

THE MESSENGER

Vermont Lutheran Church's Mission Statement:

Christians **A**ctively **R**eaching Out **E**xperiencing Christ and **S**spreading His Word

From Pastor Barry's Desk . . .



Dear Family of God,

Leaves are falling (or have fallen – depending on the weather between when I write this and when it gets published) and the weather is once again turning to cold; plants we've tended all summer have died off and the scenery around us begins to look stark. Doesn't sound like a very positive beginning for a pastoral address, does it?

But in reality, this changing of seasons is a part of the life cycle of things, isn't it? All living things are born (or somehow come into being), and all things die – or cease to be living. That may sound tragic, but it is the way life flows, isn't it?

In the spring, joy seems to abound as we welcome in new life and new growth, and in the fall we mourn what we lose to the changing of temperatures and climate.

The reason I bring this up is because of something I heard a woman say this past week as I listened to one of the many webcasts that have been offered during this pandemic. She said, ***"Jesus didn't come with an evacuation plan, he came with a transformation plan."*** I thought that she had hit the nail pretty squarely on the head when I heard that. Let me explain...

Jesus didn't come to assure us that there was a better place to go to when we left this world, for that would have meant that all our energy would be used up preparing ourselves for what would happen after this life here on earth was over. That sort of thinking might be fine for the individual who was thinking along such lines, but to everyone else it might look selfish and uncaring. If we were to live with the hope that someday we will escape this place of imperfection and go to a grand and glorious place where everything will be beautiful, then what is the reason for us to be here in the first place?

No, Jesus didn't come to provide escape for those of us who knew the right password in order that we could enter through the pearly gates, Jesus came to transform our lives so that we can see our time here on earth to be worthwhile and meaningful. And while we are here serving God's purpose, we also have the ability (or responsibility) to help out others who don't know love, or who need our help so that they might live peaceably as well.

If we as Christians take seriously this calling to be transformed in Jesus, then it means that once we understand what the love of God is all about, we will never be the same again. How could we, as human beings, not be changed when we learn about the selfless life of Jesus and how he taught us to love all people? How can we as people not treat each other with kindness and respect (despite our differences) if we follow in the example Jesus left with us?

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From Pastor Barry's Desk (continued) . . .

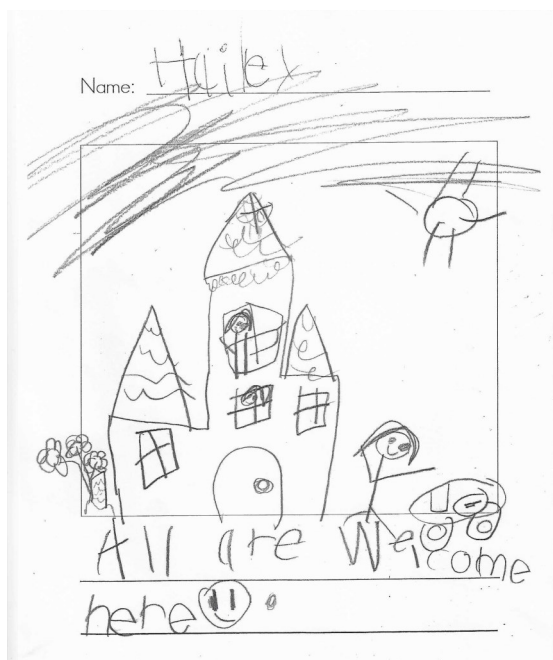
Do your Christian beliefs mean *you* have been transformed? Or, are you waiting for the time when you can escape this awful place and go somewhere better? It really shows the difference of Christian understanding of what life is about when you can answer these questions truthfully and honestly.

Jesus didn't come so that we could all look forward to leaving this place; yes, Jesus came so that we could look forward to our heavenly home, but while we are here, to make other people's lives a little better, to see justice reign, and to show people what love truly can be.

Go, be transformed!

Pastor Barry

News



Hi All,

This picture was drawn and written by our granddaughter, Hailey. The images and words were her own, the message means so much!! Hope all are hanging in there and thank you for making Vermont Church a place that inspires "All Are Welcome Here" in the mind and heart of a child.

Carol Parrell

Congratulations
Mike and Jen Syrjamaki !
Their marriage took place
October 10, 2020



Daily Discipleship

Sunday, November 13-19 (A) – Matthew 25:14-30

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Stewardship*

Focus Question: *What is your typical response when someone gives you a lavish gift?*

word of life

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’” Matthew 25:21 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 25:14-30

The parable of the talents follows immediately after the parable of the wise and foolish maidens. A talent was the largest monetary unit of the ancient world. One talent was equal to 6,000 denarii. The amount entrusted to the servants is huge, implying a great deal of trust on behalf of the master.

