

Our Saviour's Call

The monthly newsletter of
The Lutheran Church of Our Saviour

1570 Clay Pike
North Huntingdon, PA 15642
724/863-2591

A partner in the ministry of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM)

Pastoral Team

Rev. John J. Gropp – 412/680-7867 Rev. Brenda Henry – 412/390-8005
Rev. Sue Devine – 412/496-4889 Vicar Mandy Gilberti – 814/241-8150
Rev. Dr. Paul Koch – 773/848-1470

MOTTO

“Love one another, as I have loved you.” John 13:34

September – October 2020

Dear Partners in Ministry,

It might be hard to believe but since July 26th we have walked through most of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. There are four known letters from Paul to the people of Corinth, called the Corinthians. Some of the content of these letters has been lost to us and the remainder of what is left was used to create what we know as 1st and 2nd Corinthians. 2nd Corinthians was written less than a year after the documents used to create 1st Corinthians. It was during Paul's second ministry journey that he visited the city of Corinth.

Corinth was a big sea port; it was a busy place full of trade and business was successful. The city itself was a Roman colony that was immersed in Greek tradition. Part of the Greek tradition was the ongoing pagan worship of the goddess Athena; another part was the sexual immorality that went on openly in worship spaces. Early Christians found it very difficult to communicate the love of Christ within the city because of these popular practices. There were divisions in families and friendships could not endure the tension that tugged between the old practices and the potential of the new way of Jesus. Paul openly speaks that suffering for Christ will be their “new normal”.

The lectionary focused on Consolation, Forgiveness, Treasure in Clay Jars, Walk by Faith not Sight, Reconciliation, and Generosity. My attempt is to provide a “cliff-notes” version of what we have covered in 2nd Corinthians. First is Consolation. God does console us, but sometimes we don't experience it in the way that we believe it should happen. We want everything to be just so; we want all of our problems to just go away. But we really shouldn't sit still and let God do all of the heavy lifting for us. We need to realize that in getting consolation from God provides us with strength, encouragement and hope. We are never alone in our suffering. Christ suffers along with us. We cannot depend solely on ourselves to live our lives, we have to yoke up with God. Second was Forgiveness. We are not just supposed to extend forgiveness to others three times, or even seven times. We are supposed to forgive each other in an ongoing way. The best posture to have is when we are authentic about who we are and accountable for all we do. It sounds much easier on paper than it really is. God is totally aware of this and walks with us as we try to forgive others as often as we can. Third was Treasure in Clay Jars. We are the clay jars, we are ordinary on the outside but extraordinary on the inside. We are fragile jars of clay, therefore we need to be careful to make sure that we affect everyone else in a positive way. We are to be mindful of the attention we give to earthly money, possessions, and power. Our focus should be more on God. Fourth was Walk by Faith, not by Sight. We are reminded again that we are human beings with body and soul. Our bodies waste away in front of the mirror, but our soul never wastes away. The soul is nourished by the Word of God as we read scripture, as we worship together, and when we kneel in prayer. Our daily relationship with God is important and should take priority in our lives. Fifth was Reconciliation. We are brand new people on the

inside when we have been forgiven; the relationship with God is stronger, that old sin is done and forgotten. We can think of God as the “quicker picker upper”, our sins are blotted out and thrown away in the garbage. Finally, Generosity. As I think of the year plus that I have spent with you here at PLUM, I recognize you as generous people. Before the days of Covid’s limitations, when I walked into all of your worship spaces, I knew that if I needed anything you would rush to provide it for me. You are generous within your communities by providing food, diapers and clothes to those in need. You are generous with your time, talents, and treasures. I have witnessed some wonderful music, ideas, and a willingness to stay in a meeting even though it was running late.

Those six weeks have seemed to fly by, and here we are still wearing masks and keeping our distance. As bad as all of this can sometimes feel, there are truly times where life seems to be going along in a positive way. Our worship spaces are beginning to reopen. We can greet each other once again—even if it is from six feet away. We are once again communing with wine AND bread. The ZOOM service is still well attended and I have heard that people enjoy seeing familiar folks and meeting new folks. The daily 3pm meet up on ZOOM has turned out to be not only a place to hang out, but a place of love and support for the other! As we begin our walk toward the end of summer, let’s just pause and take a moment to take in all that we have experienced through the past few months. A deep breath is always a good way to refresh our body and soul!

God’s continued blessings on each and every one of you!

Vicar Mandy

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 the work of the church to get 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’ “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 can be part of our worship services!

We have received the gift of Sabbath. In the business 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.

We received the gift of sight. We were made aware that the work of the church is not tied to our buildings. 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

Worship in the Sanctuary

Since we have returned to worship in the Sanctuary we have seen about 20 members actively return and have been averaging about 12-14 weekly in attendance. We have settled into our abridged service and are delighted to have added the element of wine back into our Holy Communion.

