

The Messenger

February 2021



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

The Church
Proudly Proclaiming Christ since A.D. 33

From Pastor Marc

The picture on the right is what I look when I'm preparing for online worship each week. On the floor is a blue piece of tape, marking where I should stand. Sitting on the rack is my laptop, a microphone, a dozen old hymnals and my DIY teleprompter. The teleprompter is made of cardboard, a webcam, an old iPad, woodblocks kids play with and a broken picture frame to reflect the text



off the iPad. It's surrounded by a plastic black tablecloth originally purchased for a community event many years ago. Everything rests on a wire bookshelf that we usually use when we worship in our Opsal Hall. On either side are two LED studio lights to help with the recording. This is a very make-as-you-go kind of setup. Since the pandemic started, I've been tweaking this setup to provide the best experience I can. I've learned what light works best in our chapel space, when to record, and that the heat needs to be off in that space or else the clanking from the radiator will be heard in the recording. I usually do half a dozen takes before settling on the ones you see on your screen. And if I saved all the flubs I made during recording, I could create a blooper reel that would take days to watch in full. I think I've come up with a setup that works for us. But even though I've been doing this for almost a year—it's still strange to preach to an empty room.

As we move into the new months of this pandemic, worship will still be weird for quite awhile. Jesus compels us to take care of one another in anyway that we can. Being physically distant—especially during worship—is hard. But when I look into the broken glass of my DIY teleprompter, I know that this moment is only temporary. The pandemic broke the ways we normally gather but, like the still wounded body of Christ, the grace of God carries us on. Worship—for me—begins in that space, but it's joined by you—and Christ—whenever you tune in. And since there is no time limit for when you can watch the worship I create (they're currently stored on Facebook and YouTube until those companies cease to exist), the worship we offer to God doesn't end. The days, weeks and months ahead might be hard. But your faithfulness, love of Christ and commitment to your faith community always gives me hope.

See ya in church,

Pastor Marc

The Pandemic

Vaccine Update

First, register online with the state at <https://covidvaccine.nj.gov>. This statewide site will let you know which tier you are in and will (hopefully) contact you when appointments are available in your area. If you cannot register online, you can call 855-568-0545. This new call center opened on January 25 and is available to answer your registration questions.

Local hospitals have also received the vaccine, but most are not currently vaccinating the general public. At press time, the following websites were not currently registering people for the vaccine but might be open in the future:

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center:

<https://www.newbridgehealth.org/covid-19-vaccine-information>

Holy Name Medical Center:

<https://www.holyname.org/covid19/vaccine-faqs.aspx>

Hackensack Meridian Health (Bergen County Mega Site):

<https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/covid19/>

Pastor Marc is coordinating with local government and interfaith partners to gather the best information available. If you have anything to share, please contact him at pastormarc@clc4u.com.

COVID Cases in the Pascack Valley

In our November edition of *The Messenger*, we shared the metrics we were using to gauge the safety of gathering in person. A reminder: *When there's less than four new cases per 100,000 people daily—that means the virus is somewhat contained. When that number grows to eight, that is a sign the virus is spreading in an uncontrolled fashion.*

In November, that number fluctuated between 26 and 53. In December (before the holidays interfered with reporting), that number averaged in the low 40s. In the first half of January, that number was between 42 and 52. By the 3rd week of January, the number seemed to drop into the mid 20s. We're hopeful that the trend in January continues. Please practice physical distancing, wear masks and get vaccinated if you can. Thank you.

A Prayerful Response to the Attack at the Capitol

Pastor Marc shared the following with the prayer team. We're reprinting it in full for your reflection.

First off, thank you for your ministry. I'm so grateful for the ways you live out your faith through the practice of prayer. We not only pray for the health and wellness of people in our community but also for every aspect of God's creation. I was recently asked to compose a short prayer that might speak to this political moment in response to the attack at the US Capitol last Wednesday and the ongoing threats being made on other centers of government. I'll admit that I've struggled coming up with words to say. I find myself reading and watching the news while wrapped up in an uneasy state of prayer. Even though I'm not praying like we would during worship, I find myself taking what I see and bringing it straight up to God. It's not an experience that brings me much comfort, but it is a faithful one. Sometimes prayer is difficult—and leaves us feeling more unsettled than we were before.