The servants in the parable do not know how long the master will be gone, but they are to be vigilant and faithful until the master returns. The servants will be held accountable for how they use the resources entrusted to them while the master is gone.

Were the servants actively working on the master’s behalf, or were they only concerned about their own security? How so?

Why would the master trust the servants with so much money?

Note the familiar theme of grace in the parable. All are given the gift of talents; none is left outside the gift of grace. The challenge in this parable (as in all of Matthew) for the disciple is: What will we do with the lavish, generous gifts the master has given?

How would you assess the stewardship practices of each of the servants?

Should all of the servants been given the same amount of talents? Why or why not?

The first two servants “went off at once” to multiply the gift (vs. 16-17). They trusted in their relationship with the master. They were future-focused, willing to risk for the master’s increase. In contrast, the one-talent servant fearfully focused on the past. “I knew you were a harsh man... so, I was afraid.” He did not trust that his relationship with the master could risk failure. He did not trust his own abilities. His fear immobilized him and led him to hide the gift until the master’s return.

Why did the master respond differently to each servant?

How would you describe each of the servants using modern images?

Applying this parable to the church, the message is clear. Do we encourage one another to try to avoid disaster; or do we foster an attitude of trust and faithfulness, of willing risk-taking for the increase of the kingdom? There are some who put the gifts into action. And there are some who, out of fear, doubt, or selfishness, choose to keep it all for themselves and fail to see that the gifts given are intended to be invested on behalf of others. To these is spoken the word of judgment: If you try to keep the gift for yourself alone, you will lose everything.

Where do you find yourself in the parable?

Pentecost Bible Study (continued)

Would that be the same place as when you were younger? Explain.

What is the message of this parable for you?

word *among us*

There was once a village chief who had three sons – each with a special talent. The oldest cared for the olive trees, providing the village olive oil for food and trade. The second son was a shepherd, keeping the herds in good health, providing food and clothing for the village. The third son was a dancer, bringing cheer, beauty, and joy to the village.

One day, the chief had to go on a long journey and left the village in his sons' care. For awhile, things went well, but then the cold winds began to blow. The olive branches, cracked from the ice, failed to bloom. Soon the villagers had no fuel, and they begged the first son to cut down the trees. He finally relented, for he knew it was foolish to save the trees only to lose the village.

The ice made it impossible to travel, and soon the villagers had nothing to eat. They begged the second son to kill the sheep so they wouldn't starve. At first he refused; but he finally realized it was foolish to save the sheep only to have the people perish.

The villagers had just enough food and fuel to survive, but the hardships broke their spirits. They lost hope and became desperate. One by one they left the village in search of a better home. The chief finally returned to find smoke from his own chimney alone. Troubled, he rushed into the house, surprising his sons. "What has become of the trees? Where are the sheep? And what has happened to the people?"

The first two sons with sorrow explained what had happened to the trees and the sheep. The father consoled them, "You did your best to save the village. But what has become of the people?" The third son spoke up. "It hardly seemed proper to dance during such suffering. And besides, I wanted to conserve my strength to welcome you." "Then dance, my son," the father said, "for my village and my heart is empty."

But as the third son went to get up, he grimaced and fell. His legs were so stiff from sitting that they were no longer fit for dancing. The father, filled more with sadness than anger said, "Our village could survive with little food and fuel; but it could not without hope." And they wept.

(Adapted from a story by William J. Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984)

What gifts have you (individually or as a congregation) been given?

How do you try to be a good steward of the God-given gifts you have?

What does it mean to faithfully use these gifts?

How might you encourage people to use their gifts?

Prayer

Giver of all gifts, help us to be good stewards of your gifts.

Dig Deeper

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

last word

This week,

assess your God-given gifts
and your stewardship of those gifts.



November 1

God's Care for the Widow
1 Kings 17:1-16 [17-24]

November 8

Jonah and God's Mercy
Jonah 1:1-17, 3:1-10 [4:1-11]

