

# CORNERSTONE

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“THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU AT ST. PAUL’S”

August 2019

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

Volume 25, Issue 7

## **P.L.U.M.'s 15th Anniversary 2004 – 2019**

I received so many warm greetings and well wishes from you when I retired! I will always remember them with affection and gratitude for all of you. One card in particular contained a message that has spoken to me regularly as I've adjusted to this new life called "retirement"! The card came from Jean Brannan, a member at Trinity, Mt. Oliver. She shared a prayer that she found in her mother's Bible after her mother's death - a prayer that she and her family have often found helpful and encouraging. She hoped that I would also find it helpful as I began retirement. Copied in her mother's own handwriting it reads: "Lord, help me find the way through the changes in my life."

Facing change has always been a factor in life for us human beings. In fact, one of the reasons for humanity's survival has been homo sapiens' ability to adapt to changing conditions. In modern times we often call our adaptations to change *transitions*. All ages have to develop coping skills for making transitions. Toddlers have to face transitions all the time which are often signaled by being strapped into car seats, usually under protest! Children face the annual transition of moving from one school grade to the next. Young adults transition from school life to work life, from single status to married status, from childlessness to parenthood. Adults transition from renters to home owners, from parenthood to the empty nesters. Seniors, who keep hoping that facing major transitions in their lives have ended, face significant transitions such as retirement, downsizing, steady physical decline, death and dying. And we all face other transitions regularly such as the changing seasons.

Some changes that life brings our way are easy and some are difficult to navigate. Some are exciting and some are depressing. Some are joyful, some are gut-wrenching; some we handle well, some we don't. But they are all spelled the same: c-h-a-n-g-e! And they all require us to adapt!!

**"Lord, help me to find the way through the changes in my life. AMEN."**

When I think back over the 15 years of our life together in PLUM, I can't help but recall the way in which the Lord helped us find our way as we sought to tackle the challenges that faced our ministries. Some analysts have said that the changes facing our society are comparable to those that rocked the western world at the reformation and again during the industrial revolution! All we knew back in 2004 was, with the dawn of the digital age, so much had changed and was changing that the ground was shifting under us and our faith communities were finding that they could not continue as they always had. Some of the results of the changes going on around us were: declining attendance and declining resources, a shortage of pastors and old church buildings, unlimited competition for our people's time and energy, adaption to changes in communication of the Gospel message in the digital age - all of which contributed to the challenges of maintaining a faithful witness to Christ in our communities.

"Lord, help us to find the way through the changes in our lives and the life of your church!"

Those may not have been the exact words of our prayer but the Lord answered our pleas for help in the biblical tradition of providing faithful people to lead the way. The issue was whether or not we

would be willing to step out in faith and trust our Lord to provide!

Who knew that Pastor Gropp's experience with a small town/rural cooperative ministry could be put to use in the urban setting of Pittsburgh? (We didn't... until we gave it a try!) Who knew whether two congregations which still had full time pastors but were beginning to experience the effects of demographic decline and other cultural forces would be willing to step out in faith before they were in crisis and venture into an experiment in cooperative ministry to help a third congregation? (We didn't...but CLC [Christ Lutheran Church, Duquesne], SAL [St. Andrew Lutheran Church, East Carnegie] and ELLC [East Liberty Lutheran Church] did!) Who knew whether our synod's bishop would give his approval and support for this experiment? (We didn't... but both Bishops McCoid and Kusserow did!) Who knew how many congregations would see the advantages of the cooperative model for stabilizing their ministry and maintaining the witness to and service to Christ in their communities? (We didn't... but the members of ABLC [Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Allentown], STLC [Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sheraden], DBLC [Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dormont], MTLC [Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mt. Oliver], MLC [Messiah Lutheran Church, Munhall], RLC [Resurrection Lutheran Church, Oakdale], SPLC [St Paul's Lutheran Church, Canonsburg], ZLC [Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Coraopolis], LCOS [Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, North Huntingdon], and BBLC [Bethany Lutheran Church, Bethel Park] would!) Who knew if there would be others willing to serve on a pastoral ministry team ministering in as many as twelve congregations? (We didn't... but Pr. Paul, Vicar/Pr. Melba, Pr. Jocelyn, Pr. Dona, Pr. Liz, Pr. Martin, Interns Karyn, Brenda, Mandy, and Susan were!) Who knew what it would be like to have pastors and lay leaders working together to share ideas and insights on how best to reach out to the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (We didn't... but the PLUM Board and their congregations found out!) Who knew?

