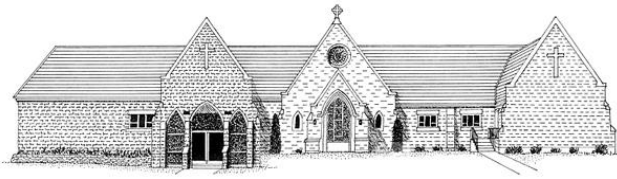


THE MESSENGER



Monthly news for Emmanuel Lutheran Church - Menominee, Michigan

JUNE

2020

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

*A righteous man who walks
in his integrity - how blessed
are his sons after him.*

PROVERBS 20:7

FROM THE PASTOR...

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

June 1st was my 5-year anniversary here at Emmanuel, which means that you've been stuck with me for half a decade now, though my accrued time here is nowhere near that of your previous several pastors. But, on this anniversary, I had to giggle to myself in that if during the interview that you had with me prior to calling me here, if anyone would have asked where you see us in five years and I had responded with "preaching to an empty sanctuary," I'm thinking that you would probably have asked the Bishop for a new candidate.

Maybe some of you did, but I'll not pursue that conversation any further.

In last month's message I stated that what we are experiencing now is far from normal, and while "normal" (however we define that word moving forward) still may very well be a long way away, we are gaining a little traction moving forward. In addition to the staff being back in the office, the doors to the church are now open during the week. This is your church and it has been very difficult keeping those doors locked and keeping you out. But as our COVID-19 knowledge grows and as we implement the necessary resources, we do feel that the building is becoming a safer place. If you do come in to the church, please honor all social distancing practices so that we all can continue to feel safe.

Having said that, we're not yet ready to gather in the sanctuary for in-person worship. Our vision is being guided by the "Returning to Church" resource put out by the Wisconsin Council of Churches that the Northern Great Lakes Synod is lifting up, a document which is built upon CDC and other scientific and medical guidelines. The resource model breaks down the process of returning to church into three phases. It is recommended that churches our size do not return to in-person worship until phase three. According to this criteria, we are still in Phase One, though we are vigilantly evaluating our environment so that we are prepared for when we are able to transition into Phase Two and then into Phase Three.

So, what does this all mean?

Well, it means that we have to take a smart and safe approach to gathering together to worship God when we finally are able to. The virtual and drive-thru communion meal on May 31st, Pentecost Sunday, was a first step. I felt very comfortable distributing the bread and wine, and I hope those who received it felt the same. I would like to propose that our second step be to gather for worship outdoors. For those who are comfortable being here, I am scheduling to **begin outdoor worship in our 14th Street Parking lot on Sunday, June 21st at 9:00 am.** (Please see included Rules for Outdoor Worship). For those who are not yet comfortable gathering, the service will still be available on our Facebook page. (As of this time, I am unsure if it will be live or recorded; it depends on the strength of our Wi-Fi signal reaching out into the parking lot). This will be our schedule for the immediate future. If rain or deterrent weather is forecast, I will get the message out on Saturday evening or early Sunday that there will be no outdoor church, but that I will stream the service on Facebook Live instead.

It's been trying times, but the reality of the COVID-19 situation as it relates to churches is that it could be another year or, possibly, even two, before we can guarantee that the church is a completely safe place in respect to this virus. We will honor the situation as such and when we finally are able to gather again together in our sanctuary that reality may alter our worship experience. I promise you, though, that we, "we" being the pastor's office, church office, and church council, will continue to monitor and converse, always looking ahead with faith and assurance that God is speaking to us and that we are listening to God's voice. The very last thing that we would want to do is to put any of our members or their families in an unsafe or unhealthy situation. That would be a direct refute on the part of the church of Jesus commandment to love one another and to care for His church.

So, I ask you to please continue to be patient and prayerful.....and please don't ask me what the church will look like in another five years; because at this point, your guess is as good as mine!

In Christ,

Pastor Mark

Rules for Outdoor Worship

As we gather for outdoor in-person worship, there are a number of guidelines that we must adhere to in order to gather more safely. Online worship is the only truly safe way to worship right now, but being outside is a reasonably safe option for many. The guidance we have received from the ELCA, our Northern Great Lakes Synod, and the Wisconsin Council of Churches ([links below](#)) have aided in these rules and are meant to keep us ALL as safe as possible as we seek to worship physically together. Above all, love and care for our fellow children of God is what must guide us. Therefore, here are the rules that will guide our outdoor worship:

- If you do not feel comfortable joining in-person outdoor worship, that is perfectly acceptable. The online livestream or recording of worship will continue indefinitely.
- If you wish to wear a mask outside, you are welcome to do so. However, masks outside are not required if social distancing is maintained.
- If you feel sick in ANY way, please stay home.
- A minimum of 6 feet will be kept between different family units/those living in the same household.
- If you are able, please bring your own chair to sit on. However, chairs will be provided for those that need them.

