Looking ahead to September

Save These Sunday Dates

**September 11, Service Sunday**

*God’s Work. Our Hands.*

Worship at 9:30am, stay for fellowship and service. Children and all ages can prepare food snacks for our homeless neighbors. Or adults and children eight and older can sign up and head to the warehouse of the Sheridan Project to help assemble weekend food packets at 1:00pm. (See below for more information).

**September 18**

*Welcome Sunday*

Worship at 9:30am, stay for a party and an activities fair—learn about opportunities for participation and service at Christ Church and in the community. New church directories will be distributed.

**September 25**

Worship at 9:30am, stay for fellowship and education. Educational forums begin this Sunday with a session on our congregation vision (more on page 10), and there will be a Godly Play Open House.

**More Information about September 11, Service Sunday**

September 11 is “God’s Work. Our Hands” Sunday. It is a day of service for the whole ELCA. After worship that Sunday, there will be a service project for children and their parents/grandparents. Later that afternoon, from 1 to 3pm, there will be another service project at the Sheridan Story Warehouse in NE Minneapolis. We will be packing bags of food to be delivered to children throughout the metro area. This is a joint project with St. Peder’s Lutheran Church, our partner in sponsoring the Sheridan Story at Howe Elementary. *The afternoon service project is for adults and children eight and older.*

Visioning Update

Throughout spring and summer, the visioning task force has been busy listening to the people of Christ Church. In that time we spoke to more than sixty individuals representing a broad cross-section of our membership: elders and children, long-time and new members, parents, couples, and singles. We met these people on their terms, holding a forum, visiting the retirees, the Red Room, choir rehearsal, and the beer club. We also held “pop-up” visioning sessions right after the service to reach people who couldn’t attend regular forums. At these events members of the task force and of council facilitated small-group discussions. We listened and took notes while the people of Christ Church Lutheran spoke about their life here. Thank you for your witness to the work of God in our life together.

The visioning task force is now in the process of distilling what we heard from you and setting some priorities to help us move forward into the next few years. We will present a draft of this new visioning statement at our forum after worship on Sunday 25 September. We hope you will be there to learn more about our priorities for the next few years and to give feedback. The final visioning statement will be presented to the council in October for their approval.

In the meantime, here is a preview of what we heard:

- The clearest message was that people are happy to be part of Christ Church and excited about the work we are doing as a congregation. They see the work of the Holy Spirit in the growth we are experiencing and the many children who crowd the steps each Sunday. There is a strong desire to “continue what we are doing well” and to stay true to our identity even as we embrace new people, opportunities, and approaches.

- Worship continues to be at the center of our life at Christ Church; the values and messages expressed in worship shape the rest of our lives, both our life together as a congregation and our daily lives in the larger community. People are eager to share this experience with others and to get more people involved in worship itself, especially children.

*continued on page 4*
Announcements

Retirees
On Wednesday 28 September we will meet at 11:00am for a program, followed by potluck lunch—cold foods preferred. Everyone welcome.

Baptisms
Tressa Swan Niermann, daughter of Noah Niermann and Katie Swan-son, was baptized Sunday 7 August at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

Helping Hands
September/October
If you are named in the helping hands chart, please help with Sunday morning coffee fellowship in the form of set up, clean up, or treats. Contact Mary Bode or Joanne Seltz for details. mhbode@gmail.com | seltz4@aol.com
Finances Update
Here is an overview of our operating budget as of the end of last month. Envelope giving improved a bit in July. In case that trend doesn’t continue, council is discussing ways to reduce our deficit.

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Thrivent Choice Dollars
A total of $1,307.00 Choice Dollars grant funds went to Christ Church Lutheran General Fund in July. You become part of something bigger by participating in Thrivent Choice. If you have questions about this program, see Melody Pauling.

New Directories
Christ Church member directories will be available beginning on Welcome Sunday 18 September. They will be distributed in the education wing after worship. A $5 donation per copy to offset the printing costs is appreciated.

