

The Messenger

November 2020

A Time for



Thanksgiving

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

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

Pastor's Thanksgiving Message



Thanksgiving this year will be different. A few months ago, I was looking forward to the virus staying at the low simmer it was during early August so that I could visit (outdoors) with family and friends. But the situation has changed. During the weekend of November 14 and 15, New Jersey reported the highest number of positive cases for COVID-19 so far. Instead of gathering around a friend's table, my Thanksgiving will be a much smaller affair. One of the things I'll miss is all the culinary dishes served at these kinds of gatherings. Each guest was asked to bring something festive, fun and super tasty to serve to everyone else. I love discovering new flavors and dishes by sampling other people's cultures and traditions. My table this year will look like it usually does – some turkey, mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce from a can. But I wonder, if this year were different, what dish would my family bring to Thanksgiving? What would we want to share with others?

It's in that spirit of Thanksgiving and the sharing of food that leads me to offer to you remarks I spoke at a "Unity in the Valley" event in March 2019. In the days before the event, anti-Semitic graffiti was found in several high schools. Leaders from various faith communities, towns and schools met at Pascack Valley High School to affirm our identity as a diverse community and to support one another. The evening was full of wonderful music, inspiring speeches and words that challenged us to listen to the better angels of our nature. I did my best to honor the interfaith nature of the event while staying true to our faith in Jesus Christ. And at the end is an exercise that you may include in your Thanksgiving meals this year. As you Facetime with family and friends, dial up a long distant friend on the phone, or setup super large calls, I invite you to keep sharing and keep connecting. Even though this Thanksgiving isn't the holiday we hoped it would be, we are connected to each other through a divine love that will never end. The Jesus who has sustained the church through these last 2000 years is with you, even now. I am always thankful for you and the ways you share God's love with everyone. And I pray that you will have a safe and healthy holiday during a very strange time.

God bless you,
Pastor Marc



Pastor Marc's Remarks from Unity in the Valley, March 2019

I want to start my remarks tonight with a simple question: what's your favorite recipe? Now, it's okay to take a few moments to think about it because it might not be the easiest question to answer. I'm not asking you to name your favorite thing to eat or what restaurant you like to go to. No, what I want to know is: what's your favorite recipe? What dish, or meal, do you love to make or, if you don't cook, what recipe does someone make for you that reminds you you're loved? Once you figure out an answer to that question, hold onto it, because we're going to use it in a few short minutes.

Now, as a person of faith who didn't grow up with one, I'm fascinated by the stuff of religion. There are the big things like the rituals, the prayer books, music and art. But there are also the little things—like what faith communities choose to post on their bulletin boards and what little booklets they keep by the front door that no one ever picks up. One of those things I sometimes find in the lobbies of many different kinds of faith communities is: that community's cookbook. They were usually published at least 10 years before, the pages are now yellowed, and the whole thing is bound together by an oddly colored piece of plastic. In Christian communities, we usually make these as a kind of fundraiser, asking people to submit recipes they want to share with everyone else. And these cookbooks are always filled with recipes you can't find anywhere else. Sometimes, you'll read about a chutney or hummus that someone's mom used to make. But you'll also find things that are a tad...frightening. As a Lutheran Christian, those kinds of recipes usually involve a casserole dish, Jell-O, a fruit you've never heard of and a can of tuna fish. When you read these cookbooks, you'll wonder if someone submitted something just to punk you. Yet, you'll also discover something beautiful. You'll be invited to make that pineapple cake that someone always brings whenever there's a funeral. And you'll be able to taste the rice and beans someone prepares every time a church member is in the hospital, leaving it on the family's front porch with a note saying we're thinking of them. These cookbooks are more than just a collection of recipes. They're a collection of stories—passed down from generation to generation—meant to be shared during incredible celebrations and to bring hope in moments of incredible sorrow.

