

The Parish Item

Monthly Newsletter of *East Liberty Lutheran Church*

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Our Mission:

- * Preach the gospel.
- * Administer the sacraments.
- * Teach God's Word
- * Serve the community.

August 2020

Being Grateful in a time of Pandemic

On February 15th of this year, I stood before God, our Bishop, numerous clergy and many people from the congregations of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM) and said my Ordination vows. I was grateful for the completions of my Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary and the Candidacy process of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I was grateful for a wonderful reception that followed the Ordination; for time with family and friends, for my mentors who guided me, for the support that I received from my family, friends and

members of PLUM, and for the beautiful, thoughtful gifts that were given to me. I was grateful.

And I was ready – ready to serve as a pastor. I looked forward to leading worship in the congregations of PLUM, to sharing communion with all who gathered, to visiting home-bound members, and yes, even to attending all the meetings that are necessary for getting the work of the church done. And then, a pandemic happened. Somehow I missed that class in seminary! And now these words come to mind:

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:18

It does not seem to be coincidental that, in the midst of the pandemic, our synod's Stewardship Committee offered a book study. The book that was used was Diana Butler Bass's *Grateful: The Subversive Practice of Giving Thanks*.

Giving thanks in the midst of a pandemic—is it possible? Is it possible to “give thanks in all circumstances?”

Bass wrote:

“If we practice gratefulness, it becomes a natural and normal way of engaging the world. With gratitude, our hearts open toward one another. It can make us different and helps us prosper”(p. 62).

For gratefulness to become natural and “normal,” it takes practice. And what is “normal?” As every aspect of our lives have changed, some questions come to mind. What does it mean to be church? What does it mean to worship? How can we celebrate communion? And a very important question – What are you feeling? I think that I can say that this has been a time of an emotional roller coaster. Bass wrote: “Our emotional lives are like gardens” (p. 40). And like gardens, Bass points out, they need attentiveness, care, and tending. How are you tending your emotional life?

Your pastors, and I think many of you, have been wrestling with those questions for months now. And another question, one that we must think about is – What have we learned? How has our awareness of our church community, the Church in the world, our local communities and our nation increased?

Bass wrote:

“Gifts bring forth gratitude, and we express our appreciation by passing gifts on to others. When we share gifts, we become benefactors toward the well-being of all. . . It is an invitation to receive gifts, live more simply, graciously, and freely, attuned to our own hearts, our neighbors, and the common good.” (p. xxv)

What gifts have we received? We have been gifted with individuals with skills to bring us together in worship on Zoom and Facebook. We have technology that allows us to attend worship, book studies, Bible Studies, council meetings, classes, family parties, graduations and fellowship hours from the comfort of our homes, our cars and our

gardens. Our family members who live hundreds of miles away are leading part of our worship services of PLUM. We have received the gift of Sabbath in the busyness of our lives, we often denied ourselves this gift that God gave us. It took a pandemic to slow us down so that we could practice being still and resting. And then, a pandemic happened. Somehow, I missed that class in Seminary! And now, these words came to mind. We received the gift of sight. We were made aware “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” We were made aware of the need that has always been in our communities and nation, but that we were too busy to see. We saw, maybe for the first time, how important an “essential” worker is – and we saw that it was the very people that we looked past each day. We saw just how many people in our communities are living paycheck to paycheck, and who don’t have enough to eat.

Our eyes have also been opened to injustices in our country. Gifts aren’t always welcomed, but they are gifts, nonetheless. It is our choice about what we will do with these gifts. Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor. We cannot toss this gift of sight aside like an unwanted toy. What are we going to do with this gift?

What does it mean to be Church? What does it mean to worship? How do we show our love, and God’s love, to our neighbor? These are questions that all of us must continue to wrestle with. We can begin by practicing gratefulness. We can practice giving thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us.

