

THE GOOD NEWSLETTER

of New Jerusalem Lutheran Church

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OFFICE PHONE: 610.682.6064

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

(Normally Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m.–12:00 noon, but during the current times, please call ahead to make sure someone is there.)



"Increase my faith in the sweet promises of the gospel; give me repentance from dead works; pardon my wanderings, and direct my thoughts unto thyself, the God of my salvation..." – George Washington, *A Prayer for Guidance*

THE MISSION OF NEW JERUSALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH:

*We are a group of people who
gather together in friendship and love
to worship God, to spread God's Word,
and to care for God's people.*



OF PRESIDENTS, PRAYERS, PARABLES AND POEMS

Dear Friends,

This is the month when we start our Lenten journey. This is the month when we celebrate Presidents' Day, an occasion to thank God for strong leaders in our past. Some of the prayers they wrote are included in a handout. This year we will celebrate Presidents' Day approximately one month after our new President takes office. Surely this month is a time for prayers as well as a time to contemplate scripture.

Speaking of scripture, for our midweek Lenten services this year our community churches are planning to focus on the parables, the stories, of Jesus. We are working to offer these worship experiences in a variety of ways while continuing our tradition of joining together, "traveling" from one house of prayer to another, thus celebrating our unity as the body of Christ. You'll read more about those plans below and find a list of parables in a handout.

The parables of Jesus are stories he used to make a point, or a variety of points. For instance, instead of just telling the lawyer, "Act like a good neighbor to everyone," Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Good stories help us to not only remember what was said, but to keep on thinking about it, finding meanings we hadn't thought about before. The Good Samaritan is certainly one of those kinds of stories.

Presidents, prayers, parables – that brings us to poems. Poems, which include songs and psalms, also help us to think about and express things. As we read or sing poetry it often brings a smile of recognition to our faces: "Yeah, I know that feeling! I've had that experience! Those are exactly the thoughts I need to express at this moment!" Like good stories, poetry can reach across the ages. Yet it is also refreshing to find poems that express our feelings in very contemporary ways. I am so thankful to have found a collection that was written specifically as a resource for a time of pandemic, *How shall we pray this morning? For what shall we pray this night?* by Tom M. Shuman. I've shared some during worship and you'll find more in the Lenten resources we are including with this mailing.

For now, as we continue through the cold days of winter, the uncertainties of 2021, a second year of pandemic, a change of administration in our nation, and continuing challenges in our personal lives, may we also remember that spring will come.

May these words accompany and reassure you this month:

What shall we say about these things?
– *Romans 8:31a (NRSV)*

Simply this:

God
has not forsaken us
has not forgotten us
has not walked away from us.

God has a tight grip on us
has wrapped us in love
pours grace into our souls

for

neither foolish politicians
nor those who make bad choices,

neither a virus we cannot see
nor the angry we can hear,

neither what yesterday, today
nor tomorrow bring, nothing,
absolutely not a thing (!),

will ever, will ever, will ever
separate us from the love of
God.

Tom M. Shuman ¹

Be at peace and may you find joy each day,

Pastor Ruth

¹ Tom M Shuman *How shall we pray this morning? For what shall we pray this night?* Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow, UK. 2020 p. 136. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

NEWS & EVENTS

in New Jerusalem and the Synod

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The following items were discussed and decisions made at our council meeting on January 11th:

- Rita Kayhart, the liaison for our Boy Scout Troop #585, provided council with an update as to how the scouts are doing.
- The community churches started planning Lenten services. More information about Ash Wednesday and the midweek Lenten services can be found in the article in the adjoining column.
- A motion was made authorizing the Finance Committee to use up to \$50,000.00 of Fidelity Investment funds for payment of expenses when needed in 2021.
- With the significant increase in postage to mail the offering envelopes, alternative methods were suggested to save money. Starting in June an offering envelope will be included in each monthly newsletter. More details will follow at a later date.

WORSHIP AT NEW JERUSALEM

As we continue to monitor the pandemic in our area, the Worship & Music Committee has made the decision to continue worshipping via Zoom every Sunday. Worship will be held via **Zoom on Sundays, February 7, 14, 21, and 28 at 10:00 a.m.**

We will celebrate **Scout Sunday on the 21st** when members of our troop will join us on Zoom and provide readers for the service.

Information on how to connect for Zoom worship via internet, phone, and other methods is available. If you are not already receiving information about how to connect, please contact the church office.

