

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 . . .

Beloved Community in Christ,

Spring is one of my four favorite seasons! There's something about new flowers and shoots appearing where there had been nothing but brown remnants of winter. It gives me hope of life renewed after a season of cold and a more lifeless beauty.

Of course, this got me thinking about our season of easing up on our Covid restrictions... This is kind of like spring too, as we see things coming back to life of sorts. We are lucky to have this opportunity to create a something new. It is not like the old "normal" was in need of change, but as long as the times are changing, why not take a look at how we do things?

Let's take a "for instance" ... If we were a little too crazy about making sure everything we did was done with "keeping productive" in mind, maybe we can see the advantages that having a period of rest gave to us. Or, while having to stay locked-in at home all of the time, we saw that there was a lot of work that we could do from our homes. Or, how much we were reminded about how important it is to keep in touch and get together with friends and family.

Paul, in his letter to the church in Rome wrote, "Romans 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*" The idea of being reborn was the idea of having a new life and being completely transformed... That living in Christ would make you a new person – hopefully seen in the increase in your ability to love and be forgiving and compassionate.

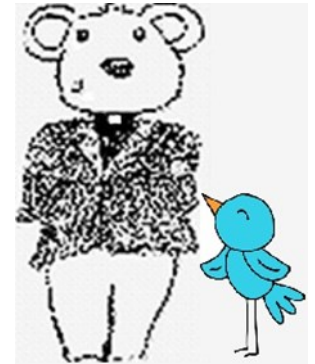
Likewise, Martin Luther wrote that, baptism *"signifies that the old creature in us ... is to be drowned and die through daily ... repentance, and ... that daily a new person is to come forth and arise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."* His idea was that each day was a new beginning, like being reborn each morning. The day before was done and there was nothing that you could do to change what had been done. Lutheran thought that you had "died" to the old day, and you were reborn to begin all over again the next morning. What a delightful outlook!

So, starting over can be a seasonal thing like going through and spring cleaning your house. Or you can see your baptism as a way in which you were born into life with Jesus. Or, you can see an instance like phasing out of this pandemic distancing as a chance to live a new life. Or, if you want to be really optimistic and hopeful, you can view each day as a new chance to "erase the slate" of yesterday's old self and begin again to live a new life.

How will you live your new life? What changes will you make? Will you be more kind? Will you be more compassionate? The opportunities are endless!

Peace,

Pastor Barry



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Highlights

In-Person Easter Outdoor Service



He Is Risen!

“God does work in mysterious ways”

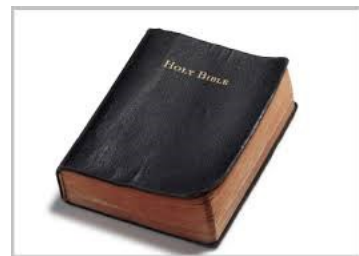
Forty years ago, while visiting a friend at Ingleside, my friend Clarence Moen made a memorable statement. “God works in mysterious ways”.

Years later, there was a chance meeting at the Hartland Nursing home in Black Earth. John Hallick and I were visiting Earl Brandt. John asked me what my connection was with Earl. I explained he is a friend and a member of Vermont Church. John went on to explain he was Greek Orthodox, and hadn't been to church in years and was battling cancer. The treatment for his cancer was experimental, without it he had only months to live.

Four months later John and Jamie showed up for Easter Service. The cancer treatment had prevented further advance. At present, John is supporting Mayo Clinic research to eliminate the cancer and has organized a world wide support group. Jamie now serves on our Church Council. John and Jamie's generous support of our Legacy Fund gave us confidence that we will achieve our goal.

It is a blessing to have the Hallick's as friends and members of our Church. “God does work in mysterious ways”.

