

The Messenger

April 2021



**The Newsletter of Christ Lutheran Church
Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey
An ELCA Congregation**

**The Church
Proudly Proclaiming Christ since A.D. 33**

Pastor's Message

In mid-March, when the snow from winter finally melted, my wife found something unexpected. While looking at one of our small shrubs that was damaged by the snow, something blue and plastic caught her eye. It had obviously been there for a long time, and we didn't know why we hadn't seen it before. The shrub was located along the edge of our driveway, and we walked by it every time we got into our minivan. She reached out and picked it up. The color had dimmed a bit but the plastic object was still intact. She even opened it up, revealing that the chocolate candy we had placed inside it was still there. We didn't try to eat because it had been outside for over a year. But what she found was an Easter egg we had hidden the year before. For almost a year, it sat undisturbed. Wind, snow, rain and the occasional small child had failed to dislodge it from its hiding place. It took many snowstorms and a damaged shrub to finally reveal it to the world. And even though we couldn't see it, that little bit of Easter lingered right beside us through a pandemic that has yet to end.

As we enter this Easter season, I am reminded that the Resurrection changes everything. The experience of Jesus rising from the dead is an experience that lingers with us even when we can't see it. Too often, anxieties and fears of this world try to overshadow the new life God wants for all of us. These fears manifest in a variety of ways, and we might end up feeling as if we're missing out on a "normal" life. Yet, a resurrected life is one that, by definition, isn't normal. It knows the values of the world are not necessarily the values of God. It finds itself holding onto justice, mercy and forgiveness rather than power, comfort or control. And when it feels buried under mountains of distress caused by the ways fears dominate our lives and our communities, Easter doesn't go away. It stays there, just out of sight, but always present serving as a powerful reminder that we do not need to be defined by fear. Rather, we can be defined by life and love because the Cross won't be the end to our story.

This Easter, I hope you take time to participate in the practice of living the resurrected life. Don't let the fear of missing out stop you from answering the call to love your neighbor as yourself. When things feel murky or if the love of God feels absent, know that Easter can never be taken from you. It might take a moment or two to see the new life God is bringing about. Or you might need to wait a year - or longer - to see what God's hope can bring. Yet in your baptism and in your faith, you were united with a love that will always be with you. Lean into Easter. Lean into hope. And let the love of God shine through the love we offer each other.

See ya in church! Pastor Marc

Worship and Missions

Annual Meeting Announcement—Keep an Eye on Your Mailbox and Inbox!

On April 28th after 10:00 am worship, we'll have a special congregational meeting to approve some projects to fund out of the Special Gifts Fund and the gift from Redeemer Lutheran Church. Details on the projects on which we will vote will appear after the April 15th Church Council meeting. We'll also share with you how the meeting will look since we'll be meeting for outdoor worship that day. Stay tuned!

Metrics for a Return to Gathering in the Sanctuary: The Church Council continues to re-evaluate the metrics we're using to return to indoor worship. Based on new information provided by a group of scientists, clergy and health officials from around the ELCA, we're looking for a return to indoor worship when there is < 10 new cases per day per 100,000 people (low community spread) and a statewide R-value < 1. The R-value at press time was 1.1 and has been over 1 since late February. Bergen County remains a hot spot in New Jersey. The Church Council will continue to monitor our specific context and will discuss regathering indoors at our next meeting on April 15th. You can help get those numbers lower by practicing physical distancing, staying home, wearing your mask and getting vaccinated as soon as you can. Don't do these things only for yourselves (which is important!). Also do it for everyone in your faith community and neighborhood.

A COVID Survey: The Church Council would love to know your thoughts about re-gathering indoors. Please submit your responses online at clc4u.com/COVIDSurvey. If you need a paper copy, please contact the church office, and we'll send you one!

Mid-Week Worship - What's in a Creed? Starting April 14th: We noticed increased engagement with our midweek worship so we'll continue it during the Easter season. Starting on April 14th, we'll take a dive into the Apostles' Creed. If you've ever wondered what a creed is and why we recite it when gathering in the sanctuary, this will be the series for you. These 25-30 minute mid-week worship evenings will include confession, prayer, music and communion. They'll premier on Facebook at 7:00 pm and be available on YouTube throughout the day.

