

St. Thomas Lutheran Church News

July 2020

XXXXII Issue 7



Pastor's Column...

I know that I can easily be distracted by busy-ness. Part of this is simply the way I'm wired. I tend to get expansive with my thinking; I'm all over the map. I find it hard to focus on just one thing, which is why I need other people around me who will force me to get to the point! So there's that. But it's also that there are simply too many seismic changes taking place in the world today, too many moving parts. How many paradigm shifts can one manage at one time?

I realize that I am not alone in this, but it sure feels like it most of the time. Facebook is a two-edged sword for me these days. On the one hand, it's like a lifeline connecting me to other people. What a comfort it is to be able to share our burdens and our joys in this way when gathering together physically is not an option. On the other hand, so many of the posts about current events exacerbate my experience of feeling overwhelmed. Plus, most of these stressful situations are ones that I cannot directly change. So there's that.

I was reading my daily email from Richard Rohr today and came across this helpful nugget:

How often do we take a deep breath and appreciate—really appreciate—the air we breathe? How often do we savor the food we taste and smell the flowers along our path? When was the last time we listened to our child, laughed with a friend, embraced our spouse? It is true that the best things in life are free, but we are often too distracted or too busy to see the simple treasures of life right in front of us.

After reading this I realize that I need to repent, and by repent I mean that I need to change my mind, change the direction I'm going. Instead of thinking about **everything all the time**, especially all the troubling things in my life and in the world, I will focus my thoughts today on the amazing things in my life that I almost always overlook and then give thanks for them.

Nadia Bolz-Weber posts prayers for each Sunday and the ones for last Sunday were focused on gratitude. She writes, "I swear to God, exercise and gratitude are like, God's own anti-depressants." She then wrote petitions of thanksgiving for things that are worthy of gratitude; this is not an extensive list, and she invites others to offer their thanksgivings as well, but some of the things she *did* list were very helpful for me today. Here are a few:

- For drinkable water, for breathable air, and Dairy Queen dipped cones I give thanks.
- For the puppy I got at the beginning of quarantine who is currently destroying my life, I give thanks. (*As I give thanks for my faithful, furry companion, Oliver, who almost always makes me look like a better person than I really am.*)
- That I am loved/forgiven/alive, I give thanks.

- That you, O God are present when I feel only your absence I give thanks.
- That you are God and I am not, I give the most thanks. Forgive me when I forget that one.
- And for every other gift I am too self-obsessed to see, but that totally comes from you -Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

To this list I would add:

- For my family and friends who love me for who I am and often in spite of how I can be, I give thanks.

I invite you to email me or post your thanksgivings on my Facebook page. Nadia Bolz-Weber helped me along the way. Maybe we can help each other to greater expressions of gratitude. It is good for the soul.

Peace and joy in Christ,
Pastor Darby



Hope. Excitement. Nervousness. Trust in the Holy Spirit. These words best describe my first month serving fulltime as the Director for the Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU Bloomington. It has been a challenging and rewarding transition thus far- challenging because of the pandemic limiting the amount of people that I have met in person, but rewarding because the conversations that I have been able to have digitally with people (students, the LuMin Board, other rostered leaders, and campus ministers nationwide) have been thought provoking and inspiring.

Whether it is discussing how can we move forward towards becoming anti-racist or what measures can we take to help prevent the further spread of COVID, the underlying theme in many of our conversations consistently has been, “How is God calling us to love and care for our neighbors?” While to some this might seem like an obvious question to ask, sometimes we need to hear those words as a reminder- a reminder that even though our society tends to put individualism above the needs of others, in John 15:12 Jesus gives us a new commandment, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Several authentic, heartfelt responses to the question that was posed, and this commandment have arisen from those conversations that we have had in regard to our world today. Loving like Jesus looks like wearing a mask while out shopping. Loving like Jesus looks like supporting Black Lives Matter. Loving like Jesus looks like introducing oneself with one’s preferred pronouns. Loving like Jesus looks like taking the time to really see the people who have become invisible or outcast to most of the world and bring them healing and wholeness through sharing God’s promises with them- providing hospitality, shelter, food, and other needs.