Bulletins are being mailed or emailed to those who request them so that they can worship at home. Those not able to join us for our Zoom worship services on Sunday mornings, can watch the services on our Facebook page or on our website <https://newjerusalem.lutheran.weebly.com> under the “Zoom Worship Services” tab. We actually know that people who are not members are joining us in worship through these means, so this

has become an opportunity for sharing the good news with others, an opportunity for what is known as evangelism.

If you would like to receive a bulletin via mail or email, please let us know at 610.682.6064 or njelchurch@windstream.net.

Bulletins are also available on our website: <http://NewJerusalemLutheran.weebly.com>.

ASH WEDNESDAY – February 17th

Since we will not be gathering in our building for worship, we are offering several other options.

1. You should have already received a packet of ashes in the mail. If you have not, please call the church office.
2. A **Drive-Up Distribution of Ashes and Holy Communion** between **11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.** weather permitting – i.e. no heavy rain or snow. Simply drive up to the church door where Pastor Ruth will be waiting. She will mark foreheads with ashes and offer communion through your car windows. Invite others to participate in this as well. If Pastor is not right at the door, ring the bell and she'll come out.
3. A **Zoom worship service at 7:00 p.m.** During the service, you can use the ashes you received to mark your forehead.
4. You can also use the enclosed **short service** and use the provided ashes to mark your own forehead.

MID-WEEK LENTEN COMMUNITY WORSHIP

The Brandywine Area Ministerium is pleased to share a mid-week Lenten worship series, “Parables: Pointing to a Greater Truth,” on Wednesday evenings, February 24–March 31 at 7:00 p.m. Six pastors from area congregations are each developing one week’s service surrounding a specific parable of Jesus. Video sermons will be shared from each week’s “host” pastor.

Some congregations will be offering live in-person worship and they welcome anyone who wishes to attend. Some will also live stream. Details will be shared as available.

Each week New Jerusalem will offer these services via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. Check-in will be the same as for Sunday services. Recordings of these services can be accessed on our Facebook page or on our website at <https://newjerusalemlutheran.weebly.com> under the "Zoom Worship Services" tab.

Be blessed together with our neighboring sisters and brothers in faith as we journey through Lent toward the cross with the hope of an empty tomb beyond.

SCHEDULE SO FAR

ASH WEDNESDAY – Each congregation hosts its own service.

February 24 – Trinity, Topton. Hidden Treasures (in-person worship available)

March 3 – New Jerusalem. Wheat and Tares

March 10 – To be announced

March 17 – St. Paul's, Mertztown
(in-person worship available)

March 24 – Christ Mertz, Dryville. Good Samaritan
(in-person worship available)

March 31 – St. Peter's, Topton

REMEMBER: Each week the service will be available via Zoom from New Jerusalem at 7 p.m.

BIBLE STUDY

The Bible Study group has finished its study of the Book of Acts. We are currently studying the Letter to the Galatians. Bible Study will be held on **Mondays, February 1, 8, 15, and 22 at 11:00 a.m.** Let Pastor Ruth know if you would like to join.

COLORING GROUP

Our Coloring Group continues meeting monthly to color Bible-themed pages while visiting with one another. The next meeting is **Thursday, February 4, at 10:00 a.m.** Pages and supplies provided, but feel free to bring your own. There is plenty of room to maintain a safe distance from one another. Participants are asked to wear masks. Friends are welcome.

If you are interested, please let Phyllis Fenstermacher (610.682.2423) or Diane Keller (610.682.4152) know.

Not able to get to church or don't feel comfortable getting together there? Just let them know and pages will be sent to you and you can visit with other members by phone.

THE PARKING LOT IS PAID OFF!

We have met our goal of paying off the expense for the parking lot/driveway repair and resurfacing. The total expense was \$37,140.00 and was paid off by the end of 2020. Thank you to all who have helped us reach our goal!

THREADS FOR OTHERS

Keep on knitting and crocheting for the Seafarers. If you need material to make masks or yarn for cowls and hats for seafarers, let Pastor Ruth know.

FEBRUARY WORSHIP SPONSORS

The cost to sponsor bulletins for a week is still \$7.00 and sponsorship of the Sanctuary Candle is \$15.00 for a month. If you would like to sponsor any of the available dates below, please leave a message on the church answering machine with your dedication. Thank you!

Since the pandemic limits our ability to gather, we are now mailing bulletins to members. The cost for that is about \$45 per week. Any contributions to help offset this cost are appreciated.

Bulletin Sponsors for February:

February 7 – Diane Keller

February 14 – *sponsor needed*

February 21 – Diane Keller

February 28 – Diane Keller

Sanctuary Candle Sponsor for February:

Sponsor needed

MARCH 2021 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the March 2021 newsletter is **Sunday, February 14.** Please have all articles and announcements to the church office by this date.