One of the images I've been wrestling with is how Christian symbols and statements of faith were part of what happened last Wednesday. How do we—as followers of Jesus—process the fact that the Christian flag was waved within the US Capitol as representatives were moved to safety; that the crowd pushing past police officers wielded Bibles like weapons; that camo-wearing individuals with plans to take hostages had Jesus/Armor of God patches on their uniforms; and that prayers for God's intervention were spoken by groups also wearing anti-Semitic symbols claiming that the six million Jews killed in the holocaust wasn't enough? As I write, I can feel myself grow extremely angry but also incredibly sad. That isn't the Jesus I know or follow.

As I look forward to this Sunday (January 14) when we will remember Jesus' own baptism, I'm reminded that we were baptized into Christ—and not into any partisan political party or point of view. The Jesus who claimed us as his own is a Jesus who does not erect crosses but rather goes towards them.

Regardless of our political affiliations, we have a responsibility to push against those who erect crosses for others to be nailed against. When we see crosses being raised, even by our siblings in the faith, we get to say that isn't the Jesus we follow and adore. Rather, we are called to gather at the foot of any cross that is raised up and proclaim that God believes in a different future for us all.

I ask that you continue to pray for our country and our wider community. I believe what has been revealed over these last few weeks will be with us for quite a while. Yet, we do not face this moment without hope. The reason the Cross is our symbol and we have it standing tall over our sanctuary, painted on our chapel space and as part of our blessing and words of absolution is because it's empty. God does not run from turmoil because God refuses to let the turmoil be our end. Jesus' love for you means that we—like him- get to work for a world where we no longer erect crosses for others to bear.

So please—don't lose heart. None of this is easy, and your prayer does make a difference. If you find yourself at a loss for words, know that your silence is not an unfaithful act. Below is a prayer based on one found in our denomination's prayer book for the armed forces:

Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and a rock of defense. Tear down every cross we erect and take from us a hunger for power and control. Commit our leaders to a peaceful transition of power and disrupt the plans of every evil course of action. Help us answer your call to repentance and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Protect those who find themselves in harm's way and help us live into a more peaceful, loving, and hopeful future. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Christ who showed us what Your kingdom is all about. Amen.

Always in Christ,
Pastor Marc



Congregational Annual Meeting
Sunday, February 7 - Online
Online Doors open at 10:45 am.
Roll call begins at 11:00 am.

Make plans to attend our Annual Congregational Meeting on February 7, 2021. Our meeting will be a bit different this year due to the pandemic. We will meet online and via conference call. Online doors for the meeting will open at 10:45 am and roll call will begin at 11:00 am.

Due to the online nature of the meeting, we request that you pre-register for the meeting. You can do so online at www.clc4u.com/2020annualmeeting or by calling the church office at 201-391-4224. This meeting will allow you to connect online or via conference call.

Annual reports are currently available online. During the meeting we'll approve a budget for 2021, elect new church council members, appoint delegates to the Camp Koinonia annual meeting and vote on projects to support with our Special Gifts fund. At the start of the meeting we'll vote on a process of voting that might be a bit easier in the online space. When we vote for church council members, we will be using an online form (available at the meeting) or paper ballot (included in our annual report). If you use a paper ballot, please return to the church office on Monday, February 8 by 7:00 pm (place in the church mailbox). If you have any questions, please contact the church office or speak to Pastor (pastormarc@clc4u.com).



Worship and Missions



A Picture from Christmas Eve

60 people joined our Outdoor Christmas Eve Worship (even though the drive-in part didn't work quite right).

We'll look to returning to this kind of worship when the weather gets warmer!

Lent Begins On Ash Wednesday, February 17

Ash Wednesday Online

Ash Wednesday will be a virtual affair this year! Two separate worship opportunities will premier online at 12:00 pm and 7:30 pm. One of our traditions on Ash Wednesday is to reveal the mark left on our forehead at our baptism using ash. The making of an ashen cross on our forehead is a sacramental act that does not require an ordained person to make the mark. When we bless one another, make the sign of the cross, and hold our hands in prayer, we are practicing sacramental acts. They allow us to bodily express the divine love God has for us while preparing us for the acts of grace Jesus gives us every day. You can make the ashen cross on your forehead (or the forehead of those near you) on Ash Wednesday!

