued from page 3)

common courtesy but *also the law* that you have the person's permission to do so.

*Second, you may submit the reason you are requesting the prayer. This caveat about asking the person whose name and/or need you are submitting applies only to private individuals, of course. If you are asking us to pray for the president, for example, or some other public figure, you obviously do not need to seek permission.

*Third, your prayer request could be as brief and general as "for health" or "in time of grief" ... or more detailed.

Let's give this a try ... and we will be open and flexible for new ideas and approaches.



Elfriede Anna Darryl Susan
 Barbara James Dottie Marianne
 Lois Jessika Jim & Mary Lou

*Members who are homebound
 Mission of LCGS & Christ Lutheran
 Congregations of Greater New Haven*

At this writing, Sue Landino is recovering from surgery at the Mid-State Medical Center but soon will be moved to a rehab center. Keep her in your prayers. Cards and well wishes can be sent to her home for Rob to share with her.

RENAMING OUR NEWSLETTER

As the members of Christ Lutheran and Good Shepherd continue our shared ministry, we are moving toward renaming our joint-newsletter, currently referred to as The Staff/Bellringer. Over the last couple of months, we have requested input from our congregations and several suggestions have been shared on the bulletin boards at each church location. Once we have received town, state and/or federal clearance to worship together again in groups of more than 10 people, we will vote on the proposed names at a celebratory breakfast (on a date to be determined).

In the meantime, the following names have been suggested for our members' consideration and will be on the "ballot" at our next congregational breakfast:

- *Spreading the Word*
- *The Good News*
- *One in Faith*
- *The Lutheran Link*
- *The Messenger*
- *The Beacon*
- *The Good Word*
- *Christ the Good Shepherd*
- *Christ the Good Shepherd Newsletter*

If you did not have an opportunity to suggest a new name, but would like to do so, please submit your idea to Sharon Napolitano or Brenda Samal by Sunday, April 12. This will allow us to put together a comprehensive list, along with a ballot box, prior to our breakfast gathering. While "write-in" votes will be accepted, your creative idea will gain more

exposure if you submit it ahead of time. Following the vote, the Joint-Council will review the top two contenders and select the new name at a subsequent Joint-Council Meeting .

As a reminder, we are trying to reduce the amount of paper we consume and the cost of printing and postage. and we will not be mailing hard copies unless specifically requested. We will email newsletters to the addresses we have on file, and we'll have copies available for pick-up at the churches. If you think we have an old or incorrect email address for you—or if we don't have your email address at all—please get the correct address to Ursula Hunter, Brenda Samal or Sharon Napolitano.



SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Please note that the submission deadline for the May issue of The Staff/Bellringer is Sunday, April 19.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the **LORD**.



The C.A.T Is Coming!

Tuesday evening, 3/24, Durbin & Ursula Hunter, Loraine Brown, Ken Watson and Brenda Samal joined together in a video chat regarding our congregation's participation in C.A.T.– Church Assessment Tool. This tool has been suggested by Synod as an important step in our future partnership plans. The article below is an introduction of what is to come in May. It is unfortunate that we cannot discuss this in person right now but with our continued prayers, it is hoped this pandemic runs its course very soon. A FAQ sheet will be mailed/mailed before the survey commences that supplies additional information. Thank you!

PLANNING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER!

We are inviting you to complete the Church Assessment Tool (CAT), an on-line instrument that will help leaders gauge the strength, vitality, and trends in our church. The information gained from this assessment will be valuable in helping us make decisions about the future of our congregations.

In a few weeks, you will receive an email with a unique link to the CAT. Beginning May 3, we are asking you to go online by clicking on the link provided and tell us about your experiences in and priorities for our church. Please do not discuss the survey or your answers with others as this may influence their answers.

If you need a paper copy, please contact Brenda Samal, and she will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

All answers are strictly anonymous. We have no way of matching any assessment to a particular person, so please feel free to candidly share your perceptions, opinions and experiences. Our future together is dependent on your participation and honest answers.

If you have questions, please contact Durbin Hunter or Ken Watson.

Many thanks,

Durbin and Ursula Hunter
Ken Watson
Loraine Brown
Brenda Samal



I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

FOR
GOD
SO
LOVED THE WORLD
HE
GAVE
HIS
ONLY
SON

A New Reality for All of Us!

In response to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic and the efforts to stem and control the spread of the disease, the Town of Hamden has directed that all public gatherings of ten people or more are to be canceled until at least April 20, 2020, and the State of Connecticut has ordered everyone to stay home unless it's necessary for you to go out until at least April 22.

