C-19 and Looking for the Good

I have been blessed enough to keep running into people who tell me they are looking for the good in the current Covid-19 pandemic. I simply nod politely and wonder if there is any good in all of this. So, I am setting out on a search for the good in days of sickness, fear, anxiety and separation from people and activities that bring joy to life. So here we go.

Generosity

One of my early concerns was how can we keep the ministry we share doing meaningful things while not gathering and people sharing their offering. Early on, people started contacting me. They asked how we should send offerings in. They asked if they should mail it in, drop it off between the doors in the front of the church or find some way to contribute electronically. The result is that all these things have happened. The generosity and intentionality of people has met or exceeded the “normal” weekly offering. We were able to initiate an on-line giving program available on our website, www.htlcpa.org, people have mailed in offerings and some have dropped them off.

The Food Pantry, while feeding more people, has also seen a high level of generosity from members, the community, ELCA grants and local foundations. Our volunteers, wearing masks, have come into the pantry giving their time to unload deliveries, stock shelves and put together grocery bags for families and individuals. The volunteers and staff place bags of food on the loading dock. The loading dock is a part of the very generous gift of Lou Wentzler. Generosity inspires more generosity. The good in all of this is that the followers of Jesus show their love for each other generously. Thank you for showing me the good.

(Continued next page)
Innovation

Two months ago, we were discussing if there is a way to share worship services with people who are not able to come to worship. We discussed ideas, thought about how it might work, considered what equipment we would need and so on and so forth. On Thursday, March 26th it became apparent that we would not be gathering for worship on Sunday March 29th. Within two days the congregation found a way to invite our members to worship together using internet technology. All the obstacles quickly disappeared as we knew we could not leave behind the mission of sharing the love of God.

Innovation breeds innovation. Each week we have added features like music, children’s sermons, remote readers and liturgist to name a few. By the second week we needed to add capacity to accommodate more than 100 devices on Sunday mornings. We were able to share our services with a few smaller congregations that do not have the technology to provide their own online services. It is as if the C-19 pandemic has awakened within our ministry the need to innovate the way we share the gospel.

Some of the good that has come from this also comes from reaching out beyond our own walls. We have had people from Alabama, Florida, Michigan, Seattle, and Long Island join us on-line. We have had people step up to help with technology. We are gathering ideas about how to continue with this after we are able to gather in person again. It has been good to collaborate with people sharing the effort to create meaningful gatherings. We have had a significant increase in the people coming to Bible study. We have been able to maintain contact with our LYF youth, our God Squad and preschool families. I am thankful to see the good in this.

Faith Formation, Spiritual Growth and Compassionate Caring

In searching for the good, it occurs to me that all the things we do as a community continue to go on. It is very probable that the level of the foundational ideas of our community have increased. I have seen the good in people of faith rising to keep others safe. I have observed followers of Jesus grow in their spiritual journey. They look for ways to love as they have been loved. I have seen the good in people in many places share compassionate care for others. We have all seen health care workers, doctors and emergency personnel risk their own well-being to care for their neighbors. We have seen National Guard members called away from their work and families to offer a period of their life for the welfare of others.

There is nothing good about the C-19 virus. On the other hand, I can see the good, when facing a common enemy, that the rule of love works hard to overcome the darkness. Jesus calls us to be children of the light. He calls us to care for those who cannot care for themselves.

I recall a small part of scripture that says, “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” (1 John 3:16.) Love is the good. When love responds to sin, difficulties, death, suffering and darkness, it is good. I can see that.

Along the way, PN

ZOOM ~ Staying Connected!

Zoom is a video communication platform for video and audio conferencing. Holy Trinity is using this medium to keep connected with each other and join together for Sunday worship. We will continue to send out ZOOM links through email, Facebook, snapchat and texts to invite people to worship, Bible study, meetings, and online social gatherings. It is easy to click on the link and follow the directions. I recommend always choosing to connect with video and join with wifi audio. When your video is working, you can always mute your sound and/or turn off your video. We hope you will join us.

We continue to explore the use of Facebook and YouTube.
Pantry Ponderings –

Let me start by saying thank you! I am overwhelmed by the generosity of those in our community and beyond! Thank you to everyone who has made a donation to the food pantry during this difficult time. Your donations have helped us to continue to supply families with one week or more of groceries including meat, vegetables, and butter. We have been able to put together snack bags for the children of the families utilizing the pantry. We have been able to provide paper products thanks to the “Other Kind of Paper Drive” done back in February by the Sunday School classes. We have been able to provide personal care items like deodorant, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, etc. We’ve had people making masks and we are able to provide families with them. Our hope is that by providing these life sustaining needs, families are able to get through this time. We are truly blessed by having such a caring community.

