

Season of Pentecost

September 2020



PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olive Branch

Thoughts and Reflections from the Pastor

When schools flourish, all flourishes.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther understood the importance of education. His primary concern was for people to be able to read the Bible, but he understood that education gives us our way of understanding the world and often creates a lens through which we understand all things. Luther was, naturally, especially worried about the state of education for clergy, as the more he traveled the more he saw that pastors around Germany didn't have a very good understanding of scripture or theology. This was the inspiration for his Large and Small Catechisms.

We will soon be heading into fall and the beginning of another school year. Our society is shaped by this annual cycle and we each begin to think again about learning. Katie and I have been working to prepare our kids to start another uncertain school year and are taking steps to take more direct control of what it will look like. I know that many of the parents and grandparents within our congregation are concerned about what education will look like as the virus continues to effect

society and we at Peace want to be a resource. We are offering some of our empty classrooms to the youth of our congregation to be used as classrooms if people don't have a good way to do it at home or simply need a place outside of the home to learn.

I'm sure there are other ways we can be of service to our families this fall, and we hope to do all that we can to help. If you have children or know of children with needs for this coming school year, please let us know. The challenges of educating our children during a pandemic don't need to be weathered alone. Also, please join me in praying for our children and teachers as the school year begins. We want them to be safe and supported.

I am also working on Peace's continuing Christian education. I plan to start an online adult forum series after church services (except when there is communion) to continue our learning and growth in our faith. I am always interested in learning from others too, so if you have a subject you are interested in sharing that you think could be of help to our members,

please let me know and we can figure out how to organize a class for it. In the same vein, with all the changes we are experiencing in society, if you find that there is a subject you would like more information about please let me know. I will do my best to answer any questions or find someone who can. There is a lot to quickly learn these days, but there is no need to do it alone.

Once such pressing issue for society is understanding the challenges of racism and privilege in America. Issues of racism are not new to the ELCA and our lack of diversity continues to plague our churches, we continue to be the "whitest" denomination in the USA. But with the Black Lives Matter movement and the growing discontent with the status quo of race relations in this country, it is all the more important that we be informed. To that end, I will be beginning our online classes with a look at these issues and the church's place in them. I hope you will join me for this challenging and important discussion.

In Christ,

Pastor Travis Larsen

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Let your faith be bigger than your fear.

Council minutes August 10, 2020 6:07pm via Zoom

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

Absent excused: Doug DeBok.

Meeting called to order by President Carol Doherty and Pr. Travis opened with prayer.

It was moved by Gayla Eckis, seconded by Kevin Hale to accept the Consent Agenda and minutes of July 13, 2020 Council meeting, the motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: by Janet Wood. July offering was \$15,275; budgeted monthly amount is \$18,128.00. Income was \$2,853 less than the budgeted amount. The monthly expenses were more than income by \$4,728. July 31, 2020 ending bank balance \$7,558.00. Janet said expenses are more this month because of the repair and maintenance on the tower out front of the church. All the benevolences are up to date. Janet still has the money for ELCA Good Gifts and \$722 for Flood Relief to pay out. It was moved by Pr. Travis, seconded by Carol Doherty to accept the Treasurer's Report, motion carried.

Old Business: we skipped over this and went right to new business.

New Business:

Copyright Renewal this has been paid along with the video licensing.

Update on Sanctuary remodel

by Kevin Hale. Kevin has drafted a letter to be sent out to the congregation. He asked for council's input, proofreading, and corrections. We are halfway to obtaining the funds needed to paint the sanctuary; carpet the sanctuary, both offices, narthex and the stairs going up to the loft; and redoing the pew pads. We talked about follow up thank you notes, where the money is coming from already (will be in the letter). It was moved by Kevin Hale and seconded by Don Reese to use \$5,000 of the PLC capital funds for the sanctuary. Motion passed. Don Reese moved that we receive Kevin's report on the Sanctuary remodel, seconded by Gayla Eckis. Motion carried. Gayla will let Jim at Pendleton Floors that we are serious about going forward.

