

Peace Lutheran Church Olive Branch

Thoughts from the Pastor

God bless and keep you,

The world is a strange and confusing place at the moment. We see unrest, injustice, and political brinkmanship everywhere. This is on top of a pandemic that keeps us from getting together and connecting with one another in ways that help us to process this time and its troubles. I hope that all of you are finding ways to connect and share with family and friends despite the challenges we face.

The council and I are developing plans for when we can get back together. There will be challenges to this of course, but we want you to know that things are in the works. We decided that the first thing that needs to happen is for our county to get to Phase 2. This is a category the state and health agencies have put out that basically means there aren't

very many cases of COVID in our area. We don't want to risk anyone unnecessarily, so we will wait to do any gathering until at least this standard is met.

Once that standard is met, we will put together a list of guidelines for what our gatherings will look like. Some of the things on that list will be challenging, but they will be for our safety. It will include sanitizing the space, wearing a mask, no group singing, social distancing, no sharing of materials like bulletins, and a record of who has attended for contact tracing. Oregon is doing very well in terms of controlling the spread of the disease, but unfortunately churches are the perfect environment for spreading it, so it requires us to be extra vigilant.

I would also like to stress that there is no

pressure for anyone to come back before they feel safe. If you are vulnerable, or at all worried about contracting COVID, please feel free to stay home. We will continue to offer the services online on our website peaceinpendleton.org and livestreamed via Facebook each Sunday at 10 am. We know everyone is with us in Spirit until we can safely be together again in person.

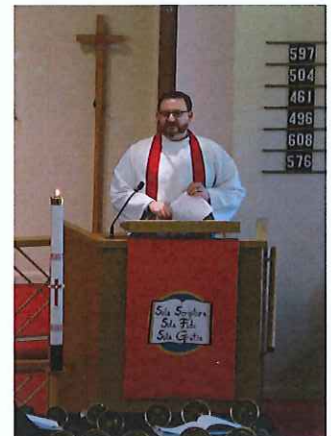
We would also like to hear from all of you. Basically, we want to know where people are at with reopening the church. Are you anxious to reopen? Are you fine waiting until things calm down? What is your psychological state in the midst of all this, and would getting back together help you to feel secure? We would like a sense of where people are at. Please email or

call into the church to let us know. Thank you.

It was wonderful to see those folks that were able to come out on Pentecost for our drive thru communion! It looks like it may be a while before we can share communion in our sanctuary again, but we will likely share it in our parking lot again. Keep an eye out for that announcement.

In Christ,

Pastor Travis Larsen



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Council Minutes June 1, 2020 6:03pm

Via Zoom meeting (everyone on their own computer or phone)

Present: Pastor Travis, Gayla Eckis, Kevin Hale, Doug DeBok, Janet Wood, Mark Stansbury, Linda Gustin, Carol Doherty, Dena Summerfield and Linda Mattes.

Absent: Don Reese.

Meeting called to order by President Carol Doherty and Pr. Travis chaired the discussion about re-opening the church for services with limitations.

It was agreed by the council members to wait until the go ahead with Phase 2; gatherings of up to 100 people allowed with physical distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols.

Challenges:

- No singing – a singer can spray up to 27 feet. If you have a mask on you could sing or hum.
- Worship leaders and Pastors may sing with 27 feet perimeter observed.
- Online services will continue to be offered. Until the new sound system and cameras are installed the equipment is in the front of the church.
- Masks will be required – bring your own or disposable masks are available.
- Separate entrances and separate exits.
- Hand sanitizers station available.
- Need to take books (Hymnals and Bibles) out of pews. Bulletins will include service and hymns that will be discarded afterwards.
- No air conditioner running during service.
- Take the pew cushions off and observe 6 feet social distancing.
- Continue the once a month drive through communion.
- Should we take everyone's temperature? 100.9 or above not acceptable to stay.
- Baskets for offering at the door as we leave.
- Stick to 1 service.
- Bathroom use: to use if needed but will have things to clean up after yourself.
- Extra cleaning after service, the possibility of hiring Nelson Summerfield to help. For sanitizing every space (handle, knob, railings, pews, etc.) after each use of our building.
- Please stay home if you are sick or feel something coming on.
- Make sure that we get all this information to our members via email, website, FaceBook.

