

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

More Stories of Being the Church in a Time of Pandemic

Holy Trinity Memorial of Catasauqua

In the letter to the church in Rome, St Paul writes, "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet, and any other commandment, are summed up in this word. 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.'" (Romans 13:9-10, NRSV). This has been the source of inspiration for Holy Trinity Memorial of Catasauqua

Over the past eleven weeks, Holy Trinity has turned God's abundant giving toward the neighborhood. The love of Christ, which is the fulfillment of the law, has freed us to boldly live in love with this world. The call to do God's Work with Our Hands has pushed us to our sidewalk.

How are we loving this world while on our sidewalk? By trusting that God has provided and cared for us so we can walk humbly with our neighbors. God has abundantly poured over \$15,000 into a Community Help fund at Holy Trinity. We have purchased \$1,000 worth of food from restaurants and cooked \$500 worth of raw food each week for a Catasauqua food giveaway. We can't wait to see what ventures God has planned for us once the strong need for food is able to be handled by the local food bank.



St. James, Hobbie



St. James Lutheran church in Hobbie continues to hold food distribution during these trying times. The distributions of produce, milk, eggs, and other goods have been occurring weekly as an outreach to anyone in the community - no questions asked. God's work. Our hands.



Zoom Meeting with Bishop Zeiser

On Tuesday, June 9, over 160 rostered ministers and others joined Bishop Zeiser in a Zoom meeting to receive updates on several matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bishop opened the meeting with a brief homily based on Jer. 31:15-17: *Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work, says the Lord: they shall come back from the land of the enemy; there is hope for your future, says the Lord: your children shall come back to their own country.* [A link to view the homily is available on the home page of the synod website at godslove.org.]

The Bishop then introduced Collin Grooms, Executive Director of Bear Creek Camp. Collin announced that summer camp has been cancelled; however, family camping and a Bear Creek Camp Conservation Corps will be available. [See the camp website for more information at bearcreekcamp.org.] The Camp will face difficult financial challenges in the coming year, but Collin is confident that the Camp will continue its ministry.

The Bishop lifted up the Online Baccalaureate Service for graduates in our synod, which was put together by Sammy Kelly and the Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry Team. He then introduced Julia Menzo, from Lutheran Congregational Services, who spoke about the various outreach efforts underway. [See her article below.]

The Bishop also addressed the status of Assembly 2020. Because of concerns for the safety and well-being of delegates, the Assembly will not be held at Kalahari in October as previously announced. The Assembly Planning Team is considering several options, including the possibility of an online Assembly. A recommendation will be presented to the Synod Council at their meeting on July 14, and their decision will then be announced to the synod.

Finally, the Bishop addressed challenges the church will face in the weeks and months ahead. These include the role of online worship, communion practice in a time of social distancing, and the need to confront racial injustice in our land.

Spiritual and Emotional Care in the time of COVID-19

The routines of work, school and simply running errands have been disrupted by COVID-19. The rituals we practice in worship, grieving, marriage, baptism, and more have been put on pause. These disruptions can impact our emotional and spiritual health. To meet these disruptions church leaders have offered creative worship, prayer, and fellowship opportunities; many of us have developed new routines at home and for everyday life.

Lutheran Congregational Services is partnering with a number of organizations to meet needs during COVID-19. Many offer spiritual and emotional care.

Keystone Disaster Interfaith Network has established a Spiritual Care Call Line to provide appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care to people of all ages, races, and religions, especially in the midst of COVID-19. Call 888-255-6520.

American Red Cross's Virtual Family Assistance Center offers an Integrated Condolence Care Program. Please visit redcross.org/virtual-family-assistance-center.html. Of course, a number of resources are available through the ELCA at elca.org/publichealth.

Lutheran Disaster Response is creating a spiritual and emotional care training, with a focus on COVID-19, which will be available in the coming months. Please also feel free to reach out to Lutheran Congregational Services to talk to Sylvia Havlish, our bereavement counselor, about upcoming programs and services.

Email jmenzo@libertylutheran.org for more information.

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