As I write this, we are still under a stay at home order. I know that over the next few days, weeks or even months, the number of families in need will continue to grow. We will still need to feed them. We will still need to purchase food to stock our shelves. We will need to purchase paper products and personal care items. Families will need financial assistance as well. There will be families who will need help with rent, utility bills, medical bills, etc. We will be here for them as we always have.

God calls us to love our neighbors and to care for them. We will continue to do this with your support, that I have no doubt about. We are in this together. Be safe, be well and God bless.

Living in faith,
Barbara Hupfer

HOLY TRINITY NURSERY SCHOOL NEWS 2020

This has certainly been a Spring for the history books. The Covid-19 virus has infected all our lives in one way or another, and kept us Social-Distancing from one another. Mother nature, however, has come to us in all her glory. The flowers are blooming, the birds are singing, and trees that were bare all winter are now sprouting leaves. Nature has not been defeated…and we won’t be either!

Our last day of Nursery School was on Thursday, March 12th. We were so sad that all schools in our area were ordered to close for the time being. We missed our Nursery School kids so much and I know they missed seeing their friends and teachers. So...we decided to try something new. Our staff has been meeting with our children through the Zoom platform each Friday morning at 11:00 AM. We had our usual Opening Time to start the class with a our usual song “Rise & Shine”, pledge to the flag, prayer and attendance. Miss Dawn did a lesson with the letter & number of the week. We had some exercise songs and even a story. There were so many special days which had already been planned and by meeting on the internet, we were able to celebrate the letter W with Wild West Day & dress like cowboys & cowgirls; the letter X with Pirate Day & dressed as Pirates to search for the letter X for a treasure. We finished up the alphabet with lessons on the letters Y & Z.

We also had a visit from the Easter Bunny on-line and danced along with him to the “Bunny Hop.” Earth Day didn’t get forgotten. Our lesson that week was on taking care of the Earth by planting flowers and remembering to recycle things like plastic, glass & paper. We had Zoo Day for the letter Z and showed off all our Zoo animals that we had at home.

I want to thank the staff for the time they have put in to plan for the children to have some Nursery School time with their friends.... Dawn McEvoy, Melissa Van Orden, Lori Williams, Julie Krick and Chrissy Bicskei. You really stepped up and I know the kids enjoyed their lessons. Also thank you to Wendy Accardo for all the work she did to make the Easter Candy Fund Raiser available. Also thank you to Jenna DeVita for making the murals for Zoo Day. Just Beautiful!

We will continue to have classes through the month of May. We hope the children will continue to join us on Friday mornings at 11:00 AM. See you then.

Andrea Nielsen, Director
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION and YOUTH NEWS

Summer Theme
“Wandering in the Wilderness Together”

PLANNING EVENTS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES:

At this time of year we are normally making BIG plans for summer youth programs. It feels as if there is nothing that is normal right now. All the events listed here are VERY TENTATIVE. We are planning with hope in our hearts. We are also very aware that some, much or all of this may not be able to happen because of the COVID-19 Social Distancing.

1st Communion Sunday & Confirmation Sunday – Plans are begin discussed. Dates TBA.

Giant Yard Sale – Possible date in the Fall. TBA.

May 25: Memorial Day Kayak Trip – Check the bulletin board & FaceBook for more information.

June 7: Senior Recognition & Sunday School Celebration Sunday –

June 28-30: CIT Training – Sunday, June 28 at 5:00 PM – Tuesday, June 30 at 10:00AM. $65.00. More information to follow!

July 6-10: Vacation Bible Camp – 9:00 AM-12:00 noon. Grades PreK4-12th. Free for everyone! (Mon.-Fri..) More information to follow!

**CIT TRAINING for 7th – 12th graders.**

CIT Training starts June 26th @ 5:00 PM through June 28th @ 10:00 AM.
For youth going into 7th – 12th grade in Sept. 2020
$65.00 each, Sign-up on the bulletin board & watch for FaceBook sign-up.

**VACATION BIBLE CAMP**

July 6-10 ... 9:00 AM-12:00 noon.

