



# THE VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH, AVON, CT

August 2020

*"In Christ, we are digging deep, reaching out, changing lives."*

## STAFF:

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*The church building is closed at this time, but you can mail contributions and communications to the church via USPS and drop off donations for outside organizations in the bins by the office door. Thank you!*

*Please join us on our website for virtual worship!*

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

***The office will continue to be closed until notice is otherwise given. All in-person events are tentative and may be changed.***

**Tuesdays in August:** Virtual Prayer, 10:00 a.m.

**Fridays in August:** Virtual Women's Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.

**August 6:** Virtual Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

**August 11:** Centering Prayer, 7:00 p.m.

**August 15:** September VOICE submissions deadline

**August 20:** Virtual Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

**August 27:** Centering Prayer, 2:00 p.m.

**August 28:** Fourth Friday at Grace, 5:00 p.m.

**August 29:** Men's Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.—*in person or virtual, TBD.*

## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

### COMMUNION QUESTIONS, PART 2

As we are all aware, the pandemic has necessitated changes in lifestyle, including a move to online opportunities for worship. The Reopening Task Force is hard at work considering possibilities to gather safely in-person, and the Council and Staff are committed to offering online worship as an option throughout the pandemic. Survey results (see article on page 2) indicate that a majority of our congregation will be worshipping virtually for some time to come. It poses the question, then, about Holy Communion, and whether there might be a way to share the sacrament over the internet.

There has, in fact, been robust discussion about whether Lutherans can share in a 'virtual communion' – that is, preparing elements at home, tuning in to the zoom worship service for the pastor's prayers, and then communing oneself or other members of the household. Last month in his lead article, Pastor Brian raised some theological questions based on historical Lutheran understandings of Holy Communion - including the roles of the pastor and gathered faith community, and the theology of the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion - and connected them to the current discussion in the ELCA about the possibility of sharing communion online. You can read that article again [here](#).

Bishop Hazelwood created two short videos on the topic, which you can view [here](#) and [here](#).

In the videos, the Bishop recommends a number of safe options for communion which do not involve the internet. They range from small groups gathering for the sacrament occasionally, to drive-in options, to special prayers and/or meals to remember Christ's presence with us. Below is a summary of his guidance on what is important theologically, as we consider our communion options:

**Grace:** Holy Communion is a gift of God's unconditional love and forgiveness. It is not earned, nor a guaranteed right of a Christian.

**The Gathered Assembly:** The community matters; the bread and wine are the Body of Christ, but so are the people of God gathered together.

**The Real Presence of Christ:** We believe in Christ truly present in the meal at Holy Communion. Like the incarnation of God in the human person of Jesus, God comes to us in the physical elements of the sacraments.

**Doors Are Open to All:** Communion is intended to welcome everyone, so issues of accessibility matter.

**Counter to Individualism:** The communion experience is a shared experience. The bishop shared a story about a parishioner and a presumed homeless visitor, and how together they



(...continued) and how together they became an incarnation of God's grace.

**Communion Sends Us to Feed:** Communion is meant to drive us into the world to act so that others may be fed. We worship so that we are prepared to go out into the world to love and serve.

**Not a Magic Pill:** Communion is not the pastor giving something so your individual sins disappear; the pastor is an expression of the entire community's need to lift up one person to serve as the leader.

The pastors will be making recommendations to the Council regarding communion practice in September. In the meantime, we welcome your thoughts, questions, and feedback on these important matters of faith.

*Pastor Julie*

Pastor Julie

### **MEET THE ST. MATTHEW REOPENING TASK FORCE!**

The following people were appointed at the July 7th Council Meeting to serve on the St. Matthew Reopening Task Force:

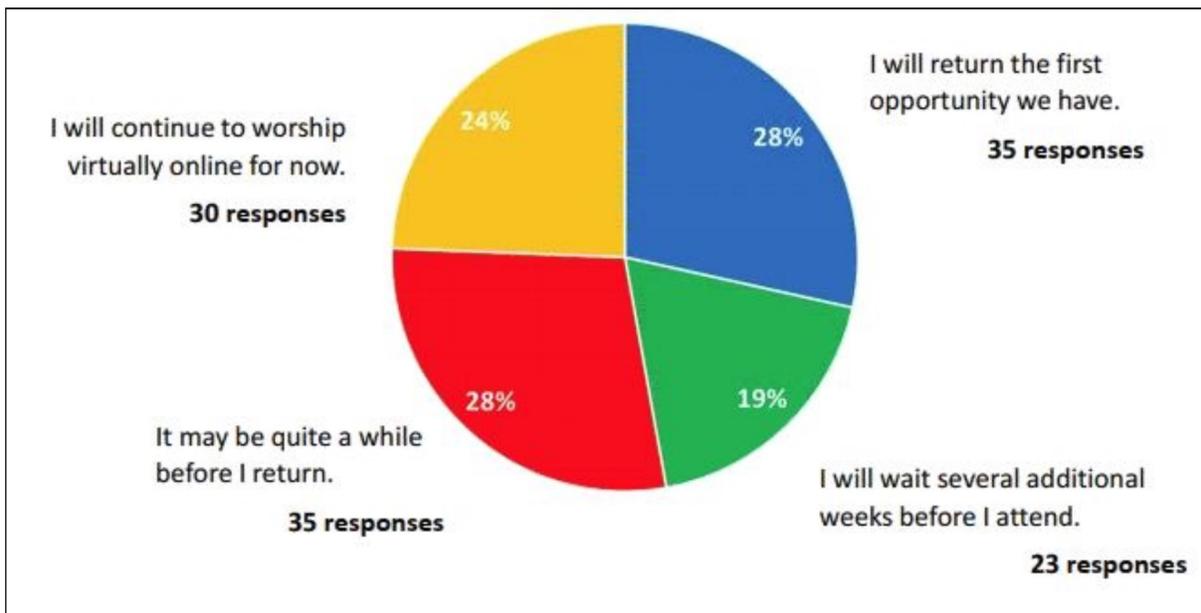
- ◇ Kathy Alsgaard ◇ Tom Leonard ◇ Doug Peterson
- ◇ Ellen Ericson ◇ John Pearson ◇ Jack Pietrick