Our favorite recipes do more than tell others what we like to eat; they show our neighbors a bit of who we are, where we come from and what makes us, us. We all carry within us a cookbook of recipes that lets other people know the entirety of our story. But the cookbooks we carry are not, I think, meant to be only for ourselves. When we eat, we're meant to eat together. Many of our faith and cultural traditions are centered at the table, at the place where dishes are served and meals are shared. Because we are invited to do more than just eat. We are here to get to know each other. The recipes we share are an opportunity for us to be vulnerable, to share a part of our tradition, our history and our soul with someone else. The table is where we get to be human and that creates an opportunity for unity that is honest with itself and its past. The meal we share is how we discover each other's joys and struggles. But it's also a moment for confession, when we finally see how our way of life has negatively impacted another. It's there where we reflect on the fullness of our story and admit the ways we didn't take seriously the story of the other. It's at the table when our -isms and -phobias breakdown. Antisemitism, sexism, racism, islamophobia, homophobia and every other wall we build to deny people a place at our table is undone. When we take seriously what it means to really share a meal with your neighbor, we're no longer in a position to hate and harm each other. Instead, we're called to feed each other, to serve one another and to help each other thrive.

And that calling isn't always easy. Sharing a meal together will always take risk. We need to be honest and to admit the ways we've hurt one another. As a Christian, I have to name, out loud, the ways my faith has been used to hurt and harm people. I have to acknowledge how we have, wrongly, denied people a place at our tables because of who they are, whom they love or where they come from. We haven't done enough to live into the reality of our faith tradition, about a Jesus who kept getting in trouble for sharing recipes and meals with people he wasn't supposed to. But we can, and we will, change that. We're not here to deny someone a place at the table. Instead, we're here to eat and to be fully human together.

So what's your favorite recipe? Who taught you it and why? Was it your grandma's cookies, your brother's chili, your best friend's gluten-free mac and cheese or that recipe you found online that you cooked all on your own for the very first time? I want you to turn to the person next to you and take the next minute to share that recipe with them, why it's important to you and how you're going to share your table with someone new.



Worship
with us
from
HOME

***In Regards to the Announcement that Worship
Starting on November 29
Will Be Online/Conference Call Only . . .***

*Pastor Marc shared the following during online worship on
November 15.*

I know there have been a few comments made about the announcement last Thursday that, starting November 29, we'll be switching to online/conference call worship only. So, I'd like to take a second to address it from my perspective. The church council is our highest decision making group here at the church. They're responsible for making the day-to-day business decisions that manage the building, staff and other ministries at CLC. The members of the church council are the ones who determine whether we meet for worship indoors, outdoors, or online. When the council discussed the possibility of worshipping indoors, the central question for us was a faithful one: what is God calling CLC to do right now? And to answer that question, we started with prayer and rooted ourselves in the freedom given to us through the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

We first looked at the ways the virus is currently making itself felt in our area. A few metrics we examined were the state-wide R value which measures the spread of the virus in the community. We also used, as a guideline, the positivity rate of virus tests in New Jersey and how many new cases appear each day in the Pascack Valley. *When there's less than four new cases per 100,000 people—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. On November 3rd, the Pascack Valley was seeing nine cases per 100,000 people. On Friday (November 13), that number grew to 19.* Since the council made their decision, my kids' elementary school went partially virtual because of a positive Covid case in Pre-K and 2nd grade. We've also seen Pascack Valley High School shut down for the 2nd time after three students tested positive for the virus. *And according to scientists for the Georgia Institute of Technology and Stanford University, there's a 53% chance in Bergen County that at least one person in every gathering of 25 people has COVID-19.* The metrics we're using show that the virus is currently running wild in the Pascack Valley and gathering indoors is the primary way the virus spreads.

