

Trinity Connections

To Know Christ. To Share
Christ.
May 1, 2021

Pastor's Message

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship)

This is a prayer that I have found myself praying a lot lately when there is so much uncertainty. I have always found comfort in this prayer but in these days of a pandemic, I seek out these words even more.

I, like most of you, long for a return to some familiar patterns in our days, a return to "normal." But I think it is safe to say that the "normal" we knew is no more. Going forward we will be creating something new, something that hasn't been before. That is an anxiety producing thought because it means that there is more uncertainty ahead. Our work and ministry is now more important than before. So, we pray that God gives us courage to go out in new ways, to head out to new paths that must be formed through our walking. This is not easy work. It is precarious but we do not walk alone. I do not know what the future will look like for us or for the church, but I know that God's hand will lead us each step of the way.

I have seen God's hand during these times of uncertainty as we have been gathering online to worship. It is a wonderful opportunity to gather even when it is not safe for us to be assembled in person. Christ is truly present during this time, drawing our hearts together across time and space.

I know many of you may be curious about when we will be able to gather in person for worship. The council has voted to *return to in-person worship on Sunday, May 23*. This is also Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the church so that seems fitting. We ask that everyone in attendance wear a mask and practice physical distancing. We will continue to live stream the worship service so that those who are not able to join us in person are able to worship.

I know that this past year has been a challenging one. We have been stretched in so many ways and we have listened for God's call. And we will continue to live out that call as we walk a new path into an unknown future. We walk together and God's hand is there to guide us each step of the way.

Pastor Jodi Golden-Lund

RETURN TO WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The Council has met and the following has been decided about our return to in-person worship:

Sunday, May 2 - pre-recorded worship service (same as it's been this past year).

Sundays, May 9 & 16 - we will be LIVE STREAMING the services at 11:00am. There will be no congregation present, but the service will be streamed online in real time. The Order of Worship and Liturgy will be published online for you to follow along. Volunteers needed, please see below.

Sunday May 23 - return to in-person service. The following protocols MUST be followed in order to attend in-person services at TLC:

- Masks will be required. If you don't have one, one will be provided.
- There will be NO SINGING at this time. Please use this time to listen to the song leader and participate in prayerful meditation.
- We will maintain physical distance throughout the service and ask that you seat only with those members of your own household.
- In order to maintain physical distance, some pews will be unavailable.
- This will be a no touch service - no handshakes, hugs, passing the offering plate, sharing of the peace. There will be an offering plate placed in the rear of the sanctuary.
- If you are not feeling well, please stay home and join us online.
- When using the restroom, please lock the door upon your entry. We will only allow one person at a time inside the restrooms. The men's bathroom is still closed; men will have to use the restroom in the Fellowship Hall, following the same guidelines.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! We are in DIRE need of TWO volunteers to help run the iPad and multimedia during our streaming services! Without help, we won't be able to provide the live stream of worship. Please let the office or Jan G. know if you are able to help us. Thank you!



Trinity Family,

It was so lovely to see everyone and worship together on Easter morning. To those of you who were not able to worship with us in person, we love you and missed you.

While it was a refreshing experience to be able to meet again in person, I'd like to give us all something to think about for the next time we meet.

"Christ is Risen!" "He is risen, indeed!" That is the greeting we typically hear in our denomination on Easter Morning. What I was mostly hearing instead was, "Are you fully vaccinated? I am." If both members were vaccinated, an invitation to hug was extended. If the person being asked was not vaccinated, they were treated differently. Friends, I want you to know that I heard from a few of the unvaccinated. What they had to say may surprise you.

First of all, I believe I know where this new greeting comes from. This was the first time we have gathered and worshiped together in more than a year. People are tired of being alone, of social distancing. We miss that physical contact, even more so those of us that live alone. Personally, I cherish this congregation's affectionate nature. I believe that I was hearing this greeting from people who were both overjoyed to see each other and greatly relieved at the hope that the COVID vaccine is giving many of us. However, even if you are vaccinated, our Synod guidelines for in-person worship are still cautionary. These guidelines recommend that churches practice social distancing and wearing of masks, even if vaccinated.

What I heard from some of the church members was how it made the unvaccinated among us feel. I heard from people who were discouraged and felt outcast and excluded. They were made to feel "less than" and unworthy. I am sure that no one was intentionally making people feel this way. However well intentioned, this practice did alienate some of our members. I KNOW that as ELCA Lutherans, we never want to make people feel that way.

There are several legitimate reasons why someone might be unvaccinated. One reason was that at the time of the Easter service, the vaccine had not been made widely available except for those over a particular age. Other reasons not to be vaccinated are medical: one of my relatives cannot take the vaccine due to it conflicting with her treatment for crippling arthritis. A close friend of mine was one of the eleven people in a million who had a full on anaphylactic reaction to her first dose of the vaccine. She will not be able to be fully vaccinated. I know several people that have concerns about a brand new vaccine, and they don't feel comfortable being vaccinated. These are not the only valid reasons why someone may not be vaccinated, but they are some of them.

