Continuing to Live as a Christian Community of Faith

Dear Friends in Christ,

We greet you as companions in faith and with thanksgiving for the community life we share as Christ Church Lutheran.

Out of chaos God created life … the beauty of creation – the natural resources of soil, water, light and dark, animals and plants of every kind, and human beings who were created from the dust of the earth to live as companions with God, with one another, and to tend to the many gifts of life. God was delighted! (Creation story of Genesis 1)

In these early days of April, as we continue our Journey of Lent and move into Holy Week, we will be reminded of God’s journey with creation from the beginning to this present day. Through manifold challenges and trials, in the scripture stories of faith we will hear once again that God has been active throughout history – guiding, blessing, rescuing and saving the “Very Good Life” that God created. In our Lenten devotions we have focused on the “Wondrous Love” that God incarnate in Jesus shows for us and for the world in his journey from baptism to the empty tomb.

As we have faced the reality of the worldwide pandemic of the CO- VID-19 virus, these stories and God’s promise to accompany, guide and empower us in our journey of faith have brought inspiration and hope to our vulnerabilities. We are creating new ways of living as we seek to navigate this new reality with compassion and care for one another.

Yes, we have physically separated ourselves from one another in this season of Lent. We will continue to be physically separated through Holy Week, and indefinitely into the season of Easter. Following Minnesota state guidelines, we have suspended communal worship and group gatherings until it is deemed we can safely meet in groups again. The church building will remain closed to protect the health and safety of all.

We’re continuing to learn how to worship, meet, and build community virtually – with worship guides, audio files, and YouTube videos that include still photos and images. Look for more creative videos to be posted during Holy Week! Email and snail mail communication continues to link us to one another. Zoom calls connect us face-to-face for meetings that enable us to plan, pray, and continue in ministry together. The Spirit of God moves freely across boundaries and obstacles, uniting us in faith and God’s love.

The Christ Church Council, Call Committee, staff and ministry committees (Property, Outreach, Racial Justice and more) have met regularly to sustain our worship, community life and ministries of service.

We are also hearing stories of how you are keeping “in touch” with one another as members and companions in faith. We give thanks to God for these strong bonds of community life.

We ask you to support the ministries of Christ Church partners (see page 6), especially Emergency Services (CES), which is providing food and essential services to vulnerable members of our community. You may send checks directly to CES, 1900 11th Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55404, contribute online at the address included on page 6 of this newsletter or by designating a Christ Church gift to CES.

As you are able, we ask you to continue your regular giving to Christ Church Lutheran. You may continue to send check contributions in the mail. We also encourage you to sign up for regular giving through Simply Giving. You will find simple and detailed steps to sign up for Simply Giving on the Christ Church website. See page 5 of this Courier newsletter for more important information.

If you are in need of pastoral care, please call the church office at 612-721-6611 or send an email to mail@christchurchluth.org. Pastor Haaland and Pastor Jensen are here for you. Pray for one another, for civic and community leaders, for health care providers, for people who are most impacted by economic and employment impacts of this crisis, and for all who are serving to protect and care for our shared community life and safety.

We hold you in prayer and live into hope, trusting that nothing can separate us from the love of God poured out in Christ Jesus. May this be our peace and our Easter joy.

Pastors Eva Jensen and Erik Haaland

Christ Church President
Matthew Courtney, on behalf of your Council leadership
April Birthdays
4/1 Dick Bruesehoff
4/2 Hans Adams
4/10 Simo Sarkanen
4/17 Pastor Eva Jensen
4/19 Liz Gomoll, Max Wipperman
4/21 Melinda Quivik
4/22 Lynn Larson, Jonathan Laven
4/26 Jeanne Anderson, Rebecca Dodd, Anna Mason, Dan Mueller
4/27 Dawn Dankers
4/29 Phyllis Dunstone, Gerry Tyrrell

Happy Birthday, everyone!

