June 2020

"The Good Newsletter" of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

A Message from Pastor Karsten: Questions, questions, questions

In the midst of this pandemic and trying to adjust to a new normal of isolation, masks, and social distancing, there are lots of important and often asked questions right now. Let me take some of the space here to try and address some of the questions we are hearing.

When can we gather for worship again?

The short answer is that the Board just met during their every other week meetings right now, and decided that, for the month of June, we will continue to have all worship be online.

The larger answer is that we recently brought together a "Smart Team" (at the recommendation of the ELCA) with its purpose to explore the issues and protocols we must address in order to open up safely. So even though the President declared churches can be open and Governor Walz is allowing churches to open to 25 percent capacity (that would be 90 in our sanctuary), there is strong consensus that we are not ready to open up our doors. There are things that we need to get in place to open safely – but we are working toward that goal. If you want a taste of some of the larger issues and expectations, this is a recent publication from the CDC- https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC_tcm1045-433301.pdf. Please know we look forward to the days ahead when groups can gather inside, when we can worship in the sanctuary (even if socially distanced and wearing masks), and when we can visit with each other – but consensus is it would not be wise, and we are not yet ready to do this. And yes, we are also exploring outdoor worship in the parking lot and even small mid-week options. Keep your eyes on the weekly news bulletins for more information.

We are missing Communion – when could we have that again?

I am glad that in the midst of this abstaining from Communion, it has stirred in many the real value of this sacrament. While there are some churches who have chosen to offer virtual communion (people find their own elements at home of crackers/wine/juice for a time of directed communion in the online worship), the Board and I have chosen to hold off on Communing until we are more together as a wider community. As this COVID-19 continues to linger, and will for a longer time, we are exploring various options for celebrating this meaningful meal. We are following the encouragement of our Bishop and here is the information link for a deeper read: https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Worship_in_Times_of_Public_Health_Concerns.pdf?_ga=2.243523469.90755443.1585058736-2005833497.1584632801

Are we ever going to be back to normal?

There are so many ways we are longing to return to what life was like – but the reality is that this situation makes it difficult to simply return to what was, and really forces us into what will be a new normal. Fellowship is such a part of being in a faith community, yet gathering around food like our Sunday donuts or pot luck meals will be missing for quite a while. We will have deep caution when being with others instead of a more open embrace and trust of others – and that will be hard. Worship will be different when we are encouraged now to not sing – yet there are good opportunities for meaningful worship that will shape and empower us. Going back to how things were is less likely than finding new ways to be together, to be church, to be in relationship with each other, and to find our ways through this challenging time. May God help us with this.

There are no doubt other questions people have. I would invite you to write or call me if you have specific questions about our life and work and worship together, and I will offer the best answers I can give and help you find other sources of information.

A Message from Deacon Jennifer Schneider: marginalized /ˈmärjənəˌlīzd/

Dictionary.com definition: (of a person, group, or concept) treated as insignificant or peripheral. "members of marginalized cultural groups"

Psalm 31:11-12 reads, “I am the scorn of my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors, a dismay to my acquaintances; when they see me in the street they avoid me. Like the dead I am forgotten, out of my mind; I am as useless as a broken pot.”

I wonder how many young adults or persons of color or persons who identify as LGBTQIA silently cry out each day with the words of the psalmist? Do their bones ache from the isolation and mental anguish over daily being marginalized in society? As I tune into the news this week, I see more rioting, violence, and destruction of property in protest of the distressing death of George Floyd. The notion of marginalization is real. It is happening right now. It happens everyday. It is not God’s plan for creation, for humankind. It is in direct opposition to the greatest command *to love one another as I have loved you.*

I write this to you as your deacon who you have called to engage in the work of outreach and evangelism. Over the past 2 years, I hope that I have nudged you to think differently about the wide welcome of God - about the radical hospitality of Christ. In our work around Reconciling in Christ (moving toward the deepening and expanding welcome of LGBTQ persons into Our Redeemer Lutheran Church) and the Augsburg grant for a Young Adult Initiative, we have explored and continue to explore our role in marginalized communities and themes of racial privilege. These issues are deeply rooted in our lives and our communities and deserve our attention as people of God. As I meet with young adults, I hear themes of isolation from the church, not finding a voice or a place to grow in faith or be accepted for who they see themselves to be. I am not saying that all young adults feel marginalized, but that they see their peers and others who are hurting in the community around them. Let me share with you some ways that we will continue to think about marginalized communities and racial privilege as we think about opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

A few weeks ago during our post-worship ORLC Connects time, we had a mini-presentation and discussion about the Reconciling In Christ process that the Inclusive Church Team is guiding us through. We heard from Hilary Hinrichs more about the steps we will take and what our end goal is.