UPDATE ON STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

As of the end of January 5th, **clean-up buckets for disaster relief** will be filled and extra supplies will be placed in another using donated materials supplemented by those purchased through a Thrivent Grant. Each bucket is valued at approximately \$75. They will be taken to an appropriate warehouse as soon as possible.

Supplies for the **Kutztown University Food Pantry at the Lutheran Center** were purchased through a Thrivent Grant and added to the generous donations of our members and friends. These will be taken to the university as soon as it is back in session.

Our thanks to all who contributed and especially those who did the extra shopping.

PASTORAL CARE DURING THE CURRENT SITUATION

Please let Pastor Ruth know if pastoral care is needed for anyone. At present, she is able to respond via phone and electronic means. Currently she is not entering hospitals or nursing homes. At times she has been able to “meet” and even offer communion while standing outside a window or door and speaking on the phone. Please also continue to let her know when someone enters the hospital or when anyone is experiencing a change in health or situation.

Pastoral care services (chaplains) are available at each hospital to support and attend to patients’ diverse spiritual needs. So even if Pastor Ruth cannot enter a facility, care is available. Some of our parishioners have reported excellent response from these servants and, at times, when given permission, pastor Ruth can be in dialogue with a chaplain in order to enhance that care.

AN EVENING SONG by Thom M. Shuman¹

Before bedtime, we
sit on the floor and play pat-a-cake
with you, laughing
every time our palms miss,
and especially when you get
that silly look on your face –
and we know you do it
on purpose, you who are
so high and mighty.

Then using your God-voice, you
announce that it is time to head
up to our rooms, and you kneel
down so we can crawl up
on your back for one last ride
of the day, and we sing lullabies with you
as you slowly go up, step by step.

Giving us one last drink of water,
you tuck us into bed, giving us a kiss;
and shutting the door so that just
a sliver of light shines through,
you sit at the top of the stairs, until we
fall asleep and you can head down
to your home office to keep an eye
on the rest of the worlds.

¹ Tom M. Shuman *How shall we pray this morning? For what shall we pray this night?* Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow, UK. 2020 p. 136. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

WHEN YOU’RE HAVING ONE OF THOSE DAYS – WORDS OF REASSURANCE

Received on the computer as a “404 Error - page not found,” but also applies when you can’t find your keys.

“I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.” – Martin Luther
Unfortunately, the page you are looking for is one of those things Martin lost.”

A LITTLE HUMOR

On the 8th Day God created Seniors and God’s Plan for Aging. Most seniors never get enough exercise.

In His wisdom God decreed that seniors become forgetful so they would have to search for their glasses, keys, and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God saw there was another need. In His wisdom He made seniors lose coordination so they would drop things, requiring them to bend, reach, and stretch. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God considered the function of bladders and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature, requiring more trips to the bathroom, thus providing more exercise. God looked down and saw that it was good.

So, if you find, as you age, you are getting up and down more, remember it’s God’s will. It is all in your best interest, even though you mutter under your breath.

Sent to me by an old friend. I have no idea where he got it. - Pastor Ruth

PALINDROME

CNN reports that a *palindrome* is something that reads the same forwards and backwards, like the date 1/20/21, a word like “mom” or the phrase, “Madam I am Adam.” Apparently, we will have another 9 palindrome days come this December (12/1/21, 12/2/21, etc.). For fun, try to notice palindromes in your everyday encounters. For an extra challenge, try making up a phrase.

“Though our feelings come and go, God’s love for us does not.”

—C.S. Lewis


 IN OUR
Thoughts and Prayers


PRAYERS FOR AWARENESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE for Those with Limited Mobility or in Care Facilities:

Anna Angstadt, Bertha Bennecoff, Verna Guinther, Shirley Hertzog, Leon Moyer, and Irene Noll.

PRAYERS FOR HEALING AND SUPPORT

Members: Myles Angstadt, Dallas Bennecoff, Sara Jane Beshore, George DeLong, Erma Guinther, Virginia Guinther, Lucille Jones, Patricia Keck, Sheila Long, Forrest Merkel, Roy Merkel, Edna Miller, Grace Miller, Lloyd and Linda Moyer, Betty Musser, Horace and Joyce Rothermel, Gabriele Sanders, Dale Schwoyer, Gary and Vikie Seyfert.