Endowment and Memorial Funds needed some clarification. If money is donated in memory of someone it goes into Memorials unless it is designated for another purpose. If it is from an estate, it goes into Endowment funds. (Donations given in memory of a loved one may be designated for an aspect of Peace's ministry including the Endowment Fund, Memorials Fund, Scholarship Fund, Pastor's Discretionary Fund, Food Pantry, etc. The donor's wishes will always be respected.)

Bottle drop in Hermiston Pr. Travis asked for help with dropping off the sacks full of bottles. It was suggested to put the need in the next newsletter.

Sanctuary needs ventilation: none of the windows in the sanctuary open and it would be a good idea to have a negative air pressure system that is always pulling air out. Pr. is going to research this and talk to Steve Umbarger and Doug DeBok about what would work best. Especially since we cannot run the air conditioner.

Bottle fund: There is approximately \$811.20 in this fund with half going to Youth and half to the Sanctuary Fund.

Clothes Closet downstairs since it is not being used has been cleared out. It was suggested that we keep a smaller clothes closet with apparel for interviews, shoes and coats.

Copier renewal is due the end of August. Do we want a new machine to lease or continue with what we have? It was decided to leave it up to the office staff to decide.

First United Methodist Church has decided to donate \$200 monthly for the use of Peace.

We went into Executive Session at 7:06

Announcements, reminders, and updates:

Congregational members updating contact information.

Adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 7:16pm.

Linda Mattes, Council secretary

Next council meeting September 14.

My husband left the bathtub spigot running one day in late March. We had just hunkered down in quarantine, our high school student daughter and college student son shifting to online classes, my teacher husband uploading all his lectures to his school's websites, and I rearranging my pastoral work as our church building locked its doors. Life was finally settling down in this month that seemed never to end. But then, as my husband read the latest COVID-19 news on his phone, he forgot the water was running until a half hour had passed—a stealthy, wet destroyer.

After assessing the damage, mopping up what water we could, deploying high-powered fans and resorting to a steam cleaner, we sought professional help. Over the course of one very long day, a team of masked workers pulled out carpet, walls, floors, tiles, ceilings and the bathroom vanity. Who knew bathwater could do so much damage?

We filed an insurance claim and decided not to have contractors rebuild until after this virus is no longer a threat. So we have lived in this state of disrepair for four months. Luckily, the room where I record home worship services was untouched by water damage. We have a guest bedroom where my collegiate son sleeps and I conduct Zoom meetings. We were lucky to still have our kitchen intact (minus the ceiling) and two functioning bathrooms. We would most definitely survive this.

As the months have passed, I've

felt the exhaustion that afflicts many clergy. Preaching to a phone is not nearly as rewarding as preaching to people, and Zoom meetings are not as invigorating as classes at the church. I have heard accounts of COVID-19 suffering, isolation and death. I reeled at the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others. I have heard the trauma of Black children of God who cry out under the burden of systemic racism and violence. I have listened to my police officer parishioners wonder how to serve their communities when they are frightened to go to work.

Like many in our nation, I have felt helpless to do my job of sitting by my people, at their bedsides and in coffee shops. I have felt helpless to make much of a difference or accompany people in any meaningful way. I have wondered what it means to be a pastor at this time, doing things I was never trained to do, not being able to do what I was taught. But here I was, stuck inside my bizarrely incomplete house.

I dwell in God in a permanent state of not-quite-finished.

Lately, my house has become a meaningful symbol to me, a metaphor of living in God. In the psalms, we are told that we dwell in God. God's kingdom is within us and around us, and God is the very home in which we live. Stuck at home in quarantine, we cannot escape this deeper imagery.

In the past few months, I have cleaned and decluttered, straightened and scoured. I have followed my minimalist tendencies and dis-

carded old items while also accepting Instacart orders and refilling my pantry. My home is now classroom, lecture hall, sanctuary and protector from a virus. Yet it's missing ceilings, floors, walls and built-in furnishings and fixtures. No matter what I clean, rearrange, organize or minimize, the exposed beams, concrete floors and open spaces where walls should be remind me that my house is not done. I am not done. I dwell in God in a permanent state of not-quite-finished.