- There will be NO – shaking hands, passing the peace through physical touch (except within family units), passing of the offering plate, or fellowship time with food or coffee.
- When Holy Communion takes place, instructions will be given at that time.
- Access to inside the church building will be limited to necessary reasons only.
- Use the provided printed bulletin and inserts and recycle them at home.
- If you need something while in attendance, ask Pastor Mark for it. Please do NOT just try and get it yourself if it can be helped.
- Be aware of others around you, try to leave in a staggered manner, and again don't congregate around vehicles.
- Be kind, be gracious, and be patient. This is an experiment that may need refining over time. This will NOT be worship as we knew it before.

Links to guidance documents:

https://download.elca.org/ELCA Resource Repository/Returning_to_Individual_Worship.pdf?_ga=2.84805584.87245994.1591303554-2135929365.1590691746

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/northern-great-lakes-synod/gather-us-ineventually/3233367493367100/>

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>



**Congratulations and God's blessings
to our high school graduates!**

*Rhyon Anderson
Brock Barrette
Lauren Caley
Kaden Clausen
Brea Davis
Natalie Delgoffe
Autumn Erickson
Delaney Johnson
Greyson Jones
Emma Laatsch
Jaida Lesperance
Amber Poquette
Kylie Wickstrom
Jadelyn Younk*

VIRTUAL
VBS
**VACATION
BIBLE SCHOOL**

July 28th, 29th, & 30th

Join us as we do VBS on Facebook live ! Children will enjoy a unique VBS experience as they learn about Jesus and God's Word through Bible adventures and crafts.

Letters and registration forms will be going out in the next couple of weeks, so watch your mail !

Steward your *new* community

Like a caterpillar emerging from a cocoon to new life as a butterfly, we can steward our congregations and communities to awaken from Covid-19 to a more excellent reality that brims with faith, hope and love.

Covid-19's hardship, deprivation and grief have inspired an outpouring of kindness, generosity, selflessness, neighborliness and courageous service. Suffering has given us a glimpse of what our communities can and should be, following Christ's two principal commands: love God and love one another.

Our stewardship opportunity and challenge is clear: Can we cultivate this renewed spirit of loving neighborliness as a "new normal"? As our community's central, defining ethos?

The last several months have taught us much:

- **Life is precious.** Everyone counts. No exceptions.
- **We suffer together.** Shared pain creates strong bonds.
- **Serving brings fulfillment.** Many sacrifice joyfully.
- **We need each other.** We can't go it alone.
- **We miss each other.** We require human interaction.
- **Personal contact is sublime.** Nothing beats face-to-face.
- **We are grateful.** Thank God for what we have.
- **We are wiser.** We know what's important.

Covid-19 is receding, though slowly. Much pain lies ahead. Before it's through, the virus will claim more of our friends and loved ones. Many families will suffer economically.

But the virus is also teaching us anew how to be loving neighbors. As Covid-19 abates, we can deepen these lessons and steward our communities to live more closely aligned with God's purposes, to discover life abundant with joy, connection, fulfillment and generosity. With God's help, our congregations and communities can emerge from our Covid-19 cocoon to a more excellent reality, centered in faith, hope and love.

--Rob Blezard

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A message from Bishop Katherine Finegan



“In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out – until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels” ~Exodus 40: 36-38

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Are we there yet? Any parent will tell you that they have heard this question called from the back seat of the vehicle any number of times, and not only on the longer car rides. Parents learn pretty quickly to prepare their children for the extended trip; gathering toys, games, and books, a favorite pillow, movies, whatever they can find to keep the children busy for the duration of the journey. Because without a sense of time or distance, children need to be given context, or other cues as in, “We will not arrive before supper time” or “We will be there before dark.” Such preparation helps the children be more resilient to the demands of travel. Knowing they will be in the car for awhile helps them settle in for a longer journey.

I wonder, if the Israelites had been more prepared for their wilderness wanderings, if that would have helped. The book of Exodus is full of accusations of being a “stiff necked people” as they complain about the conditions of their journey and never getting an answer to their incessant question (which isn’t actually recorded, but may as well have been) “Are we there yet?”

The Israelites didn’t arrive for 40 years. And while the actual question is not explicitly recorded, what we do have is a record of their disobedience, their complaining and doubts, the challenges of leadership, the lack of acceptable food and water, the weariness of the journey, and how people had trouble getting along. And yet, in the midst of all of this, all the griping and angst, the overwhelming witness of the book of Exodus and what is interwoven throughout this journey story, is the immediate, close, and faithful presence of God.