Choir Is Coming
The beginning of fall also means welcoming back the choir to our worship services. And to make that possible it also means the resumption of choir rehearsals, Thursday evenings at 7:00pm, starting Thursday 8 September. Did you know that you would be very welcome to sing with us? It’s true! Singing in choir has all kinds of benefits for the mind, body, and spirit, in addition to the fun of being around a great group of people. If you want to get back to choir singing or have always wanted to give it a try, please come. Show up at the church door a little before 7:00 on a Thursday, or if you prefer, talk to one of the cantors first.

CCL Book Club Meets 17 September
Following a brief summer break, the book club will discuss the first two parts of Pat Barker’s acclaimed World War I trilogy: Regeneration and The Eye in the Door. Group meets Saturday 17 September, 10am–noon in the Luther Lounge. Come for the conversation. All are welcome.

Looking for a Unique Gift?
Check out the hand crafted stationery by the women of Christ Church. A table outside is set up by the Yellow Room in the Education Building each Sunday.
From the Church Council

Council did not meet during June and July. We appreciated a bit of a break after a very busy year or two. We did, however, make a decision via email to approve funding for a new church directory and to set a recommended donation of $5 for each directory to help cover costs.

Our August meeting opened with devotions from Melody Pauling, who discussed Isaiah 61 as a way to talk about leadership. Then Pastor Carlson gave us a brief update on her sabbatical. We look forward to hearing more details at a future forum (see also page 7).

The bulk of the meeting was occupied with a report from the staffing task force. Dan Mueller, who chaired this group, presented the report. The council established this task force last spring to study our current staffing situation and make recommendations. A number of considerations led to this action. First, given the growth in the congregation over the last ten years, it seemed that in some areas we were reaching the limits of a congregational structure that relies primarily on volunteers. Our volunteers are overstretched.

A new Montessori preschool on site will add an administrative burden for building use. Furthermore, in our efforts to find ways to draw more revenue through increased use of our building by outside groups, we also ran up against a limit in our administrative capacity to handle any such increase. Second, many office tasks, especially preparation of weekly bulletins, were taking up an excessive amount of time for our pastoral staff. Similarly, other communications avenues seemed to need a dedicated staff person to keep them current, especially our online presence through our website and social media.

In response to this situation, the task force report recommended hiring a parish administrator for twenty hours a week. This person’s responsibilities would include communications (bulletins, The Courier, the website, and social media) and building coordination. The provisional plan is to fund this position through two sources—the new revenues from Riversong Montessori school and funds remaining from a gift we received from Betty J. Anderson a year ago. Our discussion was wide-ranging, covering questions such as whether we could vary the number of hours in the position, how a new position would affect the duties of other staff members, getting appropriate input from the congregation, the financial sustainability of this position given that we are running a deficit that is larger than in past years at this time, and the question of a timeline.

We decided that we would proceed for now with a plan to put this position into the 2017 budget but asked the task force to meet one more time to investigate further a few of these issues. And we initiated plans for gaining input from the congregation, probably at a forum.

The visioning task force also reported on its progress. Thanks to Dan Mueller and Pat Baehler for chairing this process. The process has been very positive, and participation from the congregation has been strong. Just a few more steps are left before the final report is presented to the congregation and the council.

We approved a request from the mission committee for visioning funds in the amount of $230 to be used in relation to the ELCA’s God’s Work. Our Hands Sunday on 11 September. This money will fund activities related to Our Savior’s Shelter and the Sheridan Project.

We heard a number of reports from staff and committees. Pastor Carlson reported that Maria Markman is enrolling at Luther Seminary this fall and will be doing her first-year field placement at Christ Church. She will continue to work with our children but will take on additional responsibilities.

We missed the warm and thoughtful presence of Rev. Voigt at our meeting and give thanks for the time he and his family spent here with us—until we see them again.

Visioning Update

Continued from page 1

• Many people spoke of their emotional and spiritual connections to Christ Church, calling it their “family” and noting the genuine warmth and affection that people here feel for each other. This sense of community and the relationships it fosters—especially those across generations—are highly valued by our members.