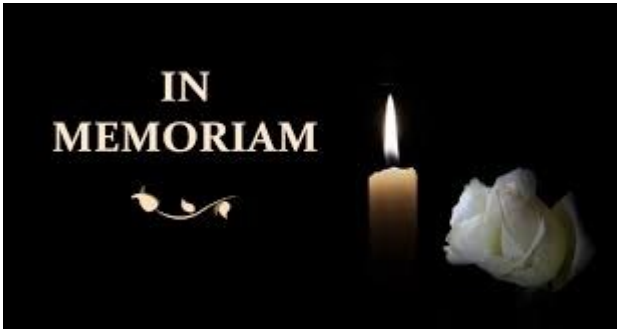
Greg Herrling



News

In-Person Services Return: May 2nd

We will be returning with a few changes. Shorter services. Wear your mask and social distance. If a communion Sunday, pick up your fellowship cup as you enter the sanctuary. Offering will not be collected during service, offering plates are available at the back of the sanctuary.



Memorial Service: May 23rd

During service, we will be remembering those whom have passed during our time away from the church.

Graduation Service: May 30th

Do you know someone who is graduating from 8th grade, senior high school, college, or tech school? We will be holding a blessing service for the class of 2021.

We would like to run the graduates' pictures in the Bulletin/Messenger. Please submit their name, and a note about where they may be headed after this milestone has passed, what their accomplishment is (including awards, scholarships, etc.), and where they go on to from here. Also, any pictures you might have of your graduate would also be appreciated. Please e-mail the church at vermont_church@tds.net by May 20th.



The Cal Tollefson Scholarship committee is excited to announce that scholarship season is upon us. We greatly appreciate the support that the congregation has shown Cal's Scholarship. We prayerfully hope you will continue to consider supporting this joyful mission! We will once again collect a special offering for the "Cal Tollefson Scholarship" at that service. Please look for the envelopes with a graduation cap on the usher stand; offerings placed in them will be designated to the scholarship for high school seniors. Thank you!



Save the Date: Sunday, September 19, 2021

Big festivities are being planned for our big day back!

Musical service with a roasted lunch to follow.

If you have any ideas to make this a special day, please contact chairperson, Jamie Hallick, at 767-2225.

We will be accepting reservations.

Daily Discipleship

Seventh Sunday of Easter (B) – John 17:6-19

The Path of Discipleship: *Rooted in Prayer*

Focus Question: *How does being rooted in prayer help you walk the path of discipleship?*

word of life

“I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.” John 17:9 (NRSV)

Read John 17: 6-19

Before Jesus faces his arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus prays an extensive prayer on behalf of his disciples. If you have not read this prayer by Jesus recently, take time to read all of John 17. It provides a glimpse into the heart of Jesus and his priorities.

1. *What does it say about Jesus for him to spend time in prayer at this point in his life?*
2. *What is your overall impression of his prayer?*

The section of the prayer found in John 17:6-8 appears to be a continuation of a conversation between Jesus and God. Jesus has fulfilled his purpose. He has made known God's name and words to the individuals whom God provided to him. Certain ones have heard and believe that Jesus has been sent by God.

3. *How well do you think the plan of God worked during the life of Jesus?*
4. *Would you have expected more people who witnessed the teachings and ministry of Jesus to have come to faith? Why or why not?*

The focus of Jesus' prayer shifts to include his followers. He knows the struggles of this world and the difficulty of keeping on the path of discipleship, so he prays on their behalf. He doesn't include the whole world but focuses on those who have connected with him. Jesus is about to die, but he pauses for prayer on behalf of others. Isn't that so like Jesus?

5. *Why do you think it was important for Jesus to hold his disciples in prayer?*

Jesus reminds God that these followers were given to Jesus by God. The link between “mine” and “yours” becomes solidified in a single unit of “ours.”

6. *What is Jesus trying to address in this part of the prayer?*

The prayer becomes a petition for protection for the followers of Jesus. Jesus is not as concerned about protecting his disciples against the powers of the world, but he desires to protect them from divisions among themselves. This is a prayer for Christian unity. Jesus experiences complete joy when all of his followers are united as one.