Thursday, July 8th, 6:00 PM – VBC Family Picnic & Campfire
Vacation Bible Camp is free for all campers!
Fun for children of all ages! Pre-K4 through 6th grade.

**VBC Adult Volunteers & Teachers are Needed!**
Watch for information for a VBC Staff meeting for teachers & helpers. Check the b-board.

Sign-up sheets & registration forms will be in the Lobby or OnLine!
For more information see Dawn McEvoy.

**Youth Zoom Gatherings!**
We have ZOOM church service and children’s sermon every Sunday morning at 10:00 AM.
Confirmation Class, MLYF & LYF meet on Sundays, too using ZOOM.
Be sure we have your e-mail so you receive your invitation!
MEANINGFUL and MEMORABLE COMMUNIONS ~ By Peter Lubrecht

In loving Memory of Pastor Franklin J. Schweiger

Communions in Church, today, and more meaningfully in a lot of ways at Holy Trinity, always bring back memories of past ones; some good, some not so good, some joyous and others painful. I grew up in Manhattan’s Upper West Side, made famous, or infamous, by the Broadway Show: West Side Story. Those streets were home to me, and were also my playground for stick ball, KING, football and for dodging moving cars. Most of the neighborhood was post Holocaust Jewish, but there many Irish, Spanish, African American and we “Lutherans”. My folks chose the Evangelical Lutheran Church of our Savior’s Atonement on 189th St. and Bennet Avenue instead of the Missouri synod one further away. We had a congregation, originally, mostly Scandinavian, and as the neighborhood changed so did the church, which is still there- with a full Gym, theater pieces, and where I had Confirmation Class, Communion, sang in the Choir, was married and where my older son was baptized..

Each and every communion now reminds of Pastor Franklin J. Schweiger; I can remember being an acolyte and meeting with him, before church, in his office getting dressed. That was “our” time. He was one of the greatest influences in my life and I try to remember him every communion service. He was tall, and athletic, teaching us Basketball in the Gym (one of our number made it to the NY Knicks championship team in 1970). He took the youth group and we went skating, dancing and bowling (in the church bowling lane). Pastor was a piano player of note who talked me into directing church adults in a Shrove Tuesday Show--I was 16--I didn’t think I could handle older adults. He kept telling me over and over, “You can do it!” He was my first musical director--He led me to believe in myself and to follow my own path. My mother wanted medicine--I wanted the arts. Pastor turned my Dad, who hated social gatherings, from a church recluse to President of the Church Council.

The first communion was one week after confirmation--always hot in New York and I had to wear the Robert Hall suit (one size larger so it could be worn for Junior High Graduation). I remember going to the altar, up the three steps to kneel before Pastor, who warned us that his hand would shake uncontrollably over our heads--he didn’t know why.

Pastor preached in February at the Jewish Congregation down the block--the Rabbi came to us. He also invited neighbors in for Christmas Eve Candlelight service--many came. One January the older councilman told Pastor they wanted the influx of minorities stopped. Pastor had them vote, picked up his silver watch on the table and resigned on the spot--my Dad resigned at the same moment. Pastor said, “you see differences in color; God doesn’t” and walked out. He took an all African American Congregation in Buffalo New York, and he and my father remained friends for forty more years. When my father passed away in New York Presbyterian Hospital the first call I made was to Pastor. He was 91 years old but still gave comfort and support. My oldest son said he would read the Bible at my father’s funeral--but if only the Pastor picked the verse out.

To my Dad, Pastor Franklin J. Schweiger was always THE PASTOR--I need to remember him.

Another Memory:

In 2004, my grand-daughter, Avery Lubrecht died of medulla blastoma Brain Cancer. She was five years old. My performing arts students at Sussex County College joined me in a fund raising Country and Western Concert called Hillbilly Heaven a tribute to Grand Old Opry. Twelve performers and ten musicians went on the road for fundraisers raising a large amount of money. They dressed as the famous Opry stars singing the appropriate song attached to them The Memorial Service was held at Trinity Lutheran Church, in Dover N.J. The cast volunteered to sing, and then came early to join the Church choir. I didn’t expect them to take communion but when the time came, there they were kneeling next to us. The service ended with us all singing “Will the Circle be Unbroken.” To a person, at the end they said “we had to be here for you Doc” I can still see the moment.
GIVING – Three ways to give... By Check, Simply Giving or Online Giving.

Since the COVID-19 Social Distancing has gone into effect there have been many inquiries as to how to continue support of our ministry at Holy Trinity. Here are several suggestions.

