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Finding a New Way: COVID-19 Update

May 7, 2020

To the Community of First Lutheran Church:

Finding God in New and Exciting Blessings after Easter

It has been a strange and exciting month for our church. We have found unexpected blessings in unexpected places! I imagine that this is a little like how the disciples felt in the weeks following Jesus' resurrection.

A Prayer for Courage As We Wait to Return to Our Building

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

~ written by Eric Milner-White (1884 – 1963) a British Anglican priest and a decorated military chaplain who wrote this prayer in 1941 in the midst of World War II

This prayer has been part of our Lutheran hymnals since the 1950s for good reason. As in other times of history, we are on a venture of which we cannot see the end.

Returning to our church building will have to happen in phases. The Governor of Minnesota has extended our time to Shelter in Place until at least May 18. His newest order continues to limit us to no more than ten people in the church at any one time. We are all encouraged to wear masks in public places, and continue to wash our hands.

This letter is a summary of what our church staff and leaders are working on, and have managed to accomplish since mid-March given our shelter-in-place orders for the state of Minnesota.

Our office staff primarily work from home. In accordance with Minnesota guidelines, we are in the office to do mission in the community and/or to prepare materials for worship. We connect with each other and with you via email, phone calls, Zoom meetings, and personal notes.

For those who may enter our building, we ask that you wear a mask while you are present, and we will begin offering to take your temperature as you arrive for mission or worship recordings. This is voluntary, along with questions about your health at the present time.

We are grateful that our church qualified for the Payroll Protection Plan from the Small Business Administration, which provides stability for our staff in the work of the Holy Spirit. More information is available in an article in The Caller.

Worship continues online for the foreseeable future. For those who do not have internet service at home, we are mailing a weekly outline for worship at home. Keep the long view in mind - this is a marathon, not a sprint.

Children, Youth & Family Ministry

Large group activities for this summer, including Camp Wapo and Vacation Bible school have been canceled. Other ideas will emerge to connect! Our children and youth are still meeting weekly online through Bible studies, music groups, youth group and confirmation, and kids' connections.

Hospitality & Outreach

Our Facebook group, "First Lutheran Community Group," engages many people from our church community as we share stories, photographs and seek advice! Please ask to join the group through Facebook if you have not done this already.

Community Service

The Sunday Community Meal continues, as well as delivery of meals to our After School families on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Let's give thanks for our partners in this work, SACA, Tesfa Academy and the Columbia Heights School District, and for the many hands who prepare, serve and deliver these meals. With your help and support, we are serving 300-350 meals each week!

Connected Community Groups (CCGs)

Thirty members are reaching out to 400 households on a weekly, or bi-weekly basis -- phone calls, text messages, emails, note cards. Thank you to those who are offering connection and prayer!

Living Connected Appeal

Through the generosity of the Edstrom & Bakken estates added to YOUR gifts, we are moving ahead with the Rain Garden/Parking Lot Resurfacing &

Landscaping at the main entrance. A Principal Payment of \$850,000 & Re-Amortization of our facility mortgage will be completed this month. (We'll celebrate this payment in worship later this month!) More information is available in this issue of The Caller.

Financial Support for day-to-day ministry

THANK YOU. Your generosity makes this mission possible! Our primary support comes from you and the people with whom you worship every Sunday. We are innovating in every way we can imagine out of necessity -- and we will be changed forever! I appreciate and am proud of the mission that continues in this time of COVID-19.

Members are mailing in their weekly offerings, setting up ongoing electronic gifts to First Lutheran, and learning to use a new app from our mobile phones, Give Plus. THANK YOU.

Facility Care & Maintenance

With the building empty, there is Super Cleaning going on -- for instance, the ceiling in the kitchen has become whiter than anyone can remember! Carpet is being cleaned, and we are doing painting and other upkeep and maintenance that preserves our facility as a place of welcome and hospitality.

If you have questions about giving, about our ministry and mission, please contact me. I would appreciate the chance to talk with you.