7. *What makes it so difficult for Christians to get along with each other?*
8. *How do you think non-Christians view the divisions?*

Bible Study (continued)

Jesus recognizes that his disciples live in the world but are not of the world. Thus, followers who desire to stay on the path of discipleship are going to need assistance, especially when they are sent to bear witness to Jesus. It is not an easy path. Jesus prays deeply on behalf of his disciples.

9. *How does it feel to have Jesus pray for you?*

word *among us*

Jacob knelt beside his bed and began his prayers, “Now I lay me down to sleep. . .” His mother watched from her rocking chair as she began her own prayers for her beloved son. Her prayer was a mother’s prayer as she prayed for God’s protection for him. Slowly, her head began to shake back and forth as she pondered all the ways her son might be harmed. These were tough times to try to follow Jesus. She continued to pray long after Jacob had drifted off to sleep.

1. *Who in your life needs a prayer for protection?*

Take a moment to pray. Allow the Spirit to open your heart, voice, and spirit.

2. *How often do we simply stop activities to pause for prayer?*
3. *What restricts us from praying on behalf of others?*

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how pray, he taught them the Lord’s Prayer. (Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4) The words of the Lord’s Prayer reflect the priorities the disciples of every age are to have. The prayer in John 17 is an extensive prayer spoken by someone preparing for his own journey to death. It reflects his priorities.

4. *What can you learn about Jesus through his prayer?*
5. *How does his prayer compare and contrast to your prayers?*

Jesus prays for the unity among his disciples to be like the unity between Jesus and God. That’s a powerful image. Take a moment to imagine what Christians might do if we were linked as closely as Jesus and God. Of course our link would need to include the Holy Spirit, the one who empowers.

As Christians, it is important to reflect on divisions among believers. In the over 2000 years since Jesus lived on earth, there have been times of significant conflict and splits. Even within congregations, there can be strife and divisions.

6. *Have we totally failed at this prayer petition to be one?*
7. *What tends to divide Christians from other Christians?*
8. *What might we do to live the prayer for unity spoken by Jesus?*

The disciples are sent out into the world to be witnesses. Jesus is well aware that his disciples (including us) will be hated by the world. Some may die a martyr’s death. Others will be rejected and persecuted. Thus, Jesus prays earnestly for his followers.

We can learn much from this prayer in our own prayer life. Take time to note how much of the prayer has to do with Jesus and his own challenges.

9. *How much time does Jesus spend in praying for others?*
10. *What can we learn from this prayer of Jesus?*



May 2

Council at Jerusalem

Acts 15:1-18

May 9

Living by Faith

Galatians 1:13-17; 2:11-21

May 16

One in Christ

Galatians 3:1-9, 23-29

May 23

Pentecost; Fruits of the Spirit

Act 2:1-4;

Galatians 4:1-7 [5:16-26]

May 30

Psalm 1

John 14:1-6

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Gale	Kennedy	May 01
Ruth	Ohlrogge	May 02
William	Kennedy	May 03
Daniel	Orth	May 03
Connor	Danz	May 04
Joan	Skalet	May 04
Charlene	Meier	May 06
Derek	Adler	May 07
Carey	Norslien	May 08
Peder	Ohlrogge	May 08

James	Stapelmann	May 08
Lavonne	Clason	May 09
Shaye	Doyle	May 12
Ellie	Boebel	May 13
Kenneth	Hoerz	May 13
Luke	Haugen	May 15
Pat	Powers	May 15
Mark	Haukoos	May 16
Russell	Severson	May 16

William Jr.	Kennedy	May 17
Michael	Syrjamaki	May 18
Taylor	Ziomet	May 18
Karsten	Kvam	May 20
Jonathan	Schultz	May 22
Brianna	Herrling	May 24
Christy	Maik	May 25
Myron	Norslien	May 25
Gaila	Olsen	May 26
Grace	Powers	May 26
Brenna	Dauck	May 27