November 15

God Calls Isaiah
Isaiah 6:1-8

November 22

God Promises a New Covenant
Jeremiah 36:1-8,21-23,27-28 &
31:31-34

November 29

Daniel's Hope in God
Daniel 6:6-27

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Autumn	McGree	November 02
Minda	Engel	November 03
Lukas	Lemke	November 04
Melissa	Hanson	November 05
Laramie	Schultz	November 09
Bryce	Duhr	November 10
Daniel	Parrell	November 10
Charles	Erickson	November 11
Dylan	Rickey	November 12
Emma	King	November 14
Alex	Orth	November 14
Douglas	Meier	November 15
Edwin	Schroeder	November 15
Claire	Howery	November 17
Donald	Parrell	November 17
Jeffrey	Herrling	November 18
Jon	Urness	November 19
John	Howery	November 21
Marguerite	Parrell	November 21
Joyce	Howery	November 24
Charlotte	Herman	November 25
Denise	Boehnen	November 26
Elizabeth	Herrling	November 29
Joseph	Schultz	November 30



Draft
Vermont Lutheran Church Council Minutes
October 22, 2020

Note: Due to the increase of Covid 19 cases in Dane County and WI, the Governor's and Dane County's recommendation was to once again limit in person gatherings. Thus prior to tonight's meeting the Council voted 9-1 in favor of once again reverting to closing the Church to in person Services beginning Sunday October 18.

The October meeting of the Vermont Lutheran Church Council was held both in person in The Gathering Place and via conference call. President Aaron Tigert called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM

Attendance: Gathering Place – Aaron T, Jamie H, Ellie B, Larry Z, Conference Call- Carol J, Steve H, Len S

Devotions: Due to the absence of Pastor Barry due to illness, PB provided an online Devotion that could be read individually by our members

Secretary's Report: Not all the Council Members received a copy of the September Draft by the meeting time. After receiving copies, Aaron made a motion to accept the Minutes, Carol seconded and the motion was approved by majority online.

Treasurer's Report: Steve reported that Vermont's cash status is in a healthy position as of the end of September. Contributions Year to date were up \$10K from Sept. 2019. In September alone of this year they were up \$1K from September 2019. Our expenses were down \$12K from 2019. Most of the contribution increase is due to The Faithful response of Vermont members who are answering the call to not forget the ongoing funding necessary to finance the operation of our Church. This positive response even though the majority of the year has been via online Services. Our next big question is consideration of Mission \$\$ in 2020. In 2019 our Mission giving was around \$17K. About \$11K was generated from the Lutefisk Dinner Funds and the balance from a variety of Fund Raisers plus the Endowment Fund contribution.

Steve's recommendation at this point is to consider funding Missions in 2020 at around a \$10K target.

Liz reported that we have received about \$2500 from our letter request of a Non Lutefisk Dinner Fund Raiser. So Steve is projecting about \$3k from this Fund Raiser and about \$7K from the Endowment Fund.

To determine how these reduced Mission Funds should be allocated a Work Group was formed. Carol and Ellie will co-chair and Jamie volunteered to join them. They will work with other sources and the Endowment Committee to create a draft of recommendations. They will bring these recommendations back to the Council in Nov/ Dec. Len suggested we also consider making Mission payouts regularly in January after all the years receipts have been received. Len made a motion to accept the Treasure's report, Aaron seconded and it passed unanimously.

Committee Reports:

- Building and Grounds – Report can be viewed separately. Ellie made a motion to accept the Report, Carol seconded and it passed unanimously
- Youth – Ellie reported that Sunday School would discontinue in person class at this time. She felt that sending material to the students would be a good way to go to help provide them with instruction. We are so Thankful to Ellie for the time and effort she continues to put in to maintain our Sunday School under difficult conditions.

Old Business:

- VLC Committee Restructuring moved to the November meetings
- Legacy Land Update – Aaron reported that the Land purchase offers that were presented to the two landowners of the property adjoining the Church on the East side had an expiration date of September 30. By that date neither co owner had responded to the offers. Basically that means that offer is officially off the table and The Legacy group must evaluate what their next move will be.

New Business:

- With a very moving letter to the Council, Riley Lynch submitted her resignation as the Youth Rep on the Council. Her personal schedule made it very difficult to continue. We are very grateful to Riley for her time representing the youth in the Church. It was decided that at this time we would not actively seek a replacement for the Youth Council Rep.
- Similarly Koah Orth has submitted a letter of resignation to her position as Financial Secretary of Vermont. Dan Orth also signed the letter as a participant in this position. Life's responsibilities has made it very difficult for Koah to continue in this position. Again her time and commitment to this position has been incredible and we are so grateful for her and Dan's work and our heartfelt Thanks go out to them!
- Joanie Haugen has stepped forward to state that she would like to help out with the Financial Secretary's position. A motion was made by Steve, seconded by Carol to designate Joanie as Vermont's Financial Secretary. The motion passed unanimously.
- The October 25th Confirmation has been postponed, no date has been set
- Deer Hunters Meeting scheduled for Nov 14 has been canceled
- Resumption of Virtual Worship – A discussion and recommendations for enhancing our Virtual Worship experience were noted and Aaron will discuss these with Pastor Barry and determine what changes we may make.
- November Agenda Items – Aaron suggested we modify our approval of reports and may make changes as to how we handle this procedure.