If we worshipped in the sanctuary, your greatest risk for exposure to the virus comes from 3 three sources. The first major problem is—me—since I’m the one who does all the talking. The second highest risk comes from singing together or listening to a soloist. And the third area of concern comes when you do what you’re supposed to—and that’s talk to each other, after worship, to share your life with one another. The science I’ve seen shows that the act of physical communication is how this virus spreads. And even with all the restrictions we could put in place for indoor worship, we would never be able to keep you 100% safe. The restrictions necessary for us to worship even a little safer indoors would make the overall experience feel isolating, lonely and limited. The church council, as they prayed, talked and talked some more, kept Jesus fully in view. And their journey with the Holy Spirit led them to the unanimous decision not to return to worship indoors in the immediate future.

No one likes that we can’t meet in our building. I personally miss seeing you in the pews and watching you sing through every song. I miss gathering with the kids on the stairs to the altar and watching the spirit move through them as they ask questions and even heckle me oh so slightly. I miss shaking your hands after worship is over and saying an additional prayer with you once everyone had left this sacred space. I miss doing the physical bits of church, but I also know that this won’t be forever. The faith God gives us is a faith meant for the long haul. We make sacrifices now so that we can keep each other and our wider community safe. By staying home, we make sure that no contact person will ever need to reach out to you because I tested positive on Monday morning. We’ll make sure that the doctors, nurses, police officers and ambulance EMTs won’t need to see us because we came to church one day. None of this is fun or enjoyable. But we do this hard thing of staying apart because this, I honestly believe, is what the Spirit is calling CLC to do. The next few months will be hard. It will be weird to do Advent and Christmas online. Yet I have faith in all of you—because you are beloved children of God and you are, even now, living in the light of Jesus Christ.

Action Item: Update Your Contact Information

We want to make sure you are connected to your church. If you are not receiving weekly emails from CLC or seeing our posts on social media, contact the church office to update your contact information. Please make sure to keep your address updated (especially if you are off at college). And if you would like to reduce the number of *Messengers* arriving at your home, please contact the church office and let us know. Thank you!

Worship in Joy and Thanksgiving!

**52nd Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship
November 22nd at 7:00 pm**

Online @ www.facebook.com/Upper-Pascack-Valley-Interfaith-Group-103438508252486

The Upper Pascack Valley Clergy Council invites you to our annual Interfaith worship service. This year's service will be an online service hosted by Pascack Reformed Church. It will feature music, readings and reflections from faith communities all over the Pascack Valley. After the service, Peace Islands Institute (a Muslim community) will host an interfaith discussion via Zoom. Join in by visiting this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88626847108?pwd=eXFBMjFqZlZ6TTNoVnJaMW1mUzRBUT09>

or calling: 646-558-8656 – ID 886 2684 7108 and Password 770474.

Christ Lutheran Church will share this information through our online resources so that you can click and join in!

**All Future Sundays Beginning November 29th
(1st Sunday of Advent)**

Online worship—[facebook.com/clc4u](https://www.facebook.com/clc4u)

or

Conference call—646-558-8656

ID 827 672 730 and Password 195901

Advent Star Devotionals

The Advent Star Devotional is a daily reading/prayer resource put together by the students, staff and faculty of the United Lutheran Seminary (with Philadelphia and Gettysburg campuses). They will be mailed to each home.



ADVENT MESSAGES

Sing His Praises for the Advent and Christmas Season

If you haven't Zoomed yet, you are in for an experience! Chancel Choir will be rehearsing and recording Advent and Christmas music soon using this platform. Don't miss this new experience! Join us by contacting the church office to let us know of your curiosity and interest in singing with us for the holiday season.

Show Off Your Crèche – Online Zoom Conversation Sunday, December 6 after worship (approx. 11 am)

Have you started decorating your house or apartment for Christmas yet? I wonder how we could share our



holiday decorations with each other. On Sunday, December 6 we invite you to join online for an opportunity to share your favorite crèche/nativity set with CLC. We would love to hear the story of how it came into your life and where you display it. You can visit the meeting via this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87620745383?pwd=QUFYQTNLdnlvSXNoWjRVVHRwNGlQUT09>

We will also share this link through our online resources so that you can click and join in.

