

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

December 2020

GOD'S PROMISE TO HIS PEOPLE DURING TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY



Then Joshua said to the people,
***“Sanctify yourselves;
for tomorrow the LORD
will do wonders among you.”***
Joshua 3:5

It has been six months since that alarming declaration in March that we need to quarantine due to COVID-19, a virus that would come to change our daily way of interacting with each other. Our worship has changed due to physical distancing, use of masks and no singing.

Times have certainly changed. Often, we hear lamented “we have not been through this before.” The circumstances of the Israelites described in Joshua 3 were different than our present situation. However, they, like us, found themselves at a crossroad of change. They were at the Jordan river and they needed to cross. They had been wandering in the dessert for 40 years, Moses their beloved leader was dead and now they were entering into new territory. What were they to do?

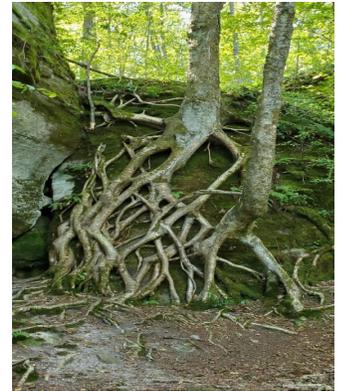
Over the last six months we have been asking the same question. The Corona Virus pandemic, the upheaval in our society as we are confronted with the divisiveness of racism, protests, looting, rioting and capturing of police officers and others mistreating black and brown bodies on the news and social media have certainly influenced how we have been experiencing this time. Our journey through this wilderness of chaos, though only six months, feels more like the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in search of the promise land. But the Israelites had hope. God had seen them through their journey and God was preparing them for this moment. Joshua told the Israelites on the eve before that crossing ***“Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”*** (Joshua 3:5)

Amid our changes, we too have experienced hope. Our hope has been in the tenacity of you, these beautiful congregations that compromise this partnership of servants committed to being God's hands for the work that God has invited us into. We continue to do our ministries of providing diapers; feeding those in need via supporting foodbanks, handing out prepacked meals and offering pizza parties to those we cannot fellowship with in person. We extended or began new ministries such as our Zoom 3pm services, on-line bible studies, 3pm fellowship hour, and on-line Taizé service. We have cared for each other through phone calls, weekly meetings with our awesome administrative staff who continue to be our frontline face to the community, as well as

monthly meetings with the president of councils and the PLUM board. Joshua's message from God to the Israelites those many years ago, also remains God's message to us today. Embedded in that message is a command and a promise. The command is to sanctify ourselves. In other words, we should prepare ourselves, engage in acts of worship, prayer and sacrifice for others. Those acts of sacrifice may come through a desire to do more as we learn of the social injustices and inequities that our brothers and sisters are facing.

These past six months have felt like our time of sanctifying ourselves. I for one do not know what God is up to. I, like you, have been sitting in this space of wondering, discerning and listening. To be clear, there is no specific step by step process of what the right way is to sanctify ourselves, but the Israelites understood that meant entering into a posture of openness, readiness and thankfulness for what God was doing and about to do. That takes us to the second part of the message, the promise: *for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.*

Oh, to experience that wonder. This past month I had the opportunity to go on a hike in the Allegheny Forest. The trail was called Minister Valley (the significance of that is another story ☐). I came across this spectacular sight – trees growing on top of boulders. I paused in awe, breathless, what a majestic sight. Both unexpected and unusual to me. After all shouldn't trees be rooted in the ground? But before me God was doing a new thing. A wondrous thing. As I looked closer, I noticed that the symbiotic relationship between trees and rock shifted. They started out with the rock supporting the trees. But as the trees grew and their roots branched out and became anchored in the soil beneath the rocks, then the branches of the roots began to secure the rocks in place so they would not move due to erosion. They had established a new way of co-existing. All throughout our hike we found this amazing demonstration of God. No, I do not know what God is up to during this season we find ourselves in. But I know whatever it is, the same God who created a new pattern of co-existing between trees and rocks also in engaged in a transformative experience for us. So, let us continue to sanctify ourselves, with eyes, ears and hearts open to the wonder God is doing and will do among us.



Pastor Brenda

On behalf of the PLUM Pastoral Team

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Are you feeling a little overwhelmed?

Are you getting excited about the upcoming holiday season with all the decorations, bells, and whistles of Thanksgiving, Kwanza, Hanukkah, Christmas or the numerous family gatherings that are typical during this time of year, or does it just add to the headache of the uncertain future we are all facing? Are we immobilized from the weariness of it all?