Starting Sunday, February 14, you can pick up a small cup of ashes at the church as well as our Lenten devotional. A table will be set up (weather permitting) by the entrance to the church office. You can drive-by and pick up a small communion cup of ashes (each cup will be more than enough for a family). You can pick up ashes on Sunday, February 14 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm; Monday, February 15 from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm; Tuesday, February 16 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm; Ash Wednesday, February 17 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. If you are unable to pick up ashes, please contact the church office, and we'll see that you receive some.

Lenten Mid-Week Book Study
Wednesdays at 7:00 pm

One Coin Found: How God's Love Stretches to the Margins

Rev. Emmy Kegler is an ELCA Pastor serving Grace Lutheran Church in northeast Minneapolis. Grace is a small servant-hearted neighborhood congregation focused on feeding the hungry and community outreach, and Rev. Kegler has been their pastor for several years. She also has a complicated relationship with the Bible. Rev. Kegler is a queer woman who grew up in both conservative Evangelical and progressive Protestant churches. She knows too well how Scripture can be used to wound and exclude. And yet the stories of Scripture continue to captivate and inspire her—both as a person of faith and as a pastor to a congregation. Her first book, *One Coin Found: How God's Love Stretches to the Margins*, tells her story as a queer Christian called to ordained ministry and how it formed her relationship with Scripture.



Starting on February 24 at 7:00 pm we'll meet weekly to read and discuss her book. You can join online by visiting www.clc4u.com/midweeklent. Let Pastor Marc know by February 17 if you would like to attend so he can arrange for the purchases of books (we invite you to reimburse the church for the book if you so desire).



Spiritual Practices for Lent

Rev. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller recently shared her motto for Lent in a recent article (“Journey Through Lent”, January/February 2021 edition) for *Living Lutheran*. One of her family’s favorite books is called *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*. In the book, the characters keep finding themselves blocked by all kinds of obstacles – including mountains, forests and tall grass. They repeat, over and over again, that “we can’t go over it. We can’t go under it. We have to go through it!” As we near the one year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic limiting our ability to worship together in-person, this Lent will be another church season that we have to go through. As Rev. Knowle-Zeller writes, “Lent teaches us to hold postures of hope in the face of despair . . . [calling] us to keep moving forward and saying together, ‘we have to go through it.’ Lent shows us through the cross that death doesn’t have the final word.”

If you’re looking to take on a spiritual practice this Lent, she recommends the following:

Take Deep Breaths. “It sounds so simple. It is simple. Yet too often I fail to take my own advice.”



- 1) Centering Poems. “Take time to savor a poem a day.”
- 2) Light a candle. “Sit by its glow. Watch the flame . . . repeat as often as needed . . . Jesus is the light of our world.”
- 3) Pay attention. “Commit to noticing what’s around you.”
- 4) Sit with a story. “Pick a book of the Bible (or one chapter) and read through it as many times as you can during Lent.”
- 5) Connect. “Take a few minutes each day and send a text or write a letter.”
- 6) Cook. “Try a new recipe and savor the act of creating something . . . As you cook and bake, remember that in the making and breaking of bread, Jesus is present.”

News from Our Partners in Ministry

Camp Koinonia Update



We're sharing some news from Camp Koinonia based in Highland Lake, New York. CLC is a member of the corporation that owns/runs the camp, and several of our members are working hard to help the camp reopen.

- Painting of the public areas in the Kairos Conference Center is complete. Deep cleaning is in progress.
- Olsen Mechanical has begun installing heat pumps in the Asdahl House (the house on the left when you first enter at the main entrance) and the Administration/Staff House. They will then install heat pumps at Two Family, Lakeside and then the Kairos Conference Center. Heat pumps will result in a tremendous annual cost savings and allow guests to efficiently select their own comfort level!
- Painting of the interior of Caritas House is in progress. It will also receive a heat pump. The house was “abandoned” several years ago when mold forced it to be evacuated. It is a major asset as it was once the residence of Rev. Bob Nervig, Executive Director. We are rehabilitating it for an anticipated future full time staff person.
- Koinonia leadership is working on a renewal of the campground beginning with plans for a new shower house.
- The Transition Board is working on a list of 12 nominees for the next Board.
- The next annual corporation meeting is February 28, 3:00 pm (Online).
- Dr. Kathleen Ruen, Interim Executive Director, is organizing meet-and-greets with pastors and other leaders. Pastor Marc, Kim Kearns, and Tom Kearns met with her during the last week of January.
- The Transition Board is working on a well-considered 2021 budget to be presented at the February 28 corporation meeting.