Friends of the congregation: Carrie Bausch, Adam Bell, Darlene Bogert, Bob Bright, Thelma Bright, Joshua Buck, Anne Cunningham, Mark Derr, Randy Dreibelbis, Jennifer Engle, Nicole F., Harry Geidner, Jason Grof, Mamie Guinther, Denise Haage, Shirley Hahn, Nancy Harnish, Johnson-Agiri Family, Debra Kenny, Angie Kistler, Kelly Kline, The Koontz Family, Edna Kramer, Cayden Kresge, Mary Kring, Michelle Kurtz, Catherine Lenio, Ella Loose, Joe M., Family and friends of Nancy Meck, Rodney Miller, Johnathan Naugle, Ruth Ramsey, Patricia Sigfried, Carol Spigelmeyer, Thomas Spraut, Robert Taylor, Leticia Weaver, Linda Wegman, Terry White, Althea Young, Alton Zentner, Barry, Lynn, Pat, Sam, and Tim.

OTHER PRAYER CONCERNS: We pray for all seeking to respond responsibly to COVID-19, especially healthcare workers; our nation, including our president, congress, judicial system, and leaders of our communities; an end to the many ways prejudice and systemic racism maintain inequality between people and injustice; an end to threats between nations; peace in the world; our military personnel serving around the world; areas enduring disaster; and migrants and refugees.

LONG-TERM PRAYER LIST: Gary DeWees, Don Gajewski, Erma Gajewski, Lorelai Gold, Amanda Herman, David Jenkins, Anh La, Michelle Meck, Joanne Pauley, Arlene Reider, Leilani Rodriquez, Andrew S., Joshua S., Roger Schollenberger, Donna Schwoyer, the Spatz Family, and Leah Wiest.

THANK YOU NOTES

Dear Congregation of New Jerusalem, thank you for collecting 15 Holiday dinner boxes and 26 Christmas gifts for children of our pantry clients. Your wonderful donations helped local families have a great year and Holiday season! The 2020 Christmas Cheer program was certainly one to remember, as so many uncertainties filled the year. But the outpouring of generosity from donors was extremely heartwarming to all of us at Friend. From the clients, staff and Board of Friend, Inc. Community Services, we sincerely thank you and wish you a successful 2021!



Dear members of New Jerusalem Church, thank you for supporting the Brandywine Food Pantry with your recent monetary donation. Sincerely, The Food Pantry



Dear Friends of Seafarers, Happy New Year! Thank you for having shared the joy of the season with seafarers who could not be with their families and loved ones. On their behalf we thank you for your generous donation of satchels and supplies to fill satchels. Wishing you all the best for 2021, Henryk Behnke, Director of Development & Communications



- 2 Linda Moyer
- 3 Robert Keller
- 6 Lillian Sue Lambert
- 8 Wyatt Keller
- 8 Kevin Stump
- 11 Beatrice Barlet
- 15 Steve Fox
- 18 Caleb Keller
- 22 Katie Ellen Cleaver
- 25 Sherrie Carl
- 26 Jarrett Hahn
- 27 Justin Keller
- 28 Jeannette DeLong

New Jerusalem Lutheran Church Statement of Accounts

December 31, 2020

| <u>Asset Accounts</u> | <u>Balance</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Memorial | \$ 21,240.62 |
| Thrivent | 9,871.31 |
| Checking | 7,149.80 |
| Youth | 406.52 |
| Fidelity | 82,372.49 |
| Cash Reserve | 34,412.24 |
| Mission Investment | 11,559.72 |
| Local Care | 2,065.31 |

Total: \$ 169,078.01

Total Balance of Asset Accounts
from **December 31, 2019** \$ 190,731.83

December 2020 – ‘Actual’ vs. ‘Required’ Income

| | Income Required | Actual | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <u>Used For:</u> | <u>Per Month</u> | <u>Income</u> | <u>Difference</u> |
| Operating Expenses | \$ 9,565.00 | \$ 13,777.27 | \$ 4,212.27 |

*Income Required per Month — Based on 2020
Budget Passed by Congregation
Less Budgeted Benevolence Contribution*