This has a huge impact, of course, on all of us who are a part of the Christ Lutheran Church-Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd family. It means that all our worship and all our other activities must be canceled, including our Palm Sunday breakfast and worship (April 5), the services on Maundy Thursday (April 9) and Good Friday (April 10), and our Easter Sunday celebration (April 12). Just a few weeks ago it would have been unthinkable to contemplate missing Holy Week and Easter!

One of my favorite prayers comes from the *Evening Prayer, or Vespers*, service:
O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I don't believe that God is in anyway responsible for this global pandemic. Still, I think this prayer pretty much says it all. This is uncharted territory; a venture that effects every one of us. We don't know what the end will look like or when it will get here. Nor do we have a GPS that's able to show us, step by step, how to see our way through. But we do have faith – faith in a living God who cares for us more than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. So, we pray to this God of ours – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and ask for the courage and discernment and faith to know and trust that God will show us the way and give us the strength to make it to the end of this particular venture.

With this in mind, here are some of the steps down this as yet untrodden path that we at Good

Shepherd and Christ are taking as we try to find our way through the venture of COVID-19 ...

- Brenda Samal and Ursula Hunter have done a wonderful job merging the contact information for both our congregations, especially the electronic means ... so your pastors are able to send devotional and informational emails to you often. We want to keep you informed on what's happening, to keep in contact with you, and to offer you some spiritual resources.

- We have both already sent you our personal contact information and the expressed hope that if you have any need for pastoral care – or any questions, comments, requests or suggestions – you will contact us. Again: Pastor M – therevjm@me.com and 860-402-8734 ... Pastor S – pastorlrs@comcast.net and 860-857-9362.

- Our Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast has been canceled for now. However, let's look forward to when all of this is over, and we'll have a great, big, celebratory Pancake Breakfast together. Maybe we'll need to include a "hymn festival", too, sometime after this is over ... to sing all those favorite Palm Sunday, Holy Week & Easter hymns we'll be missing.

- We are working to put up an email prayer chain by which our church family might support one another through our mutual prayers. If some of you might wish for some prayer resources to help you get started with regular praying during this crisis time, here are a few free prayer apps you might download and find useful for your personal prayer time: *iBrevery*, *Daily Prayer*, *Daily Devotional*, *Reimagining the Examen*, and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Or, if you have a hymnal at home – any one of them – they are all loaded with prayer and devotional resources. Open it up and look.

- We are looking into appropriate internet links with on-line worship services for those of you who might be able to use the various social media and enjoy doing so. We'll be sending you these links and addresses as we get them.

- * We need to say something to one another about
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(A New Reality continued from page 7)

our stewardship. Send in your contributions: if you are able, please continue to keep up your offering contributions. We understand that this crisis has disturbed more than our physical health. Not everyone may be able to keep up with their pledges/contributions, but if you are able, your congregations need you to do that. Our bills and financial commitments will continue. You can mail your offering envelope to the church, or at least try to put aside your filled offering envelope each week until we're able to be together again, and then bring all of them to church.

Finally, **How you can help?** — A couple of things immediately come to mind ...

- **Pray:** Pray for medical personnel and all first responders and our governmental leaders. Pray for those who are sick and dying – from any illness – and cannot be with their loved ones. Pray for pastors and all faith community leaders as they seek to serve God and God's people in these uncertain times.
- **Reach out:** Call, write, text, use carrier pigeon, whatever. Keep connected with family and friends and those who have no family. If you need some names, numbers and address of members of Christ and Good Shepherd, give one of the pastors a call. We're sure you recognize that not all our members have or are able to use email, texting, etc. We're trying to stay in touch with these folks by telephone and regular mail, but you know these folks, too ... and they'd love a call from you.
- We'll say again: **please send in your contributions.**

- **Do what you are being asked to do:** stay safe and stay home as best you're able. It is hard, especially if you don't have any symptoms. The goal is to keep it that way! Bishop Hazelwood expressed it like this: Imagine you are in a car and a police car or fire truck came up behind you with lights flashing. You would pull off the road to get out of their way so they can do their job. Well, that is what we are being asked to do – get out of the way so that our health and governmental people can do their job, and so that we don't become part of emergency.

- And **stay calm:** Not many seem to have good or reassuring things to say right now. 1) Take what you hear seriously, and yet, 2) don't believe everything you hear. If you want to know what the current guidelines are nationally, go to the Center for Disease Control website (cdc.org). For the latest information regarding Connecticut go to CT.gov/coronavirus.

Your pastors hope these words and this information will help and reassure you. It is with deep faith that we say to you, God is with you ... and the peace of the Lord be with you all.

Pastors Les Swenson and John Marschhausen



REJOICE! JESUS HAS RISEN!

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