In Christ,



Rev. Bonnie Wilcox

Senior Pastor

Email: bonnie@flcch.org

Living Connected... To God & Each Other



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Worship: 10 AM
YouTube & Facebook Live
(All Age Worship)

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FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH MINISTRIES HAVE RISEN TO THE MOMENT IN PROFOUND AND AMAZING WAYS!

Through rain, snow, sun, and wind we have been braving the Sunday elements as we deliver curbside meals at our Sunday Community Lunch! We have had powerful moments of generosity where volunteers of all ages cooked delicious warm meals, packed fresh salads, and bagged up to-go containers for 160 people each week!

As cars have lined up along the sidewalk to talk and pray with the pastoral team, we've heard amazing stories of people delivering meals to friends who can't drive and seniors picking up meals for people in their apartment buildings. A few people were struggling with homelessness and were sleeping in their cars. A warm meal, a human connection, and a prayer was truly a blessing.

Connections with our After School students twice a week have been vital for so many young people who are staying in small crowded apartments and duplexes in our neighborhood. The families are so grateful and we often hear "God bless you!" from their mothers when we drop off the meals.

We are grateful to offer the delicious, healthy meals prepared by "Mama" Jane, Larry Bugbee and Rock Hauser, and for food deliveries by Nathan Roberts, Rachel James, Sheri Bodell & John Burke.

A Special Thank You to everyone who donated to the \$500 ELCA Domestic Hunger Matching Grant! This will go a long ways in helping us continue to serve meals during this difficult time. And, to Rock and Kari Hauser, Brian Schweiger, Roy Weber, Judie Opheim, Wendy Ramirez, the Rogne family, Doug and Drew White, Deb and Jeff Myhre, DiAnn Meyer, the Jacksons, and all the people who are a part of this amazing ministry! *by Nathan Roberts, Dir. of Community Engagement*

Our church has a rich history of giving! One way we do this is serve community meals for our neighbors every week. We've been serving more than 300 meals each week. We're also reaching out for donations of homemade cookies of any type to add to these meals through the month of May. We would like to have 50 cookies to share every Tuesday and Thursday, and 200 cookies for Sundays. For hygiene purposes, please wear a face mask and gloves while handling the cookies. They need to be individually wrapped (baggie or cling wrap). To sign up, use the First Lutheran Cookie (Meal) Train www.mealtrain.com/trains/9lldlo or call the church and leave a message.

Drop-Off Instructions: There is a blue cooler outside the church doors to store your cookies. They need to arrive by 2:30 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 9:30 AM on Sundays. If you have questions regarding your cookie donation, please reach out to Nathan Roberts, 763-350-1630.



Our congregation will worship the Lord, even if our building must be closed. *by Pastor Jill Bergman*

At the beginning of March, most of us had no idea that we would be forced to stop worshipping in our building. Today, our Sunday gathering for worship is bigger than ever, including participants from all over the United States, as we come together in worship via YouTube and Facebook.

We were sad at the thought of being separated physically but the Word of God has used this opportunity to propel us outward. We often talk about the truth that God didn't call us to be comfortable. Instead, God calls us out of our comfort zones for a greater impact.

I dare to say that right now, none of us are comfortable. In our discomfort, our faith has become more vibrant, more vital. The hope and new life we find through Jesus Christ has become essential, not only to us but to the entire, desperate world.

Are you thinking about joining the family of God or bringing someone else to the family?

We would love to offer baptism to you! Please leave a message at the church office, 763-788-9653 or Pastor Jill, jillb@flech.org

Children, Youth & Family Ministries

by Rachel James, Dir. of Children, Youth & Families

Sunday School, Confirmation, Youth Group and Kids music are continuing during this time of distributed church! Each week, we've been reading Bible stories online, meeting through video conferencing for confirmation class, youth group and kids music. Kids and youth have shared prayer requests, studied the Bible, played games, sang and stayed connected even as we are staying at home.

Kids and youth have been serving and helping in our communities. They've been writing letters and creating artwork to send to seniors in our church, helping to clean up their neighborhoods and helping with the Sunday meal.