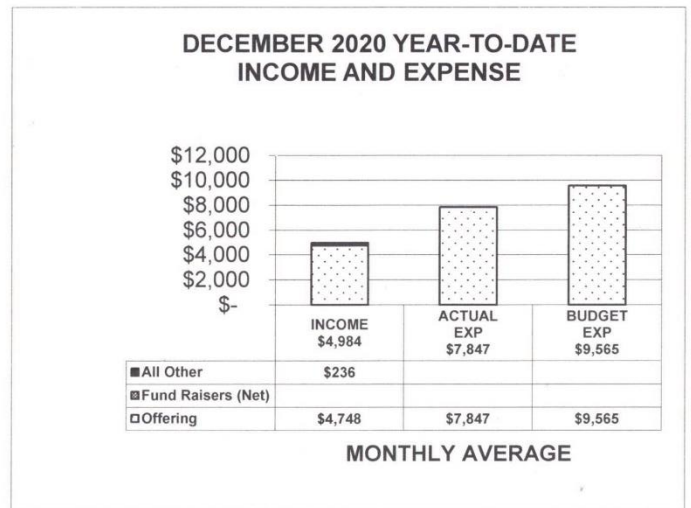
Parking Lot – Funds received to offset expenses
for Driveway/Parking Lot Repaving

\$ 37,140.00 Total Expenses for Parking Lot
Project

\$ 37,140.52 Total Funds Received to Offset
Expenses

SUCCESS!

THANK YOU to all who helped reach our goal!



**CALENDAR YEAR 2020 INFORMATION
NORMAL OPERATIONS
(DOES NOT INCLUDE MAJOR REPAIRS/PURCHASES)**

| INCOME & EXPENSE ACTIVITY DECEMBER 2020 YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|-------------|------------------|
| | Dec Y-T-D | Average Month |
| Income | | |
| Offering | \$ 56,980 | \$ 4,748 |
| Fund Raisers | \$ - | - |
| Other | \$ 2,835 | 236 |
| Total Income | \$ 59,815 | 4,984 |
| Actual Exp | \$ 94,161 | 7,847 |
| Budget Exp | \$ 114,780 | 9,565 |
| Shortage * | \$ (34,346) | (2,862) |

*NOTE: Shortage - Total Income to 2020 ACTUAL Expense
Less Benevolence & Major Repairs/Purchases

COMMANDMENT #11

During the 17th century, an archbishop traveling through Scotland met theologian Samuel Rutherford but kept his identity secret. Rutherford invited the man to stay with him. When Mrs. Rutherford gathered the servants on Saturday to prepare for worship the next day, the guest joined in and was asked a basic question: “How many commandments are there?”

When the guest replied “11,” Mrs. Rutherford said, “What a shame it is for you, a man with gray hairs, in a Christian country, not to know how many commandments there are!”

The next morning, Rev. Rutherford went out in the woods to pray and heard his guest doing likewise. When he discovered the archbishop’s identity, Rutherford invited him to preach that morning. The archbishop’s topic? The 11th commandment, based on Jesus’ words in John 13:34 – “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another” (ESV).

– Reprinted from *The Newsletter Newsletter*

?? **Bible Quiz** ??

What was the name of Moses’ wife?

A. Miriam
B. Jochebed
C. Zipporah
D. Leah

Answer: C (See Exodus 2:21)

BRANDYWINE FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

Reflecting on this past year, we at the food pantry, along with many others have seen a lot of changes. Some of them expected and some very unexpected.

Of course, one of the changes, which was totally unexpected, was the pandemic. We thought we would have to close because we were almost out of food, but God had other plans.

That was one of the biggest changes, our perspectives. Through prayer and other forms of communication, the most tremendous community outpouring of love, support, kindness, generosity, the list could go on, showed up literally on the pantry's doorstep week after week for months. God showed us that we should not rely on our own devices, that we should turn everything over to Him in prayer and rely on Him to take care of our needs.

Another change was the retirement of Pastor Roger Ulrich, although it was expected it was still an adjustment. Of course, it happened during the pandemic, so many of the patrons did not realize that he retired because they did not come around during the early days of the pandemic. His smiling face and talkative ways are still missed.

We also lost some of our volunteers during the pandemic, which was unexpected but to be expected. They chose not to come during this time which is understandable because of their age and health risks. Many of our volunteers were more mature adults, (meaning they were older than 65), and we are very grateful for the time that they did give and wish them all the best.

So, in keeping with that change, we did gain some new volunteers. The pantry has some new faces, and as always, we are appreciative for the help that we get. If you are interested in helping with the pantry, whether it is picking up and delivering the bread on Tuesdays, volunteering to watch the pantry on a Tuesday or the one Thursday a month, or help to sort the food that is donated, please let us know. You can call the church office at 610-682-7633 if you have any questions. We are more than willing to answer any questions that you have.

We, of course, had to make changes in how we ran the food pantry. We only allow one person in the food pantry at a time unless they are with a family member, the patrons and volunteers must wear a mask, the patrons must either wear gloves or clean their hands with hand sanitizer before they sign in,

the pantry is wiped down with antiseptic or Lysol before it is opened, the pencils and the doorknobs are wiped also, the tables that the bread is put on is wiped down and we ask the patrons to practice social distancing when waiting their turn or picking up bread.