Holy Week and Easter, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

By now we all know that this will be a Holy Week and Easter unlike any we have ever experienced. Because of the need to continue to protect each other and our community from the spread of this contagious virus, we are going to have to celebrate these holy days—the most significant of our entire liturgical year—in our own apartments and homes. It will be strange. It may feel sad. And at the same time we trust that God’s Spirit will be as alive as ever, renewing us and all creation in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Even though we do so physically separated, we will celebrate these days together, united in the loving bonds of Christ.

Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday
April 5 (9:30am)

The Great Three Days:
Maundy Thursday
April 9 (7:00pm)
Good Friday
April 10 (7:00pm)
Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil)
April 11 (8:30pm)
The Resurrection of our Lord (Easter Day)
April 12 (9:30am)

Worship materials for each of these days (documents and links to audio and visual material on YouTube) will be sent out by email ahead of time. You will be invited to make use of these materials at the time we would normally gather for worship. (You will also be welcome to make use of them whenever it makes most sense for you.) To those without email, printed resources will be sent by mail. There will also be short videos prepared especially for families with children. (These videos will be available alongside the other material on YouTube, and everyone will be able to view them.)

In the midst of these troubled, difficult times, let us enter these days full of the hope that God in Christ is with us in all things—and that Love is and shall be the firstborn from the dead.

~Pastors Eva Jensen and Erik Haaland

Staff
Pastors
Pastor Eva Jensen
Pastor Erik Haaland
Pastor Robert Farlee
Pastor Martin Seltz

Cantors
Tyler Egge
Chuck Merrell
Laurel Jacobson
Pastor Eva Jensen

Children’s Ministry Director
Laurel Jacobson

Congregation Council
President
Matthew Courtney
Vice President
Kate Haugen
Secretary
Hilary Gebauer
Treasurer
Brad Hubert
Council Members
Elena Hilding
DeAne Lagerquist
Kevin Olsen
Melody Pauling

Pastoral Acts
March 14—Pastor Haaland presided at the wedding of Morgan Boes and Brian Manor.
Christ Church Council Update for April

Kate Haugen began the meeting by leading us in a reflective devotion entitled “Lockdown: A Prayer,” by Father Richard Hendrick, about our pandemic experience and the resilience of faith, hope, and love.

Our March meeting followed social distancing requirements and was held via online video conferencing. It was a new experience for us to all be together, discussing the church’s business, while also each being in our own homes. Like everyone else, we are adjusting and adapting to living under these new circumstances.

Our main agenda item was to learn more about the condition and potential need for a new boiler. Darrell Anderson, Chair of the Property Committee, joined us and provided a report on the committee’s extensive assessment of the current boiler and research into viable, sustainable options to replace our 60-year-old boilers. He reported that the existing boilers, which date to 1961 while some of the heating system dates to the original 1949 sanctuary building, have been well-maintained all these years, but that they are realistically beyond their mechanical lifetimes. To be fully operational for the next heating season, the boilers would require up to $10,000 in repairs, with an estimated $3,000 in maintenance costs annually thereafter. While these costs might be less than a new boiler up front, they would only prolong the use of our aging, inefficient system that requires constant supervision by a certified boiler operator. To address these needs and prepare for a more sustainable, affordable future, the Property Committee recommends that the church invest in a new, high-efficiency boiler system that will reduce our energy usage, utility bills, and maintenance costs. Darrell shared that the committee believes replacement at this time is important, not only because we will reduce our long-term costs, but replacement of the boiler now will qualify the church for utility rebates that wouldn’t be eligible if (when) the boiler has completely broken down; the rebates are only available when we replace an operational boiler that we would be upgrading. The boiler replacement project would also include abatement of asbestos and installation of high-efficiency fans to improve hot air circulation throughout the sanctuary and education building, which would help significantly reduce our electricity usage and costs. A working group of the Council is now assessing feasible financing options. The generosity and frugality of the congregation have allowed us to maintain significant endowment and financial reserves that could be part of the congregation’s plan to make these investments. The Council will consider the Property Committee’s full recommendation at our April meeting. If the Council supports the boiler replacement, then we anticipate presenting this to the congregation for discussion and a vote. We will continue to update the congregation as more information becomes available.

