

The Messenger

MAY 2021

**May the LORD
bless his people
with peace!**

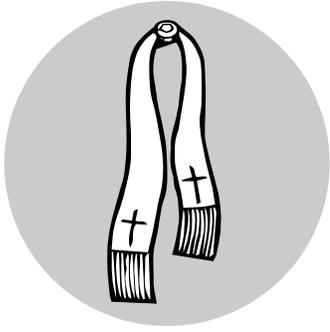
Psalm 29:11, NRSV



**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



Every week, the Lutheran clergy of Northern New Jersey gather for Bible study, and attending those sessions is my priority. My faith is fed by listening to God's story as shared in scripture and by listening to the stories of what God's people are doing all over New Jersey. A few years ago, a retired pastor who attended these sessions shared a story that I've chewed on over the last few days. He was a new pastor thinking about implementing some changes in the worship life of his community. He was worried it might upset a few people, and he didn't want worship to be a source of conflict in the church. While expressing his concerns to the church council, the president at the time gave him some advice. The changes, they said, should be spread over a year so that not everything happened at once. But that council also knew something about human nature. They also assured the pastor that after that year, the changes would be so engrained in the community that it would feel like they've always worshiped in this new way.

Now, for over a year, we've worshiped online, outdoors and over the phone. We've changed how we've gathered—shifting our in-person community towards one that was connected through technology. Our worshiping community has changed—and includes new people who have never set foot in our sanctuary. We're not the same local version of the body of Christ that we were on March 8, 2020. Yet, our identity in Jesus continues to be rooted in the grace, hope and love God gives us everyday. It's been 14 months since a worship service was held in our sanctuary. We've gotten above and beyond the one-year boundary that makes a church say "we've always done things this way." I'm looking forward to seeing how this last year changes, enhances and makes our life more faithful as a worshiping community. And we'll see those changes lived out this month as we return to indoor worship.

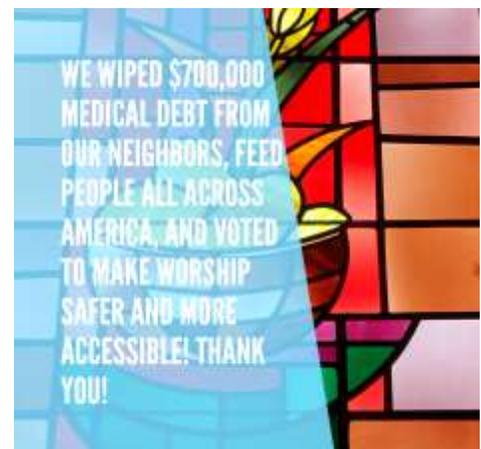
On May 23rd, the Rite of Confirmation will be celebrated in our sanctuary. Kayla Elek, Elena Thalmann, their families and guests will be present. Due to the number of guests we expect at that worship, only invited people connected to these two confirmands will be at worship. An online/conference call worship will be available to the wider community.

On **May 30th, 10:00 am worship will be held in the sanctuary.** We ask that you be masked, practice social distancing and avoid congregating in the lobby (narthex). Pre-registration is not required, but we invite you to contact the church office (201-391-4224 or clc4u2@verizon.net) to let us know if you will be there. It will take some time to get used to worshipping indoors, but I'm excited we get to do this together. Our transition into the sanctuary space will be more than a return to how things were. It will, instead, be the entering into a new future that is big enough to contain what we experienced over these last 14 months. We are here because Christ never left us, and we will continue to go wherever he takes us. See you in church!

Pastor Marc

Special Congregational Meeting Update

A shout-out to the over 40 people who attended our online special Congregational Meeting last Sunday. We reviewed a series of projects which will make an impact in our community and help make our worship accessible for years to come. Using the resources from the Special Gifts Fund and the generous gift from Redeemer Lutheran Church, we:



- Wiped out \$700,000 in medical debt impacting our neighbors in Northern New Jersey (through a \$7,000 gift to RIP Medical Debt).
- Committed to help Feeding America feed people nationwide and in New Jersey (through a \$5,000 gift).
- Began to improve our worship space by fully funding a new air conditioning/ventilation system for the sanctuary (\$33,124) and livestream media equipment (\$10,000).
- Approved installing security cameras and update the locks on our building (\$19,574).
- Began to fund refurbishing the parking lot (\$35,000) so that it is safe for everyone who attends worship or our special events.
- Increased our Mission Endowment Fund (by \$10,000) so that even more money can be generated to make a difference in the world.

COVID Update

What a difference a month can bring! Current statewide restrictions are being loosened while vaccine eligibility has increased. Many of you are currently fully vaccinated while others are arranging to receive their first shot. The staff at CLC has been fully vaccinated and Kate Stutzel is available at (kate.stutzel@gmail.com) to help you get your appointment. Even with the recent changes in guidelines from the CDC, getting a vaccine is still the best thing you can do to love your neighbors. Now is the best time to get vaccinated!

Starting in April, the state health department shifted their reporting of test results to the towns in our area. Data is shared on Wednesdays. We take the 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 average new daily cases per 100,000 people. As you can see, cases are approaching the 10 per 100,000 threshold.