God travels with the Israelites, guides them, even feeds them. During this journey, the Israelites enjoy a relationship of intimacy and care with God, unequalled anywhere else in the whole history of salvation. I think of Charles Dickens’ words, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”. It was worst because the people struggled and suffered. There was uncertainty. There was pain and death. But it was also the best of times as God’s presence was visibly and palpably with them. Despite all the complaining, never before or since were the people of God so utterly dependent upon God’s care and guidance. Their trust was out of necessity, but it was trust well placed.

Our religious tradition is thick with wilderness stories and analogies. Wilderness times are marked by uncertainty and pain even as they are synonymous with complete dependence on God, and a deepening of that relationship, borne of desperation yes, but do we not cling to God all the more fiercely when our need

is greater? The season of Lent is often likened to a wilderness time. Or the journey of grief. Or a time of healing from an illness, or any other time of trial and tribulation.

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness 40 years. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness 40 days. I suggest that this time of pandemic is also a wilderness time and a journey that is blessed with trust and dependence on God.

Like any wilderness story, our current time is marked with uncertainty. And as people of faith, we are blessed to once again and always depend upon the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus to sustain and guide us, weary travelers that we are.

Because the difficult truth is, we are not going to “arrive” for some time. We would do well to prepare ourselves and our children, our congregation members and our neighbors, to understand what it will mean to learn to live with this new virus until a vaccine is readily available, or until 60% to 70% of the population is immune. Such preparation creates resiliency. And we will need to be resilient to the demands of this journey else we start to gripe and complain and not get along well with each other.

The lifting of government restrictions does not mean that the virus is no longer a threat. Nor does it mean that life, and worship, can return to pre-pandemic rhythms. Even as we are legally allowed to gather in groups of less than 10 and then less than 50, we and those we love are still at risk and precautions must be taken to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Watch for the cues: We will arrive when widespread testing is available, when tracking is possible, and ultimately, when there is a vaccine. Like the Israelites, we do not have a map. Like the Israelites, our arrival time is still far off. And like the Israelites, we will arrive a different people than when our journey began. But we are a resilient people, striving for patience and faithfulness in these wilderness days. Know that God travels with us, guiding us, sustaining us in our weariness.

Again, I ask you to seek out the blessing that is in these days. God is ever present, ever faithful, and will bring us to that day when there is an answer to the question, “Are we there yet?” For now, the answer is no, not even close. Settle in for a longer journey. But we’ll get there, and we’ll get there together.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Katherine Finegan

Because we are unable to be together in our church building on Sundays, we will share with you here the bible verses that are usually in the bulletin each week. You can read one each week, or all at once if you like!

June 14, 2020 (Second Sunday after Pentecost)

Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” **Matthew 9:37-38**

How will our faith communities look when we finally emerge from our sheltering in place? Many things will have changed, but the good news is eternal. We listen to Jesus, pray for renewal, and trust that God is doing a new thing with, among, and through us.

June 21, 2020 (Third Sunday after Pentecost)

“Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” **Matthew 10:39**

Sometimes community feels like loss, smells like sorrow, and loudly laments what is no longer. Jesus proclaims a “kindom” community born of an essential loss to self. That death, in turn, enriches the soil from which the abundant life God desires for all creation will burgeon.

June 28, 2020 (Fourth Sunday after Pentecost)

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” **Matthew 10:40**

You don't have to watch hours of Martha Stewart to master the art of hospitality. Just fling wide the door. Community forms and flourishes in the soil of wide welcome and presence (i.e. hospitality). How will a new reality reform both your hospitality and community?

EMMANUEL BUDGET NEWS

As of May 31, 2020

*Your Contributions to the General Fund	\$103,073.44
*Your Approved Budget Amount	\$110,584.96

Thank you to everyone who has continued to give during this unique and difficult time. I know that it's not easy to give to something if you can't see the work being done or if you're not even sure if the work is being done. I assure you that it is.

Hebrews 11:1 states: "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" Your continued giving is that act of faith. Though we haven't been able to worship together, the work of the church continues to happen, in some cases in exciting new ways. That is faith in action. Thanks be to God for the continued evolution of the church and for her ability to adapt, and thanks be to you for your continued faith in Christ's church to continue to carry out her mission.

– Pastor Mark

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT EMMANUEL
Online Worship 9:00 a.m.
Livestreamed on our Facebook page

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Follow us on Instagram and Facebook at
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Mrs. Patti Treptow

Church Secretary

Mrs. Judy Raygo

Custodian- inside Mrs. Carol Parrish

Custodian – outside Mr. Lee Parrish



We are a congregation of the Northern Great Lakes Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America