Blessings from your pastoral team,
+Pastor Sue

PLUM Summer Discussion Series

The Tensions of being in Relationship: Reflections on Broken Covenants and Ways of Healing



Please join us for discussion beginning July 7, 2020:
Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Jeremiah 31:33

The call in line for these discussions is:

Zoom online: <https://zoom.us/j/401596541>

Zoom by phone: +1 646 876 9923 US

Meeting ID: 401 596 541

Summer Discussion Series – Weeks 1 and 2: Biblical Covenants and Social Contracts

Introduction:

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Jeremiah 31:33

“He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' ”
Luke 10:27

I. Biblical Covenant

a. Definition: A covenant is a chosen relationship in which two parties make a promise to each other.

Example: marriage

A covenant should be distinguished from a contract because it is a personal relationship which people voluntarily enter.

b. Biblical Covenants

1. There is disagreement about how many are in the Bible. Opinions range from 1-12. In the Scripture, there was a focus on three types of covenants, namely, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, and the New Covenant mediated by Jesus. Some scholars classify only two; a covenant of promise and a covenant of law. The former involved an oath taken by God – a word of promise instead of command – while the latter is known in the Bible as “the Law”.

2. Brief description of Seven Biblical Covenants:

*Eden: Genesis 3:15; God’s Promise: Satan and mankind will be enemies;

Sign - pain of childbirth, work for bread

*Noah: Genesis 9:8-17; God’s Promise: God would never again destroy the world with a flood.

Sign – Rainbow

*Abraham: Genesis 15:12-21, 17:1-14; God’s Promise: Abraham’s descendants would become a great nation if they obeyed God. God would be their God.

Sign – Smoking firepot and flaming torch.

*At Mount Sinai: Exodus 19:5-6; God’s Promise: Israel would be God’s special people, a holy nation. But they would have to keep their part of the covenant to obedience.

Sign – The Exodus

*The Priesthood: Numbers 25:10-13; God’s Promise: Aaron’s descendants would be priests forever.

Sign – The Aaronic priesthood

*David: 2Samuel 7:13, 23:5; God’s Promise: Salvation would come through David’s line, through the Messiah

Sign – David’s line continued and Christ was born a descendant of David

*New Covenant: Hebrews 8:6-13; God’s Promise: Forgiveness and salvation are available in and through Christ

Sign – the resurrection of Christ

II. Social Contract

What allows us to live together in community?

a. Definition: an implicit agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits. Example: sacrificing some individual freedom for state protection

b. Social Contract theory says that people live together in society in accordance with an agreement that establishes moral and political rules of behavior. The US Constitution is often cited as an explicit example of part of America’s social contract. It sets out what the government can and cannot do.

c. After the contracts are established, however, then society becomes possible, and people can be expected to keep their promises, cooperate with one another, and so on. **The social contract is the most fundamental source of all that is good and that which we depend upon to live well.**

III. Trevor Noah Video

Trevor Noah is a South African, political commentator and television host. He is the current host of the Daily Show. He is also an author of “Born a Crime” and other books.

The video that we are about to share was Trevor Noah’s response to the death of George Floyd and other events happening in our country today. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4amCfVbA_c



PLUM NEWS



"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men [and women] will see visions, your old men [and women] will dream dreams." Acts 2:17

PLUM has a Vision Committee to imagine PLUM’s future in broad stroke with an eye on concrete, practical actions to move us into the future we are creating.

We would like you to become involved!

Changes in pastoral leadership mean that PLUM faces a major period of transition. You can help define and shape what is coming: *How do we enable and support each congregation to pursue its mission while at the same time be an integral part of PLUM?*

Dream about what you think PLUM should be. Envision your congregation with its specific call from God. Help us imagine our future and work to bring it into reality.

Your sister in Christ,
Susan Smith
PLUM Board President

Addiction Support Group

Supporting Your Loved One's Recovery



There will be no meeting in August. Next meeting will occur on Saturday, September 5. Addiction Support Group - via online "Zoom" meeting

The "Zoom" (internet video conferencing) meeting for the upcoming **Support Group meeting** is on **Saturday, April 4, 2020 @ 10 AM.**

For a **COMPUTER**: If you do NOT have the Zoom program on your computer, then click this link to [Download and install Zoom desktop program \(Windows or Mac\)](#). After the file has downloaded, go to where the file was downloaded to (probably in your "Downloads" folder) and click on the "**ZoomInstaller.exe**" file to start the installation process.