Terry Dallas asked for permission for her book club to meet on the church lawn with social distancing being observed. Council agreed it would be fine.

Council will meet next Monday night at 6:00pm on the church lawn.

Pr. Travis ended the meeting with prayer at 6:40pm.

Linda Mattes, Council Secretary



Nostalgia hit recently with reminiscences about work and interactions with our kids, some memories arising after a local Sunridge Middle School teacher, Blair, talked to me about the new normal. Listening to him, I felt fortunate not to be living the expanded parental role that families are now challenged with, and thankful to the teachers, coaches and staff who support the success of our children.

I remember talking at our son's graduation here in Pendleton with a former student of mine, a teacher then at the middle school. Jo now works with teachers on supporting their work under challenging circumstances as an instructional coach at the Intermountain Educational Service District.

When I approached Blair and Jo for input, we relied on this new normal through email and later interviews by phone. Our communication was enlivened by the image in my mind of Jo's smiling face and Blair's cheerful resolve at taking on something new. Familiar with Jo's background in Lone, where the culture of volunteerism informed who she is today, and seeing Blair in action in our community in so many ways, I wanted to know more about their current work.

They are in agreement about what matters most in their learners' success, even more so in the remote environment. Whether a teacher seeking ways to supplement best practices by using instructional technology, or a middle school student, both groups of learners need "to know that you will show up, listen, and help them figure out

next steps," especially in the age group for whom "the needy human interaction" is most in play, where distance learning may make it "tough to replicate real life experience."

Both teachers see their strengths in providing hands-on learning experiences. In addition to enlivening ancient culture classes on the Greeks with projects based in the Olympics, for example, Blair is coordinator of Outdoor School programming, and talked enthusiastically about field trips to Portland for live theatre performances. His experiential approach is on pause with students learning remotely, especially when working through packets of worksheets and posted homework assignments until the school year ends on June 4. So Blair's been exploring how to be available to students through social media, or by implementing highlight lessons in ways that learners can experience in their home environment.

Jo's work with teachers in the past involved road trips to all 18 districts, where a professional development workshop had everyone up and moving around, exchanging with one another. That's been replaced by online screens in webinars, requiring her to think outside the box.

Inevitably, there is shared frustration with teachers when a connection becomes spotty, as happened to us when we talked on the phone.

Both Jo and Blair are inspired that their most reluctant learners are "doing more than they did in class

originally." Teachers who reported discomfort with working in an online environment had little choice, Jo said. "Thrown into the water, they had to figure out how to swim ... and they are!" Some are experimenting with evening availability to increase parental support. For the future, there may be blending of what they've done in the past with integrating new tools for remote learning platforms. Blair imagined for me how teaching a campfire cooking experience with a coffee can might be possible, and hopes for a redesigned model for outdoor school. Jo talked about the need to create some minimal environment for face-to-face interactions where students have access to support services out of reach to them now.

News stories focus on the digital divide, the necessity for ramping up support for those who need it most, and maintaining access for all. Local journalism informed us on efforts underway in each district, with more likely to come.

Jo and Blair see the current challenges in a message that a colleague recently posted.

"We are not all in the same boat. We are in the same storm. Some of us are cruising in our yachts while others tread water, desperately clinging to rafts with holes in them," the message read.

These teachers take this reality seriously by seeking new pathways to reach their students. They are essential frontline workers, and I am grateful to them.

Sacred hospitality *What does it mean to be a sanctuary denomination?*

By **Stephanie N. Grimoldby**

For more than 13 years, Miriam Vargas has lived in Columbus, Ohio. While there, she had two children, held a job, paid taxes—and has been an undocumented immigrant.

Vargas and her sister escaped Honduras after their family was threatened by gangs, and at the border she received a six-month visa permitting her to enter the United States.

But as a young woman who didn't know the language or customs of a new country, she didn't receive the paperwork telling her about her court date when it was sent four years later, because she no longer lived at the address to which it was mailed.

During the Obama administration, Vargas was repeatedly granted extensions to stay in the country by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). But in May 2018 she was told, "You have 30 days—buy your tickets, you have to leave," said Sally Padgett, pastor of First English Lutheran Church in Columbus.

Yet Vargas—who has a 10-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old daughter with severe autism, both of whom are U.S. citizens—knew she couldn't do that.