That is how it is and, in fact, how it must be. This virus is not done yet, and it might not be for a very long time. Even more, racism has been part of our country for 400 years, and though we can, will and must work for a better world free of racism and white supremacy, that will not happen in full overnight. The beams are exposed. The floor is concrete. The walls are missing. And that is our home—the state we all live in as we dwell beautifully in God.

In Lutheran Christianity, we say the kingdom is "already/not yet." The kingdom is here in full and, at the same time, not yet realized. That is how it feels these days to live in my home, my community, my nation and my world. This state of incompleteness is the resting state we all live in and the state we will always live in, this side of heaven. We might want the drywall up, the tiles laid, the paint dry. But then there would be no work left for us. And Scripture makes clear that we dwell in God and that there is still much work to be done.

Seeing God in Community

Congregation, organizations partner to serve elderly during COVID-19

As people around the world adjust to the “new normal” brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased focus on caring for the most vulnerable people in our society. For many, this has brought a renewed emphasis on the importance of community amid hardship. For James Pike, pastor of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Huntington Beach, Calif., the pandemic provides an opportunity for the community to come together in support of the city’s senior citizen population.

Before the pandemic hit California, Huntington Beach had planned an interfaith day of service with Pike as its coordinator. But as COVID-19 spread, the city shut down. City officials recognized they had a plethora of demands, but they didn’t have the resources to respond to all of them. They turned to Pike to coordinate efforts for one of those needs: care for the city’s elderly population.

Waste Not OC, a nonprofit that partners with grocery stores and restaurants to use their excess food to prepare and package meals, was already willing to be involved. The city asked Pike to organize the distribution of these meals to homebound senior citizens.

Fortunately, Pike had a valuable partner in Care Connections Network (CCN), a nonprofit centered on empowering older adults to age confidently in their own homes. CCN was launched in 2012 by members of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection who saw the need for a ministry for seniors. The nonprofit incorporates education, social programming and creation of intentional community into its work, empowering its clients and preventing social isolation as they age.

With grants from Lutheran Disaster Response and other organizations, CCN and Resurrection began a program to distribute food and other essential products to homebound older

adults.

Once a week, program participants receive a box of 10 professionally prepared and packaged meals and paper products such as toilet paper. Volunteers drop off the boxes at the front doors of recipients, then call to let them know their meals have arrived. During the first four weeks of the program, over 2,220 meals were delivered.

The program is also serving homeless seniors who have been referred to them by the Huntington Beach Police Department’s Homeless Task Force. Other partners now include the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council, the local Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs, and other Lutheran congregations in the area.

“The number-one rule of establishing an effective network like this is you just have to keep showing up to stuff so people know who you are, and then you can have those relationships when you need them,” said Pike. “A lot of this has happened because there were existing relationships that we could use during this time.”

During the first four weeks of the program, over 2,220 meals were delivered.

“A way for us to worship our God”

CCN also prioritizes wellness checks, a valuable element of the program. Volunteers call clients on a weekly basis to check in and provide a moment of socialization for those who may feel isolated. More than 420 wellness calls have been made to 119 older adults. Many times, recipients reach out to CCN to express their gratitude for the care given to them. These phone calls are especially meaningful to Carolyn Ross, executive director of CCN.

“I think for me it was that first phone call I got, that first lady that called,” said Ross. “She was almost in tears,

but they were just tears of being grateful. I could tell she was really lonely. We talked for about 15 minutes, and it just meant so much to me that she took the time to call, and to express, with such genuine emotion, how she felt.”

The food distribution project has also provided an opportunity for young adult leadership in the church. Young adults have taken over management of many elements of the program, administering an on-the-ground lesson in civic engagement. They are reading a text together, discussing questions of faith and life and applying their discussions to the current circumstances.

But a project of this size hasn’t come without challenges. As the pandemic intensifies and the demand for services rapidly increases, Pike explained, they’ve struggled to keep up with the program’s quick growth, especially regarding communication between the multiple groups involved.

“The challenges we have encountered, it just shows me how God’s hand is in our work, because we do overcome them, and we overcome them without a lot of strife,” Ross said. “It just seems to happen. This is just meant to be.”

Ross sees the strengthening of relationships among the partners as one of the biggest rewards of the program, highlighting their commitment to helping the community.