• Outward service and engagement continue to be priorities. Members want to continue with the community service projects we already do and want to be on the lookout for new opportunities to engage the community. And while people are proud of our welcome to guests and newcomers, they are also interested in ways of improving and expanding our presence in the Twin Cities.

• Members are excited about the increasing numbers of children and the ways they are brought into our life together. Our children are a source of delight and a hope for our future, and the people of Christ Church are very eager to plan ahead for additional children’s programming and to find ways we can further involve them in worship.

If you have questions for the visioning task force, contact cochairs Dan Mueller or Pat Baehler. We look forward to hearing from you in September.
As the church council met this month, things were different. We were happy to have Pastor Carlson back among us, but the table was not as it had been. We missed Rev. Voigt. This caused me to reflect on his time here. He brought many gifts to this congregation. From the pulpit, he artfully read the sometimes challenging events of the day through the lens of God’s love. He gave us fresh eyes—from another continent—for the conversation here. His splendid family became part of our family. His joy and ease among us made his time here seem so natural but go so quickly.

Conversations about a “Leipzig Exchange” began several years ago. It was not an easy process. At times the exchange looked like it might be over before it started. But it started. On his last Sunday, Rev. Voigt preached about welcoming. That seemed perfect to me. This leaving welcome captures something about life together in the body of Christ. Even in saying goodbye we are still welcoming. Always welcoming. On their last Sunday here, our job was still to welcome the Voigts.

Each Sunday, as we hear the word preached, I’ll be thinking also of a pulpit in Germany. When we break bread there will be more people around our table than are in the sanctuary at the moment, and we will be guests around another table. The Leipzig Exchange has begun. It is still going on. Things have changed, marvelously.

—Bob Victorin-Vangerud, Congregation President
Pastor Carlson speaks auf Deutsch to the Sophienkirchgemeinde, bringing thanks for the Voigts and the Leipzig Exchange. The congregation applauded when she finished!

Gåsvær, the island in the Norwegian Sea from which Pastor Carlson’s grandfather came. This is the view from the front door of the house where he was born and lived until he came to this country after his confirmation.

The view from the rorbu (fishing cottage) in the Lofoten Islands where Pastor Carlson spent a week. Her ancestors came to these islands every year to fish. This is also where the Vikings had a great settlement.

The great Pfarrhaus (pastor’s house) with the Voigts’ flat, where Pastor Carlson stayed with her husband while she was in Leipzig.

The home and barn in Tromsø where Pastor Carlson’s grandmother was from. She left to come here as a teenager.
Sabbatical Reflections

The first thing I want to say about my sabbatical is, thank you! I am so very grateful for the gift of my three-month sabbatical this past summer. Thanks to my wonderful colleague, Pastor Haaland, for his increased time and for his generous, excellent pastoral ministry and leadership while I was away. Thanks to Pastor Helge Voigt—our Leipzig Exchange pastor—for doing more pastoral care, preaching, and presiding at worship during this time. Thanks to our cantors, Pastors Robert Farlee and Martin Seltz, who carried an extra load in worship and in congregation projects—the design of the new organ, the proposed columbarium. Thanks to Rev. Harvey Leuning for filling in on some Sundays with inspired preaching. Thanks to our congregation president, Bob Victorin-Vangerud, and to the council for encouragement and support; to my pastoral support committee, chaired by Hilary Gebauer, for wise guidance; and to the congregation of Christ Church for a resounding “yes” to this sabbatical. It was a time of rest and new life for me. All my thanks!

Next, I’ll offer some reflections about my sabbatical, which had two parts, two chapters: over a month in Leipzig, Germany, where I joined my husband for the end of his year as a pastor at the Sophienkirchgemeinde; and then a month traveling the length and breadth of my ancestral home, Norway.

During my time in Leipzig, I got to live in the great Pfarrhaus next to the Schloßkirche (the Castle Church) in the Voigs’ flat and experience life in this former East German city “from the inside.” My main form of transportation was a bicycle, which I rode all over town like so many Leipziggers—shopping in the outdoor market, lunching with friends, attending events. Each week, I worshiped in the parishes of the Sophienkirchgemeinde—participating in the liturgy and hearing my husband preach auf Deutsch. I renewed friendships with pastors and people I knew already in Leipzig and made many new friends.