As we continue through summer, I pray that I will have the opportunity to meet and chat with more of you, and that you might share with me your responses of how and where you see God calling us to love and care for our neighbors. Until then, may God inspire us all to action, reflection, and a Holy Spirit filled response.

Peace,
 Pastor Amanda Ghaffarian †

St. Thomas COVID-19 Taskforce

The St. Thomas COVID-19 Task Force met weekly during the month of June to review issues concerning virus spread and cleaning supplies and procedures required before entering Phase 2 of our phased reopening of St. Thomas.

As a reminder to our congregation what the phased reopening of St. Thomas entails: The Council has agreed to gradually resume activities through three distinct phases. Phase 1 involves no in-person activities. Phase 2 would allow for small group gatherings such as committees, prayer groups, etc. with appropriate safety protocols in place. Phase 3 would include near normal church activities with strong safety protocols in place.

St. Thomas Church Council has approved a plan to continue its innovative virtual services and activities not only during Phase 1 but throughout all phases going forward.

The task force has made progress in developing comprehensive procedures to ensure safety and health concerns when the congregation can meet in small groups. An air circulation study was conducted the week of June 15th. The taskforce is reviewing the results and will soon make recommendation to Church Council concerning the results

The taskforce feels St. Thomas is still in Phase 1 of our reopening plan and that no in person services take place until at least July 15th and possibly later. The taskforce is constantly monitoring the COVID-19 situation and if conditions do improve we will inform the congregation as soon as possible.

The task force will continue to meet weekly. We ask for patience, wisdom, and prayers from everyone.

COVID-19 Task Force Members: Bruce Colston, Susan Krieg, Pastor Darby Lawrence, Gretchen Moehlmann, Mike Powell, Debbie Selk

Submitted by

Frank Nierzwicki, COVID-19 Task Force Chair

WORSHIP SERVICES

You may go directly to YouTube and search for St Thomas Lutheran Church Bloomington. The Sunday services are also available via links on our website and on our Facebook page. On the St. Thomas website look for "Videos for Worshipping in Place" located on the right-hand side of the home page. From there you will find links to all the YouTube videos that we have done since March 22.



ALTAR FLOWER SIGN-UP

Please send Susan an email (susank@stlconline.org) if you would like to request flowers for July 19, any Sunday in August, or a special date you'd like in the months ahead.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Education Committee met in June to discuss how Sunday School might look this year. We have agreed that it is best initially to not meet in person for classes, as disappointing as this is. We want to keep everyone safe and healthy, and we are keeping our ears open for what the Covid-19 Task Force will be recommending.

Sunday School Kickoff will be **Sunday, August 23rd, at 9:45 am**, and will be **virtual!** Our theme this year is **“Fruits of the Spirit”** and our verse is **Galatians 5:22-26**: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

We do not anticipate being able to meet in person for **Sunday School classes** until mid-September *at the very earliest*. The Education Committee is working on several ideas to be able to provide faith formation activities for our children.

Teaching Teams

When we are able to go back to meeting in person, the following people have generously offered to donate their time and energy to invest in the faith formation of our children:

Godly Play (age 3- Kindergarten): Sharon Fawbush, Tish Llewellyn, Debbie Nixon

1st – 3rd Grade: Sarah Fogleman, ***second, third teacher needed****

4th – 6th Grade: Mary Thomason-Smith, ***second, third teacher needed****

High School: Peter Iversen

Confirmation: New Minister of Youth & Family Nurture, or Amy Bartleson Balcam (as volunteer)

Substitute Teacher: Gretchen Moehlmann, Stephanie Hulett

Sunday School Coordinator: Gretchen Moehlmann

***NOTE:** We need an additional one or two teachers for our 1st – 3rd grade and 4th-6th grade classes. Please consider volunteering for one of these positions. The lessons are already provided for you, and you are not required to teach every Sunday. Contact Gretchen to volunteer your time.

