

CORNERSTONE

"THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU AT ST. PAUL'S"

June 2020

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Volume 26, Issue 6



Dear Partners in ministry,

I find myself in an uncomfortable position because in 44 years of pastoral ministry I do not think I recommended we cancel on site services; or for that matter, even personally not attended on site Sunday worship more than a handful of times. And now it has gone on for 9 weeks during which time we have had to learn a myriad of new skill sets that have taken us all outside of our comfort zones. Listening to the news media, regardless of which view you turn on and where you stand on the issues, is almost nauseating; not to mention how many times have you heard me say, to reopen you need to put together a plan where you are socially distant, socially isolating, physically separated, "spread out and sit as far apart from each other as you can?" It is a confusing time to say the least.

So where do we go from here when everything is changing so rapidly? It seems the "old norms" and realities, as individuals, families, communities, and even in the Church, are being shifted and everything is up for grabs. Or is it? In the mantra words of my mother's favorite T.V. program of the late 1960s, Star Trek, **"We Boldly Go Where No One* Has Gone Before."**

How apt it is that we are in the 10th week of this Coronavirus pandemic. For us in our PLUM churches, it all began at the beginning of our 2020 Lenten journey when we cancelled all on site worship services for the sake and safety of our communities on the 3rd Sunday in Lent, the 15th of March. As is true with everything we have done within our 11 congregations strong, 15-year-old cooperative ministry, we (as able), have found new ways to support each other in worship, meetings, and carrying on our ministries. But this is nothing new. Imagine those early disciples and their first Lenten, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost journey (13 weeks). We, like the early disciples, can come out of this in a better place if we remember the lessons we have experienced, because we know the end of the story. We know that for Christ it was not just suffering and death. It was defeating death and instituting "new life." It was the tearing down the curtain in the temple and opening the church to a new day.

For the disciples then and us today, the first forty days of Easter was a time to get their/our bearings as they/we walked with Christ into the new reality. Then Ascension happened and "POOF" Christ was gone. Oh, to be sure, the disciples (and we) tried to go back to life/church as usual and 10 days later, 50 days after his resurrection, **(on Easter, CHRIST IS RISEN, HE IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELULIA!) "SWOOOSH"**

PENTECOST - The Coming of the Holy Spirit
When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them,

and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Acts 2:1-4

The "church" then and now is changed forever. Through the touching of God's Spirit, the people of God became Christ's presence for the world. And no matter how hard they/we try to go back to business as usual, there will always be new avenues that push us ahead. May we never forget those many millions and their families who served us on the front lines: the clerks, cleaners, first responders, food workers, sanitation workers, medical personnel, etc. to get us through this pandemic that in the 10 weeks over 100,000 Americans lost their lives (for perspective, 58,220 soldiers died over 9 years in the Vietnam war). Biblically once we are touched by God's Spirit, life ceases to be about me. Jesus' words resonate this fact; "For God so loved the world that he gave...."; "given and shed for you...."; "I've come that you might have life....";

As we reopen our churches and reopen them we will, may we be ever mindful that it is not about us. As Bishop Kusserow clarified and pointed out to our synod pastors on Monday, "this is not a sprint nor a marathon, because there are no markers as to how far we must go or where the finish line is." This is life and as Jesus states: "*And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'*" Matthew 25:40. May this be what drives us as: **"We Boldly Go Where No One* Has Gone Before.** God's Blessings on all you do as together we celebrate Christ's presence in our midst.

Peace,
Pastor John J. Gropp

AT HOME TAIZÉ PRAYER SERVICE: FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2020, 7:00 P. M.

During this time of the Coronavirus and Social Distancing, Prayer is a source of Comfort. Please join us in Taize Prayer from the safety of your homes. To participate in the Taize Prayer service, go to PLUM's [Zoom page](#). Call Pastor Sue (412-496-

4889) or Pastor Brenda (412-390-8005) if you have questions or concerns.

What is Taizé? Taizé is the style of Christian worship practiced by the ecumenical Taizé community in France, characterized by the repetitive singing of simple harmonized tunes, interspersed with readings, prayers, and periods of silence.

One of our congregations, Hope Lutheran Church in Forest Hills, has a long tradition of offering this meaningful, contemplative type of worship service monthly. Also, in the past PLUM has had a Taizé joint worship service and May 1 we had our first "at home" Taizé service via zoom.

Whether you are someone who is new to Taizé, or someone who already appreciates this beautiful way to connect to God, community and self, please consider joining us. All are welcome!



GOOD NEWS from the Congregations of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries

Good News stories and Uplifting events from all of the congregations that are part of PLUM.

- Vicar Mandy Gilberti graduated from United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg Campus on Friday, May 15 2020 with a Master of Divinity Degree. Congratulations, Vicar Mandy we cannot wait until you are a Pastor.
- Pastor Susan Devine graduated from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota and participated in their virtual commencement on Sunday May 31. As you know Pastor Sue finished her studies toward her Master of Divinity Degree in December 2019 and was ordained in February. We are blessed that Pastor Sue choose PLUM.
- LLC Marie Bishop's great-granddaughter, Ailani, has graduated from elementary school and is on her way to middle school.
- **SAL and ELLC organist Genevieve Long's 80th birthday is June 2nd.** SPLC

- Congratulates Rebecca Harvison on being a Canon McMillan Senior High 2020 Graduate.
- MLC Congratulates Devin Jamison on being a 2020 Graduate.
- MTLC is serving “drive by” dinners for children 18 years and younger on Mondays and Thursday through June 18th. Meals are available between 4 pm and 5 pm. Each child will receive three pre-packaged meals on each day. We are working with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and a Giving Heart.