I have great admiration for what the church in Leipzig is doing: its faithful ministry in Saxony, which is only 14% Christian; its united and strong public voice on social issues—particularly now, the support of refugees from the Middle East; its thoughtful engagement with the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation; its ecumenical efforts. We can learn from these sisters and brothers in Christ!

I also sort of “gorged” on Bach and other musicians with Leipzig connections—Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Max Reger, Robert Schumann—and on other musical offerings at the great St. Thomaskirche. Listening to John Eliot Gardner and the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra perform Bach’s Mass in B Minor one night, I was transported to heaven.

On my husband’s last Sunday, in mid-June, with a packed church and our own Bishop Svennungsen in attendance, I gave a little speech auf Deutsch during the worship service—about twelve sentences that I wrote myself—thanking them for our partnership. I was delighted and moved when they applauded! There is enthusiastic support in Leipzig and in the Sophienkirchgemeinde for connections with us here.

Traveling in Norway with my husband and two of our sons, I spent some days in Oslo and also in Bergen with dear friends. And then we boarded the Hurtigruten and spent over two weeks sailing up the west coast of Norway. We disembarked along the way to visit the wonderful city of Trondheim—and the stunning Nidaros Cathedral where St. Olaf is buried—and to visit relatives on my father’s side. I spent some days on the Arctic Circle with descendants of my grandfather Olaf and was able to go one day in a small boat out to the island of Gåsvær where he was born and lived until he came to this country after he was confirmed. Then, I spent a week in amazing Lofoten—where the Vikings lived and where my ancestors went to fish—staying in a rorbu (a fishing cottage right on the sea) and hiking, resting, and attending several concerts that were part of the Lofoten Music Festival. At last we took a final boat to Tromso, “the Paris of the North,” where my grandmother Ragna lived until she came to America at sixteen. There, too, relatives received us and hosted us with such warmth in the Land of the Midnight Sun.

Back home at last, I spent my last week of sabbatical at our family cabin on Lake Kabekona and was so happy that Helge and Anke Voigt could join us there for a few days. It was a good time of reunion and thinking together about the gift of this sabbatical time and of our Leipzig-Minneapolis Exchange. I told them especially about that final Sunday back in June, in their home congregation in Leipzig, the Sophienkirchgemeinde, when so many people shook my hand, thanked me for coming and for this exchange, and said to me, Alles ist gut. Alles ist gut. And in Norway, as we departed from relatives, they called to us, Takk for alt. Takk for alt. My heart is full of these words too. Danke! Vielen dank! Takk! Tusen takk! All is good. Thanks for everything.

—Pastor Kristine Carlson
Refugee Sponsorship

Civil strife, oppression, famine and war have contributed to what may be the largest refugee population in world history. Reversing the conditions that result in the creation of refugees will be complex and long-term. Political courage on the world stage will be required. One response that can have immediate and satisfying results is the sponsorship of refugees. This is in keeping with what is best in our national history.

Christ Church Lutheran and St. John’s Lutheran (Northfield), in partnership with Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota (LSS), have made a commitment to help settle a family of nine persons from Ethiopia. The family did not come directly from the homeland. Many years were spent in a refugee camp in Kenya. Needless to say, life is not easy in such circumstances. Uncertainty concerning the future must surely be a major challenge.

The family arrived 20 July and was met at the airport by relatives living in St. Cloud and people from LSS, St. John’s and Christ Church. After living in a transitional housing unit for a couple of weeks, the family moved into a five-bedroom house in the Frogtown area of St. Paul. Howard Thorsheim of St. John’s pointed out that Frogtown has long been a place of settlement for immigrants ranging from Scandinavians to Irish to people of Africa, Asia, and South America. The family is well settled and will now turn attention to matters related to education, language training, employment and becoming acquainted with the neighborhood and metro area.