Over the next year, the Inclusive Church Team will engage our congregation in discussion and learning through Sunday forums, book studies, and updates in the monthly newsletter. There are some important benefits to these conversations. Firstly, in learning about our own understanding of sexuality and our understanding of what the Bible says about sexuality, we benefit from breaking down barriers of misunderstanding and judgement. Another benefit is empathizing with others experiences of how religious institutions have offered or refused welcome due to differences. It is beneficial for us to learn and grow in our own understanding so we can create a safe space that functions as a place of love and acceptance for those who have been isolated or rejected in other places.

In July, we will offer a book study - more details to come! This fall, we will have another opportunity to gather and discuss the topic of marginalized communities. Within the next 18-24 months, the Inclusive Church Team hopes to bring a vote to the congregation to become an open and affirming congregation for the LGBTQ community. In the mean time, here is a brief devotion by The Rev. Kevin Strickland, Bishop of Southeastern Synod, Atlanta GA, reprinted with permission…

“When the Japanese mend broken objects, they aggrandize the damage by filling the cracks with gold. They believe that when something’s suffered damage and has a history it becomes more beautiful.” (Barbara Bloom) This understanding of “brokenness” is so counter-cultural to the way many of us live and think. We see brokenness and broken things as objects to be disregarded. But God, who calls us to walk this week toward a cross, reminds us that even the brokenness of his own son’s body on a cross and his death is not useless.

For many years, I felt like I was “broken” as I fought the internal struggle to come out and say that I was gay and to not only do that but then to continue being able to serve as a pastor in this church. I felt shame, brokenness, sense of not being right. Then a dear friend and pastor reminded me, I was exactly what God created and even in what may feel broken to me, God calls it beautiful. I now can claim that I am a beautifully and wonderfully created child of God who is gay. Being broken-open means I now live free as the person that God created me to be. In that broken-openness, there is such beauty.

So, for us, we who are broken-pots, we who may feel forgotten, we who may feel judged by the world for our brokenness … God takes our broken-potted selves and reminds us that through his love, we are loved. Loved in life and in death. Loved in brokenness and in newness. Loved to let others, even our enemies, know that Christ comes among the ashes and wipes our tears away.

Prayer: God who binds up the broken-hearted, give strength to the weary and hope to the hopeless. Amen.”

The Smart Team - Planning Needed Before Reopening [Worship Online—See Back Page!]

We hope you are doing well and staying safe. At the encouragement from Bishop Patricia Lull to all Synod congregations, Our Redeemer has put together our 'Smart Team' -a group of people to help negotiate the opening back up of our church. Roy Wong, Dean Ersfeld, Judy Triplett, Jeff Morgan, Peter Yang, Sally, Cathryn Heimerdinger and Pastor Karsten are the members of the news SMART Team. We want to open the church in a way that is safe for everyone in the congregations that use our space and the visitors that join us. This group is exploring and coordinating the details and steps necessary to reopen safely for each of the churches using our building. We will be keeping you updated on our plans for opening the church and bringing our community back together. Please reach out to Pastor Karsten if you have any thoughts or ideas!

June Worship Highlights

- On **Sunday, June 7**, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will be providing our sermon on our online *YouTube* worship service. The sermon will use the texts for Trinity Sunday, Year A, with a focus on II Corinthians 13:11-13 and Matthew 28:16-20.
- On **Wednesday, June 10**, at **6:30 p.m.,** we will have **"Worship On the Farm Zoom"** as part of a monthly series this summer—the fun format, creative worship and good preaching will continue! The last five years, we have collaborated with various other area Lutheran churches to host a Wednesday evening service at the Maplewood Historic Society Barn. As we cannot gather in this same way this year, we have set up three Wednesdays—the others will be held July 8 and August 12. June will have our Bishop Patricia Lull preaching. Sign up at this link https://mailchi.mp/d985577d8fe0/rsvp-to-worship-on-the-farm-online#rsvp and you will be sent the Zoom link for the worship. See you "On the Farm Zoom"!

- Beginning **Sunday, June 14**, we will have a preaching series titled, "Meeting God When We Are Alone" which will look at various biblical stories of God using times we people were more isolated and alone to speak hope and call into their life. In these days of isolation let's hear how God can reform these days to be deeply holy for us.