Margaret	Donaldson	May 29
Jensen	Doyle	May 29
Justine	Myers	May 31



DRAFT
VERMONT LUTHERAN CHURCH Council Minutes
April 22, 2021

The April meeting of the Vermont Lutheran Council was held via ZOOM conference with video and audio participation. Vice President Paul Dybdahl called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

Attendance: Paul D, Jamie H, Pastor Barry, Len S, Melissa H, Steve H, Ellie B, Larry Z

Devotions: Pastor Barry led us in Devotions. He recounted the events of a recent wedding that he officiated at. Due to unique circumstances this wedding was moved up from its original Fall date and the couple still wanted a Church wedding. It would be held before a very few. The key is that regardless of the circumstances or the couples religious back rounds, God was still present at the wedding! Molding to other peoples needs may vary, but Gods molding always keeps Him present!

Reports:

Pastor's report – Can be read as presented and printed separately

Secretary's Report – March minutes (April draft of Minutes can be read and printed separately)

Treasurer's Report – Can be read and printed separately

Property and Building Report – Can be read and printed separately

Ellie made a motion to approve all Reports. Jamie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Confirm our in person Church Services will resume on May 2nd. It will be with masks and social distancing. FM broadcast will be available with hope of technical sound problem to be cleared up.

No basement serving yet at this time.

May 23rd a Memorial to the deceased who have passed away during our Church absence.

New Business:

Sunday May 30th to be Graduation Blessing Sunday

Summer Services are being planned

A Church Celebration may occur in early Fall with a pig roast; it could be in conjunction with Rally Sunday. Details a work in progress

Cal Tollefson Scholarship – to be presented to graduating Seniors who have returned their applications. Paul D graciously volunteered to be the presenter with the format of Black Earth Graduation yet to be determined

The next scheduled Council Meeting to be live in person Wednesday May 19th at 6:30 PM

Len made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Larry seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 PM by a unanimous vote

Pastor Barry led us in The Lord's Prayer
Submitted by Larry Ziemer, Secretary

Church Council Meeting April 22, 2021

Pastor's Report

Baptisms: 1: 4/18 – Colton Randall Dyerson

Weddings: 1: 4/22 – Keri Brown & Joel Jarmel (n/m)

Shut-In Visits: 0 Hospital Visits: 0

Funerals: 0

West Dane Text Study: 4; Area Narrative Study Group: 1; Mt. Horeb Ecumenical Clergy: 0
(all via Zoom)

Things are starting to look up and returning to whatever “normal” is again! We had a family baptism last Sunday with the Dyerson family (Janelle is the granddaughter of Beverly Schultz). Today (Thursday) I had a small wedding (there were 7 of us) for a couple who lives on Old Indian Trail, and on May 8th I have a baptism for Ron & Denise Boehnen’s granddaughter. I also have one wedding scheduled for next September (Ashley Hefty). Donna Schultz is in the hospital (St. Mary’s) and is doing poorly. So, there is *life* back in Vermont after a long quiet spell!

Confirmation class is finished for the year. I would really like to thank Jill Dybdahl for the great job she does in coordinating and teaching, for the students who hung in there with us during the Zoom classes because of COVID, and also to the mentors (Larry Ziemer, Stuart Dybdahl, Rylie Lynch, and Karsten Haugen) for the weeks of Lent this year. Thank you all!

The outside Easter service went well (despite my voice!), and we had 59 souls here, though I understand that there might have been a few who stayed in their cars that I may not have seen. It was a **beautiful** day and it was so nice to see faces again (even though they were half-covered by masks).

One thing about the COVID year is, man, did I catch up on my reading! I’ve been learning a lot from Richard Rohr, Matthew Fox, and Rob Bell. It has been a great time to brush up on some current theology I might have missed otherwise.

I spoke with a woman relative of Travis Dyerson (Janelle’s husband) who has a group that does polka worship services! I think that this might be a great treat for the beginning of fall when everyone is back from vacation and we can worship together without too much nervous pressure. Maybe we could get that pig roast in then too! This group has done the barn worship Christmas Eve services for West Middleton Lutheran for the past several years, and they sound like a solid group. Also, she says that they’ll play for whatever they get from an offering collection! Cool.