April 7: 30
May 5: 10

April 14: 21

April 21: 18

April 28: 13

To view the updated COVID guidelines from the CLC, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html> (or google “Choosing Safer Activities CDC”). Below are some of their guidelines that pertain to our life as a worshipping community. For indoor activities, masks are recommended. For the unvaccinated, following social distancing rules is recommended as well.

Your Activity	Fully Vaccinated People	Unvaccinated People
Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people		
Attend a full-capacity worship service (indoors)		
Sing in an indoor chorus		

Worship and Missions

Worshipping at Christ Lutheran: A reminder that there are three ways to worship at Christ Lutheran Church on Sunday through May 23rd!



- 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.
- 4) Starting May 30th, worship will meet in the sanctuary, 10:00 am! Please wear your mask and refrain from greeting one another in the narthex (church lobby). Special markers on the pews will show you where you can sit six feet distant from those around you. Worship materials will be available for pickup in a brown paper bag (similar to our procedure for outdoor worship).

The return to indoor worship starting on May 30th means we will need worship assistants! Options exist to help setup the altar, read during worship, and usher. Please contact the church office (201-391-4224) if you would like to volunteer or keep an eye on our weekly e-newsletter for more information.

A Note About Live-Streaming: We do not expect to have live-streaming of worship in our sanctuary setup by May 30th. We are currently going through options to see what equipment will work best in our space. Until live-streaming is in place, Pastor Marc will continue to create and post a worship video on Facebook and YouTube. We have with a long history of making worship accessible, and we will continue to do that.

Mid-Week Worship - What's in a Creed? This midweek online worship series is digging deeper into the Apostles' Creed. We've briefly discussed the origin of the Creed, what we mean when we say "I believe" and how the first sentence of the Creed invites us to experience a God who is very particular. During the rest of May, we'll spend time unpacking the word Father and why Jesus' teaching and healings were not stated in the Creed. These 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.

Now that we're through the first quarter of the year, we wanted to share a few bits of information about the financial position of the church. The numbers below reflect our income/expenses through March 31, 2021.

Through the first quarter of 2021, we received \$51,010 in giving which represents a 1.4% increase compared to last year. Total income for the first quarter was \$52,541. Expenses through March 31 total \$67,078 giving us a loss of \$14,537. This loss was better than our budget for a loss of \$19,544 through March 31.



In March, the Finance Committee reviewed our current insurance package. We reached out to two additional firms to see what their plans offered. Church Mutual, the preferred insurance company of our denomination, gave us a plan that increased our coverage while decreasing our cost. They became our primary insurance carrier starting on April 1st.

Our long-term investments at Thrivent Financial remained steady through the first quarter. Due to the robust stock market in 2020 and through 2021, our operating loss has been mostly offset by the investment gain. Through 2021, we have not had to dip into our investments to fund operating costs.

The PPP loan we took last year was fully forgiven. We have placed that loan as well as the \$20,000 approved at the annual congregational meeting to create a new balance sheet item called: Reserve for Operating Deficits. This can serve as an offset if we have a deficit at the end of the year.

Your faithfulness continues to be inspiring! Thank you for the ways you support your faith community. Your generosity makes a faithful impact in northern New Jersey. If you would like to learn how you can shift to electronic giving, please visit www.clc4u.com/give.

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 and how Jesus helps us become who God wants us to be! We'll meet on May 2nd, May 16th, and June 6th. Contact Pastor Marc if you have any questions.



Confirmation: Our partnership with Prince of Peace Lutheran Church continues! We held our last class for the season May 2nd. On May 23rd, we will publicly affirm the calling God has given Kayla Elek and Elena Thalmann to be leaders in our church. If you are interested in the confirmation program for your youth (typically in 7th and 8th grade – but no upper age limit), please contact Pastor Marc at pastormarc@clc4u.com.

Let's Go Camping!

Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center is 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 8th to 10th grades (Service. Exploration. Excellence. Knowledge - SEEK - programs) are also available. Learn more by visiting <https://www.crossroadsretreat.com/summer-programs/>.

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.

Update



We wanted to share a few updates from Camp Koinonia located in Highland Lake, New York.

Dr. Kathleen K. Ruen, interim executive director of Camp Koinonia, had her position made permanent by the Board of Directors on February 28, 2021. As executive director Kathleen is responsible for the oversight and success of all aspects of Koinonia's mission. Koinonia is not "simply" a Lutheran outdoor ministry, it is also a campground, motel, restaurant, worship center and a place for retreats with programs for children, youth and adults. There are nine buildings to manage, miles of unpaved roads and culverts to maintain, six water systems and lakes, trails and camping sites that require frequent attention. The Executive Director will have a working knowledge of strategic planning, contracting, safety of guests, emergency response, office and mechanical systems, hiring and supervision of staff, governmental regulations and reporting, and financial management.

Register recently opened for a day camp at Koinonia, hosted by St. Peter's Church in Port Jervis. The four week camp is for 5-12 year olds with morning swim lessons at West End Beach. The goal of the camp is to connect kids with God's creation – and improve their swimming at the same time!