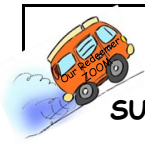
Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting via Zoom

After our online **Worship Service** on **Sunday, June 28,** at **10:00 a.m.,** we encourage you to join the Board and staff via Zoom for our **Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting** at **11:00 a.m.** This is a great opportunity for our members to learn and grow together as people of God and to hear updates on our financial status, reopening plans, ministry highlights, and more. (Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215215964 or join by phone calling 312-626-6799 (Meeting ID: 862 1521 5964)

GIVING OF YOUR OFFERINGS

- Mail your offering/envelope to the office: **ORLC, 1390 Larpenteur Ave E, St. Paul MN 55109**
- Drop off your offering/envelope in the locked mailbox located near our front entrance.
- Make an online gift at the link www.orlcmn.org/donate, which is also available on our website (www.orlcmn.org) by clicking the "Make Donation" button on the first page near the bottom. This allows you to make an automatic withdrawal from your bank or financial institution, or by using a credit card. It allows you to set up either a one-time or a recurring contribution. (There is a minimal charge to use a credit card.)
- Text 844-871-2328, enter amount in message line, send, and you will receive further instructions.

Worship Online details on back page!



CONNECTING ON ZOOM!

SUNDAYS—Our Redeemer Connection Time
11:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
NOTE NEW LINK:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85817075248

WEDNESDAYS—Bible Study
9:30-10:30 a.m.
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82883163046

SUNDAY, JUNE 28—Semi-Annual Meeting
11:00 a.m.
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215215964

Or participate by phone: 312-626-6799
(long distance charges may apply)

CONTACT US - We are still here for you!

Please feel welcome to call and leave messages for any of the staff, or reach us via email. We want to hear from you whether you simply need someone to talk to or have special prayer requests.

Pastor Karsten - karstenn@comcast.net 651-772-2445, ext. 102 or at 651-271-5134

Deacon Jennifer – jennifer@orlcmn.org 651-772-2445, ext. 103 or at 651-494-7943

Finance Administrator, Lisa – Lisa@orlcmn.org 651-772-2445, ext. 101

Office Administrator, Sally– office@orlcmn.org 651-772-2445, ext. 101

Contact the office if you would like the June-August "Our Daily Bread"!

Stewardship and Finance news

We are still hopeful to have more people contact the church with an updated estimate of what your annual giving will be for the General Fund and the LIFT (Living Into our Future Together) Fund. Please write to Lisa@orlcmn.org or call the office at 651-772-2445 to share your intended giving. This will be very helpful as we make plans to have a balanced budget with our spending by making necessary adjustments based on expected income.

We did apply and receive a PPP (Payroll Protection Program) loan from our bank. This money is given as a loan, but if the funds are used appropriately and there is careful documentation then it will become a grant to us. We qualified for $41,600 as long as the funds are used to cover payroll expenses, mortgage interest and various facility and utility costs. This will be a big support for our finances and budget. This money is intended to cover eight weeks worth of these expenses to ensure keeping people employed and helping to support this "business."

Below is our most recent financial status:

Member Giving	$107,682
Supplemental Giving	$ 57,231
Actual Total	$164,913
Budgeted Amount	$174,805
Expenses	$120,253
Budgeted Expenses	$154,854

Additional ways to give to Our Redeemer:

Gift Cards—You can still purchase gift cards by preordering them. Email Sally and she will coordinate your order with Barb Maynard. You can pick them up with your payment preferably on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Order through Shutterfly—Any purchases you make through our Shutterfly Storefront provides Our Redeemer with 8 percent of the sale! Go to: ORLCMN.ShutterflyStorefront.com.

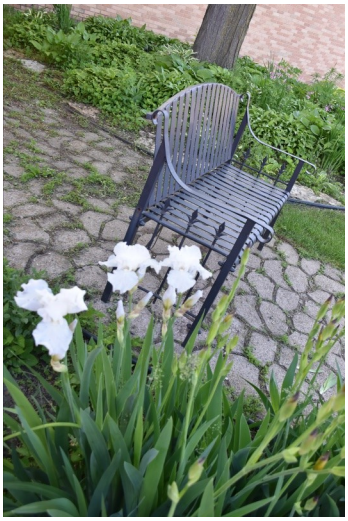
ORLC Serving at Dorothy Day

On **Monday, June 22**, Our Redeemer will prepare and serve individuals at the St. Paul Opportunity Center and Dorothy Day Residence. Please contact Claire Sexton if you are interested in volunteering either for preparing of the food or serving. We couldn't do this ministry without you! As always, we appreciate *Thrivent Financial* 's involvement for making grants possible to its members, which tremendously helps offset our costs! For details and to sign up, contact Claire at 651-336-2975 or at her email: clas1249@gmail.com.