It's time to resume active discussions of the direction of Vermont Church:

Where are we now?

Where do we want to be?


How do we get there?

The next scheduled meeting will be on TUESDAY November 17th at 6:00 PM. To be determined location and format of that meeting.

Steve made a motion to adjourn the Meeting, Larry seconded, the motion passed unanimously

At 7:59 PM President Aaron closed the conference call and the in person meeting

Submitted by Larry Ziemer, Secretary



STEWARDSHIP

Managing God's Gifts To Us

Financials: Year to Date October 2020

Operating Contributions:	126,082.15
Total Operating Expenses:	105,595.17
Difference:	20,486.98

Attendance Matters

October 2020

4th 30 + 13 views = 43

11th 34 + 22 views = 56

18th 17 views

25th 7 views

HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON!

Pastor's Report

1 Wedding 10/10/20 – Jennifer Harms and Michael Syrjamaki
1 Funeral 09/30/29 – Dorothy Mae Rasmussen

On September 06, we once again went to in-person worship services, with no singing, everyone wearing masks, and about a 30 minute service each Sunday. Things went well for over a month, but once again in October, the COVID case counts went through the roof and the virus was hitting record numbers of infections and deaths in Dane County and the surrounding area counties (especially Sauk) as well.

With this in mind, and with an urging from the Wisconsin Council of Churches, we resumed virtual worship services via YouTube once again as of Sunday, October 18. It is not the course we would have taken if there was another way to go about the worship of our Lord. But, the alternative was to invite the risk of infection to some of the most vulnerable members and to participate in causing more spread of the virus. This neither seemed responsible, nor in keeping with the model of the church being a healing and safe place.

I have spoken with the families of our two confirmands who were to be confirmed on October 25 (Reformation Sunday). It seems that they have decided that for the time being, they would opt for postponing a Confirmation Service at this time rather than to film a virtual Confirmation Service.

How we will begin to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas will be interesting to see, and I will be working with the Worship and Music Committee to see what we can come up with as we have learned to be both flexible and creative during this unusual time.

Ellie has been holding Sunday School classes in the Gathering Place, but with no in-person worship, I assume that Sunday School will be postponed as well. We might look at providing a virtual lesson for Sunday School as well, but we're going to take things one step at a time for now.

We celebrated the life of Dorothy Mae Rasmussen on Sept. 30 with a funeral and burial following in the Vermont Cemetery. There were more people than I felt comfortable with in attendance, but everyone was masked, sitting in family groups, and fairly respectful of COVID Guidelines. We did sing two verses of Amazing Grace (with masks on), and had a solo and a duet sung, but I believe that we were about as careful as we could be. It was difficult providing a service for someone to whom music meant so much, and we did the best that we could.

I also officiated at a wedding on 10/10/2020 (quite a memorable date for a wedding!) for the Syrjamkis, and it was a small family affair with about 20 people in attendance. The weather was absolutely beautiful and they couldn't have planned for a better day!

We (Jill Dybdahl and I) have been holding Confirmation classes in the Gathering Place on every other Wednesday. We have 3 students attending and a 4th doing classes at home because of some scheduling conflicts. A new program we are using is great and the students seem to enjoy it too.

God's Peace,
Pastor Barry

WELCA News

NOVEMBER ALTAR DUTY

Mary Nelson & Pat Ziemer

Building and Property Committee Report

October 15, 2020

- * The Boehnens and Antonies did the Fall weeding of the flower beds
- Jim Herrling applied broadleaf weedkiller to the Cemetery Grounds
- The PlaySet has had it's first coat of stain/sealer applied, some roof area remains to be done upon replenishing our supply of stain
- Modern Heating has been contacted to do a Fall checkup and service of all four furnaces
- Modern Heating will be the contact company going forward for all furnace/ AC service

A Thank You to Ron and Denise Boehnen for transporting on September 26 our 30 plus boxes of 186 Quilts to the Madison Train Station to be loaded and begin their journey to where needed in worldwide locations!