Well, I feel like I’m going from hibernating to sprinting through the spring flowers, but that’s all I’ve got for now!

Peace!

Pastor Barry

Worship and Music Committee meeting

April 16, 2021

The committee met to address several items to prepare for the beginning of in-person Sunday services in May.

The current plan is to hold the church service outdoors, weather permitting, as was done on Easter Sunday. Worshippers may bring their own lawn chairs. If the area has inclement weather, we will move indoors and observe the precautions of masks and distancing. We recommend that the decision of the location for the morning is posted on the website by 7 am when the weather looks questionable in case some members are uncomfortable with the indoor setting and would prefer to stay home. Pastor Barry is planning to post the services online later in the day.

The service for the summer months will be shorter with less use of the traditional liturgy. We are attempting to combine the opening hymn with the hymn of praise, there will also be a sermon hymn and a final sending hymn. Special music could also be added or used in place of one of the hymns.

We discussed choosing a variety of hymns, both traditional and more contemporary. Because the service is outdoors, it was recommended that we use the With One Voice (blue) hymn book for the hymns. The hymn book could be picked up along with the bulletin for the service from the ushers.

A request was made for a new, more positive or relatable and possibly shorter Prayer of Confession to recite early in the service. Several were located on the ELCA website and one will be sent to Pastor Barry for his approval.

The Sharing of the Peace portion of the service will be skipped for now.

Many people have expressed a desire to limit the standing and sitting transitions in the service as it is more difficult to manage from a lawn chair. We are also concerned about the length of time standing when outdoors. We recommend limiting standing to only The Lord's Prayer and possibly the final sending hymn.

Hospitality following the service should also remain outdoors. Since we will not have tables and will be juggling items, the hospitality will be limited to only beverages. The coffee cart can be brought outside and coffee could be served by the hosts in disposable cups. Individual creamers and sweeteners will also be made available. The hospitality hour will need to be cancelled for the morning if the weather pushes the service indoors.

We are interested in purchasing a dolly to mount the electronic keyboard on to help move it into position for the service. We may also look at speakers to help direct and amplify the sound for all to hear.

We are all looking forward to returning to the church for our worship.

Respectfully submitted,

Marguerite Parrell, Ingerid Kvam, Jamie Hallick, Patty Herrling, Jill Dybdahl, Laura Winchip

WELCA News

MAY ALTAR DUTY

Joanne Skalet & Julie Schmitt

Building and Property Report - April 2021

Even though we have not been inside the Church for many months, outside activity on the property continues. Once the snow disappeared and the green appeared it has been a busy place. Greg with his cast of thousands gathered some to begin the Spring work, and others just came and did jobs that they have done in the past. Here is a list of some work accomplished over the last month.

Flags were put up again in Vermont's Military memorial

Gardens were treated with Preen

Paved areas with weeds were sprayed with Roundup

All turf areas including the Cemetery were sprayed with crab grass inhibitors


Joel cleaned up the fallen Winter brush in the Cemetery before mowing season begins

The door to the Gathering Place was becoming hard to lock – repair and adjustment was accomplished

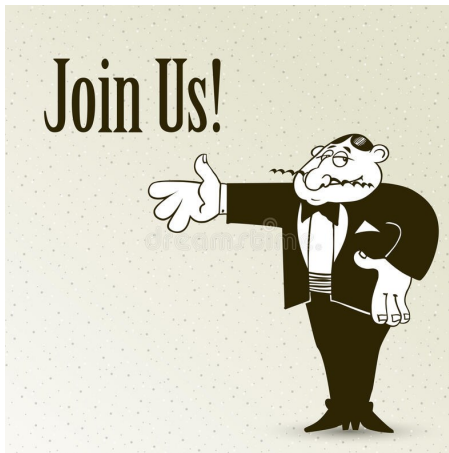
Pansies were planted in the well head planter (Thank You Deb K)

Thank You to the volunteers and others “who do when they see needing done!”