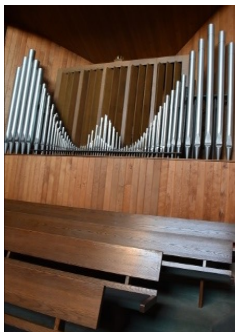
The Mask Movement—Coming to Our Redeemer—Sewing Volunteers Needed!

There is an amazing organization called the "Mask Movement" that you will want to be a part of—check out their website at: https://maskmvmt.org/. Our Redeemer is going to be one of the "hubs" or holding places for the handmade masks! We are also looking for volunteers to sew the masks—they provide the fabric and other supplies needed. These masks are still needed and they will be made available to any person or groups needing them. Please spread the word to your family, friends, coworkers and contact Sally to let her know if you or others are interested. Our local contact coordinator is Wendy Stone. Here is her email, in part:

> "Low income people are being forced to get a mask if they want one at work (employers are not providing them in many cases). We are still thousands of requests behind...but we've delivered over 5,800 masks since March 5, when we started.
>
> Our big news is that we are focusing more on individuals and families, and sending bulk requests from businesses to retailers. Congregate living (group homes, nursing homes) are also being handled by some of the other sewing groups and a combination of retailers who are now up to speed, so we've been making all kinds of connections with those folks to get those bulk requests covered as fast as possible, usually by dividing up the request among our people and other groups.
>
> Our vision is to mobilize a mask to individual and family requests within days of receiving it (we're about 16 days behind the requests, on average). The only way to catch up is to sew, sew, sew! We have materials for around 3,000 adult and child masks sitting here in my dining area as I type, ready to go out in kits of 10 masks. Most of the sewing seems to be happening in the suburbs, with most of the requests that are older still in the inner city of both Minneapolis and St. Paul. So some of the masks your group will make may end up in Cedar Riverside, North, the east side of St Paul, Frogtown, etc.
>
> Also, we are partnering with Twin Cities Food Justice Coalition and other smaller groups to combine the provision of free groceries or meals with the distribution of masks. Same people to serve, two inter-related needs. Now that masks are being required to enter many stores, it's another barrier for those on SNAP or otherwise experiencing the need to choose between the cost of a reusable mask and essentials. I'm thinking that your Loaves and Fishes program is another excellent way to distribute masks to people who do not have them. And I'd bet that your church has relationships with other churches and organizations doing similar things that we can leverage to add mask provision into the delivery of food, for those who need both. It's a perfect mutual aid situation."

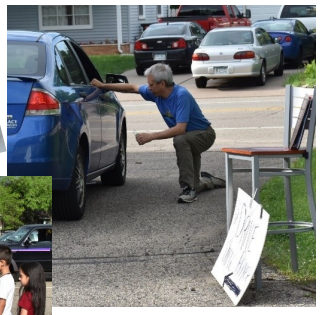


Volunteers needed! If anyone is interested in helping Tereziana with our community vegetable gardens, PLEASE contact the church office. Thank you!



Loaves & Fishes—Wednesday Drive-Thru Take-Out Meals & Prayers!

During this difficult time when many of us are not venturing out of our homes, remember that our *Loaves & Fishes* drive-thru FREE take-out meals are on **Wednesdays** from **5:30 to 6:30 p.m**. New to Wednesdays is the Drive-Thru Prayers! Also, a huge THANK YOU to **Kathi Kirchoff** and the **North St. Paul Food Shelf** for providing us with a plethora of various breads, pastries, fruits, vegetables, snacks, etc., when available! (At times, you may even find a table of FREE clothes.) Remember to tell your family, friends, neighbors—ALL are WELCOME! We are always looking for volunteers to hand out meals, so contact the church office to sign up if you or others are interested.



Worship Online!

SUNDAY WORSHIP OPTIONS
YouTube & Home Church

- Click on or enter our link: **http://bit.ly/ORLCMNyoutube**
- Visit our website at: **www.orlcmn.org** and on the first page near the bottom, there is a link under the title, "YouTube Videos."
- On ***YouTube***, search for "Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN" (look for our logo)
- Read our weekly ***Home Church*** if you do not have access to a computer or other electronic device.

*Remember to check out our other connections via **Zoom** on Sundays & Wednesdays—contact us for assistance.*

Address Service Requested

DATED MATERIAL
DO NOT DELAY

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
1390 East Larpenteur Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55109