Worshipping at Christ Lutheran: A reminder that there are three ways to worship at Christ Lutheran Church on Sunday!

- 1) Online: visit <https://www.facebook.com/clc4u/live> at 10:00 am on Sunday mornings. You can also visit our YouTube channel at any time on Sunday to view worship when it is convenient for you.
- 2) When worship premieres on Facebook at 10:00 am, you can listen to worship via Conference Call: dial 646-558-8656, enter meeting id: 827 672 730 and then #. Hit # to ignore participant id and then enter the password 195901.
- 3) In-person and outdoors: Worship meets in our main parking lot at 10:00 am. Please bring your own chair and wear a mask.



COVID Update

We are still living and navigating through a pandemic that has upended our lives. Yet we continue to be hopeful that things will eventually change. We know many of you have already received your vaccine or will be eligible for a vaccine very soon. Recent news reports are starting to show that these vaccines might limit the possibility of giving the virus to other people. Getting vaccinated is how we, together, can gather safely inside and with our families. If you need help getting a vaccine, please contact Kate Stutzel at kate.stutzel@gmail.com. She's scheduled dozens of appointments for members and friends at CLC. She also knows the tricks on how to make appointments. Together, we can safely take care of one another.

COVID cases in the Pascack Valley (at press time): Twice a week, the county government releases the total number of positive COVID cases in our area. We take that data for the towns in the Pascack Valley (Emerson, Hillsdale, Montvale, Park Ridge, River Vale, Washington Township, Westwood, Woodcliff Lake) and calculate the number of current new daily cases the numbers below reflect the average new daily cases per 100,000 people in the Pascack Valley.

March 2 = 17	March 5 = 35	March 9 = 31	March 12 = 46	March 16 = 42
March 19 = 45	March 23 = 33	March 26 = 42	March 31 - 27	

As you can see, cases increased in our area in March.



Kids and Adults: Education and More!

Sunday School: We're continuing our partnership with Camp Cross Roads in New Jersey! Every two weeks, we meet for a 30-35 minute session with fun videos, a Bible story and other activities. This year, we're examining the seasons of the church year. We'll meet on April 11th and April 28th. Contact Pastor Marc if you have any questions.

Confirmation: Our partnership with Prince of Peace Lutheran Church continues! This year we're digging deeper into the Small Catechism. Luther wrote the Small Catechism as a tool to help parents sow seeds of faith in their children. We're covering our life together in April. We'll meet on April 11th and 28th. We plan for Confirmation Sunday to take place on May 23rd – Day of Pentecost.

Children's System of Care Public Awareness: Kristyn Ulanday is the Digital Media Specialist for the NJ Department of Children & Families. She recently wrote and directed a series of PSAs to highlight the help available to youth with emotional or behavioral challenges, substance use issues, or who are living and thriving with developmental disabilities. Jersey's Children's System of Care (CSOC), through the Department of Children and Families, serves children, youth and their families through wraparound services, peer supports, mobile response and stabilization, and in-home, in-community and out-of-home programs. If your child is in need of assistance, don't wait. Call CSOC today, (877) 652-7624.



Is your child in crisis?
Know the signs. All kids have bad days.
But, trauma and life-changing events
can create lasting challenges.

Extreme behavior problems that
continue for more than six months
could indicate a need for help.

Watch for:

- opposition and aggression
- disrespect and property damage
- anxiety or depression
- lying and fighting
- stealing or substance use
- running away or self-harm

Don't wait to get help! For free real time de-escalation
and emergency counseling, call the Children's System
of Care at 1-877-652-7624.



Let's Go Camping!

Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center. . .

Now Registering Kids for Summer Camp!