Vargas, Padgett said, shared with her that "she was told, 'You either take your girls [back to Honduras],' which is the most dangerous country in the world right now, 'or you leave them here for adoption.'"

"And that, to me, is heartbreaking, as a mother."

"You really have to define sanctuary in your context and what it means to accompany people."

When Padgett heard of Vargas' situation, she asked her congregation if they would become a sanctuary hosting site for Vargas. After the congregation took an affirmative vote, Vargas and her two daughters moved into the church building in June 2018.

Today, First English continues to house and support Vargas and her daughters as she works to become a legal citizen. Such hospitality is an expression of the congregation's faith, affirmed by the wider church.

Last August, the 2019 Churchwide

Assembly voted 718-191 to declare the ELCA a sanctuary denomination. The declaration builds on the church's commitment to accompany migrant children and families through its AMMPARO strategy, which was approved by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. (AMMPARO stands for Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.)

The 2019 vote both brought the denomination increased media attention and raised questions within the ELCA about what it means to be a sanctuary church body.

For some congregations, such as First English, the sanctuary denomination vote affirmed the work they had already been doing to serve their immigrant neighbors. For others, it was a call to action and an awakening to the plight many undocumented immigrants face.

Some ELCA members are still seeking to understand what they can or should do following the vote, wondering where their congregations fit under this denominational declaration.

"You really have to define sanctuary in your context and what it means to accompany people," said Christopher Vergara of St. Peter Lutheran Church in New York City, who put forward the amendment to declare the ELCA a sanctuary church body. "We have to figure that out as the ELCA, as synods, as congregations and as individuals."

What is sanctuary?

In her role as AMMPARO program director, Mary Campbell advises ELCA members and communities engaged in sanctuary and AMMPARO ministry. The ELCA has said a "sanctuary denomination" is a church body that walks alongside immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers as a matter of faith, she clarified.

For seven ELCA "hosting" congregations, she said, that has meant providing physical shelter for an undocumented immigrant. Some congregations, such as First English, are housing undocumented immigrants indefinitely; others provide housing for 24 or 48 hours during an ICE raid because they also house schools or lack showers or other features necessary for long-term sanctuary.

For 40 additional sanctuary congregations connected to the AMMPARO network, Campbell added, responding to the church's call to be sanctuary has meant accompanying undocumented immigrants in other ways.

"My congregation decided to declare itself a sanctuary congregation ... because we have a large immigrant population, largely Hispanic, where 75% of the people are undocumented," said Vergara, who is St. Peter's council president. "We grew to understand the issues and the needs of undocumented people in our community."

As a historic church in Manhattan, St. Peter lacks showers and is unable to house overnight guests. "We had to discover a definition of sanctuary that wasn't only about providing long-term housing for individuals in fear of deportation. ... It's accompanying them with legal assistance, food, [off-site] housing, with mental health support—with all the things a church community in its truest sense can provide."

"For us, it's a broader understanding of what sanctuary is, which is sanctuary everywhere—for people to feel safe and free and whole in their lives."

Ron Werner Jr., an ELCA pastor and community organizer in the Oregon Synod—one of five in the ELCA to declare itself a sanctuary synod—works closely with the Interfaith Movement for Immigration Justice (IMIJ), an organization that helps Oregon communities and people of faith advance immigrant justice. But that rarely means housing an undocumented immigrant.

"We have had no one in [physical] sanctuary for over five years," Werner said. "For us, it's a broader understanding of what sanctuary is, which is sanctuary everywhere—for people to feel safe and free and whole in their lives."

Some congregations are involved in accompaniment programs, supporting people who are afraid, Werner said. Congregants escort undocumented immigrants to court appointments and asylum proceedings and help them check in with ICE.

Other congregations host English as a Second Language classes or hold discussions on what our faith says about immigration. Others answer the

call in the streets, Werner said, marching to advocate for just immigration laws.

Sanctuary can be many things, but most agree it's not a solution to a broken immigration system. Usually, Padgett said, it's a method of buying time to fight deportation on a legal front.

"The end game is for a just immigration system that would not seek to harm people who are trying to enter this country," Vergara said.

Is sanctuary legal?

The vote to become a sanctuary denomination is not an encouragement to break the law, Vergara said.