The primary tasks of sponsoring congregations are providing financial resource for rent during the first six months, equipping the house, extending friendship and assisting with the process of learning to live in this society. The expectation is that the family will become essentially self-sufficient within six months. The provision of friendship, of course, has no time limit.

Refugee Team members
—Rachel Slater, Marilyn Kochsiek, Ronald Johnson

Opportunity to Serve LSS

As you might have seen in an email from the Christ Church office, a request has recently come to us from Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota Refugee Services. As you know, we have been working with them to help resettle Paul and Ariat and their family, recently arrived from Ethiopia.

Refugee Services are finding themselves a little overwhelmed with their work right now. They normally resettle thirty to fifty people each month. At the moment they are working to resettle ninety people between now and the end of September. Here is where some of us may be able to help. They are looking for volunteers willing to be on call to help with unloading furniture trucks and setting up apartments for newly arrived refugees. At this point they are looking for people to add to their volunteer list. If need should arise, you would receive an email with details about where and when you are needed. You could then reply if you are free to help.

If you are interested in being added to this special volunteer list for the next month or so, notify the church office, who will pass your contact information to LSS. Thanks in advance for your willingness to help our new neighbors.

Brass Concert to Benefit Sheridan Story

Join us for a fun evening with the Lake Wobegon Brass Band on Friday 7 October at 7:30pm, right here at Christ Church Lutheran. Come for an evening of great music in our beautiful sanctuary and stay after the concert for a reception and visit with members of the band. The concert is free, and a freewill offering will be collected to benefit the Sheridan Story weekend food program at Howe Elementary. The concert is presented as a part of Music at Christ Church.

The eighth annual LoLa Art Crawl is September 17 and 18, 10am–5pm both days. At the Riverview Cafe you can view Anna Mason’s paintings and photographs, and at Squirrel Haus Arts you can view Jeff Weispfenning’s oil portraits based on fables, memory, and religion. The League of Longfellow Artists (LoLa) art crawl has become a tradition showcasing the diverse work of artists and crafters living and working throughout the Longfellow neighborhood.
Sheridan Story Updates

For so many, the month of September means “back to school.” It’s a busy, exciting, and promising time.

But did you know that over 200,000 children in the state of Minnesota live in food insecurity and do not always know if they will receive their next meal? That’s why we at Christ Church support the Sheridan Story, an organization that responds to this need by closing the weekend food gap between Friday and Monday, when children are not able to participate in the free or reduced meal programs at school. Along with St. Peder’s Lutheran, we sponsor Howe Elementary School, which is right in our neighborhood.

Our two congregations purchase a year’s worth of food for Howe School, and during each week of the school year, volunteers from our two churches deliver bags of food to children whose parents sign them up for the program. The bags of food are placed directly in the children’s backpacks while students are in class.

Here are some comments from a few of our volunteers:

The program is well organized and easy to navigate. It is heartwarming to be able to help distribute the bags of food. I can imagine the kids’ relief to find these bags that help them get through the weekend!

—Ann Davis

Something I have personally experienced is a reminder of my own privilege in taking for granted enough food and support in my daily life. I hope this awareness can keep me focused on the needs of others and how I can contribute positively and constructively.

—Kate Haugen

Ken and I enjoy delivering for Sheridan Story in the schools that our families grew up in in the Longfellow neighborhood and are happy to be partnering with St. Peder’s church in this well-organized, efficient program. As with Meals on Wheels, if it wasn’t for volunteers delivering and packing, it might not be happening.

—Rita Schoenike

Now, as the new school year begins, is the time for us to renew our support for this good program. Here are three ways you can help:

• Sign up to deliver food. Volunteers spend about an hour on a Friday (morning or afternoon) delivering bags of food at Howe Elementary. It’s a meaningful thing to do! Contact Pastor Haaland if you are interested in being on the list of volunteers.

• Join us on the afternoon of Sunday 11 September, 1–3pm, for a packing project at the Sheridan Story’s warehouse in NE Minneapolis. We’ll be packing bags of food that will be delivered to schools around the city. September 11 is “God’s Work. Our Hands” Sunday, a day of service for the entire Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Look for a sign-up sheet at church on Sunday, or contact the church office if you’d like to participate.