The Council discussed the April retirement of Chuck Merrell, long-time member and church facilities manager. We are grateful for the many gifts and service that Chuck has offered our community throughout these years, and we wish him and his wife, Kristy, the very best in their next adventure.

Our pastors provided updates on continuing mission work during these difficult times, including support of Community Emergency Services, Our Saviour’s Shelter, The Sheridan Story, and Meals on Wheels.

We adjourned with the Lord’s Prayer.

Lectionary Readings for April

April 5
Passion Sunday
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-27:66

Three Days
April 9
Maundy Thursday
Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

April 10
Good Friday
Isaiah 52:13—53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25
John 18:1—19:42

April 11
Vigil of Easter
Genesis 1:1—2:4a
Exodus 14:10-31, 15:20-21
Daniel 3:1-29
John 20:1-18

April 12
Easter Day
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4
Matthew 28:1-10

April 19
Second Sunday in Easter
Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

April 26
Third Sunday in Easter
Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23

Upcoming online church membership database

Coming this spring: Breeze, “the world’s easiest web-based church management software for small and mid-sized churches”! Church records, communications, giving and a host of other ways to streamline church functions will be simple, user-friendly and safe. Look for more information soon!
This month’s Closeup features Chuck Merrell who served as building engineer and custodian for Church Lutheran for 27 years and was a member for 40 years.

When did you start working for Christ Church Lutheran and what influenced your decision to work here?

In 1993, I needed some part-time work and Christ Church needed a building engineer, so it was a good match. In 2001, I took over the cleaning work which moved me up to half-time hours.

Were you a member or did you attend worship at Christ Church before you started working as custodian?

I began attending Christ Church as a tech school student in 1976. I became a member in 1980.

Do you or did you live in the neighborhood?

I have lived near Christ Church for most of my time here.

What did you like about working for Christ Church?

Caring for God’s house and all of the wonderful people here.

Do you have any stories to tell about your time working or worshipping here or events you participated in?

Playing in the handbell choir was particularly joyful. Beyond that, it is too difficult to pick one or two stories from the multitudes of memories.

I gather you were married here? When was that?

My wife, Kristy, and I were married on November 4, 1995.

Were there specific people at Christ Church who impacted your work and life during your time here?

Pastors Kretzmann, Neibacher, Farlee and Rogers. All of my wonderful colleagues on staff. Ray Gierke, who taught me so much about buildings. Darrell Anderson, whose dedication to this church is truly inspiring. Ken Schoenike and Dave Kutzbach, who has lent a helping hand with so many things.

What influenced your decision to move to Duluth?

Kristy’s parents are increasing in age and decreasing in ability. They need us there.

What can you tell us about yourself that we may not have known or interests or hobbies you enjoy?

Pipe organs have been a life-long fascination of mine. Working on our previous organ brought much satisfaction. Attending musical performances is something else I enjoy.

“Closeup” is a Courier feature to help us get better acquainted with our fellow members. If you would like to share your story in “Closeup,” call Donna Lindberg at 651/552-8499.

Chuck, we will miss you. Godspeed!
Treasurer’s Update

Our financial position - in terms of cash on-hand as well as the Congregation and Endowment investment funds - is good at this time. The Council and Endowment Committee moved investment earnings previously budgeted for use later this year to cash holdings prior to the market drops last month, and the investment strategy, generally, is moderately conservative.

The financial report typically presented here is in progress; our month-end process was delayed as we adopted social distancing and set up our ability to perform some key work from our remote/home locations. One key development includes setting up our financial recordkeeping system for secure, online access for a few authorized users. This supports the need for very limited access to the building and the well being of us all. We expect to present you with a quarterly report (covering Jan - Mar 2020) in the next edition of the Courier.