"We are not, in any way, calling anybody to engage in illegal activity," he added. "If you are engaging in having a long-term person staying and an ICE agent comes with a signed warrant for that person, most advocates would say you should go with that ICE agent."

Providing sanctuary is not illegal, Campbell said. However, she noted that the American Civil Liberties Union states that congregations should be aware of what is illegal: harboring, concealing or shielding from detection an undocumented immigrant when done with knowledge or "reckless regard" for that person's unlawful status; and transporting or moving an undocumented immigrant when that transportation helps the immigrant remain in the United States unlawfully.

"Almost every single hosting congregation in the ELCA is very public about the fact that they have someone in sanctuary," Campbell said. "It's known by the community, it's known by immigration officials, and immigration officials know who these individuals are. ... They're not hiding it."

Still, Campbell said, if a congregation is considering becoming a hosting congregation, it should hire an attorney to protect itself from the myriad ways immigration laws can be interpreted.

Becoming a sanctuary denomination doesn't mean every ELCA congregation has to become a sanctuary church. But it does mean every congregation is encouraged to discuss the topic.

That's what University Lutheran Church—located in Cambridge,

Mass., just off the Harvard University campus—did in 2017 before housing a young mother with two small girls, whom they still host today.

First, the congregation offered clear expectations for anyone seeking sanctuary within the church. "We made it a requirement that anybody who was going to come and live in our space had to have a lawyer because it was important that this person would really be on a path to permanency," said Kathleen O'Keefe Reed, pastor of University.

Second, the congregation itself sought legal counsel, finding a firm that agreed to work pro bono. "It turned out the kind of lawyer we needed was not an immigration specialist but a First Amendment specialist, because what we do is an expression of faith and ministry," Reed said.

Becoming a sanctuary denomination doesn't mean every ELCA congregation has to become a sanctuary church. But it does mean every congregation is encouraged to discuss the topic.

"What we're basically telling congregations ... [is that] they should educate themselves about sanctuary. Learn what it is and what it isn't," Campbell said. "If they want to prepare themselves in case someone would show up at their door and they're not a sanctuary congregation, they should know who in their area they could turn to, to help the person requesting assistance."

And while not every undocumented immigrant is a political refugee, those who have a legal right of asylum in the United States and around the world.

A "political" issue?

At least 80% of the members of St. Paul Lutheran, Lodi, Calif., belong to "mixed-status" families in which someone has documentation issues, said Nelson Rabell-González, a pastor of the congregation.

Because of that reality, the congregation became a sanctuary church in 2018, supporting immigrants, aiding immigration groups and connecting members to legal and advocacy groups.

Just prior to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, St. Paul conducted a media blitz to publicly declare itself a

sanctuary congregation as a prophetic response to injustice, Rabell-González said.

"The incarceration of children [by ICE] was a turning point," he noted. "By last summer, we had already a sizable Spanish community worshipping with us. Last March, 30 kids did their first communion [with us]. ... We looked at that and said, 'We have to take a stand.'"

St. Paul's immigration ministry didn't change significantly after the assembly vote, but the legitimacy of the congregation's work increased, he said, adding, "It gave us more inroads to the community, because we had that badge of honor. That's why our ministry keeps growing."

"We are called throughout the Bible to care for the stranger."

Not all ELCA members agree that the assembly vote was the correct route to take as a denomination. "My congregation has a variety of perspectives on this issue," said Tyler Beane Kelly, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in The Dalles, Ore.

But while they may have different ideas about how to fix the U.S. immigration system, Lutherans can agree that loving the neighbor is central to their faith.

Kelly has seen members of his congregation changed by stories of people directly affected by the immigration system. "[Like] this father [who] has been detained for three years and he's never met his daughter because his wife was pregnant when he was taken by ICE," he said. "Using a real story, instead of a theory, that works better."

Some members question why the ELCA voted on what can be considered a "political" issue. Supporters say it's not political, but a social ministry defined by Scripture.

Since the time of the early church, Christians have offered sanctuary, continuing a biblical practice in which cities and houses of worship provided refuge and asylum for people fleeing injustice.

"We are called throughout the Bible to care for the stranger," Vergara said. "And it goes from Moses' mother putting her baby in the Nile to [give him] a better life, and God takes care of that baby,"

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Sacred hospitality cont.

to [stories of] being a stranger in a foreign land. It keeps coming up in the Bible, and I think people resonate with that."