As the pastor who made that initial phone call to Pastor John in the hopes of picking his brain about how we pastors of the congregations of Christ Lutheran and St. Andrew Lutheran could assist the ministry at East Liberty Lutheran, I certainly didn't know! But we began with the expectation that if we stepped out in faith, trusting that our Lord would show us the way through these changes in the life of the Church, we would see and learn exactly how our Lord would provide for us. And 15 years later we may not have all the answers to the questions being raised by the challenges facing our congregations but there is one thing the last 15 years has taught us: there is no change that challenges us which we cannot face with confidence because we know and trust that the Lord will help us find the way!

Because of your faithfulness in PLUM: a Methodist cluster has used our example and formed a cooperative of churches on the southwest corner of Pittsburgh, Lutheran congregations used our experience to form a cooperative of congregations in the Mon Valley, our venture has spurred creative discussions among congregations all over our synod, news of our ministry together has spread so that we've received inquiries from as far away as Florida and New England, and recently, I've been asked to advise congregations in the Erie area on how to go about forming a cooperative as they struggle to find pastoral leadership to assist them in stabilizing and moving forward their ministries.

On this the 15th Anniversary of our ministry together as PLUM I give thanks for all of you and the faithfulness you have demonstrated over these last 15 years. You've done what many congregations have not and will not do - step out in faith and creatively take on the challenge of these changing times by adapting how we do things for the sake of our ministry in Jesus' name. PLUM is 15 years young because of your trust in our Lord Jesus Christ to help you find the way! AMEN!!

Congratulations on 15 years of faithful ministry!

Grace and peace,  
*Pastor Beth*



Welcome to **Vicar Mandy Gilberti**, the newest member of our PLUM Pastoral Team!

Vicar Mandy's official start date was July 15, 2019. She will be part of the regular preaching rotation. Vicar Mandy has already been meeting with the pastors, attended our last PLUM Board Meeting, and looks forward to meeting more members of all of our congregations as she begins her internship this summer.

Malinda (Mandy) Kay Gilberti was born in Altoona, PA and raised in Johnstown, PA. She currently resides with her husband Frank in Penn Hills, PA. Mandy graduated from ICM School of Business and was a banker for 24 years, most recently with First Commonwealth Bank in Indiana, PA. While there, she discerned her calling to walk with the people in her community and left the business world to answer God's call. She enrolled in the United Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg in 2016. She just finished her third year at the seminary and is now in her internship here with PLUM.

Mandy is a proud Mother of Marykate and Mack Kuhne. Marykate is an accomplished clarinetist, musical conductor, and an Adjunct Professor at Illinois State University. Mack is a full-time student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania majoring in Kinesiology/Pre-Med.

Mandy was raised as Roman Catholic and converted to ELCA Lutheran in 1995. At that time, she attended Zion Lutheran Church, Johnstown, PA. In 2003, she became a member of Zion Lutheran Church, Indiana, PA, and served as a Sunday school teacher for children and adults, Church Council member, Financial Secretary (6 years), Choir, Church kitchen staff, VBS, and the Indiana County Back to School Bash.

## PLUM UPCOMING EVENTS



PLUM Outdoor Worship Service and PLUM Picnic will be held at **Resurrection Lutheran Church (7600 Steubenville Pike, Oakdale, PA 15071)**. Festivities will start at 1:00 pm, followed by an Outdoor Worship Service at 3:00 pm. Lunch served at 1:30 pm. Hamburgers and hotdogs will be provided. Please bring a covered dish to share. Join friends from PLUM for good food, fellowship and worship. Invite a friend! We had a great time last year, so we hope to see **EVERYONE** there this year!



Join **St. Andrew Lutheran Church**, 218 Alter St, East Carnegie 15106 for their annual fund raiser from Noon – 4 pm at the East Carnegie Parklet and SAL church grounds. Featuring music, along with great food, children's activities, raffles, crafts and more!