Camp Cross Roads is a joint ministry of the New Jersey Synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. The Camp specializes in retreats and summer programs for youth. With the recent announcement that summer camps will be in session this year, the Cross Roads staff is working with other summer camps and health professionals to create a safe environment for all campers.

Four weeks of youth camp will start on July 11th! Kids who have completed 2nd grade and up are invited for a week long excursion at the camp. Special weeks for high school youth (July 11-16) or youth who have completed 8 to 10th grades (Service. Exploration. Excellence. Knowledge - SEEK - programs) are also available. Learn more by visiting <https://www.crossroadsretreat.com/summer-programs/>.



Recent Update from Camp Koinonia

A special Easter message was recently sent out by Dr. Kathleen K. Ruen, Interim Executive Director of Camp Koinonia in Highland Lake, New York. For over 60 years, Christ Lutheran Church has partnered with their outdoor ministry. Several years ago, the camp closed due to mold but has been working hard to re-open ever since. Electrical, plumbing and building certifications are expected soon as well as installing Wi-Fi in the conference center. The camp is moving towards a soft reopening around Memorial Day with retreats from congregations resuming around Labor Day. Below are some highlights from the letter.

Blessings and Greetings to you during this transformational and miraculous Easter season. Like a chrysalis, Koinonia is re-forming under a protective shell of God's Grace and the incredible gifts of time and treasure from the Koinonia community. In the next few months, God willing, Koinonia will emerge, along with all of us sheltering through the COVID pandemic, and surprise and inspire us all. As we wait and work, I would like to share the news about what is happening under the surface, so to speak, and how you can be involved.

Although the camp is technically closed to guests, reservations are coming in for the summer and the fall. If you want to book a cabin for the summer, we urge you to contact us now (register@koinoniany.org). If there are no cabins available, please consider renting a room or two in the Conference Center. We will provide meals, and it will be a wonderful opportunity for you to socialize and build community with folks that love Koinonia. And, if you really want to get back to nature, we plan to have 12 campsites open.

On Memorial Day weekend we will offer programming and recognize those who have given so much to Koinonia over their lifetimes. We hope you will consider staying in the Conference Center, tenting at the campsite or coming up for a day of programming.

We are beginning to form our committees and teams and will have our first meetings in the next two weeks. If you feel called to serve Koinonia in the areas of finance, strategic planning, property, marketing/outreach or worship/program, please be in touch.

Are you ready to do some work at Koinonia? We are in the process of planning work weekends throughout May to clean up the trails and campsites, prepare the Conference Center for guests and in general prepare Koinonia for guests starting Memorial Day weekend. If your church is interested in bringing up a group, contact the office and we will find a place for you to stay and tasks for you to do!

Koinonia is hiring! Our first priority is to hire people who take care of people, and then we will look for a property manager who can oversee the buildings and general maintenance. We are searching for a Retreat Director, a Program Director and a part-time Office/Outreach Manager. Please spread the word and pray that God sends us talented and strong candidates who are called to grow along with Koinonia! More information can be found on the camp's website (<https://www.koinoniany.org/>)

I will see you soon on the other side of Easter, God Bless—Kathleen Ruen

Supporting Others

Special Gifts Fund Shares Easter Joy!



One of the mission projects of Worship Committee is the Easter Dinner Project for the benefit of mixed families and seniors living in Lutheran Social Ministries Housing at Project Home in Jersey City. Normally, volunteers of our church would shop for Easter-type food at local stores for distribution to these dear people. This year, however, because of the pandemic we could not deliver food. Instead we purchased ShopRite \$25 gift cards so they could purchase their own needs. Pictured

above is one of these gift cards along with the note cards we included. Thanks to Pastor Marc, each card had an Easter message. This project from The Special Gifts Fund was primarily supported by money approved at the February Annual Meeting of our church.

Hats for St. Matthew's Lunchtime Ministry

Kudos to Jean!