Another thing to think about is that vaccination is a personal medical decision. While some of us may not have any misgivings about sharing medical information, we have many members who are uncomfortable discussing their health and medical issues with others. We need to be sensitive to this possibility when talking about vaccinations.

I have pointed out a concern, but what is the solution? Are we to abandon health guidelines and go around hugging everyone willy-nilly at church? I don't believe that, for the time being, is the solution either. I would propose that we stop interrogating each other about vaccinations as the first line of greeting. Let us leave people's health a private matter to be brought up later if the other person invites you to discuss it. Let us greet each other in Christ. Let us continue to observe social distancing. Let us treat each person equally with both love and physical distancing.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie McIntosh,
Trinity Lutheran Church Council President

Bibles, Books and Beyond

Sunday Morning Bible Study at Trinity Resumes on May 30th

It's been over a year since the Bible study group was able to convene around our table in the Fellowship Hall. And while the Bible study has continued via email, there really is no replacement for being in a place where we can read, pray, and reflect on the Bible together. Finally, that time has come again! Beginning on May 30th, we will meet at the usual time (9:45-10:45) in our usual place (the Fellowship Hall) directly before worship. We will wear masks and spread out, but the important thing is that the Spirit will be present with us. Our first meeting will be on the Sunday after Pentecost.

On May 30th we will begin a new study in on the Johannine epistles (1 John, 2 John, and 3 John). These three short documents open an intriguing window into the life of the early church. The communities to whom these letters are addressed have recently experienced conflict and division in their ways of seeing Jesus. The author writes to clarify the gospel and to reaffirm Jesus as the incarnation of God's love.

Invitation to Join the Ministry of Books Team

In our most recent council meeting, council decided to expand the Ministry of Books into a collaborative effort with Foothill Presbyterian and La Vida Nueva. Thus far, the Ministry of Books has initiated two projects:

- Books for the Homeless—We have joined the Porterville Little Libraries Project and will be constructing and placing a Little Library in front of the Welcome Center. It will be up to this the ministry team to find out what books are needed and to keep the Little Library stocked.
- Trinity Theological Library—Trinity now has a Theological Library (probably the most extensive in the community). It will be up to the ministry team to plan how to make use of this valuable resource, perhaps including the development of classes and presentations on the Bible and theology.

The time has come to plan the further development of these two ministries, as well as to consider other projects that might benefit our community. For example, through partnering with La Vida Nueva, I am sure that we can find ways to distribute appropriate books in both Spanish and English—and explore ways in which books might be used to bring our three congregations together.

This is an exciting opportunity—and today I am inviting you to join the team. If you have any interest in any aspect of the Ministry of Books—please join! Or if you have any questions about how this might work for you, please ask!

To join or to learn more contact Ann Marie at amwagstaf@gmail.com or 559-791-0286.

Finally, we still need help building our “Little Library”. Please let the office or Ann Marie know if you are interested. Thank you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRAYER REQUESTS

New Prayer Concerns

Continuing Prayer Concern

Peggy Holt - for healing and comfort due to health problems

Julie Elston - for continued health concerns

Brian Nelson (Scott Nelson) - for continuing health concerns

La Vida Nueva UMC - for God to prosper our partnership in the gospel

The Sierra-Pacific Synod - for wisdom and a spirit of true fellowship in our shared ministries

Those unable to worship with us:

June Mowles - Sierra Hills

Avis Lindroos - North Dakota

Phyllis Rengstorf - Kaweah Manor, Visalia

MAY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Helen Zenz	May 10
Muriel Josten	May 12
Geri Witt	May 18
Patricia Pitkin-Thingvold	May 26
Marnie Kavern	May 30
Orval & Norma Brown	May 31

June Mowles is in need of 10-20 Quaker oatmeal boxes (empty) for a craft they are doing where she lives. If you are able to help her out, please give her a call at (559) 784-3223.

USING VANCO FOR OFFERINGS

Many people are preferring to use online payments with their computers or their smart phones instead of paying with a check.

We are making a service available for online giving to the church, even if you don't use online banking.

If you want to do your giving online, you may make payments with your credit/debit card or with information from your checking account through a company many churches use called VANCO.

To use Vanco online (from a computer), go to: <https://secure.myvanco.com/YJOM>

To use the Vanco app on your phone download the VANCO app called "VANCO Mobile Faith Engagement."

Once you are on the website or have downloaded the app, find our church by searching for Trinity Lutheran Church of Porterville. The rest is self-explanatory. They will ask for address information in order that you can get accurate tax documents.

There is a small fee the church will pay for the service (1% for ACH bank information, 2.75% for debit/credit cards). You will be given the choice to increase your giving by that amount in order to cover the service charges. This is only if you feel led to do so.

You are still welcome to support the church in the regular way you are accustomed to. We are just providing this service to those who prefer it.