As we walk through the ever-changing seasons on our way through mid-fall, we find ourselves approaching the church celebration we call All Saints Sunday. It is a Sunday during which we intentionally remember our friends, family, and loved ones who most often changed our lives forever and have joined the church triumphant. As we are compiling the list of those we have served and cared for in their final season in this life, I am ever mindful of their celebration of life. When I ask the family if there is a preferred scripture they would like included in this celebration, the 23rd Psalm is the leading choice.

Psalm 23 (slightly modified for the current times)

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, (coronavirus pandemic, physical distancing, face masks, white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, school closures, political upheaval, unemployment, judicial upheaval, health insurance, environmental concerns, pro-choice vs. pro-life, etc.) I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Most people find in these words that were first recorded some 3,000 years ago by a “called” shepherd, turned king named David, who in human terms is the forefather of our Lord Jesus, to be words of comfort and strength. I believe this is just what we need today as we face our current time in our present-day valley. In times like these, we tend to forget that we have a God who is in charge. First allow me to rule out the obvious, for the most part we are all living in a bit of a fog. Check out the following tease and the One Minute version, but for a remarkably interesting description, read the full article at the website link noted below.

Covid and culture shock feel the same to your brain — and here’s why by EDITOR on AUGUST 25, 2020
by Peter Olson

We suspect you’ve been feeling it too. A frustrating sense of ‘molasses’ clogging your thoughts. A fatigue you just can’t seem to shake. Feeling ‘tired’ or ‘worn-out’ as you search to journey through normal days that simply don’t feel as normal as they should.

As we have both watched and experienced the events of 2020, something has seemed oddly familiar. Every part of life seems to have changed, nearly overnight. Stores are different. Work is different. Interactions with friends and with strangers – it’s all different. Yet in a way this scene seems to be a re-run. Because, in a way, it is. This scene is familiar because it mirrors culture shock.

The One-Minute Version:

When someone moves to a completely new culture, many of the ‘autopilots’ your brain uses for thousands of small decisions every day become ineffective. In a similar way, your current environment has likely changed sufficiently enough that many of your own ‘autopilots’ are no longer working. When this happens, the next remaining option for your brain is to use a second decision-making process that requires far more effort and energy (glucose) to operate. Your body can only supply glucose to your brain at a certain rate – a rate far below what would be required to use this kind of thinking continually. Thus, additional thinking about routine matters has likely left you with a chronically depleted level of glucose in your brain. All to say: You are experiencing “culture shock”.

For the full article please check out this website:

<https://www.alifeoverseas.com/covid-and-culture-shock-feel-the-same-to-your-brain-and-heres-why/>

This article might begin to explain the fog, but to help us with the decision making process during this cloudy and chaotic time, (yes, decisions still need to be made daily, hourly, and at a moment’s notice), Christians are assured that God is clearly in charge even if we are not privy to the end result. And as Christians, we are not called to sit idly by without putting our words into action. Remember, it is God’s work; “our” hands. Our example is Christ who was motivated by compassion and justice, always taking the side of the oppressed and those who were disenfranchised. Let us be willing to move in that direction as well, despite the fog that immerses us in our current valley, as there is a difference between being a true follower of Christ and just being religious. To be a true follower of Christ requires risk and assurance that God is with us.

In Christ’s service,
Pastor John Gropp

Treasurer's Report

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

Offerings/Other Income	\$55,685
Expenses	\$68,979
Deficit	-\$13,294

Thank You for Your Generosity

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

Parish Register

Deaths

Ronald Veverka	9/5/20
Mark Critchlow	10/30/20

New Address

Helen Blank
611 Bonney Drive
Sumner, MA 04292

Advent Bible Study

Please join friends from PLUM for *Advent Family Bible Study* on Zoom starting Tuesday, December 1st at 1:00 p.m. and continuing each Tuesday through December 22nd. The same study will be offered on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. We will explore the meaning behind the four candles of the Advent Wreath – HOPE, FAITH, JOY, LOVE.

Christmas Eve

There will not be a Christmas Eve in-person worship service in the church this year. However, there will be a *Parking Lot Worship Service at LCOS at 9:00 p.m., with music starting at 8:30 p.m.* Details will be provided later. There will also be two Zoom worship services: a Family Friendly Worship Service with Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m. and a Candlelight Worship Service with Holy Communion at 11:30 p.m.