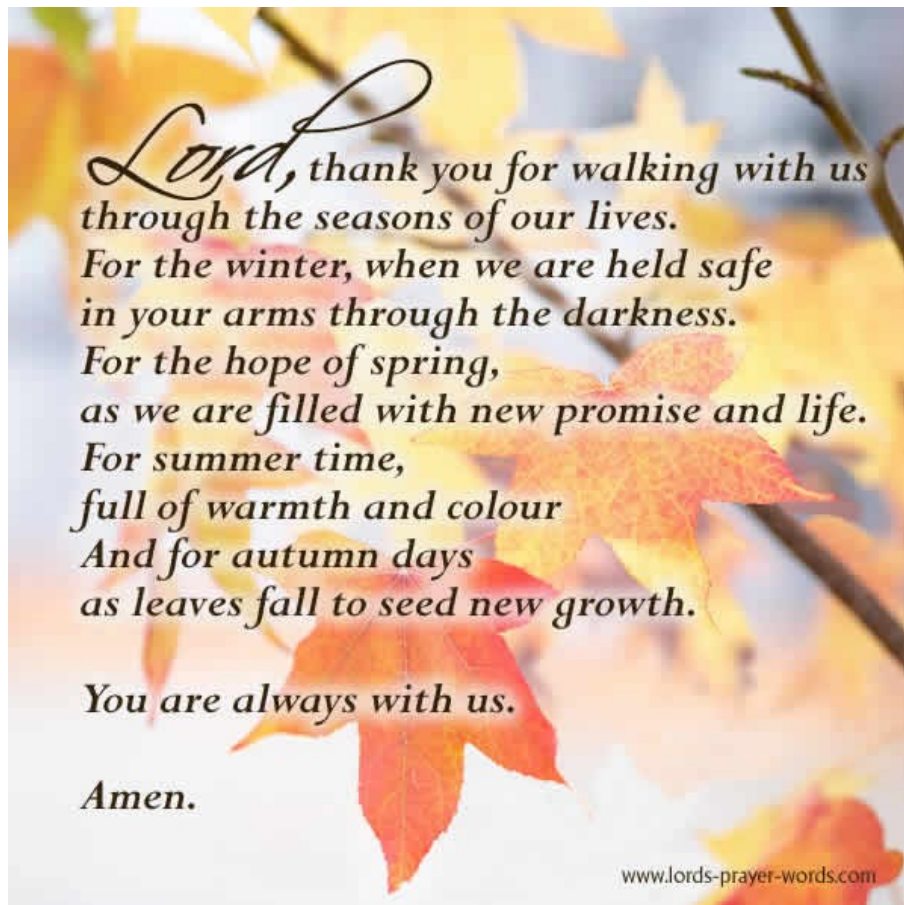
Greg H Larry Z

Lutefisk Committee Report

October 31, 2020

Vermont Lutefisk committee of 2020 would like to thank the many Vermont Members and Vermont "lutefisk" friends for their donations of **\$3,399.00**. The money will go toward our Vermont Mission Budget for 2020. This money will be combined with other missions fund deposits for the year.

Thank you again--Hope to see you in 2021



Synod News

United by the Holy Spirit: Worship Celebration and Installation of Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe

The Rev. Joy Mortensen-Wiebe was installed as bishop of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on Sunday, October 11 at 1:00 pm. Due to the pandemic, people gathered virtually by a live stream originating from New Heights Lutheran Church in Black Earth, Wisconsin.



The theme of the installation was grounded in scripture chosen by the installation planning team from Luke 10:2.

He said to them, “The Harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Wheat fronds, doves and special flowers adorned the holy space as well as hundreds of leaves lovingly colored by people of all ages from around the synod who were invited to pray for the bishop while coloring. Thank you to our liturgical arts team of Jean Minga, Peggy Schaub and Gail Rockeman (Our Savior’s Sun Prairie) and to Bryan Zimmerman (Good Shepherd Madison/Verona) for providing the leaf art.

Bishop Idalia Negrón of our partner ELCA Caribbean synod brought a prayer and message of thanks for continuing the good partnership we have had where we have learned from one another.

Bringing us beautiful music that helped us notice the presence of God were Ben Johnston-Urey, Pianist (First, Janesville), Amy Hartsough, Cantor (Bethel, Madison), Zachary Peterson, Violinist (Our Savior’s,



Beloit), and Christopher Aaron Smith, Cantor Rock Prairie Presbyterian, Janesville).

stream:

To watch the live

<https://www.scsw-elca.org/bishopinstallation>

Deacon Francine Rask (New Heights, Black Earth) read the gospel, Luke 10:1-12, 16-20.