While it is not the worship we had before March 15th, it is good to be back home in our worship space. We look forward to and pray for the day when we can all sing in jubilation; kneel in thanksgiving at the rail, greet each other with a hug and see each other’s faces!

Many thanks to Marianne Nicholas who is able to be with us at least once a month and to Pastor Gropp who is steadfast in his concern for our safety each week. Soon the pastors will resume rotating through the congregations, and we will enjoy seeing them again.

Thanks for Your Generosity

Thanks to all who have dropped off or mailed offerings to the church or brought them to worship. Your continuing support and faithfulness are greatly appreciated.

Treasurer’s Report

The following is the year-to-date financial report as of the end of August:

Offerings/Other Income	\$42,345
Expenses	\$49,740
Deficit	\$7,395

Parish Register

Deaths

Roberta Veverka	7/22/20
Charles Hershey	7/29/20

Memorial Gifts

A monetary gift has been given to the Memorial Fund in memory of:

John Shondel

from Lori Playso

Happy Apple Back to School

Happy Apple Learning Center started their classes on September 8th. **If you need to stop at the church during the day, please be aware that they will be there and kindly enter through the social room or the office door rather than the main church door. Also, please make sure the doors remain locked at all times.**

Pastor Paul's 50th Anniversary

Pastor Paul's 50th Anniversary of his ordination as a Lutheran Pastor was Sunday, August 9th. As a surprise, a slide show was presented during the 3:00 PLUM worship service via zoom.

Thank You from Pastor Paul

Dear Lutheran Church of Our Saviour,

What a delight it was to receive your greeting on my Ordination Anniversary. You and I are part of the PLUM family, and that is very special. God bless you as you find your way through COVID-19. I know God is guiding you, and you will be well.

Peace,

+ Pastor Paul

Brownie Troop Bridging Ceremony

The Leader and members of Brownie Troop 36812 were very grateful to be able to use our church grounds and the gazebo for their bridging ceremony in July.

PLUM Discussion Series

PLUM Discussion Series will resume on Tuesday, September 15th, and will be held on Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. via zoom. As time gets closer, please see the PLUM website (plumofpa.com) for details.

Garden of Faith

With temperatures in the 90's and almost three weeks without any measurable rain, this summer's weather has been a challenge for gardening. We were able to deliver the following vegetables to the *Norwin Meals on Wheels* kitchen: 10 pounds of onions, 3 zucchini, 18 pints of cherry tomatoes, 23 full sized tomatoes, 30 heads of garlic, 8 quarts of green beans, and two bunches of parsley. The staff at *MOW* are always grateful for our donations. Sue, the "chef", says she loves having fresh slices of tomatoes for the clients' sandwiches.

If September has good weather, we should be able to provide a few more tomatoes and beans. This year, we will NOT need any additional leaves since we still have a pile to decompose.

"Sing to the Lord of harvest, sing songs of love and praise; With joyful hearts and voices your allelulias raise. By him the rolling seasons in fruitful order move; Sing to the Lord of harvest, a joyous song of love."

Blessed Bundles Update

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Number of Volunteers</u>
July	50	120	7
August	42	102	5

The \$250.00 dollar Thrivent Action Grants were received for July and August by Barb and Mike Pergar. We received a very generous monetary donation from Denny and Brenda Erdly. There have been a lot of donations of clothing and baby "equipment" from families in the community and some of our Blessed Bundles families themselves. Thank you all so very much! We would also like to thank our faithful "adopt a box" families who continue to generously donate a box of diapers every month.

We were notified by the Southwestern PA Synod Women of the ELCA that due to the pandemic, Blessed Bundles will remain the designated outreach for 2021!

We continued to follow CDC guidelines for the distributions by spacing the tables as far apart as possible to have everyone socially distancing. All parents who entered were required to wear a mask and use hand sanitizer prior to entering the social hall. We let only 15 people in at a time, and everyone was required to provide a phone number for contact tracing purposes. We have also been placing some items outside (weather permitting) so that families can browse in the open air.

If our volunteer crew feels comfortable participating in the upcoming distributions, we welcome their help! Masks are required as well as social distancing for the health and wellbeing of our incredible volunteers. Please do not feel obligated to attend especially if you are in the high risk category for the COVID-19 virus. **It is more important that you stay healthy at this time!**

We are in need of assistance with bringing out the winter clothing and placing the summer clothing in storage. This can be done whenever you are able and allows for volunteers to be at the church alone without increased risk of exposure. Please contact Pam McCurdy at 412-736-7055 if you are interested. We would like to have the winter clothing available for our September distribution.

Our next distribution dates will be Saturday, September 19th and Saturday, October 17th.