At Home Taizé Prayer Services

During this time of the Coronavirus and Social Distancing, Prayer is a source of Comfort. Please join us in Taizé Prayer on Zoom from the safety of your homes on Friday, December 4, 2020 and again on Friday, January 8, 2021. The time for worship will be 7:00 p.m.

Special Congregational Meeting

A special Congregational meeting was held on Sunday, September 27th in order to discuss the church's recent inheritance of Martin Horensky's estate. Martin passed away on June 12th. Shortly afterwards we were made aware through Thrivent that we were the beneficiaries of his life insurance policy (approximately \$79,000.00). Then, a few weeks later we were made aware that we have also inherited Mr. Horensky's estate as well. Since an executor had not been named in his will, we found ourselves in a position of appointing someone to act in this position. The appointed person would have to accept the challenge of handling all of Martin's bills, cancelling all services, taking care of the house, getting an appraisal for the estate, and meeting regularly with council to keep us up to date. That person would receive 5% of the estate. It will take up to a year to complete.

- *Motion was made and seconded that we appoint Maureen Kroll, Attorney, as Executor of Martin Horensky's estate. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to add an addendum: Two people from the Church should*

be appointed to follow up with Maureen on a regular basis and keep council up to speed on the progress. Motion carried. There were two volunteers: Sandi Bergman and Christine Bohman. Everyone was in favor of these two.

Bi-Annual Congregational Meeting

Our bi-annual Congregational Meeting was held on November 15th.

The following actions took place:

- *Acceptance of the February 16th Congregational Meeting minutes.*
- *Acceptance of the minutes of the Special Congregational Meeting minutes which was held on September 27th.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the 2021 Ministry Plan. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the nomination of three new council members. Motion carried.*

New Council members elected:

Mike Seymour
Jane Atkins
Sandi Bergman

- *Motion was made and seconded to make a one-time gift of \$5,000 to our Synod. The donation will come out of the Horensky gift. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to donate \$1,000 to The Greater Things Resource Center, which provides food, clothing, hygiene items, and support to the homeless. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to donate \$1,000 to Gwen's Girls (Black Girls Equity Alliance). Motion was tabled until more information is provided.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to donate the \$500 which LCOS received from Trinity, Mt. Oliver to Blessed Bundles. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to make a change to our constitution. Currently our constitution states "A quorum would be 20 members in good standing." Council is proposing our quorum to read "All those gathered at the time of the call of the meeting." Motion carried. This is the first reading of a change.*

Furniture for Sale

There is some nice bedroom furniture at Mr. Horensky's house. If anyone is interested in looking at it, please contact Lars Bohman at 412/979-5808 to make arrangements to meet at the house.

2021 Offertory Envelopes

2021 Offertory Envelopes are now available for pick up. You can pick them up during church office hours. Please call 724/863-2591 to make sure someone is there.

Thrivent Choice Dollars

The Thrivent Choice program lets members choose where some of Thrivent Financial's charitable outreach funds go. **If you are a Thrivent member who is eligible to participate in this program, you can choose Lutheran Church of Our Saviour to receive your Choice Dollars.**

Thank you to those who have already designated their Choice Dollars to Our Saviour! For any questions concerning the Thrivent Choice Program, please contact Mim Abraham, your Thrivent representative, at 412/389-9450.

Garden of Faith

The garden was closed for another season on October 2nd. Our final harvest consisted of four quarts of beans, three pints of cherry tomatoes, 6 green tomatoes, and parsley. All produce was delivered to Meals on Wheels. Special thanks to Jan Feltes for donating tomatoes from her home garden. These also were delivered to MOW. Despite weather and COVID challenges, God once again blessed our little garden this growing season. Just 5 more months until Spring!

"Come you thankful people, come; Raise the song of harvest home. All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin. God, our maker, does provide, for our wants to be supplied. Come to God's own temple, come, Raise the song of harvest home."

Blessed Bundles Update

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Number of Volunteers</u>
Sept.	56	136	14
Oct.	58	153	9

The \$250.00 dollar Thrivent Action grants were received for September and October by Barb Pergar and Rose Peters. We received another very generous monetary donation from Denny and Brenda Erdly.

We received a donation of \$1,000 from the Southwestern PA synod Women of the ELCA as their 2020 designated outreach. 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.