CHECK (Envelopes): If you want to send in your offering, you can mail it to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 103 Delaware Crest, Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328.

“SIMPLY GIVING”: This can be done through Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. A form needs to be filled out and given to Brian Krick, our treasurer. A very good program but there are limitations.

ONLINE GIVING: This is done through the church software “Realm.”

With the onset of social distancing, we were asked many people asked if there was a way to give to the church online. The requests were for either a onetime donation, or to give at their own timeline. We looked into the online giving through our church software, Realm, and it has been very successful. It has been so successful that Alan and I choose to change from Simply Giving to Online Giving. This process enters the information directly into our Realm account information at church which saves Joanne Brown, the church’s financial secretary, from having to enter it herself. With online giving, you can give a onetime donation, or you can set it up for recurring payments. When we want to donate to a special appeal, or to a memorial, we can do that also. The system even allows sending money through your phone via Texting. For more information on this, you can visit the church website at www.htlcpa.org. There is a link to Online Giving in the top left corner of the home page. There is also a link to step by step directions towards the bottom of the page.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in any way you can. And a huge thank you to the “Worship Team” for all your work and dedication during this time.

Jean Tjornhom, Church President

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♦ Memorial Fund ♦

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SUBJIN
From
Sharon Subjin

♦ Memorial Fund ♦

IN MEMORY OF DAVE MUSTO
From
Charles & Ellen Frederickson
Bill & Diane Mercer
Premier Health Associates
Garry, Mary Beth & Betty Hafner
Charlotte & George Ambrose
Tim & Peg Hoover
Ed Ibold
Janet McKenna
Robert & Joyce Urban
Joanne & Gary Fratrich
Thank You . . .

I want to express my thankfulness to the COVID-19 Worship Team. These people have made it possible to have significant worship experiences for all of us each Sunday morning. Without exception, these people have willingly given of their time and talent to provide the Zoom Worship Services. At the time of writing this thank you, I do not know how much longer we will be worshiping remotely. However long it is, I am confident that these faithful people will continue to provide their help.

THE COVID-19 WORSHIP TEAM:

Tech Production & Support ~ Kyle Bicskei & George Hupfer Jr.
Organ & Piano ~ George Radloff & Raycharlyn Krasulski
Scripture Readers ~ Kathy McDowall, Sharon Subjin, Lewis & Katrina Merikas, Kayla Bicskei, Peter Lubrecht, Ryan & Laura Curchoe.
Special Music ~ Ryan Curchoe, Laura Curchoe, Maddie Curchoe, Jack Curchoe, Kyle Bicskei, Lewis & Katrina Merikas, Kristopher Tjornhom.
Being the Church in a Time of Pandemic

As this article is being written, social distancing and "stay at home" orders in response to the spread of the Coronavirus are preventing our congregations from gathering for face-to-face worship. But in the midst of circumstances that keep people from “going to church,” it is heartening to see the ways in which the congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod are focusing on God’s call to “be the church,” bringing a message of hope to their members and their surrounding communities. Leaders are discovering a number of creative ways in which God’s people can still ”gather” for worship and conversation - via Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube, email, telephone chains, cars parked at a drive-in movie theater, and other means.

In addition to worship, prayers, and pastoral care for members, congregations are also turning their focus outward to bring tangible expressions of God’s presence and love in the midst of extraordinary circumstances to their most vulnerable neighbors. This brief article highlights just two of these outreach ministries, as examples of the kinds of things that are happening in numerous sites across the territory of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Food Pantry at Holy Trinity, Dingmans Ferry

Every weekday morning, volunteers gather at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in rural Pike County to prepare bags of food for community members who are food insecure. In the past, typically 85 - 95 families would turn to Holy Trinity each month to supplement their nutritional needs. Food Pantry Director, Barbara Hupner, reports that the number of those turning to the pantry has increased due to the Coronavirus pandemic. And the members of Holy Trinity are responding, even as some of the traditional sources of food - such as donations from individuals or local stores - have decreased.

In addition, there are concerns for the safety of both the volunteers who staff the pantry and those who come for food. Barbara reports, “Due to this crisis we have begun a drive-up pantry pick up for our families. Each family receives three bags of non-perishable foods along with a bag of frozen meats, vegetables, butter, fresh fruits and cheese. This has helped us to maintain social distancing as well as keep our volunteers safe.”