The Tri-Boro Food Pantry



Thank
You!

Below is a reprint of the Tri-Boro Food Pantry's end of the year thank you letter to financial contributors.

2020 was a year of incredible difficulties and amazing generosity. When the year began, we regularly fed 30+ families a week. But when COVID-19 showed up, everything changed. People lost jobs; children were home from school; and it wasn't safe to see each other in person. The Tri-Boro Food Pantry realized quickly we needed to do two things. First, we changed how we gave out food. We put in place procedures to keep our volunteers and clients safe. Second, the pantry needed to grow. When spring came, we served up to 140 families in one week. And because families were staying home, we increased the amount of food we gave. Every family would receive the milk, eggs, fresh produce, hygiene products, and household items they needed. When we made these adjustments, we had no idea if we could feed this many people. But we trusted that you and the entire community would help make this endeavor possible.

And that's exactly what you did. You organized neighborhood food drives, created blessing bags full of health products, and made sure everyone had a six pack of toilet paper. You hosted fundraisers, made facemasks, held virtual concerts, organized garage sales, and let that money help your neighbors in need. When you picked apples, you filled an extra bag for the pantry. When a pallet of produce sat unused at your place of business, you shipped it our way. And when stimulus checks arrived and you canceled your travel plans, you sent that money to the pantry. Over 550 individuals, families, and organizations gave a financial gift to the pantry this year, which is almost 10x, the number who gave last year. You fed your neighbors in 2020 and made sure they'll be fed in 2021 as well. We don't know what the future will bring but we do know, based on your generosity, that families in Northern New Jersey will not be hungry tonight. Thank you for making a difference.

Board Members

Chair: Rev. Mark Suriano

Director: Janelle Larghi

Treasurer: Rev. Marc A. Stutzel

Terry Ciula

Secretary: Karen Stevenson

Leticia Perez

News from the Finance and Stewardship Committees

Stewardship Results

Thank you to everyone who made a financial pledge for 2021! Here are the results as of mid January. If you would like to submit a pledge, you can do so at any time!

<u>Financial Pledge Amount</u>	<u>Number of Pledge</u>	<u>Total</u>
\$1-500	5	\$1,070
\$501-1000	1	\$600
\$1001-2000	14	\$18,172
\$2001-3000	7	\$17,580
\$3001-4000	3	\$10,620
\$4001-5000	2	\$8,960
\$5000+	11	\$108,800

Finance Committee News

Our 2020 numbers are in! Thank you to everyone who were able to give a financial gift to CLC in 2020. More details are available in our Annual Report. We ended 2020 with income of \$230,841 (\$221,599 from your financial gifts) and \$249,362 in expenses. Money was moved from the Emergency Fund to zero the deficit of \$18,521

Raise the Roof Update

At the Annual Meeting on February 7, we plan to present a Special Gifts request to complete the Raise the Roof Campaign. As of December 31, 2020, we still owed \$9,227 to ourselves.

Restricted Funds Update

We regularly send updates about how much of our current 'restricted funds' are being used. This is in accordance with the congregational-approved motion June 3, 2018.

The change in available funds is related to our monthly spending (by taking income minus our expenses) and the market value of our investments at the end of each month.

Approved amount:	\$50,000.00
Previous Amount of Total Funds Used:	\$ 1,533.00
<u>Amount accessed from approved funds:</u>	
Amount given back in December 2020:	\$28,045.00
due to an increase in our investments and zeroing of deficit	
Total amount of remaining available funds:	\$50,000.00
Amount available above the approved amount:	\$26,511.00



Come, Zoom and Sing with Choir during Lent!