“As a Christian, I see God in the people we’re serving. This is a way for us to worship our God through loving our neighbor—God among the poor, God isolated, God in an older person in a mobile home, God as a senior in an apartment with a pet bird, God who doesn’t like spicy food, God who wants a roll of toilet paper. The very common work that we’re doing is exactly the kind of thing that Jesus means when he said, ‘If you do this for them, you do it for me.’”



This one-day virtual event is for ALL of us, not just rostered leaders.

This event will be:

- A day of rest
- A day of learning

A day of delighting in what God can do in us when we come together to take seriously Christ's call to love our neighbor as ourselves, and scripture's challenge to heed the wisdom of the eloquent and of the "least of these"

Tell your friends and invite your congregation!

September 19

9:00 am-5:30 pm

Session topics include:

- Innovative and Online Worship Ideas
- Oregon Synod Horizon, Values, and Stepping Stones for the Future
- Health Care and Racial Equity: What COVID-19 has Revealed

And more!

Only \$25 per person for adults over 21; under 21s are free!

Click the button below to learn more and register. Registration closes September 13 at midnight.

Follow the link below for more information and to register.

<https://oregonsynodelca.regfox.com/synod-day-of-learning-liberating-our-hidden-stories>

Peace Lutheran Church Food Pantry and Clothes Closet

Here's a quick update on the Food Pantry. We are still open. We haven't given out food locally for months but we were able to share some of our food with the Methodist church in Hermiston. **If you or anyone you know is in**

need of our assistance please let us know. We are here and happy to help.

Also, we've put what few clothes we have in with the Food Pantry. There are clothes that are nice enough to go to job interviews and many for growing children.

If you've been spending some of your free time cleaning out your clothes closets and need to find a place for the stuff you don't use anymore, we would be very happy to accept your donation.

Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief

The pandemic has made the need for Personal Care Kits even more desperate. Please do what you can to help out. Each kit requires one bath towel (inexpensive and fast-drying; not a luxury towel), 2 or 3

bars of soap totaling 8-9 oz, one sturdy comb, one nail clipper, and one toothbrush (No toothpaste). You can leave any of these items in the Fellow-

ship Hall where they will be assembled later.



School Kits for Lutheran World Relief

It's time for kids to be thinking about school, and school supplies are on sale. We send school kits overseas through Lutheran World Relief to many students whose families are unable to purchase the needed supplies. Each kit requires 4 notebooks with 70 sheets of paper, wide or college ruled (no religious, patriotic, or military designs and no US flags), a 12" ruler with both centi-



meters and inches, one pencil sharpener, one blunt pair of scissors, 5 unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers, 5 black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel pens), one box of 16 or 24 crayons, and one 2 1/2" eraser. Each school kit is packed in a 14"x17" drawstring backpack which you may purchase or Rosanne Goade sews them according to LWR requirements. Call her at 541-429-3238 if you'd like to help with making backpacks. If you are able to purchase any of these

supplies, even if not enough for a whole kit, please leave your donation in the Fellowship Hall.

Printed supply lists are available at church. Ring the doorbell alongside the parking lot door to have the door unlocked. For more information about the ways that Lutheran World Relief helps to extend God's loving care and hope to people around the world, go to <https://lwr.org>

Thank you for your generosity!

We thank you for wearing a mask.

It shows you care about those around you.



Lutheran World Relief Quilters

Do you like to sew? Would you like to help out needy people here in the US or overseas? Anyone can help to make Quilts for Lutheran World Relief. Stop by the

church and pick up a packet of quilt squares from the box in the Fellowship Hall. Sew the squares together using simple 1/4" seams and then return the finished quilt top to the

church. The Peace Quilters will finish assembling the quilts whenever they are able to meet again.

Upcoming Dates to Remember

September 6 ~ Labor day/Office Closed

September 13 ~ Grandparents Day

September 14 ~ Council Meeting

September 16-18 ~ Office Closed

September 22 ~ First Day of Fall

September 27 ~ Drive thru Communion

October 12 ~ Council Meeting

October 25 ~ Reformation Sunday and Drive thru Communion

October 31 ~ Halloween



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