G and J Dollars for Rise Against Hunger

We are still raising money for "Rise Against Hunger" by collecting "G and J" dollars. **Please check the dollar bills you have and consider donating the ones with the letter "G" for God and "J" for Jesus to this ministry.**

Prayer List

Our Members – Gwen Johnson, Robin Prady, Ken McDonough, Karen McDonough, Lucy Gracan, Eugene Woods, Rose Peters, Lois Smith, Cassie Rinker, Lil Fresch, Ryan Park, Diane Clem, Mitch Atkins, Betty Beranek, Luyviana Petersen, Margaret Achtzehn, Kitsy Cochran, Carol Godor, Mark Smith, Henrietta Solomon, Chuck Rubbo, Karen Smith, Glenda Ann Wareham, Sandy Fry, Tom Cochran, Steve Solomon, Brian Bergman, Janet Feltes, Carol Miller, Aaron Solman

Our Friends – Blancy Mitchell, Jennifer Miebach, Parker Burket, Jackie & Randy G., Dan Grubbs, Frank Krien, Tom Miller, Sara Stumme, Lance Lewand, Nathaniel Lewand, Jane Ramer, David Wilhide, Kelly Haley, Valerie Sas, Tammy Smiley, Cheryl Hayes, Keira Longo, Dennis Pollock, Darcy Riazzi, David McCurdy, Kelly Ward, Bruce Hayes, Kyle Wertman, Tim Hamilton, Karen Dunn, Jenni Stevenson, Pat & Dennis McCarthy, Steve Plecko, Alex, Bernard Socha, Suzanne Whitacre, Joan Hall, Joyce Hollick, Bryce Patrick, Kristin Cherone, Tracy Zarate, Rob Zarate, Ruth Sileo

Our Shut-ins – Eugene Woods, Irene Vozel, Lucy Gracan, Bill Malis, Pat Palm, Donna Churilla

Blessed Bundles' Families & Friends – Layla, Delaney, Jacob, Zac, Alrya, Nicole, Alanis, Alexis, Traedyn

Birthdays

September

Betty Beranek	9/3	Sandy Fry	10/1
Roni Johnson	9/3	Ed Bittner	10/6
Aiden Reed	9/5	Cora Park	10/6
Debbie Massimino	9/9	Robin Prady	10/7
Luyviana Peterson	9/14	Evelyn Evans-	
Debra Rubbo	9/16	Labanish	10/8
Austin Evans	9/17	Sue Morales	10/9
Barb Waldrop	9/21	Karen McDonough	10/11
Gwen Johnson	9/30	Karen Bittner	10/14
Susan Seymour	9/30	Garret Bohman	10/25
		Carol Miller	10/27

October

Have a wonderful birthday! To those whose birthday already occurred, Happy Belated Birthday! We hope you enjoyed your special day! If your birthday did not appear on the list or if it's incorrect, please notify us so we can update our records.

Can Collection for Recycling

We're still collecting **aluminum** cans (example: **pop and beer** cans) for recycling. Please bag them and **drop them off in the entranceway outside the kitchen door. Don't forget to pop off those tabs first!** The Thrivent Pop Tab Challenge will most likely be an annual event and we can get a jump on the next event.

Council Meetings

Council met on July 14th.

Members present: Lars Bohman, Sandi Bergman, Debbie Massimino, Diane Johnson, Pam McCurdy, Robin Prady, Ken McDonough, Pastor Gropp, Vicar Mandy Gilberti

Member absent: Jane Atkins

The following action took place:

- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the June 9th meeting. Motion carried.*

Council met again on August 11th.

Members present: Lars Bohman, Sandi Bergman, Debbie Massimino, Pam McCurdy, Robin Prady, Jane Atkins, Pastor Gropp, Vicar Mandy Gilberti

Members absent: Diane Johnson, Ken McDonough

The following actions took place:

- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the July 14th meeting. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded that Happy Apple Rent be cut back to \$1,000 beginning in September and running through December. The situation will be reviewed again in December for January's rent. Motion carried.*

Those wishing to view full council/congregational meeting minutes can do so once they are approved at the following meeting and are made available in the church office.

Women Ministers & Their Stories*

*I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH;
YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS*

SHALL PROPHECY. JOEL 2:28A

In 1970, the prophecy of Joel came to fruition in the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) when, on November 22, **ELIZABETH PLATZ** was ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament. She was the first Lutheran clergywoman in this country. Before the year ended, the American Lutheran Church ordained its first woman pastor, **BARBARA ANDREWS**.

Pastor Platz never intended to be a trailblazer. She grew up in our synod, at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Carrick. She entered Gettysburg Seminary in 1962. She had no desire to become a pastor at that time, but she wanted to study systematic theology, and the only way to do so was to pursue the Bachelor of Divinity degree.