It's a new year and as a church we are experiencing many brand new, exciting and meaningful ways to worship and sing praises through Zooming! The Chancel Choir members are amazed with this new way to sing for you, but we would love it if you would sing with us. We still rehearse Wednesday evenings but in the comfort of our own homes. Join us as we prepare for Lent. Contact Argine Safari (arginesafari@gmail.com) for more information.

Trash and Treasure Sale Postponed

Our annual Trash and Treasure sale (typically the first Saturday in May) has been postponed. At the moment, CLC-Women (who run the sale) are hopeful for a possible sale in the fall. Due to the current pandemic, any fall sale will be restricted to Treasures (i.e., no clothing). Stay tuned!

Church Office Remains Closed But . . .

Doris, the Parish Administrator is available at the church 8:30 am to 3:30 pm weekdays. Please feel free to call, 201-391-4224, or e-mail her (clc4u2@verizon.net) at any time with any thoughts, concerns or anything she can do for you. You are free to stop by during her hours; however, a phone call first is appreciated.

Looking Ahead—Changing Our Clocks

March will be here before we know it. On Sunday March 14, 2021 at 2:00 am we will need to change our clocks to Eastern Daylight Savings Time.

Our Celebrations in February!

Birthdays

Heather Henry
JoAnn Sallo
Lorraine Sadlon

Wedding Anniversary

Argine and Tigran Safari

Baptisms

Sarah Christensen
Brenna Collins
Henry Fitzgerald
Patrick Herlihy
Dana Sladovich
Mia Timberg

[You are invited to contact the church office to update our records on your important upcoming celebrations.]

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 in February on the 14th and 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 the Apostles' Creed in depth in January and February! We'll meet in February on the 21st and 28th.

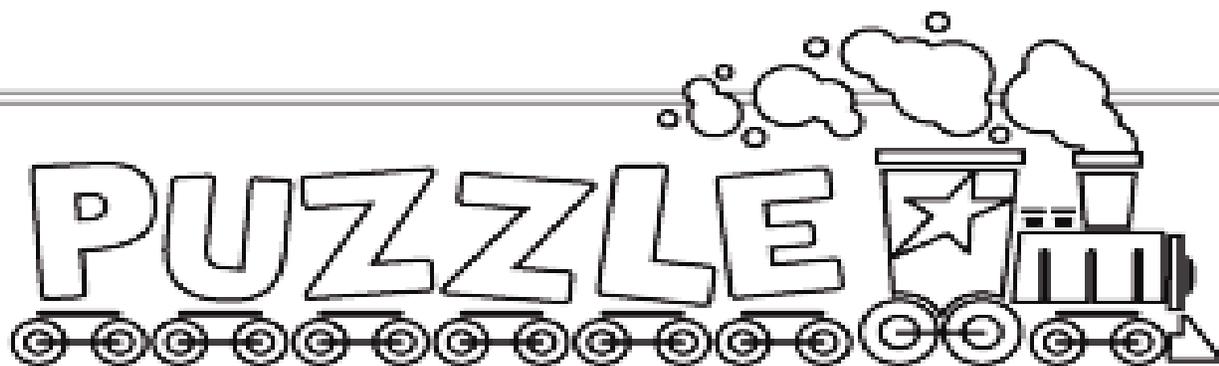
Are Lutherans Christians?

Exploring "Lutheran" as an Adjective

Pastor Marc has started a new Children Sermon series on what it means, to him, to be a Lutheran! He's shared how Lutheranism is a flavor of Christianity centered in experiencing Jesus right now. We've met Jesus in our baptism, in the Bible and in prayer. Do you have a question about Lutheran Christianity? Send your questions to Pastor Marc at pastormarc@clc4u.com.



**Learn
&
Grow**



BIRDS IN THE WORD

The Bible mentions many kinds of birds. How many have you seen?

Directions: Unscramble the bird names, using the Bible references and pictures as clues. Then insert the final unscrambled bird name to complete the passage below.



VDEO

___ ___ ___ ___ (Genesis 8:8)



LWO

___ ___ ___ (Psalm 102:6)



GEELA

___ ___ ___ ___ (Isaiah 40:31)



TOKRS

___ ___ ___ ___ (Jeremiah 8:7)



APROSWRS

___ ___ ___ ___ ___

“Are not five ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ... Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.”

LUKE 12:6-7, NIV

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