Looking for Volunteers – Advent Wreathes



One of the ways we count down to Christmas is through the lighting of candles. Pastor Marc would love to have a short video of your family lighting your Advent wreath. If you're interested in participating, contact him at pastormarc@clc4u.com.

Christmas Eve Preview: The Love Tree 2.0

One of our amazing traditions sponsored by the Care Committee is the sharing of Christmas blessings to everyone in the congregation. During this time of the pandemic, we won't be able to hang heart shaped messages on a Christmas tree but we can still wish each other a Merry Christmas. If you would like to compose a short (15-30 second) video to be shared at our online Christmas Eve worship, please contact Pastor Marc at pastormarc@clc4u.com.



At the end of October 2020, total expenses (\$23,175) outpaced total income (\$17,920) resulting in a loss of \$5,254. Year to date, our loss is \$23,158 which is actually less than planned. November and December are typically the months you are most generous with your faith community. We carry a loss through much of the year because CLC is committed to generously sharing Jesus in Northern New Jersey. We're able to worship, educate and adapt to unexpected challenges through the gifts you entrust to your church. As we enter these final two months of 2020, we know this year has been especially difficult. Yet you continue to follow Jesus in everything that you do. The staff and leadership at CLC will continue to use your financial gifts to make a faithful impact in our wider community.

Thank you very much,
The Finance Committee

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 on 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:	\$3,688.00
<u>Amount accessed from approved funds:</u>	
Amount used for October 2020	\$9,129.00
Total amount of remaining available funds	\$37,183.00

Stewardship Campaign Has Begun

In late October, stewardship pledge cards and time/talent sheets were mailed to many of you. Every fall, we look forward to the future and wonder what God is calling us to do. While the rest of our culture uses these last few months to reflect on what has come before, we look forward into the future that God is already bringing about. Please continue to prayerfully consider how you will continue to serve God in your church. More information (and with weekly videos by Pastor Marc) can be found on our website at www.clc4u.com/stewardship.

SAVE THE DATE
WCL RECREATION, APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN
CHURCH, CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH &
OUR LADY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH
INVITE YOU TO OUR ANNUAL

Christmas *Tree*
Lighting
Ceremony

Celebrate The Holidays With Us!

Friday, December 4
@5pm-6pm

-Songs-
-Blessings & Prayers-

Corner of Werimus Rd.
& Woodcliff Ave. by the
Old Mill Pool

If you plan on attending we ask that you register via TICKETLEAP. Social Distancing & Masks will be required. Questions? ecalderone@wclnj.com

If outdoor gatherings remain possible at this time we will plan on hosting Rain or Shine. Please check the towns website for up to the date information & sign up to receive weekly notices via constant contact

www.wclnj.com

Community Service and Events

Shop So That They May Give Thanks!



We usually decorate our sanctuary altar in November with fruits and vegetables for the benefit of the Tri-Boro Food Pantry. This year you may donate produce when you attend the outdoor worship in November or drop them off at the church office, and they will be delivered to the **Park Ridge Tri-Boro Food Pantry**. Can you bring vegetables and fruit this year?

Supermarket Gift Cards (\$20)	Cauliflower
Frozen Turkeys	Canned Cranberry Sauce
Carrots	Stuffing
Onions	Apples
Any potatoes	Oranges
Any hard squash	Baking mix

Low-income Seniors: Boost Your Budget

Bergen County Department of Senior Services has teamed up with the National Council on Aging to help low-income seniors [Boost Your Budget!](#)

We know that making ends meet on a fixed income is no easy task. Benefits can help, and our staff is trained to guide you. Give your budget a boost by calling the Department of Senior Services at 201-336-7400 and talking to a representative about how to apply for food, medicine, utilities or transportation benefits programs. They will do a benefit screening over the phone and help you access applications for programs. As a bonus, participants will receive a \$25 grocery store gift card, while supplies last. Call them today at 201-336-7400 and let us know that you want to Boost Your Budget!



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