As our mission and ministry continues, so does our giving - even in this new time of social distance. Accordingly, I encourage those of you that are able but not yet set up for online giving to consider joining me now in giving in this manner. Online gifts can be set up via the Simply Giving (serviced by Vanco) program, or if you prefer you may do so by clicking on the “Donate” button on the homepage of the Christ Church Lutheran website (www.christchurchluth.org). See easy instructions included on this page.

If giving online, please consider using the option for a direct charge to your bank checking/savings account rather than paying by credit/debit Card. The fees charged to the Church are higher for gifts paid by card. For example, an online gift of $50 via direct charge to your bank checking/savings account costs the Church just $0.21, but that gift paid by a card results in a fee of $1.90!

If you opt for the classic Simply Giving program, you’ll need to print, complete and send the “Authorization Form” (attached in the email with this edition of the Courier) via US Mail. As noted, above, we suggest that you not contribute with credit/debit card payments, but that is an option if it is the best for your situation. Also note that for your security, please do not send your confidential financial information via email; instead, let Laurel in the church office know that your form is coming via US Mail.

Also, to save printing and postage costs, individual and family quarterly giving statements will only be sent on an as-requested basis. Please contact the church office if you’d like to receive your quarterly statement and we will coordinate with our quarterly reporter, Jan Radloff Bruss, to print and mail your statement as soon as possible.

Your continued support of the mission and ministry of Christ Church Lutheran is appreciated and important. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

~Brad Hubert, Treasurer

EcoPalms for Palm/Passion Sunday

This year, FedEx delivery services shut down due to the pandemic, so no EcoPalms came to the Christ Church doorstep. If they are delivered post-Palm Sunday we can look forward to a big burning of the palms in Lent 2021!

Online Giving is Easy!

Christ Church Lutheran is well-served by online giving, and if you have questions or concerns about its ease of use or security, rest assured that it is both! To access Vanco, the online giving service that many churches use, start at the Christ Church website:

1. Click on “Giving,” then “Stewardship,” then “Donate”
2. Click on “Sign In/Sign Up”
3. Click on “Create your GivePlus account” at the bottom of the page and follow the email and password creation prompts
4. Click on “OK” and then sign in with your email and password
5. Click on the “Give Now” header and choose the fund you will give to (the General Fund is what supports the church operations). Choose your preferred frequency of giving, then enter the amount you would like to give (no period needed), then click “Next”
6. You will have the choice to give by credit card or checking/savings account; Christ Church prefers the bank account option, as fewer fees are incurred.
7. Click “Next”, then “Donate Now.” You will receive a confirmation number
8. On the top left of the screen, click on the three horizontal bars, which will take you to Logout. Clicking on that won’t close the screen, but logout has occurred.)

Thank you for your generous giving!
Christ Church in Mission: Helping our Neighbors at the LSS Safe House and the CES Food Shelf

• The LSS Safe House continues to rely on community support for food and other items. Here’s what they request:

  Safe House Donation List
  • Milk
  • Cereal
  • Fruit
  • Veggies
  • Snacks
  • Food that a teenager would want to eat
  • Laundry detergent
  • Hand soap
  • Hand sanitizer
  • Bleach based products
  • Video Game Console
  • Spare laptop
  • Books/magazines
  • Art supplies

  If you are interested in making an in-kind donation to Safe House, please contact Pastor Haaland (ehaaland@christchurchluth.org) for information and instructions.

  • Community Emergency Services (CES) continues to need donations of funds and food. Christ Church appealed for both during the month of March and took in over $400 as well as nonperishable food items. Thank you, members and friends of Christ church! To find out more about how you can give, click https://www.cesmn.org/help/donate-now/food to go to the CES website.

  Christ Church is blessed to be a blessing to our neighbors in need!