How should we respond?

The best way to figure out how your congregation can engage with sanctuary ministry is to listen to those around you, Reed said. When University considered becoming a hosting congregation, its staff spent a month conversing with members one-on-one to hear their views and concerns.

And, importantly, the congregation took time to listen to their neighbors. "You need to place yourself in a position so you can hear the stories of your immigrant neighbors," Reed said. "Our members are from all over the country, and they go to Thanksgiving dinner ... and they hear, 'How can you do something for these illegals?'"

"To be able to respond firsthand from a personal depth of knowledge about what's it like to be a mother or a father or an unaccompanied minor for whom getting out of where they live

is a matter of life or death, it's like growing capacity for empathy by listening."

Those engaged in sanctuary work also recommend that congregations utilize their surroundings to help determine what their ministry around the issue could look like.

Kelly points to the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facilities (NORCOR), a public county jail in The Dalles that has contracted with ICE in order to help balance its budget.

"[Start] small, start in an obvious place; you don't have to go way out of your way."

"The problem is immigrants who are being detained at NORCOR are sometimes detained for two, three, four years," Kelly said. "And the facility really can't provide the resources that somebody in that situation would need." It isn't built to handle face-to-face family visitations, he said.

In May 2017, he and a group of clergy began visiting undocumented immigrants detained at NORCOR.

"You get a feel for what it's like to live without documentation in this country," he said.

Kelly's situation may be unique, but he noted that if he hadn't been in contact with the IMIrJ network to learn about the detainees, the ministry may not have come to fruition.

Those active in sanctuary ministry emphasize the need for congregations, wherever they're located, to create relationships with people in their communities.

"A lot of our towns that are small and rural still have significant Latino populations that live and work there," Kelly said. "They're your neighbors, they're your roofing contractors, they work in your restaurants, they farm or pick fruit, and they work in your local non-profits and schools."

"Following the relationships was what Jesus was all about, and all the countless stories of people whom he was engaging with were on the margins. [Start] small, start in an obvious place; you don't have to go way out of your way."

Sound System update

Did you hear the good news?

The good news in that you will soon.... be able to hear us better.

Peace Lutheran was fortunate to receive an grant from the Pendleton Foundation Trust for \$8900.00 towards the new sanctuary sound system. It is a matching grant and we have even more **good news**. An anonymous member of our congregation has matched this do-

nation. Thus, we have ordered the new sound system and it is being assembled and plans are moving forward to have the new sound system installed as soon as possible. We are excited to jump start our sanctuary remodel with this huge donation. The sound system will be our first step to a whole new sanctuary.

Let's keep the project moving forward. We have painting to do, new carpet, new pew cushions, and repositioning of the pews to

accomplish next. Please join us in raising these funds for the next phase. If we are going to be closed down a bit longer...maybe it would be wise to have this project completed and ready for when we can join together and really celebrate the good new of God's love in our Church, or Community and our Souls.

Please join us by making a special contribution today. Can I hear a loud Hallelujah??

Drive-Thru Communion

Thank you to everyone who participated in our first Drive-Thru Communion. We had 29 cars come through with approximately 50 people. It went well and we look forward to doing it again.



Peace Lutheran Church

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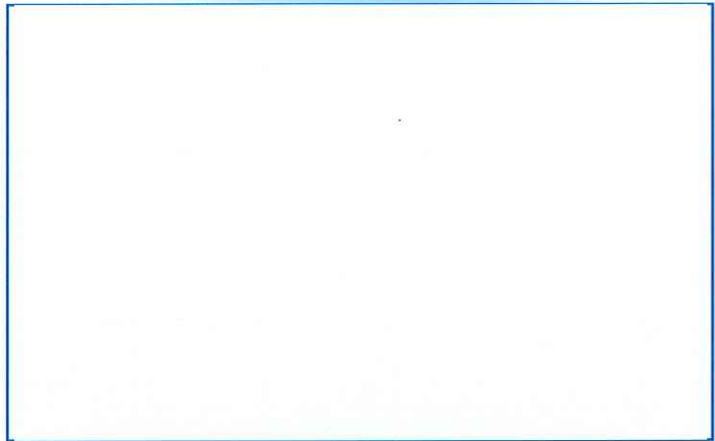
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