Even though it's springtime, the most vulnerable among us still need warm hats for cold nights. Thank you to Jean Helom for knitting a box full of hats! Mr. Enzweiler from St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Hoboken, New Jersey stopped by our church to pick them up. They were shared with the clients of their lunchtime ministry which provides warm food to the home-insecure five days a week. We've supported their amazing



program in the past through our Special Gifts Fund, and we are grateful for the ways they live out the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Community Events

Unpacking Family Baggage:

An Online Event sponsored by the Hills Valley Coalition

Wednesday, April 14th from 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Mental Health Resource Fair 6:00 to 7:00 pm

Keynote speaker Claudia Black at 7:00 pm

Trauma begets trauma; addiction begets addiction; and each tends to beget the other. Both reverberate throughout a family system. Come and benefit from the years of experience of Claudia Black as she will visually portray how we carry family of origin issues into our adult lives using the metaphor of the baggage cart. We will discuss trauma and addiction, and offer a 7-part path to a healing process.

Visit <https://hillsvalleycoalition.org/post/792/> to register!

RIP Medical Debt: An Easter Initiative Sponsored by the Northern New Jersey Mission District

We are all called to help and serve others. This Easter season, we are partnering with RIP Medical Debt to relieve the burden of medical debt for individuals in Northern New Jersey who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- ❖ Earn less than 2x the federal poverty level.
- ❖ Debts are 5 percent or more of annual income.
- ❖ Facing insolvency — debts are greater than assets.

RIP Medical Debt (<https://ripmedicaldebt.org/>) is an organization helping families recover from the crushing debt caused by medical expenses. They act like a collection agency - buying up debt that hasn't been paid back. But instead of seeking repayment, they use money from donors to forgive the debt instead. They help remove this burden from the lives of families while helping repair their credit history at the same time. This is one way we can help grant people the gift of resurrected life this Easter season. Together we're hoping to raise at least \$15,000. I know that sounds like a lot, but that amount of money will be able to forgive \$1.5 million dollars of Medical Debt in Northern New Jersey. Learn more and make a donation by visiting <https://ripmedicaldebt.org/campaign/north-new-jersey/>



Caregiver Support Group—1st Tuesday of the Month at 7:00 pm—Online

Are you a caregiver for your spouse or an aging loved one? Take time for yourself. Meet other caregivers and receive educational resources to help you cope. This virtual, informal social and support group not only provides a welcoming and confidential environment for you to share with others in a similar situation, but also serves as an educational forum for caregivers to learn about important topics. Meetings are led by Journey Hospice's Nurse Practitioner, Lynn Durmala, APN, ACHPN*. This support group is presented virtually via Zoom. Attendees may connect by phone or by Zoom conference call. To register, call (800) 458-0651 or email Beth Gebhart (LSMNJ) at bgebhart@lsmnj.org.

Virtual Life Planning Seminar: Documents Everyone Should Have in Place

Presented by Sarah Cranston, Esq. ArcherLaw's Estates and Trust Group Attorney

Tuesday, April 27th at 12:30 pm

This free virtual workshop will discuss the essential documents every person should have in place: wills, living wills, types of power of attorney, POLST documents, etc. You will leave with an understanding of necessary documents and how to get started in planning for the future. Our presenter, Sarah L. Cranston, Esq. brings a wealth of knowledge as a member of Archer's Estate & Trust, Litigation and Elder. This free workshop is presented virtually via Zoom. Attendees may connect by phone or by Zoom conference call. Pre-registration is required. Registered attendees will receive a link to connect. To register, call (800) 458-0651 or email Beth Gebhart (LSMNJ) at bgebhart@lsmnj.org.

STAND UP TO HATE – SPONSORED BY THE NJ SYNOD, ELCA

Active Bystander Training!

2 hour session on how to safely and faithfully

DISTRACT, DELEGATE AND DOCUMENT

FREE Online Event Offered

Saturday, April 17, 2021, 10:00 am – noon

Thursday, April 29, 2021, 7:00 pm—9:00 pm

To Register:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zYSeigjGywdXSDWTS4hnLgy9OPUGSLWkrQVsscqlorI/edit>

Questions: Contact Rev. Kimberly Vaughn—kvaughn@njsynod.org

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