Greg H
Larry Z

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: space-between;">  <div> <h1 style="margin: 0;">STEWARDSHIP</h1> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Managing God's Gifts To Us</i></p> </div> </div>			
<u>Contributions</u>	2021	2020	Change
Monthly	\$ 13,971	\$ 18,163	\$ (4,192)
YTD	\$ 47,382	\$ 57,785	\$ (10,404)
<u>Operating Expenses</u>	2021	2020	Change
Monthly	\$ 9,402	\$ 8,998	\$ 404
YTD	\$ 43,695	\$ 41,433	\$ 2,261
<u>Operating Cash</u>			
Current Month	2021		\$ 113,711
Current Month	2020		\$ 87,660
Current Month	2019		\$ 21,770

Attendance Matters	
<u>April 2021</u>	
4th	65 + 13 views = 78
11th	12 views
18th	11 views
25th	11 views



So more people may know the way of Jesus

ELCA implements Future Church design

By [Megan Brandsrud](#)

March 12, 2021



On Feb. 1, the ELCA churchwide organization implemented [Future Church](#), a new working structure focused on motivating the entire church to actively share the way of Jesus with more people so that they might experience community, justice and love. The design emphasizes the belief that members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization and its partner organizations all have important roles in the [church's mission](#).

The church's three expressions (congregations, synods and the churchwide organization) will remain, but the Future Church design is centered on a "One Church" identity that will bring greater collaboration to the mission of sharing the gospel and God's grace in the world.

This new design stresses three goals:

- A welcoming church that engages new, young and diverse people.
- A thriving church rooted in tradition but radically relevant.
- A connected, sustainable church that shares a common purpose and direction.

To implement the Future Church design, structural changes were made that resulted in a 5% reduction in staff and the creation of new departments, called home areas.

Living Lutheran talked about Future Church and what it means for the life of the ELCA with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton; Phil Hirsch, executive director of ELCA Christian Community and Leadership; Mikka McCracken, executive director of ELCA Innovation; and Bill Horne, ELCA vice president. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Living Lutheran: What is the purpose of Future Church, and what is most important for people to know about it?

Eaton: We've tried to emphasize that this isn't something that just sprang up because of or during the pandemic, but this is building on work that we've done for years. We're not doing this to combat or counteract the trend lines that we see in the church, though that is something we're concerned about.

We're trying to find a way to activate each of us to invite more people into the way of Jesus and find community, justice and love. That's it. The way of Jesus.

When you talk about church out in the world, especially when you have an "evangelical" in it, it's a church that is anti-science, anti-intellectual, anti-gay, anti-having any kind of dialogue, and we have a theology that is the opposite of that. How can we now be the ones to grab hold of that doctrine of grace and justification that brings freedom, and invite more people into that and have that be heard as an authentic voice of Christianity?

Hirsch: This is something that's authentically Lutheran. Martin Luther, at a time when the church of his day was facing a crisis of its own, what did he have them do but drill down to the core of the gospel message and hold true to a few core principles and then innovate on everything else. That's what he taught us, and that's what we're doing here. So, we talk about becoming an innovation denomination, but that's who we've been since the start.

McCracken: Innovation is a means—not an end. Part of this purpose statement of activating each of us is, for me, about connecting to that sense of vocation. For Luther you could be a bread maker, a shoe fixer ... as long as you were doing that in service to the neighbor and with the heart of the gospel, you were connecting and living your life of faith. How do we return to that as we think about innovation?

Each person has a vocation that's a gift from God. When we become the body of Christ and live more fully into that collective, all things are possible.

What are some of the disruptions that have affected the church's ability to reach people, and how does Future Church address them?

Hirsch: One is that people don't just come to church as a matter of course anymore. Instead of expecting that people are going to come to us, maybe we need to think about going to them, particularly for young adults.