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7**

For the second year in a row, PLUM will be working with the faith-based organization **"Rise Against**

**Hunger”** to host a **meal packaging event**. This year, our neighbors in faith from St. John’s Lutheran Church in North Versailles will be joining us. We will coordinate an assembly-line packaging of highly nutritious dehydrated meals comprised of rice, soy, vegetables and 23 essential vitamins and minerals. Together we will package 15,000 meals that will be sent to school feeding programs around the world, medical clinics, child growth and development centers, elder care and crisis and disaster centers.

**This project has two parts:**

- First, it costs 34 cents to package each meal. Our goal is set at 15,000 meals (\$5,141), an increase over last year’s commitment. Given a financial commitment from St. John’s Lutheran in North Versailles and some PLUM funds from last year, bottom line is that PLUM congregations need to raise about \$3,146 by August 30<sup>th</sup>. So we are asking each PLUM congregation to contribute \$315.
- Second, we need at least 40-50 people to help package the meals. We need a group of able-bodied people at Christ Lutheran at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup> to help unload the truck and set up our fellowship hall for the event. The actual meal packaging will take place 10:30 am sharp - Noon the same day.

**Please make the commitment to help with the event on Saturday, September 7!**

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15  
PLUM JOINT HEALING SERVICE**

Trinity Lutheran Church (Mt. Oliver) (601 Brownsville Road, Pittsburgh PA 15210) at 3:00 pm. This will be a service of healing and will offer a Litany for the Healing of the Nations, Holy Communion and Anointing for Healing. Please let the people in your congregation know if you can provide rides or if you will need a ride



**Stewardship and Mission**

The Stewardship and Mission committee is collecting Pull Tabs for the Ronald McDonald Home Charities and Box Tops for Education for Bethesda Children’s Home. This collection will last through November.



Interested in being eligible to apply for \$250.00 to help St. Paul’s do a special project or fundraiser? Then become an associate member of Thrivent Financial. The cost is \$19.95 per year and you can then apply for an Action Team funds. Action Teams receive \$250.00 for a specific project (the church has received money in the past to help with Vacation Bible School and Bags Lunches for the Food Pantry). See Jill for more details.



**Blessing of the Backpacks**

Students of all ages of the congregation are asked to bring their filled backpacks to church to be blessed before they begin school the next day. Following worship service St Paul’s plans to have a luncheon to welcome Vicar Mandy to PLUM and in honor of the students as they begin their new school year.



## August Assistants and Sponsors

### Assisting Minister

- August 4 – Carol Ferens
- August 11 – Corey Ferens
- August 18 – Ann Morrocco
- August 25 – Jill A. Shook

### Eternal Candle

- Karen and Logan Billingham

### Fellowship

- August 11 – Ruth Latta
- August 25 – St. Paul's

### Flowers

- August 4
- August 11 – Carol Jean Straka
- August 18 – Ann Morrocco
- August 25

### Lectors

- August 4 – Jill A. Shook and John Straka
- August 11 – Karen Billingham and Lee Jones
- August 18
- August 25

If you are interested in serving as an assistant or sponsoring the eternal candle or flowers, please contact the church office (724-745-5962) or email: [stpaulscbg@verizon.net](mailto:stpaulscbg@verizon.net).

## Worship Schedule



August 4 – Rev. Melissa Stoller  
 August 11 – Rev. John Gropp  
 August 18 – Rev. Liz Mayforth  
 August 25 – Vicar Mandy Gilberti  
**Pastor's schedule is subject to change without notice.**



Keep in your prayers: Ev, Matthew, Anna Mae, Nancy, Pat, Alex, Mark, Albert, Patty, Pam, Virginia, Betty Jane, Rich, Rachel, Pat, Donna, Cooper, Edward, Anna Mae, Eddie, Randy, Steve, Barbara, Charlotte, John, Lyndsay, Christine, Tondi, Pastor Wayne, Kelly, Mike, Colin, the Miller, Paulick, Galano, Burchesky, Grove, O'Donnell, Richmond families. If anyone should be added or removed, please contact the church office (724-745-5962) or email: [stpaulscbg@verizon.net](mailto:stpaulscbg@verizon.net).



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|--------------|-----------|
| Corey Ferens | August 9  |
| Joelle Filby | August 18 |
| Becky Bell   | August 19 |
| Andy Cowser  | August 24 |
| Gina Cowser  | August 24 |
| Nancy Pollo  | August 25 |

**YOU KNOW YOU'RE LUTHERAN WHEN**



**SHARING THE PEACE TAKES LONGER THAN THE SERMON**

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