Synod News (continued)

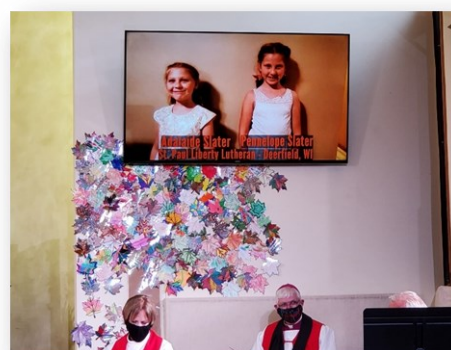
Bishop Eaton started her sermon recognizing the significance of the chosen scripture as one that speaks to being called and the importance of being equipped to answer that call. “It’s not the work of the 70, nor the apostles, nor any of us or the work that we do, it’s not our work; but we have been commissioned with authority as emissaries of the Word which transforms lives...which brings life. So if we don’t get it right, on the days when it does feel like we are lambs set in the midst of wolves, it is not our work. Having found us at our worst, when we were enemies and far off, Jesus brings out a life of service that is even better than our very best. That’s the promise. The buddy system is us walking together, but Jesus is walking with us. It’s not our work. We don’t do this by ourselves.”

Family members, daughter Julia Wiebe and husband, the Rev. Darin Wiebe wrote and prayed the intercessory prayers.



Gathering around Bishop Mortensen-Wiebe in a special moment during laying on of the hands were special guests including the ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton; the Rev. Peter Rogness, former interim-bishop of the South-Central Synod of Wis.; the Rev. Idalia Negrón, Bishop of the ELCA Caribbean synod (participating virtually); the Rev. Paul Erickson, Bishop of the ELCA Greater Milwaukee Synod; the Rev. Gerald Mansholt, Bishop of the ELCA East-Central Synod of Wisconsin; and ecumenical partner, the Rev. Matt Gunter, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac.

While not together physically, children from all around our synod delighted us as readers with their humility and joy and command of the spoken word! Our hearts were filled with music and song from musicians and singers via video recordings. We were a gathering of saints for this celebration worship!



“We are church together for the sake of the world and I am deeply moved that we begin our time together in worship. The 138 worshipping communities in south-central Wisconsin are connected by the gift of technology but more importantly in this moment by the Holy Spirit. The hours of planning and care that went into this virtual celebration are witness to the passion that we are church together and that we have a holy calling to share the love of Jesus with the world,” Bishop Mortensen-Wiebe says of the installation service.

Synod News (continued)

We are especially grateful to the Rev. Rob Nelson, pastor and the staff of New Heights Lutheran Church for hosting us and having a heavy hand in the execution of this event. Special thanks to the technology team at New Heights, Kim Amundson, Kyle Schaefer and Jake Weiland. We also could not have done this without the support of Deacon John Weit and the churchwide worship team who provided the tools we need for planning.



Special thanks also to our sponsor, Gunderson Funeral Home who helped to financially support the costs of the installation and to Messiah Lutheran Church for hospitality of those present at the event.

Thank you also to the planning team, many of whom pivoted quickly from work on the synod assembly.



This was an especially meaningful installation and election as it has happened during the year of the 50th anniversary of Lutheran women being ordained in the United States, 40 years of women of color being ordained and the 10 years of LBGQTIA individuals being able to serve freely.

"Bishop Mortensen-Wiebe emerged from a very strong field of four nominees and is well equipped to lead in such rapidly changing times. We are a church in energetic mission, even as the field for that work has become so very different," shared the Rev. Peter Rogness, former interim bishop of the synod.

And now we can look forward to our bright future as the 138 worshipping communities of the South-Central Synod of

Wisconsin. We have been given the gift of each other...a buddy system of walking together with Jesus. Let's use that gift to labor in God's mission field together. The harvest is plentiful!

If you missed the installation, you can view the recording of the live stream here:

<https://www.scsw-elca.org/bishopinstallation>

To see WISC-TV Media Coverage and interviews with Bishop Eaton & Bishop Mortensen-Wiebe:

<https://www.channel3000.com/new-bishop-installed-for-south-central-synod-of-wisconsin/>

Synod News (continued)

Mental Health in Pandemic

New Life Lutheran Church in Madison has recently released a series of videos about Mental Health during this pandemic. In this 5-video series, Pastor Heather Hayward and clinical therapist, CJ Webster (Stonetree Therapy in Waunakee) talk about the care of the whole person - mind, body and spirit. New Life has on their property an outdoor labyrinth, and because of that these discussions are connected to the three parts of how we walk the labyrinth - with a sense of releasing, receiving, and returning. Please feel free to come and utilize this labyrinth at any time!