Kathy Alsgaard and Doug Peterson have agreed to serve as co-chairs and Jack Pietrick, Council President, and Pastor Julie are ex-officio members. They are working to recommend to the Council the safest practices for St. Matthew, while keeping in mind people's spiritual and relational needs.

They plan to update the congregation on their work in mid-August. We give thanks to God for their ministry of wisdom, care, and leadership among us.

### **SANCTUARY REOPENING SURVEY RESULTS**

A survey went out to all members of our congregation on Tuesday, July 9th, soliciting a response to the following question: Assuming all possible precautions are in place, when would you plan to return to worship services held in the Sanctuary? Including all final electronic and paper surveys, there were 123 responses, broken out below:



As mentioned in the July newsletter, the data has been provided to the Reopening task force, serving as a guide as they begin their discussions and decision-making.



### **YOUTH GROUP'S SOCIALLY DISTANCED OLYMPIC CHALLENGE!**

In August, youth group will meet for our first in-person event since the pandemic began. The Summer Olympics were postponed this year, but we will have our own socially distanced Olympic games! We'll meet outside the church, wear masks, and stand six feet away from everything. We'll compete in challenges and obstacles, even sort items for those in need, all the while keeping our distance. Please note, no food will be served, and the inside of the church will be off limits. Join us on Friday evening, August 7th, from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.!

### **VBS: SCREEN-FREE & VIRTUAL OPTIONS**

At-home, parent-led VBS materials are available on the church website! The first week is titled "Lord Teach Us How To Pray" and the second, "God's Excellent Adventure." Each day includes an activity, a lesson, Bible readings, and reflection questions to discuss with your kids. It'll be more fun if parents read through the material for each day first as a lesson plan; don't feel the need to read the whole lesson plan word-for-word to your kids. Get an idea of the material first and then participate with your kids in the activities.

Also, check out the website for link to Camp Lutherlyn's Virtual VBS. The theme is "God's Time: Seasons of the Church Year" and there are sections for 1st-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade, and 7th-12th grade, led by Lutherlyn counselors. We hope your whole family enjoys this at-home version of VBS!

### **YOUNG ADULT GROUP**

Young Adult Group will meet on Zoom again at a time TBD. Contact Pastor Brian if you are interested in joining. We usually plan our meetings via group text to make sure everybody can make it.

### **MEN'S BREAKFAST**

Men's Group will meet for breakfast on Zoom on August 29th (the 5th Saturday of August, not the 4th Saturday like usual). We'll gather on Zoom 8:30 a.m.—10:00 a.m. for a time of fellowship, prayer, and devotion. Newcomers always welcome! Hope you can join us!

### **GHIAA TRAINING**

GHIAA is a faith-based organization which works for specific, local, justice-oriented change. GHIAA will be holding a training on six consecutive Thursday evenings 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m. beginning September 10th on Zoom. If you are interested email Pastor Brian or Pastor Julie to learn more about how to participate!

### **GOOD THINGS: God is good to us, even in the midst of struggle. In August, we are grateful for the following:**

- † We officially paid off the mortgage before the beginning of the new fiscal year! Thank you for the generous gift from the Jenson/Steinberg family and all those who contributed to the first phase of the Capital Campaign. (We will continue with a second phase of the campaign to pay off the Endowment loan, which we hope to do as soon as possible!)
- † Rick Hanson and Meg Kraft have answered the call to be Zoom Masters during our Sunday morning services and have done this incredibly well. Thank you Rick and Meg!
- † Stephanie Montminy did an amazing job organizing the program categories for Church 360, our new church software program. Thank you Stephanie!
- † Pastor Julie and Pastor Brian have started making socially distanced visits to homebound members who are comfortable with visitors and have arranged times to do Porch Chats for other congregation members wanting a visit.
- † Zoom groups have continued to meet including Tuesdays Together, Women's Group, Men's Group, Bible Study, Youth Group, Choir, Young Adult Group, Centering Prayer, Finance, Church Council, and others.

**God is Good, All the Time!**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>August 2020</b>						1
Please join us on our website for virtual worship! The office will continue to be closed until notice is otherwise given. All in-person events are tentative and may be changed.						
2 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom	3	4 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom. 7:00 Church Council	5	6 10:00 Bible Study	7 9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom 7:00 Youth Group: Olympic Challenge	8
9 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom	10	11 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom. 7:00 Virtual Centering Prayer	12	13 7 White Privilege	14 9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom	15 VOICE Deadline
16 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom	17	18 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.	19 7:00 Virtual Centering Prayer	20 10:00 Bible Study 7 White Privilege	21 9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom	22
23 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom	24	25 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.	26	27 2:00 Virtual Centering Prayer 7 White Privilege	28 9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom 5:00 Fourth Friday at Grace	29 8:30 Men's Breakfast via <a href="#">Zoom</a> . (Meeting ID: 814 7413 2264. Password: 06001)
30 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom	31	Notes:				

August 2020



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