On May 1st-2nd, Camp Koinonia hosted a volunteer weekend. Kim and Tom Kearns joined 20 other volunteers to wash down the kitchen in the conference center, steam clean the Agape room, make beds, mow lawns, cut down trees, clear trails, clean windows, and prepare the camp for their soft opening on Memorial Day weekend.

Pastor Marc, Tom and Kim Kearns, Lynn Lesko and Jim Drobinske continue to be engaged with the leadership at the camp, offering our prayers and support during this time. If you have any questions, please reach out to any of us!

Community Events

Senior Citizen Activity Donation Drive from May 1 - May 31, 2021

The Junior Commission on the Status of Women is holding a Senior Citizen Activity Drive for Homebound Senior Citizens. The COVID 19 pandemic has left many people isolated and lonely, particularly our homebound senior citizens. To lift their spirits and show them we



care, we are asking for donations of the following activity items, which will later be delivered to Bergen County Meals on Wheels recipients:

- ❖ Adult coloring books
- ❖ Colored pencils
- ❖ Crayons
- ❖ Word search
- ❖ Crossword puzzles

Donations can be dropped off in the lobby of One Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. If you have any questions, please contact Terry Cannon at (201) 336-7425 or email: tcannon@co.bergen.nj.us

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. The organization acts 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 and (at press time) have **already raised over \$9,000**. 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/>

Supporting Others

Feeding Your Neighbors One Zucchini at a time: The Genesis Garden

After a year off, we're gearing up for a new season of the Genesis Garden. We utilize our own property to grow over 1200 lbs. of fresh produce to support the work of nearby food pantries. This year, our produce will be benefiting the work of the Tri-Boro Food Pantry in Park Ridge that serves 150 families a week.



The Genesis Garden team is looking for volunteers who can help make this spring/summer/early fall project happen. We typically meet once a week (traditionally on Tuesday nights) to plant, pick and tend the garden. A few initial days in May are set aside to plant hundreds of individual plants and many volunteers are needed to make that happen. This outdoor activity is great for families with kids and teenagers (Pastor Marc's kids have helped out even at the ages of 4 and 5). If you're looking to help make a difference in the community while participating in a safe activity, make a plan to join the Genesis Garden team. Contact Tom Kearns at tkearnsnj@gmail.com for more info or to sign-up.

News from Church Committees

The Care Committee's mission is to care for Christ Lutheran Church and the surrounding community. During the pandemic, they have been active with the prayer chain, visits, letters and phone calls, Knit One Crochet Too and our prison ministry. They will host their first in-person meeting (outdoors since March 2020) on May 11th at 10:00 am. Interested in learning more? Contact Mary Zeigler or the church office.

The Property Committee has been busy over the last month preparing the church for indoor worship. They've also been updating the Opsal/Fellowship Hall. Next time you visit, you'll notice the ceiling has been repainted as well as the large wooden beams that support the ceiling. Thank you for all our volunteers who made this over-the-top project possible!

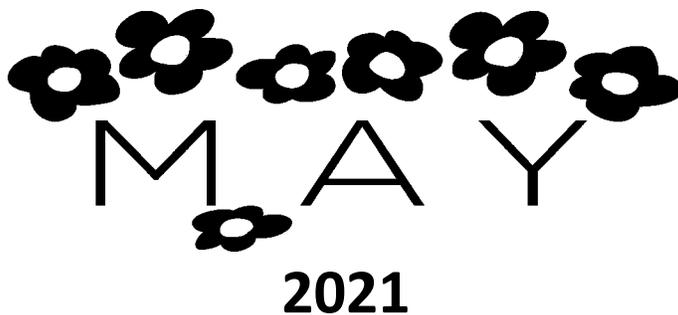
2021	M A Y					2021
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Sunday School 9:45 am <u>Worship with Holy Communion</u> 10:00 am Online and Parking Lot Worship Confirmation Class 6:30 pm	3	4 Worship Committee Meeting 8:00 pm	5  Chancel Choir Zoom Rehearsal 8:00 pm	6	7	8
9 <u>Worship with Holy Communion</u> 10:00 am Online and Parking Lot Worship HAPPY <i>Mother's Day</i>	10 Property Work Night, 7:30 pm	11	12 Chancel Choir Zoom Rehearsal 8:00 pm	13 Finance Committee 7:30 pm	14	15
16 <u>Worship with Holy Communion</u> 10:00 am Online and Parking Lot Worship	17	18	19 Chancel Choir Zoom Rehearsal 8:00 pm	20 Council Meeting 8:00 pm	21	22
23 DAY OF PENTECOST CONFIRMATION <u>Worship with Holy Communion</u> 10:00 am Online and Confirmation Service (Sanctuary, family only)	24	25	26 Chancel Choir Zoom Rehearsal 8:00 pm	27	28	29  MEMORIAL Weekend
30 HOLY TRINITY <u>Worship with Holy Communion</u> 10:00 am Online and in the Sanctuary 	31 MEMORIAL DAY Church Office Closed					

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