Here are links to each video:

Introduction – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPL3AxpZHMt&t=174s>

Release – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J-r-KuG90&t=22s>

Receive – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fx9Wx46vico>

Return – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLAPhsxF1yg>

Final Thoughts – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTVEADIOpqq>

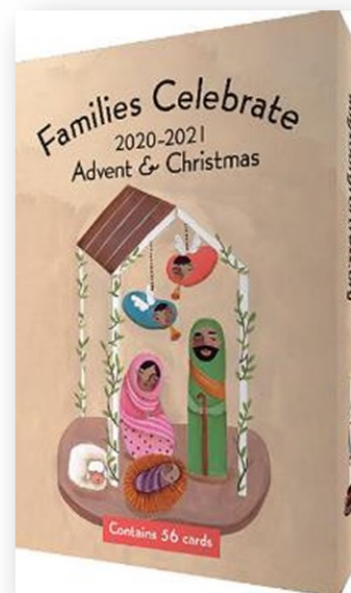
For more information, please feel free to contact Pastor Heather at pastor.newlifelc@sbcglobal.net.
Healthy blessings!

Families Celebrate Advent & Christmas – Activity Cards

Families Celebrate Advent & Christmas is a colorful deck of cards that is full of rituals, prayers and reflections. Endlessly flexible for busy schedules, you can create a new after-meal ritual, use them as decorations, or carry them on the go. Explore the entire season from Advent to Christmas through Epiphany. These make a great gift for families in your congregation!

Order Advent & Christmas Cards here:

<http://bit.ly/FamiliesCelebrate>



What's A Synod?" Part 1

By Deacon Vicki Hanrahan
Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Life



Thirty six years ago when my husband and I were married and joined the Lutheran Church, someone with Lutheran roots asked me, "What synod are you in?" I remember thinking...Huh? What's a synod? In my Lutheran infancy, I answered, "Well, I think the church is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, so I know it's not in the Missouri synod." I still laugh when I remember that, and at the same time, I am and will always be in awe of the journey that God created for me, especially as a woman. Since 2016, after years of discovery, continuing education and on the job training, I became an ordained Minister of Word and Service to the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the ELCA. Isn't it funny that my call includes synodical communications and life, teaching others what it means to be a part of a synod and the larger church. As others have taught me, so now, I am called to teach those in their infancy.

And that brings me to the point of this multi-part series on Synodical Life.

I hear it time and time again. "People don't know where their mission support goes or how it is used. People don't know what a synod is or what a synod does." I believe this is less about a failure to communicate than it is about the reality of the journey we are on together. I would guess that most of the 2,300 readers of *What Matters* know that your congregation is one of 138 worshipping communities that make up the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and when you became a member of your congregation, you became a member of all three expressions of the church: local, synodical and ELCA churchwide. You are a subscriber of *What Matters* because you are an active, engaged member of your congregation. Or as a stakeholder in this good kingdom work, you walk with us as a partner ministry of our synod. Either way, you are further along in your understanding than most in our synod.

The reality is that there are members in your congregations with an infant's understanding of this marvelous church just like I had 36 years ago. Some may have been attenders for a long time like I was and are now just beginning to engage in the life of your church. Some members have converted from other faith traditions, like I did, and are just beginning to understand what it means to interpret scripture through the Lutheran lens. It is our prayer that we can all work together to help them better understand that engaging at the synod or even churchwide levels can help their faith evolve into something far reaching. So as not to overwhelm them, baby steps are helpful. And here's an example of what I mean:

Asking new Lutherans to understand for example the genesis of the ELCA would be like drinking from a firehose instead of a tippy cup. Just try telling them the history of the merger of the three ALC, AELC and LCA. You may try to impress them with remembering what the acronyms stand for... The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church in America. But try that and you'll likely find that only a few find it interesting, and others' eyes may glaze over as I'm sure did mine. It is good for us to remember that some younger members may just be at the point in their journey where they are simply figuring out **how to belong and fit in**. And others may only have the energy to attend worship to hear the good news and that is enough for now.

Instead, we encourage you to move into your new member primer an introduction to what it means to

What's A Synod?" Part 1 (continued)

belong to the larger church. Let them know that when they became a member of your congregation, they automatically belong to a community of saints outside your zip code and there are members from other churches in 12 counties that want to meet them and walk with them! They belong to the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the ELCA. What is their first step to walking together with us? Go to the synod website and sign up for *What Matters*. Get to know us and receive the invitations to learn about, be inspired by and if they choose, to participate in our shared work.

There are nearly 87,000 members across our synod. The harvest is plentiful. In the next several issues of *What Matters*, I will give you information that you can share in your contexts to help others enrich their understanding of what it means to be walking together in this part of God's kingdom and how getting involved in the larger church can change the trajectory of their life!