One of the nicest, unexpected changes is that due to the continual support of the community with the food supply, we were starting to run out of room in the small storage area that our host church, St. Peter's allowed us to have. We were actually starting to put small shelves under the tables on the floor to store some of the small items that we had. Once again, God had other ideas, and through prayer and communication again, St. Peter's graciously allowed us more storage area. Thank you, St. Peter's, we greatly appreciate it!

Change is not always easy to accept especially when you are not expecting it but listening to God when He calls for change is important, whether we want it or not. If we keep our focus on His mission for us here at the pantry, we will continue to flourish. He has a plan for us, we just have to be willing to listen and follow that plan even if it means more changes.

And now, thank you to everyone who has helped the food pantry this past year. Without the help of the community, volunteers, donors, local businesses and not-so-local businesses, community organizations, so many consistent individuals, we would not have been able to support the many patrons that we did. We are so very grateful for the generosity of all of you. There are just not enough words to express the overwhelming heartfelt gratitude that we at the food pantry board feel.

But most of all, To God be the Glory, for without Him, none of this would be possible.

The Brandywine Food Pantry Board



BRANDYWINE FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

(updated as of January 19, 2021)

In the light of concerns about increased food needs in response to COVID-19 and possible challenges of delivering items to the food bank – please consider a generous monetary donation. We will keep you posted with information from the food pantry. You can make out a check to “**Brandywine Food Pantry,**” and mail it to **Brandywine Food Pantry, c/o St. Peter’s United Church of Christ, 122 W. Franklin St., Tipton, PA, 19562.**

Donated items in “much” need right now: coffee, fruit juices, sugar, flour, mayonnaise, ketchup, spaghetti sauce, ramen noodles or cup of noodles, beef stew, Chicken-ala-King, canned meat (such as tuna, chicken breast or Spam), Chef Boyardee style canned items (such as beefaroni, lasagna, etc.), instant potatoes, pasta or rice sides, snacks of all kinds (cookies, chips, pretzels, pudding, etc.), shampoo, bar soap, body wash, and laundry detergent. ***We do not currently need: corn, green beans, mixed vegetables, or tomato soup.***

The pantry is always in need of the following items:

Canned fruits: pears, mandarin oranges, fruit cocktail, applesauce, etc.

Canned vegetables: creamed corn, sweet peas, carrots, beets, sliced potatoes, yams

Canned goods: diced tomatoes, tomato sauce

Condiments: yellow and brown mustard, pickles, salad dressings, vinegar, cooking oil

Drinks: hot or cold tea, water

Extra: peanut butter, marshmallow fluff, jelly

Dry goods: stuffing mix, Rice-a-Roni, ramen noodles, rice

Baking items: cake or brownie mix, frosting

Breakfast food: oatmeal, pop tarts, cereal bars

Paper products: tissues, toilet paper, paper towels

Personal care items: combs and hairbrushes

Cleaning and disinfectant products: dish soap and laundry detergent.

Gluten-free and sugar-free food is also greatly appreciated.

Please check dates on donated food products.

As always, thank you for your support. It is greatly appreciated.

To fall in love with God is the greatest of romances, to seek him the greatest adventure, to find him the greatest human achievement.

– St. Augustine

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”
–**Matthew 22:37-40**

What a shame that February – the one month of the year with keen focus on love – is also the shortest. We sure could use a lot more love in our world, especially for our neighbor.

The last 12 months have been particularly hard, as race riots, a divisive election and civil unrest have all unfolded against the traumatic backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently in very short supply, more love for neighbor would go a long way in helping us to solve our problems.

Love for neighbor is integral to not only good discipleship, but also good stewardship. The greater the “love for neighbor” factor in our lives, the better stewards we will be of every blessing God provides – creation, time, relationships, money, possessions, health, to name just a few. By cultivating love for neighbor we will also enjoy a happier life and promote a healthier and more civil society.

The opposite is also true. Cultivating enmity for neighbor leaves us sour, selfish and cynical, while also making our nation angry and selfish.

This year make February “Love Your Neighbor” month in your personal devotions and your congregational life. Give the concept breathing room in your life. Keep it in your thoughts, sow it in our heart, talk about it to your family and friends.

Pray for God to teach you what it means to love our neighbor. Pray for God to give you the strength and will to live it. And watch as love heals and invigorates your life ... and our world.