Secondly, we are a very monocultural church in a very multicultural world. The issue there is, what witness does it bear to the kingdom of God—the way we understand God to be and the kingdom of heaven to be—to be that very white church in an increasingly diverse world? The way to get at it is to begin by naming it and then take some steps. Instead of expecting people to come to us, we go to them and listen to what their needs are and then craft ministries to begin to meet those needs. When it comes to becoming a more multicultural church, more diverse people, there's a lot to be said about that, but we have to learn about and respect our neighbor's culture in ways that we haven't before.

Eaton: And certainly being forced to shelter in place. We were disrupted that we couldn't do business in the same ways, and we found out we could be a lot more creative and efficient in this new way. That would've never happened if we weren't forced out of the office or out of our

ELCA News (continued)

congregations. And we've adapted. We're reaching more people now than we have reached before with the good news of the gospel of Jesus.

So when we can worship in person, which I think is an extremely important component of the Christian life, how do we make sure we still stay in contact with those people who will not come into our church buildings? And what have we learned or can we learn about online community?

Hirsch: I think one of the disruptions is also that the way human community is forming is changing at an increasingly rapid rate. People form human communities now online, and it's not just a virtual experience to supplement the in-person. It is its own experience. That is new to human community. The world nor the church have seen this before, and the church has now taken a huge step to adapt to this.

We need to be able to make adaptations like that as a regular course of what we do because it's changing so quickly.

McCracken: To build on that piece, about human community, it's not only the forming but the finding and belonging that changes with that. When you consider that 48% of Gen Z (born in the late 1990s and early 2000s) is going to be people who don't identify as white in terms of racial identity, what does that mean for us? How do we have to grow and adapt so that we can be this place for all, that vision that we have?

Hirsch: And it is not just our vision for the church; this is our understanding of the kingdom of God, and it was the way of the early church. So in a way, it's a callback to the roots of who the church was from the start, which was not only more ethnically diverse but more economically diverse than what we are today.

The Future Church design focuses on working as "One Church." How will the expressions of the church be working together in this new design?

Eaton: It's our intent to contact a million new people and introduce them to the ELCA as this community of Jesus. This has to be our great mission and our great purpose. It can't be done by those of us in the churchwide organization developing programs or issuing directives. It can't be done just by congregations. We have so many other beautiful resources that can be brought into play to give people entry points to come into this community. I mean, 1 in 50 Americans is touched by a Lutheran service organization. Right there, we are in contact with people.

Hirsch: This is something we hope everyone will see their place in—that they will be able to find a way to reach out to somebody new around them. We know that belonging usually precedes believing. So we're hoping that people will have a sense of belonging to each other, and then we need to do better at helping people understand the way of Christ.

We've been very good at that for people who would come and baptize their babies and bring them up in Sunday school and confirm them, but when that is no longer the primary way people are engaging with religion, we need to make some shifts and begin to ask how else we can bring along adults and help them discover this way of living and of loving in the world. And to be changed by the grace of God.

Eaton: I think here is where the innovation lab is going to be a very important incubator for us, because we need new ideas and new ways to do this that we haven't even thought of.

ELCA News (continued)

McCracken: If this year of working with the lab has taught us anything—the best ideas, no offense to us, don't necessarily come from churchwide. Synods and congregations are encountering this more and have more aptitude for innovation because they're closer to the members, they're closer to the community.

"One Church," I think, means, "How might we learn from one another in new and different ways so we don't have to re-create the wheel and are able to share good ideas and offer encouragement?" One person with a good idea really only needs a little bit of encouragement.

How can members get involved in this shared mission—the purpose of Future Church?

McCracken: Check out what's already happening by you. I have been in so many conversations with places like Augsburg University or Luther and a handful of synods that are far out ahead of us in this innovation work and have been doing it for many years. There are a lot of resources that exist already, and that's something that we would hope to build on.

Also, the ELCA is just so excited about the opportunity to work on the "Congregations Lead" initiative with support from Lilly [Endowment Inc.] and their Thriving Congregations work. That will be a fairly small group in terms of a pilot group for that work, but we know we're going to learn so much from those congregational partners and synods. And hopefully those will be some inspiration points and ideas that we're able to share back with the church.