For a **"SMART" CELL PHONE**: If you do NOT have the Zoom app installed on your cell phone, then go to

Google Play (for Android phones) or to the Apple Store (for Apple phones). Search for the "Zoom" app. Download and install the file.

AFTER you have installed the program or app:

To join this Zoom meeting (with a **computer, laptop** or "**smart**" cell phone), click: <https://zoom.us/j/7810537518> The Zoom "Meeting ID" is 781 053 7518

Please call my cell (412) 853-3189 if you experience any technical difficulties.

Kathleen

Support your loved one's recovery by attending the Addiction Support Group the **first Saturday of every month** from **10:00 a.m. – Noon** via **Zoom**. The support group will be exchanging experiences and ideas as a means to provide resources, suggestions and ideas that can help those struggling to support the recovery journey of a close relative or friend.

Interested participants are encouraged to reach out to the group facilitator by email (kdhays2010@gmail.com) or by text to (412) 853-3189. For more information and regular updates, go to the Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/596414461122363>

Saturday, August 8
Diaper Bank - at its NEW LOCATION

The Diaper Bank has *moved* to **St. Basil's Church** (1735 Brownsville Road). It will be open on the second Saturday of each month. The first diaper distribution *at the new location* will be on **August 8**.

The Diaper Bank will reopen on the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Please use the **parking lot entrance**.

You **MUST** have your WIC ID, SNAP card, or proof of income to sign-up. You will receive diapers, wipes and ointment for each qualifying child.

Diapers sizes are: Newborn to Adult. *Quantities are limited.*

- For information about the Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank, go to www.wpadiaperbank.org

Saturday, August 15
Blessed Bundles baby supplies program

Lutheran Church of Our Saviour (1570 Clay Pike, North Huntingdon, PA 15642) is proud to offer "Blessed Bundles" - an exciting program which offers new and gently used baby supplies to individuals in the local community. Blessed Bundles will be collecting and distributing items such as diapers, baby wipes, baby clothes (up to size 8), baby/toddler toys and equipment, and other baby supplies. Items may vary and will be available as they are donated to Blessed Bundles. Blessed Bundles will distribute supplies on the **third Saturday** of each month from **11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

East Liberty Lutheran Church Council Minutes
July 21, 2020

Present: John Curry, Sandy Curry, Marie Bishop, Sandi Sunny, Gloria Davis, Susan Smith, Lee Carrington, Charles Honeywell, Pr. John Gropp, Pr. Brenda Henry

- *Devotions, Pr. John*
Jeremiah 29:11-13

- *PLUM Pastors' reports & update, Pr. Brenda*
 - PLUM Churches: In-person, 6 of the 10 (ELLC is now one)
 - As of 7/20/2020, Trinity building has been sold. They are transferring membership to Bethany Dormont.
Aug 1, 7 p.m. Zoom Closing and Opening service; all are invited.
 - PLUM Presidents' meeting tomorrow at 7 p.m. on Zoom
 - PLUM Board meeting Monday, July 27 at 7 p.m. on Zoom
 - Summer Discussion series continues looking at racial relationships; all are invited to participate Tuesdays at 1 or Thursdays at 7 on Zoom.

- *De-briefing on our first in-person worship at EECM*
 - 6 people present including Pr. Brenda
 - Distancing was not an issue.
 - Laura Reynolds will play the piano starting next week; \$100/week
 - Everything went according to plan.