Book Group (Date and time to be determined)

A book has been chosen for the next meeting of the Christ Church Book Group: This Tender Land, by local author William Kent Krueger. Any and all are welcome to the conversation! (Please contact Pastor Haaland if you’d like to be added to the group’s email list.)

A description by the publisher follows:

1932, Minnesota—the Lincoln School is a pitiless place where hundreds of Native American children, forcibly separated from their parents, are sent to be educated. It is also home to an orphan named Odie O'Banion, a lively boy whose exploits earn him the superintendent’s wrath. Forced to flee, he and his brother Albert, their best friend Mose, and a brokenhearted little girl named Emmy steal away in a canoe, heading for the mighty Mississippi and a place to call their own. Over the course of one unforgettable summer, these four orphans will journey into the unknown and cross paths with others who are adrift, from struggling farmers and traveling faith healers to displaced families and lost souls of all kinds. With the feel of a modern classic, This Tender Land is an enthralling, big-hearted epic that shows how the magnificent American landscape connects us all, haunts our dreams, and makes us whole.

We hope to gather to discuss this novel as soon as we can; look for further word from Pastor Haaland or Dan Mueller in early May, as the health situation is evaluated then.

Call Committee Update

Thanks to all who participated in helping us to complete the Ministry Site Profile, which was finalized and sent off to the Synod last month! Next steps include a meeting with Bishop Ann Svennungsen and then beginning to receive and review the Rostered Leader Profiles of potential candidates. Our intention to have the congregation meet with Bishop Svennungsen in early April was interrupted, like so many things for all of us, by the need to stay physically distant during these weeks. The Call Committee plans to meet via zoom the week of April 15 and make plans for moving forward -- depending on the situation you may find yourself invited to an all-congregation meeting with the Bishop over zoom sometime soon. Stay tuned!
A Timely Spiritual Practice: Gratitude

No matter how productive I am in a day, I always let myself go for a walk after dinner—clouds or sun, rain or shine. These walks help me feel connected to the world around me, to the people I pass by (six feet away, of course), and to God. These walks also help me practice gratitude—giving thanks to God for the beautiful things I see around me. On one of my walks last week, I could feel that spring was in the air. I couldn’t help but smile in thanks to God for the buds on the trees, the geese flying north, the warmth of the sun on my skin, and the expansiveness of the agricultural fields at the U of M’s St. Paul campus. Despite feeling isolated and weary from little to no real-life human connection, I have been experiencing joy in getting outside and being in creation.

Reflecting on this practice of mine has made me wonder how you all might practice giving thanks at home during this time. At your evening meal, try reflecting together as a family on what happened that day that you are thankful for. You can think, too, about what things that didn’t get done might you let go of for the rest of the evening. Then, get outside and give thanks to God for the trees, the rivers, the lakes, the animals, and everything else that lights within you a spark of joy! During these isolating times, hold onto as many of those sparks as you can. Families of Christ Church, for what are you thankful for even in this time of uncertainty?

In hopes that you might be encouraged to find some time to safely get outside and practice gratitude, too, included here are a few pictures of my recent walking adventures around my own neighborhood. Peace to you, families, and I look ahead with great anticipation to the next time we all can gather together again.

~Tyler Egge, Children’s Ministry Director

Baptism Birthdays
Hans, Caleb, Calvin, Nora, and Photios have all been baptized in the month of April. Be sure to wish them happy baptism birthdays this month! If your child has a baptism birthday in April and is not in the list above, send Tyler an email at childrens-ministry@christchurchluth.org, so he can add them to his records.
Images and memories of Lent, Holy Week and Easter at Christ Church

Lutheran Social Service will feature Christ Church in an upcoming LSS magazine edition! This photo was taken by their photographer on Sunday, March 8. We greatly look forward to joining together in Christian community as soon as we are able!

Holy Week and Easter blessings to one and all.

Christ Church to be profiled nationwide!