I invite you to actively participate in this series by sharing what you learn with others in your settings. If you write the newsletter for your church, or you lead committee meetings, or you teach new member classes, please share these issues of *What Matters* and invite others to send me an email to receive *What Matters* directly.

And if you will indulge me for a moment, I would like to thank two of the most influential people in my faith formation. I am grateful to the Rev. David Berggren, my pastor for 20 years, and Muriel Arms, Associate in Ministry (former deacon of our church) who worked tirelessly to make sure that we were all on a journey of love together. We were made to understand that we would find ourselves in different stages in our faith development, but no matter where we were, Jesus would meet us where we were at, and the point was that we all keep moving forward together. They loved this church and made sure we understood that we were part of something bigger than 550 Lincoln Drive in Sun Prairie. Being encouraged to appreciate the significance and wonder of that is why I am a called deacon in the church today.

Next week, we will share from people who say that engaging in synod life helped them to hear God's voice as the master navigator of God's plan for their lives along with some other interesting demographics about the synod in which we belong.

Invite New members to Sign up for What Matters today! <https://scsw-elca.org/news/>

or to send me an email and put "Add Me to What Matters" in the subject: vickih@scsw-elca.org

Include a sign up sheet in your new member packets! Include a simple yes, no question:

Would you like to stay connected to our larger church through the synod's e-newsletter, *What Matters*? We highly recommend it!

NEW GIFTS



Soap and sanitation supplies

\$25

ADD TO CART



Personal protective equipment

\$25

ADD TO CART



Goat and flock of chicks

\$60

ADD TO CART

Your donation will be used where it is needed most within the wider category of each gift you've selected. (For example, a gift of vaccinations may be used to support other health care initiatives.) This allows our church to stay adaptive, flexible and effective in the work that we do. Because we seek to honor your generosity and keep administrative costs low, we do not track individual financial gifts to specific families or locations in the U.S. or abroad.

News From Lutheran World Relief . . .



Dear Friend,

I hope you and your family remain in good health and that you're blessed by a life filled with love.

I'm writing today to ask you to share your love with your neighbors who have the very least.

Lilian and her son, Nevil, live in one of the world's largest slums in Nairobi, Kenya. It's common for the buildings in this slum not to have running water or electricity. Paying for water that's safe to drink is the most expensive item for families like Lilian's. Often, **the choice is between having clean water to drink or food to eat.** Can you imagine making this heartbreaking choice?

Without easy access to clean water...

News From Lutheran World Relief . . .



Lilian must choose
between buying clean
water to drink or food
for her son to eat.

GIVE NOW

When you give today, your love will reach your neighbors who've been forgotten by the rest of the world ... but not by you. **You will help give them the abundant life God wants for all of us.**

And [through your generous giving](#), your neighbors like Lilian and Nevil will have easy access to clean drinking water, clean bathrooms and safe places to wash their hands. You also help provide health care to prevent and treat deadly diseases, including COVID-19.

SEND CLEAN WATER

Together, we won't stop until our love reaches every neighbor.

In Christ,

Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard
President and CEO

P.S. You would be overcome with joy by the radiant smiles and the gratitude in the hearts of the neighbors you help with your generosity. [Please give the gifts of your love, clean water and hope for a better tomorrow.](#)

Call or email

PRAYER

REQUEST to

Jan Cowan - 767-4616 - jancowan@tds.net
Kay Rettenmund - 767-2328 - rett@tds.net.

It is our time to build a legacy

Become a member of the Legacy Fund. Members of the Legacy Fund come from all walks of life and are united by a desire to preserve our beautiful Church and Cemetery.

Vermont Lutheran Church owns and maintains a cemetery, historic church building and Gathering Place with a hilltop viewscape. Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given us, including accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources. Therefore, we created the Legacy Fund to encourage, receive and administer these gifts.

Our goal is to generate a Legacy Fund of \$1 Million dollars, or more.

Through receipt of bequests, grants and/or gifts, contributions to the Legacy Fund and investment growth will serve two very important purposes now and into the future:

- To purchase neighboring land for expansion of the cemetery; and/or
- Provide funds for future maintenance of the cemetery and/or building and grounds needs of the Church.

Any legacy member whose contribution totals \$1,000 or more will be recognized with a brass plate on a prominently displayed plaque. Annual meeting reports will include all the names of those individuals who made a contribution of any amount that year.

December Newsletter
articles are due
November 26th

to Elizabeth Herrling at
vermont_church@tds.net

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Website: vermontlutheran.org

Visit Vermont's Website:

www.vermontlutheran.org

Password: God'sWork

Log on to see all Vermont
news and pictures!