- Lee and John C. moved shelves and cart so that the storage room is set up.
- For those who prefer, we can deliver the wafer after all others have communed. Someone will then take the tray over so that s/he can take his/her own.
- Pr. Brenda used a shield so that we could see her face as she spoke and her image and talking were in sync. That worked well.
- EECM, including restrooms, was spotless. They were prepared for us.
- We wiped things down at the end.
- *Review of Wednesday ministries*
 - *Wednesday worship & lunch*
Worship tomorrow at EECM at 1 p.m.
 - Marie will be there early and pick up 6 lunches; we can check with people tomorrow to see if the service can start at 12:30 p.m. in future weeks since we are not eating lunch together.
 - 2 regulars are definitely planning to be there.
 - Pr. John will stop at ELLC to be sure people don't go there. Signs have been posted at ELLC.
 - Pr. John will change the message on the phone. Sandi will send the directions again.
 - Pr. Brenda will bring normal chapel-format bulletins that she will bring tomorrow.
 - *Feeding the community*
 - We don't have a strong sense of what to do going forward. A lot of time is invested to hand out things for 2-3 people with less intimate contact; that's COVID.
 - Sandi has sent a message to DZ at EECM to check on details.

- Do we need to have something happening at ELLC so that it is not 'abandoned'? We are insured for liability outside; not the building. That is one reason to keep the mailing address the same and that the grass is cut. We don't know city regulations or Church Mutual if the building were boarded up. John C. will call the lawyer to find out.
- If we move, will people follow us? We will have to move when weather is cold.
- We don't want to give up the ministry. Maybe we can feed into another local ministry.
- If we want to eventually feed people in person with socializing, then a transition would be to move to EECM. We need to show that we are still around and want to do the ministry.
- **Short-term – for the next month:** advertise more – in Aug. put up sandwich board to say we are handing out food and that we are moving it to EECM. **Sandi will make the sign with outdoor sign (from Charles) and permanent marker.**
- **Susan will put it on the FB page. She will contact EL Business Bureau person who contacted her through FB; Sandi will sign us up for Next Door and announce the community dinner.**
- This weather would be good to take things to U-Haul for storage.
- *Selling the church property--updates and discussion*
 - July 15 deadline came and went with no response from LRC. John C.'s opinion is that we no longer have an agreement. He is working with

the lawyer who is cautious. The lawyer said not to contact them because it looks like we are open to continuing negotiations. Instead a mutual termination agreement is being prepared. The escrow money: they owe us \$15,000 from last amendment. There is a question about the \$30,000; COVID complicates things. John and the lawyer will review the agreement again.

- The sense of the council is that John move forward with the lawyer.
 - There are 1-2 other buyers who have expressed interest. We can't move forward until the lawyer give us the OK.
 - **Motion: As the treasurer, John recommends that he ask the bank if they would add \$50,000 to the credit line.** Unanimous vote to endorse this action. It is likely that the bank will accept.
 - Do we want to have a final activity outside before closing? A farewell as a socially-distanced picnic? With no end date, it is hard to organize something. There is grief and loss because we are letting go the building as a functional place, but we still don't know anything definite about the building. Maybe in Sept.? Maybe next spring? **Council Members will think about it this month sending some ideas around by email.** It may depend on what is happening with the building.
- *Financial report*
 - John C. provided financial reports for Jan. – June of 2020. We are not “rolling in dough” but offerings are coming in. Overall, regular givers

continue to send offerings. It has been fairly consistent.

- \$10,000 has come from the credit line. \$25,000 shows up in Feb. from LRC (money they owed us). John is being conservative about using credit.
 - We are paying rent now by the week. Utilities are low for the summer.
 - We hope that moving to EECM and having in-person liturgies will have a positive impact on members.
- *Old business: Caring for each other*
 - Gloria has followed up on some contacts on behalf of the church.
 - Some are making regular calls. Some are not. Many are keeping in touch with some people. Marie is very good about it. Charles is making some calls. Sandy has been sending notes in the mail. Cards – hand written are OK.
 - Lee and Charles will bring Anthony and Larry on Sundays.
 - **Between now and the Aug. meeting, Council members are requested to log who they talk to and send cards to so that next month we can make sure no one is falling through the cracks.**
 - We do need to pass along needs as we know them.
 - Gemma wants to be in the loop and does text although she manage council meetings. Susan is mail minutes to her.

- *New business*
 - None

Marie moves adjournment; Sandi seconded; unanimously passed; we ended with the Lord's Prayer.

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PLUM Congregations
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