• Contribute financially. We are looking to raise $1,700 to support the Sheridan Story for this year. If you’d like to contribute, you can make out a check to the church and write “Sheridan Story” in the memo line. Another great way to support the Sheridan Story is to come to the first Music at Christ Church event of the season—the Lake Wobegon Brass Band in concert—on Saturday 7 October at 7:30pm. All proceeds from the freewill offering will go to support our participation in the Sheridan Story at Howe Elementary School.

Christ Church Day at Farmers Market a Wet One

Christ Church Lutheran and the Friends of Christ Church Lutheran sponsored a day at the Midtown Farmers Market—Saturday 27 August. It was a gray and rainy day. But Pastor Haaland was there to meet and greet folks, and Pastor Carlson was too. Our cantors also stopped by for a bit. There was a nice sign thanking us for our sponsorship, but it got mostly washed out by rain. Maybe you can make it out?

It says thanks to us for sponsoring a day at our community farmers market.
**Educational Forums**
**Sundays 11:15am**

**September 25**
*Progress Report on Congregational Vision*
Visioning task force members will report on what they heard from the congregation in visioning sessions that were held this past spring-summer and how that is shaping plans as we look ahead. They are eager to hear your thoughts and suggestions on these initial plans to help in developing a compelling vision for our congregation’s future.

**Kids Calendar for Upcoming Sundays**
Mark your calendars today for these upcoming events for kids and their parents at Christ Church:

**September 11. “God’s Work. Our Hands.” The ELCA Day of Service**
Parents, kids—everyone is invited to participate. See details on page 1.

**September 18. Welcome Sunday**
During coffee hour in the atrium, find out about the many children’s ministry offerings available at Christ Church. For parents and anyone who loves children, this is a chance to sign up to be a nursery or Red Room helper. If everyone pitches in, the commitment should be only a couple of times a year.

**September 25. Sunday School Open House**
Godly Play for ages 3–12.

**October 2. Sunday School Begins**
Come to Godly Play!

**Year-Round**
Nursery for children under three and Red Room for older children are always available during worship. We love children at Christ Church. It is going to be a wonderful year for them and for all.

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**ELCA Churchwide Assembly Key Actions**
Voting members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America approved a number of key actions during the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly held in New Orleans 8–13 August. The assembly is the highest legislative authority of this church. The 945 voting members:

- Elected William B. Horne II of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Clearwater, Florida, vice president of the ELCA.
- Accepted the “Declaration on the Way,” a unique ecumenical document that marks a path toward greater unity between Catholics and Lutherans.
- Approved **ammparo**—the ELCA’s strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities.
- Approved the Ministry of Word and Service roster. Beginning 1 January 2017, ELCA associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers will be a single, unified roster of Ministry of Word and Service.
- Approved the 2017–19 budget proposal. The budget includes a 2017 current fund spending authorization of $65,296,005 and a variety of other spending authorizations.
- Approved various memorials from the ELCA’s sixty-five synods.
- Elected members to serve on: church council, Portico Benefits Services, mission investment fund, Augsburg Fortress, committee on appeals, committee on discipline, and nominating committee.
- Adopted amendments to the ELCA Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions.
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Meals on Wheels

September 2016

Welcome Event, TBA

Godly Play Open House

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<td>Molly Boes</td>
<td>John Schmidt</td>
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<td>Daniel Holmgren</td>
<td>Gary Skrivseth</td>
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<td>Daniel Holmgren</td>
<td>Clayton Smith</td>
<td>Bob Davis</td>
<td>Bob &amp; Ute Swenson</td>
<td>Jonathan Stensland</td>
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<td>Cathy Sieving</td>
<td>Carmen O'Halloran</td>
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<td>Phyllis Mattill</td>
<td>Gene Bruss</td>
<td>Rachel Slater</td>
<td>Dave Kutzbach</td>
<td>Will Stark</td>
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