

CORNERSTONE

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

August 2020

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

Volume 26, Issue 8

Being Grateful in a time of Pandemic

On February 15th of this year, I stood before God, our Bishop, numerous clergy and many people from the congregations of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM) and said my Ordination vows. I was grateful for the completions of my Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary and the Candidacy process of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I was grateful for a wonderful reception that followed the Ordination; for time with family and friends, for my mentors who guided me, for the support that I received from my family, friends and members of PLUM, and for the beautiful, thoughtful gifts that were given to me. I was grateful. And I was ready - ready to serve as a pastor. I looked forward to leading worship in the congregations of PLUM, to sharing communion with all who gathered, to visiting home-bound members, and yes, even to attending all the meetings that are necessary for the work of the church to get done.

And then, a pandemic happened. Somehow, I missed that class in Seminary! And now, these words come to mind:

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18

It does not seem to be coincidental that, in the midst of the pandemic, our synod’s Stewardship Committee offered a book study. The book that was used was Diana Butler Bass’ “Grateful: The Subversive Practice of Giving Thanks.” Giving thanks in the midst of a pandemic—is it possible? Is it possible to “give thanks in all circumstances?”

Bass wrote:

“If we practice gratefulness, it becomes a natural and normal way of engaging the world. With gratitude, our hearts open toward one another. It can make us different and helps us prosper” (p. 62).

For gratefulness to become natural and “normal,” it takes practice. And what is “normal?” As every aspect of our lives has changed, some questions come to mind. What does it mean to be church? What does it mean to worship? How can we celebrate communion? And a very important question – What are you feeling? I think that I can say that this has been a time of an emotional roller coaster.

Bass wrote:

“Our emotional lives are like gardens” (p. 40). And like gardens, Bass points out, they need attentiveness, care, and tending. How are you tending your emotional life?

Your pastors, and I think many of you, have been wrestling with those questions for months now. And another question, one that we must think about is – What have we learned? How has our awareness of our church community, the Church in the world, our local communities and our nation increased?

Bass wrote:

“Gifts bring forth gratitude, and we express our appreciation by passing gifts on to others. When we share gifts, we become benefactors toward the well-being of all. . . It is an invitation to receive gifts, live more simply, graciously, and freely, attuned to our own hearts, our neighbors, and the common good.” (p. xxv)

What gifts have we received? We have been gifted with individuals with skills to bring us together in worship on Zoom and Facebook. We have technology that allows us to attend worship, book studies, Bible Studies, council meetings, classes,

family parties, graduations and fellowship hours from the comfort of our homes, our cars and our gardens. Our family members who live hundreds of miles away can be part of our worship services! We have received the gift of Sabbath. In the business of our lives, we often denied ourselves this gift that God gave us. It took a pandemic to slow us down so that we could practice being still and resting. We received the gift of sight. We were made aware that the work of the church is not tied to our buildings. We were made aware of the need that has always been in our communities and nation, but that we were too busy to see. We saw, maybe for the first time, how important an “essential” worker is – and we saw that it was the very people that we looked past each day. We saw just how many people in our communities are living paycheck to paycheck, and who don’t have enough to eat. Our eyes have also been opened to injustices in our country. Gifts aren’t always welcomed, but they are gifts, nonetheless. It is our choice about what we will do with these gifts. Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor. We cannot toss this gift of sight aside like an unwanted toy. What are we going to do with this gift?

What does it mean to be Church? What does it mean to worship? How do we show our love, and God’s love, to our neighbor? These are questions that all of us must continue to wrestle with. We can begin by practicing gratefulness. We can practice giving thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us.

*Blessings from your pastoral team,
Pastor Sue*

PASTORAL Check-in Weekdays at 3pm on ZOOM is now called **Fellowship Time**. It is time to share joys, prayer concerns, and words of encouragement with people from around PLUM. **Zoom online:** <https://zoom.us/j/401596541> **Zoom by phone:** 646-876-9923 Meeting ID: 401 596 541

The PLUM board meeting will be held on Monday, August 31st beginning at 7:00 p.m.

PLUM Summer Discussion Series

The Tensions of being in Relationship:
Reflections on Broken Covenants
and Ways of Healing

Recent events around our nation and in our city have raised our awareness of the injustices that exist in our world. As Christians called to love God and love our neighbor, it is our duty to educate ourselves of those injustices. It is our duty to do what we can to bring justice into our world. This summer, we will host a discussion series around the issues of Racism in our communities and our world. We will explore videos, articles and books with each other as we consider actions that we can take to live out our command to love our neighbor.

Please join us on Tuesdays at 1:00
and/or Thursdays at 7:00.

These discussions will be held via Zoom.



Our monthly mission emphasis for August is Mission Support. Any contributions to this mission should be at the church by August 28th. Thank you for your contributions to Domestic Violence. \$128.00 was sent to this organization.

REOPENING OUR CHURCH

On Tuesday, July 28th the church council met and approved a plan for re-opening the church. The date for reopening will be Sunday, September 6th. Before the church reopens, Five Star Cleaning will do a deep cleaning of the church including the entrances (Jefferson Avenue and both College Street entrances) and the restrooms in Eberle Hall. The members of the church council and their families will do a practice run of the service to assure that are safety measures are in place. Social Distancing and

the wearing of face masks will be mandatory during the service. There will be Holy Eucharist celebrated but there will not be singing of hymns or passing the Peace. A letter containing this and more information about the church service will be sent in a letter to each family following the council meeting on Monday, August 24. Thank you for your patience in adopting this plan. Until then, attend the service on ZOOM each Sunday and don't forget to let me know that you have attended. If you have any questions about the plan, please contact me at 724-747-4418.or the church at 724-745-5962



New Logo....Same Mission!
At the July Board of Director's meeting a new logo was adopted for communications and marketing of Camp Agapé.

It still retains the circle image that reminds us of the blessings of God that last forever and have no end, the cross in the upper left represents the large cross located near our Retreat and Learning Center that serves as a focal point for all campers and staff during the day, the campfire in the upper right is a reminder of the flame of the Holy Spirit and the nightly devotions that occur when we close the day with singing and sharing the spirit of Christ's love, the maple leaf represents the gift of creation that God has blessed Camp Agapé with and of the maple trees that we are able to make into our own maple syrup, the heart in the lower right is a reminder of the Agapé love that is shared among campers, staff, and guest, and the center cross is a reminder that Christ's life, death, and resurrection are the center of our faith and our purpose for being a ministry for God's church.



Cabins available for family groups beginning August 3rd. Currently our Hope and Faith cabins are available for family groups to rent. Each cabin comes with 6 bunks and 1 single

(13 people), and a bathroom with shower. Later in August our new Duplex cabins, Alpha and Omega will be available, these have 5 bunks and 2 singles

(12 people) with separate toilet room, two showers, and large meeting space. We will provide grills and a place to keep your food cold. With the rental you have use of all 257 acres, including our playground, fishing pond, and outside chapel. For reservations please contact us at campinfo@campagape.org or call 724-356-2308 Monday – Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.



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



Keep in your prayers: Anna Mae, Mark, Albert, Kristin, Jason, Pam, Virginia, Misty, Matthew, Jennifer, Betty Jane, Rich, Rachel, Pat, Donna, Randy, Anna Mae, Eddie, Steve, Barbara, Tom, Charlotte, John, Mark, Kelly, Mike, Carol Jean, 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



Church offering envelopes for August should be dropped off or mailed to the church by August 28th

Thank you