A Prayer for These Times: (adapted from ELCA’s Prayers for Times of Public Health Concern: COVID-19/Coronavirus, accessed from: <https://www.elca.org/publichealth>):



Gracious God, it is good for us to gather as your beloved in community. We treasure your presence with us in word and meal, song and prayer. Be with us in these days when gathering together as often as we would like is not possible. When we must be apart for reasons of safety, we trust that you surround us with your sheltering wings. Encourage us in connecting as we are able, reaching out to our neighbors in need and being persistent in prayer. We pray especially for parents who are navigating how to make ends meet while also trying to meet the needs of their children, and for children who are navigating new ways to learn and to be in relationship with one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our constant companion. Amen.

Your Siblings in Christ,
Gretchen Moehlmann, Education Coordinator
Amy Bartleson Balcam
STLC Education Committee

Anti-Racism Resources for Congregations

Compiled by the Indiana-Kentucky Synod, ELCA, Racial Justice Team
June 2020

This is a partial list. I will complete the list over the next few newsletters. ~Susan

General Resources:

- ELCA resources on racial justice: <https://elca.org/Resources/Racial-Justice>
- Southern Poverty Law Center: <https://www.splcenter.org/>

History:

- Equal Justice Initiative Museum: <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/>
- **FILM:** Documentary with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. :“*Reconstruction: America After the Civil War*”: <https://www.pbs.org/weta/reconstruction/>
- Massacres in U.S. History from the Zinn Education Project: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/collection/massacres-us/>

Incarceration and Policing:

- <https://www.blackpast.org/special-features/race-crime-and-incarceration-united-states/>
- **FILM:** Ava Duvernay’s documentary, “13th: *From Slave to Criminal with One Amendment*” can be accessed on most streaming platforms, including Netflix. Discussion guide for the documentary: <https://educationforjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Film-Discussion-Guide-13th.pdf>

Books for Adult Education and Discussion:

- *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* by Lenny Duncan (2019). Rev. Duncan is an ELCA pastor. www.lennyduncan.com
- *So You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo (2019). Discussion guide: <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/so-you-want-to-talk-about-race-readers-guide.pdf>. Ijeoma Oluo’s website: <http://www.ijeomaoluo.com/>

Books for Children:

- *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Ph.D. and Marietta Collins, Ph.D. (2018).
- *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong’o (2019).
- *Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to be Malcolm X* by Ilyasah Shabazz (2014).
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson (2018).

Books for Teens:

- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi (2020). Educator guide: <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Stamped-Educator-Guide.pdf>

TED Talks:

- *Talks to Help You Understand Racism in America*
([https://www.ted.com/playlists/250/talks to help you understand r](https://www.ted.com/playlists/250/talks_to_help_you_understand_r))

MISSION & MINISTRY NEWS



Karen Anderson, our ELCA Global Mission representative in Chile writes to remind us of the very serious spike in Covid-19 cases in the country. Though Chile took action very early on with widespread testing and quarantine measures, more recently the country has witnessed the spread across the poor communities in the country and in Santiago, in particular, where Karen is located. As Bloomberg news reports, “Initial assessments suggest that Chile followed the lead of wealthy nations only to realize -- once again -- that a large percentage of its citizens are poor, an echo of last year’s disconnect between government and nation when a subway fare increase led to massive riots.” To date, more than 275,000 cases have been reported.

EPES (Popular Education in Health), where Karen works, is supporting the fight against Coronavirus in many ways, one of which is the project, Nutrition, Justice, Gender and Health. As in the United States, the lockdowns have required people to stay at home, without the resources to feed their families. EPES has responded by teaching people how to perform an act of resistance through the cultivation of land and the production of food through home and community gardens.