Hirsch: This is maybe going to sound very basic, but I would also encourage people—if they're really going to be active in this—to be grounded in their Christian life through prayer and reading Scripture. You can't give what you don't have, and the more our own people have the sense that they are so completely loved by God and unconditionally, the better they're going to be able to share that with others. If they don't have that, it will be a program, but if they have that, everything else will become clear.

Horne: Our focus on innovation gives our members an opportunity to show that love for Jesus to others. Working in a much more collaborative environment, that is where the person in the congregation can see a connection to others who may work in other parts of the church and, because of what they do, can help give life and meaning to some ideas that they have, where they are located. We can become better connected because we share that experience with Christ.

Eaton: Phil is absolutely right. This is not just a technique or a program, but it's a way of being. And as Bill just mentioned, we're not used to being one church, working all together. We don't see ourselves as connected, but in baptism we are connected already.

What are you most excited about with the Future Church design, and what do you want members to feel hopeful about for what's to come?

Horne: I hope when they read this article, they come to the conclusion that there are so many possibilities of how we can be church. For years I've heard people complain and criticize the church for not being able to do this or do that, and often the criticism was directed at how our three expressions function. When they begin to experience what it means to be one church, these barriers melt away because there are things that you can do, and we're committed to being church in a way that embraces good ideas, embraces innovative ways of serving God.

Eaton: We are on a mission from God. That's exciting! Our lives have meaning, deep meaning.

ELCA News (continued)

They've been given meaning because we're beloved of God. And then we're free to share that.

I think we live pretty isolated lives in the United States in a lot of ways, but we're not alone. We don't do this alone; we're invited into this great cloud of witnesses. That, to me, is exciting. That we have this mission that's been given to us—and doing it all together!

Hirsch: I know that some people are concerned that focusing on new people, on others, will take away something from their experience of church. My experience is that when people see others come to faith, experience the love and the belonging that is in community, the longing for justice and peace, the people who were there all along are energized in a way that's hard to describe. My hope for the church is that we will have that experience again. Because I think once people get a taste of it, there's just nothing like it.

McCracken: To speak very personally, as someone who is as old as the ELCA and has only ever known this denomination, I would love to be part of a future church movement that isn't only defined by decline and failure to reflect the diversity in which God gifts and creates. I want to be part of telling the old, old story of Jesus and God's love so more people have a chance to think about church and community in new ways. I want to be part of a church—the people of God—that trusts so deeply in the transformative power of life in Christ that we insist on change. I believe the abundance of God is going to be so incredible, we're not even going to know what to do with it. That's my hope.

New home areas

The Future Church design has created four new home areas that encompass the work of the churchwide organization.

Christian Community and Leadership

Led by Phil Hirsch, this home area recruits, trains and deploys leaders, and establishes and grows Christian communities. Programs include congregational vitality, campus ministry, the ELCA Youth Gathering, children's ministry, young adult ministry, worship, federal chaplaincy, Young Adults in Global Mission, and ELCA colleges and universities.

Innovation

Led by Mikka McCracken, this home area champions and drives innovation culture (the development of new and useful things) and leaders. Programs include Resourceful Servants and Innovation Services.

Service and Justice

Led by Rafael Malpica Padilla, this home area fosters and facilitates the church's engagement in service and promotes efforts to call and act for justice. Programs include global service, ethnic ministries and associations, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, advocacy, and the Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy.

Operations

Operations comprises the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Office of the Secretary and Office of the Treasurer. This home area includes the work of development, ecumenical and interreligious relations, theological discernment, communications, the archives, synod relations, rosters and records, finance and information technology.

Call or email

PRAYER

REQUEST to

Jan Cowan - 767-4616 - jancowan@tds.net
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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.

June Newsletter
articles are due
May 27th

to Elizabeth Herrling at
vermont_church@tds.net

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