—Rob Blezard

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Love YOUR
neighbor
as yourself.
MATTHEW 22:39

FOR THE BIRDS

Display this recycled craft to care for feathered friends.



What you need:

- Peanut butter or vegetable shortening
- Plastic knife
- Empty toilet paper tube
- Bird seed
- A plate
- String

What you do:

1. Spread peanut butter or vegetable shortening on the tube, covering the entire outside surface.
2. Pour bird seed on a plate and roll the tube in the seeds.
3. Thread string through the tube and tie it to make a loop.
4. Hang the bird feeder outside. When seeds are eaten, coat the roll again.



BIRDS IN THE WORD

The Bible mentions many kinds of birds. How many have you seen?

Directions: Unscramble the bird names, using the Bible references and pictures as clues. Then insert the final unscrambled bird name to complete the passage below.



VDEO

___ _ _ _ (Genesis 8:8)



LWO

___ _ _ (Psalm 102:6)



GEELA

___ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 40:31)



TOKRS

___ _ _ _ _ (Jeremiah 8:7)



APROSWRS

___ _ _ _ _

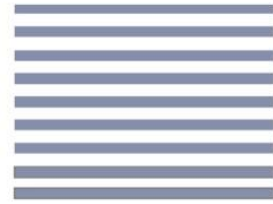
“Are not five ___ _ _ _ _ sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ... Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many ___ _ _ _ _ .”

LUKE 12:6-7, NIV

Answer: dove, owl, eagle, stork, sparrows

SYNOD NEWS

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, ELCA



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From Our Bishop: Vital Signs for Now

As I write this in January, I have no way of knowing what our situation – national, state, or local – will be like. But I have no doubt in two truths. First, God will be with us and for us. Second, the big challenges will still be upon us. As people who believe in and follow Jesus, we always have these promises: *Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.* This means, wherever we are, and wherever we're headed, that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:39).

In the midst of all we face, across this Synod – our congregations, leaders, members and ministries – are playing *vital roles* in God's work to bring life out of death, love out of hate, hope out of despair, and joy out of sorrow. The Holy Spirit is revealing *vital signs* in our midst because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. So, I ask you: as part of the Body of Christ, *what are our vital signs right now?* How are we doing these three things:

Healing the hurting? Loving the land? Engaging the stranger?

As a Synod going forward, I'm calling these three, our *Vital Signs for Now*. Ways we are called by our God to address this moment through which we are now living:

- ***Heal the Hurting*** can include helping all of us, suffering through this pandemic. Those who are facing economic struggle. Those who are also ill from other afflictions, including addiction, anxiety and depression. Those having a hard time finding health care and security. And those in pain and fear from our large divides over politics.
- ***Love the Land*** can include the realities of climate change. The need to make our communities more livable for everyone. And deciding what is best to do with our buildings and properties, to bring more life to our neighbors as well as ourselves.
- ***Engage the Stranger*** can include anyone who feels estranged, inside and outside our churches. It includes all the ways that have made us estranged from each other and our core Christian values: the lack of welcome for all people, especially foreigners and our LGBTQIA+ siblings; racial injustice and white supremacy; the disregard of facts and the lack of listening to the "other side".

In these first days and weeks of 2021, as a Synod, let us work on these three things. And let us share with each other, what is working and how the Spirit is moving and leading. Let's tell each other and ask your pastors and councils to share with our deans and Synod staff. We will then share with the whole Synod. Let's go and grow more alive and vital, together, as church, by the grace of our great God.

Bishop Christopher deForest

Vital Signs!

When Pastor Michele Kaufman decided she wanted to have Palm Sunday and Easter services in-person last spring at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mountaintop, she and members of the congregation decided to hold drive-in services on the church grounds. Jim Doxsey, a member of the congregation, purchased a low-frequency FM radio transmitter so members could listen to the service inside their vehicles. The concept worked well, and the outdoor services continued throughout the spring and summer.

In the spring, the congregation completed work on a prayer garden at the rear of the church where Pr. Kaufman conducted the services. Recently, the church moved its 9 a.m. service indoors, but kept the 11 a.m. gathering outside. As late fall arrived, the congregation came up with an idea to allow the pastor to continue to conduct the outdoor service, even in inclement weather.

They built her a Pastor Pod.

"The 9 a.m. service was moved indoors, maintaining social distancing and requiring masks," Pr. Kaufman said. "But we wanted to keep one of our services outdoors because several members of the congregation were dealing with cancer and other health problems. We wanted to make sure they could attend services but be safe."