PLUM: If you need any help with coping/dealing with the pandemic, Kathleen Hays is available for phone consultation. Please contact New Horizon Counseling at 412-853-3189.

IN CASE OF EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

If you are having a **mental health emergency** and feeling unsafe, you need to immediately call 9-1-1 or the ReSolve Crisis Network at 1-888-796-8226 (where a counselor can assist you 24/7) as your first contact. Sending an email or calling me does not guarantee that I will be able to respond immediately, even in the event of a crisis. If you do not receive a response from me within a few minutes, you need to call ReSolve.*****

GOOD NEWS has been slow to receive information. Please submit special dates, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, weddings, births, etc.

Please submit your “good news” to Val Oxenreiter at telcmo@gmail.com by Sunday of each week to be included in the following Sunday's Worship Service. Please include your church in your message.

The news will be listed by abbreviated congregational names:

CLC= Christ Lutheran Duquesne

DBLC= Bethany Dormont

ELLC= East Liberty

HLC= Hope Forest Hills

LCOS= Lutheran Church of Our Savior

MLC= Messiah Munhall

MTLC= Trinity Mt. Oliver

RLC= Resurrection Oakdale

SAL= St Andrew East Carnegie

SPLC= St Paul's Canonsburg

ZLC= Zion Coraopolis

Camp Agape

Our Mission emphasis for June is Camp Agape. Camp Agape is in the midst of a building project. A commercial kitchen is being added to the Retreat and Learning Center and also a Duplex Cabin. Agape will be able to increase its camp capacity for summer camps and attract more year-round groups. The upgrades will cost an estimated \$400,000. Camp Agape invites you to prayerfully consider making a donation towards this major building project. The camp is in its 59th year of ministry and hopefully will continue to offer a place for all to be able to enjoy for many years to come. If you have been to camp you will understand the love that is present there. If not, hopefully you will stop and visit when the construction is completed and see what the camp does offer.

Following is an excerpt following a letter that was sent to the churches in the Synod.

The Camp Agape Board of Directors met on May 16 and unanimously voted to suspend all Summer and Day Camp programs. This difficult decision was made with **heavy hearts**. Like many of you, our summer does not feel complete without camp! We never envisioned this scenario. Still we know that God is love. We trust that when we act out of love for others, Christ's love flows through us. God has a guiding hand on the ministry at Camp Agape and we have faith that we will come out stronger on the other side. As soon as we can safely do so, Camp Agape will reopen. The board's decision leaves room for creative onsite options later in the summer, options that more easily support social distancing. We will continue to seek ways to support you and offer experiences to grow in faith. We hope to proceed with a busy fall calendar. It is okay to grieve the loss of Summer 2020 at Camp Agape, we grieve with you. But, as **Easter people**, we look to the resurrected Christ. With that same hope, we live in a present ripe with opportunities, and await a future that is brighter and more beautiful than anything we can imagine. “Beloved, let us love one another.” The world needs

us now more than ever. We cannot wait until that day when we can again worship around the campfire at the Cross at Camp Agape!

Grace and Peace

Deacon Rick Frederick, Executive Director

Jill A. Shook, Boiard President

Contributions can be made on June 15th and June 29th. These are the days that regular church offerings will be received. If you have any questions about the camp, contact Deacon Rick at 724-356-2308. You can also email Deacon Rick at executivedirector@campagape.org or campinfo@campagape.org.

REOPENING OUR CHURCH

The Church Council will be meeting on Monday, June 22 at 7:00 p.m. to work on a plan to reopen our church. It is not an easy or quick task to develop a COVID re-opening plan. After developing that plan it must be presented to the pastors and the PLUM board before services can begin. If you wish to be a part of this planning, please attend the meeting that evening. We will be social distancing and wear masks.

The Church Council feels it is necessary to have feedback from the congregation. Below are the questions that were given to all of the PLUM churches. We are asking each member to think about the following questions:

- **How much are you going out of your house and to what kinds of places?**
- **Will this change when the Southwestern PA Counties go to "Green"?**
- **What are your feelings about the church building re-opening?**
- **What factors go into your feelings about the re-opening?**
- **In what ways do you think we can better serve our member and neighbors as we move forward?**

Within the next two weeks council members will be contacting you to get your feedback. If you wish you can also send an email to stpaulscbg@verizon.net.

Thank you in advance for your input into developing our plan.



Stephanie Richmond	June 8
Austin Filby	June 9
Natasha (Kelley) Johnson	June 9
Carol Ferens	June 17
Carol Jean Straka	June 18
John Straka	June 18
Rob Mrvos	June 25



Keep in your prayers: Anna Mae, Mark, Albert, Jason, Pam, Virginia, Misty, Matthew, Jennifer, Betty Jane, Rich, Rachel, Pat, Donna, Randy, Anna Mae, Eddie, Steve, Barbara, Tom, Charlotte, John, Kelly, Mike, Colin, Tracey, Carol Jean, Matthew, the Miller, Paulick, Galano, Burchesky, Mele, Richmond families, all those suffering from the coronavirus, our Bishops, our Synod, our PLUM pastors and members and our church. If anyone needs to be added or deleted, please contact Jill at 724-747-4418 or email stpaulscbg@verizon.net



Congratulations to Rebecca Harvison, Lee Jones granddaughter, on her graduation from Canon McMillan Senior High School. Her address is 423 Valley View Terrace Canonsburg, PA 15217



Church offering envelopes can be dropped off or mailed to the church on June 15 and June 29.

Thank you