A first act was to organize an online workshop to help launch this effort. The workshop consisted of three 1.5 hour sessions that were transmitted live via YouTube so that the promoters could connect from their homes. (While not all low-income Chileans have computers at home, almost every household has someone with a smart phone that allows the health promoters to connect online). The next step will be to create a community garden, once lockdown is lifted. In the meantime, people will begin by composting food scraps to be used in the garden. The participants in the workshop were also instructed on the ways to find space for home gardens and what plants work in various sized plots.



Members of St. Thomas who raise and share the bounty from our own community gardens can well relate to the work of EPES in Chile. As Karen Anderson puts it, “In the midst of the suffering and uncertainty ravaging our world since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as Christians we are called to be co-creators of a more just future.” Our fellow Christians in Chile are advancing that goal.

Karen sends her ***Thanks to us for our love and support and her blessings during this difficult time.***

St. Thomas Mission Endowment Fund Call for Third Quarter Proposals:

The Mission Endowment Fund provides funding for special projects at St. Thomas Lutheran Church, local outreach, and missions beyond the local community. If you have a project in need of funding, please submit an application before July 31st. Application forms can be emailed. If you have questions, please contact the church office or Keith Knipstein, Chair of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee.

MCUM FUNDRAISER HELPS MANY FOLKS!

A big THANK YOU for donating to MCUM's Summer Fundraiser, Each One Feed One!

Lots of appreciation goes to Jim and Suzanne Halvorson for setting up and taking down— twice—their wonderful canopy and to Jan and Tom Sinn, Janis Stockhouse, Kaye Hill, and Chris Ogan for hosting the drive.

St. Thomas contributed 273 pounds to the MCUM Pantry.....in their names, I thank you.

Helen Ingersoll

St. Thomas Board Representative



NEWHOPE
FOR FAMILIES

Immediate Needs

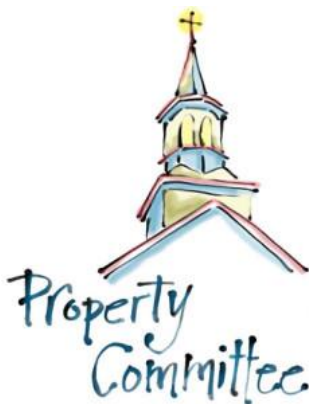
Toddler training potty (3 needed)
Face masks (adult and child sizes)
Disinfecting wipes, Hand sanitizer
Liquid hand soap, Liquid dish soap, Dishwasher tablets
Toilet paper
Pull-ups (size 4T/5T)
Women's tennis shoes (sizes 8-1/2)
Book wish list: <https://smile.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3RRA49J76PXH9>

Also needed

- Paper towels, Disinfecting spray
- Baby shampoo, Baby wipes (unscented), Diapers (sizes 3 and up) and/or Pull-ups (any size)
- Digital thermometers
- Non-perishable food (especially pasta and “heat & eat” meals)
- Lactose-free 1% milk
- Kroger gift cards
- Can openers, Sets of silverware
- Shelter wish list: <https://smile.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/267UG93RNIZ5Y/>

Donation deliveries are **by appointment only**. Please call our office at (812) 334-9840.

Questions? Please call (812) 334-9840 or email thom@newhope4families.org



The property committee hosts church work days at St Thomas each month typically on the first Saturday of the month and the third Tuesday of the month from 10 am to noon. We have a great group of people that help each month, but we could use a few more to keep St Thomas in great condition. It's only two days per month and only for 2 hours each, plus it is a great opportunity to get to know other church members. If you are willing to join the property committee and help us maintain the church, then please contact the church office.

From the Finance Committee

In April a letter went out informing the congregation that our income was down about 40%. We understood that the pandemic had thrown us all out of our normal routines and may have affected your own income and expenses. But we asked that you remember your offerings as you could, and you did! Thanks to your giving, we are back on track. We are keeping up with our budgeted benevolence and paying the usual expenses.

Thank you!

You may unsubscribe from this newsletter by emailing susank@stlconline.org.