Thank you to all the ladies who diligently helped switch out the summer clothing for the winter clothing. They also sorted through many bags of clothing that were donated over the past 2 months. Thank you to Janet Feltes for organizing the volunteers in a manner that was safe under the COVID-19 guidelines.

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 well being 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!**

The next distribution is scheduled for December 19th.

Prayer List

Please review the following prayer list. If your family member or friend no longer needs to be on the list, please let us know so we can update it.

Our Members – Mark Smith, 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, Henrietta Solomon, Chuck Rubbo, Glenda Ann Wareham, Sandy Fry, Tom Cochran, Steve Solomon, Brian Bergman, Janet Feltes, Carol Miller, Aaron Solman

Our Friends – R.J. Mitchell, Tim Hamilton, Vicky Hamilton, Meridith Moss, Clyde McWilliams, Blancy

Mitchell, Jennifer Miebach, Parker Burket, Jackie & Randy G., Dan Grubbs, Frank Krien, Tom Miller, Sara Stumme, Jane Ramer, David Wilhide, Kelly Haley, Valerie Sas, Tammy Smiley, Keira Longo, Dennis Pollock, Darcy Riazzi, David McCurdy, Karen Dunn, Steve Plecko, Bernard Socha, Suzanne Whitacre, Joan Hall, Joyce Hollick, Bryce Patrick, Tracy Zarate, Rob Zarate, Ruth Sileo

Our Shut-ins – Irene Vozel, Bill Malis, Pat Palm, Donna Churilla

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

Birthdays

<u>November</u>		<u>December</u>	
Karen Smith	11/7	Benjamin George	12/4
Kelsey Bohman	11/10	Jennifer Fisher	12/10
Thomas Fisher	11/14	Ashlynn Field	12/13
Drew Bergman	11/20	Steven Solomon	12/14
Linda Thompson	11/21	Betty Howell	12/16
Nancy Bergman	11/24	Brian Bergman	12/18
		Ronald Thompson	12/24
		Mark Smith	12/29
		Maxwell Brutsche	12/30

Have a wonderful birthday! To those whose birthday already occurred, Happy Belated Birthday! We hope you enjoyed your special day!

Council Meetings

Council met on Sept. 8th.

Members present: Lars Bohman, Sandi Bergman, Debbie Massimino, Diane Johnson, Jane Atkins, Pastor Gropp, Vicar Mandy Gilberti

Members absent: Pam McCurdy, Robin Prady, Ken McDonough

The following actions took place:

- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the August 11th meeting. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to call a special Congregational Council meeting on September 27th after the worship service. The first order of business will be to discuss the appointment of an executor for the Martin Horensky estate. Motion carried.*

- *Motion was made and seconded that during the said Congregational Council meeting, we also vote to grant Church Council the authority to resolve any issues concerning the property and/or the estate. Motion carried.*

Council met again on October 13th.

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

Members absent: Robin Prady, Ken McDonough

The following actions took place:

- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the September 8th meeting. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made to donate community outreach money to the Blessing Box at the First United Methodist Church in Irwin. Motion carried. The box was filled with toiletries for the needy to help themselves.*
- *Our sexton, Diane Johnston, recently lost her daughter. Motion was made to help the family with a \$550 gift from the Memorial Fund. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made to accept the proposed 2021 budget and present it at the Congregational meeting on Nov. 15th.*

Council met again on November 10th.

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

The following actions took place:

- *Motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the October 13th meeting. Motion carried.*
- *Motion was made and seconded to make a one-time gift of \$5,000 to our Synod. It was decided to make a recommendation at the Congregational meeting on Nov. 15th to allow input from our members.*

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.

Lutheran Church of Our Saviour
1570 Clay Pike
N. Huntingdon, PA 15642
*(A partner in the ministry of
Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries)*

Church Office - 724/863-2591

licos2@comcast.net

<https://licos28.wixsite.com/lutheranchurchirwin>

Hours: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Tuesday - Friday

Rev. John J. Gropp, PLUM

Members, Ministers

Jane Humlan, Secretary

Zoom Worship Services

Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

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

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

Christmas Eve

There will not be a Christmas Eve in-person worship service in the church this year. However, there will be a Parking Lot Worship Service at LCOS at 9:00 p.m., with music starting at 8:30 p.m. Details will be provided later. There will also be two Zoom worship services: a Family Friendly Service at 7:00 p.m. with Holy Communion and a Candlelight Worship Service with Holy Communion at 11:30 p.m.

*Wishing you many blessings during the Christmas Season
and in the New Year!*

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.