The approximately 6x8 foot "Pastor Pod" is located adjacent to the church parish hall. It was constructed using two-by-four supports, has a platform, and a roof – the entire structure enclosed in plexiglass.



The congregation and surrounding community embraced the concept of the Pastor Pod with great enthusiasm. "We have people from as far as 25+ miles traveling to worship with us. We have several families from neighboring congregations and different Christian traditions attending on a regular basis because of the safety factor. The creativity and **innovation and resilience** this congregation has displayed in these trying times has been an inspiration. It has been our modern-day Reformation! We are church in every sense of the phrase!" reported Pr. Kaufman.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mountaintop

Born and raised in Richmond, VA, I graduated from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA with a public policy and economics degree. After a year of itinerant youth ministry in the Midwest and 18 months as an inventory analyst, I admitted that the rustling in my gut was not indigestion but a call to sacramental service in the Church. I went to Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC, where I learned to appreciate the rhythm of daily life, shrimp and grits, theology, and Friday night cookouts. Since ordination, I've served St. James, Hobbie and St. John, Mohnton. I continue to be gobsmacked for the gift to be about what God is up to in the world—to point out Jesus, crucified and risen.

Pastor Rachael Dietz



I cheer for the Steelers and Packers passionately, stretch daily, roast coffee regularly, and travel through life curiously.

While written for the week of January 17, this message from Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is still timely.

Bishop Eaton Offers Prayer for Our Nation



As we reflect on the events at the Capitol on January 6 and look toward the inauguration, and share concern about possible violence at our state and national capitols, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton offers the following prayer:

The psalmist reminds us that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). Our nation is bracing amid reports of acts of political violence planned for the coming days at state capitols and in our nation’s capital. Wherever you are, and whatever your political beliefs, we are one in Christ Jesus. On this firm foundation, as a pastor and a bishop, I invite you to join me in prayer during this time of chaos, confusion, fear and grief. For even when “the nations are in an uproar,” we are encouraged that “the

Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:6a, 7).

Mighty God, our great help in trouble, as distrust, fear and violence threaten our nation and its peoples, we come to you in prayer, seeking your wisdom, strength and peace.

We pray for the health of our democracy and its leaders, that those elected to serve may utilize government structures and processes to promote human flourishing and the common good...

We pray for those who risk harm to ensure the safety of others: police officers, security guards, the National Guard and other military personnel...

We pray for an end to the evils of white supremacy, Christian nationalism, and racial violence that threatens, destroys and kills...

We pray for those experiencing trauma induced by the public display and use of hateful language and symbols, including Confederate flags, anti-Semitic language and images, and nooses...

We pray for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and historically marginalized groups traumatized by violence stemming from white supremacy: lynchings, bombings, vandalism and church burnings...

We pray for clergy and church leaders, especially for those burdened by mistrust and painful divisions in their communities. Give them and all people the courage to confront white supremacy, Christian nationalism and racist rhetoric with messages of truth, sustained by the power of your magnificent love...

We pray for people and communities struggling to discern your voice amid competing voices clamoring for attention. Direct us to listen deeply and celebrate the diversity among us. Freed in Christ, we dare to witness to your promise of abundant life and abiding peace...

In this time of great uncertainty, we pray without ceasing, trusting that your word, Holy God, never returns empty and your mercy never fails. We pray in the name of Jesus and by the power the Holy Spirit. Amen.

FEBRUARY 2021

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----|
| | 1 11:00am-Bible Study via Zoom 12:45-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 2 Presentation of Our Lord | 3 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 4 10:00am-Coloring Group | 5 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 6 |
| 7 5 th Sunday after Epiphany 10:00am-Worship on Zoom | 8 11:00am-Bible Study via Zoom 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. 7:00pm-Council Meeting | 9 | 10 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 11 | 12 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 13 |
| 14 Transfiguration of Our Lord 10:00am-Worship on Zoom | 15 11:00am-Bible Study via Zoom 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. President's Day | 16 | 17 11:30am-Tentative Fellowship Luncheon (location TBD) 11:30-1:30pm-Drive up Distribution of Ashes and Holy Communion 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. 7:00pm-Worship on Zoom Ash Wednesday | 18 | 19 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 20 |
| 21 1 st Sunday in Lent 10:00am-Scout Sunday, Worship on Zoom | 22 11:00am-Bible Study via Zoom 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 23 | 24 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. 7:00pm-Community Lenten Service, Worship on Zoom | 25 | 26 12:45pm-1:45pm-AA Mtg. | 27 |
| 28 2 nd Sunday in Lent 10:00am-Worship on Zoom | | | | | | |