And so it was that, when the church voted to ordain women, Elizabeth Platz was one of a handful of women who already had the necessary degree for ordination. Upon ordination, Pastor Platz became the chaplain at the University of Maryland-College Park. She retired after 47 years of service to the university.

In 1979, **EARLEAN MILLER** became the first African American woman ordained by the LCA. **LYDIA RIVERA KALB** became the first LCA Latina clergywoman that same year. As women of color, Pastor Miller and Pastor Kalb had to overcome not only sexism, but racism in the whitest denomination in America. Pastors **KAREN BATTLE** and **BRENDA HENRY** still serve as trailblazers as the only clergywomen of African descent who have ever served in our synod or its predecessor bodies.

CAROLINE MENDIS, our synod's longest ordained clergywoman, entered seminary in 1970. "I went through seminary with the synod hardly being aware of my presence. There was very little contact with people from the synod. ... I did not feel welcomed in the synod... there wasn't a sense in which I knew there was going to be a place for me."

The support from Gettysburg Seminary wasn't much better. When the first-year field assignments were made, she called the pastor at that church and spoke briefly with him. The next day, the wife of that pastor called the seminary placement office and said, "No. We can't have this person." Pastor Mendis continued, "So, I didn't have a placement. [The seminary] talked about getting me a different one, but they never did."

The internship assigned to Caroline Mendis was in the middle of nowhere, on East Swamp Road in Potter County, New York. There was no pastor at that church. "Hardly anybody knew I was there." Fortunately, the bishop knew, and saw her gifts. "When I was ready to be ordained (in 1974) that synod opened the doors to me and said, 'We would be happy if you came up here.'"

Before she began her call in Mayview, New York, Pastor Mendis came home to be ordained. However, when she called the synod office the day before her ordination, the bishop asked, "What's your name again? Who are you?" She replied, "I'm one of the ordinands!"

After some years, Pastor Mendis and her husband, Pastor George Mendis, returned to our synod and served together at Christ Lutheran Church, Millvale, from 1989 until their retirement in 2014.

SUSAN DEVINE is our synod's most recently ordained pastor. Her experience of support from the synod and seminary is far different from Pastor Mendis'. For 23 years, Pastor Devine worked in banking, but she had a sense that she was being called to serve the church. She kept telling herself, "I have a family to raise. I'm too old. I'm a woman. But the Holy Spirit kept nagging. My husband, Keith, said 'You've been thinking about this for over 20 years. You just need to do it.'" So, she talked with Pastor Ed Sheehan, then an Assistant to the Bishop, who helped her work out a distance learning program with a seminary that allowed her to continue to work full time.

On February 15, 2020, Pastor Devine was ordained and called to Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries. The support of Pastors **BETH SIEFERT** and **MELBA DIBBLE**, and the camaraderie she now shares with Pastor Brenda Henry and Vicar **MANDY GILBERTI** has been a blessing. "One of my favorite pictures from my ordination is when Pastor Beth and Pastor Brenda put the chasuble on me. They didn't just drape it on me. They took care to adjust my collar, make sure that my hair wasn't stuck in it. It was a caring moment... we're in this together and we're going to take care of each other."

In thinking about how much things have changed, Pastor Mendis reflected, "It sounds as though Sue has had much more camaraderie with women pastors in the sense of being together in that journey. I don't think I ever had that."

*This article is excerpted from **Wayfarer Magazine: Stories from the Road**, a publication of the Southwestern Synod of the ELCA, issue no. 3, August-October 2020. The full issue and more may be viewed at swpasynod.org/wayfarer.

At Home
Taizé Prayer Service
Friday, October 2, 2020, 7:00 pm



*During this time of the Coronavirus and Social Distancing,
Prayer is a source of Comfort.*

*Please join us in Taize Prayer from the safety of your
homes.*



To participate in the **Taize Prayer service**,
go to PLUM's [Zoom page](#)

Call Pastor Sue (412-496-4889)
or Pastor Brenda (412-390-8005)
if you have questions or concerns

Lutheran Church of Our Saviour
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Hours: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Tuesday - Friday

Rev. John J. Gropp, PLUM

Members, Ministers

Jane Humlan, Secretary

Worship Services

Sunday at 11:15 a.m. at the church

Sunday at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

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

Zoom by phone: +1 646-876-9923 ID: 401596541

VISION STATEMENT

We believe God's vision for the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour is that we become: a loving community whose Christ-like love for others embraces everyone, including those who have yet to experience the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ, Our Savior.

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a family of believers:
Renewed through worship,
United by Christ's call,
Bearing His love into the world.



STAY WITH. RAISE UP. SEND OUT.

GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.