Congratulations to our 2020 High School Graduates!

Kira Bergman, Collin Shull, Anthony George, Alex Presseller, Tatiana Carlisle



What a Ride!

by Jeffrey Patry, Dir. of Music Ministry

Could you believe that it was just over a month ago that life was normal? We didn't have to worry about getting together in groups of people, we could go out to dinner with friends and we could all worship in the same building! Wow, what a ride this has been!

I'm enormously grateful for my music volunteers that come together every week to provide beautiful music for our recorded services. This is above the call of duty and I am ever so appreciative of their service to FLC.

I am also appreciative to my friend and colleague Drew Stolba who is the driving force behind putting together our Sunday worship recordings, and to our wonderful leaders during this time of crisis, Pastor Jill and Pastor Bonnie.

When we all will be together is unknown, but I can't wait for that day!

55+ Singles on Zoom!

We have enjoyed keeping connected via Zoom... what an experience! We have our Zoom meeting every Friday night from 5-6 with 6-12 people joining in. Actually, it is fun just seeing each other's faces with smiles and enjoying "what have you done this week?", do we need to include someone in our prayers?" Those who have been working on projects will often share their status. There's always talking with lots of smiles. *We all thank the Lord for being with us!*

To join, contact Faith, 612-799-4245, whitefa@comcast.net

If you'd like to schedule a Zoom meeting for your Ministry Group, contact Joyce, joyce@flech.org or leave a message at the church office.



LIVING CONNECTED

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Greetings Members of FLC!

We want to take this opportunity to thank the members of First Lutheran Church for their continued financial support during these unsettled times. We are grateful for your dedication to keeping the mission and ministries of our congregation active and accessible until we are able to gather again in person! Below you will find some updates about other things that First Lutheran is doing to continue moving forward during this period of uncertainty.

Through the quick work of our Business Administrator, Dave Reilly, and the support of our long-time banking partner, Northeast Bank, First Lutheran was awarded a Payroll Protection Program loan from the Small Business Administration (SBA). These loans provide a direct incentive for small businesses to keep their workers on the payroll. And since church employees are not eligible for unemployment, it is especially important for First Lutheran to do everything it can to keep its valued staff members meaningfully employed and compensated. A very attractive feature of these loans is that the SBA will forgive the loan if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, mortgage interest, or utilities (at least 75% must be used for payroll). We are very grateful for this opportunity!

We also continue to work toward fulfilling the goals of our Capital Campaign. You may recall that the proceeds of the Capital Campaign were dedicated to two very important initiatives: paying down the principal on our facility's mortgage balance and investing in

new mission/environment/safety activities, including the resurfacing of our parking lot with rain gardens to improve safety and reduce water runoff to sewers. Following are updates on each of these important initiatives:

MORTGAGE: We are close to completing a significant principal payment on our outstanding mortgage. We have received roughly \$650,000 in gifts to date towards this initiative. In addition, our Endowment Committee has provided the congregation with a loan of \$200,000 against future Capital Campaign pledges which will allow us to pay down the mortgage by \$850,000 (roughly 40%). This principal payment will result in our monthly mortgage payment being reduced by approximately \$5,000, providing much needed cash flow relief to our congregation!

MISSIONS: We are in the early stages of planning for the rain garden and parking lot resurfacing project. The majority of this project will take place in 2021. However, 2020 activity will include design, engineering and survey work, as well as the much needed repair of the main parking lot lane running from Polk to Tyler. We will also be applying for assistance via two different grant programs from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization to help offset some of the costs of this project!

As you can see, the work of this congregation continues even as we are unable to congregate physically. Our continued gratitude and appreciation to our members for their support of the work of FLC!

*Respectfully Submitted,
Chris Larson, Council Treasurer*

First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights is financed by the generous, direct monetary gifts of its members and friends.

Giving
Supporting Ministry and Mission

Thank you!

During this time of COVID-19 crisis, the offerings you give online, through the mail and hand-delivered on Sundays, continue to bless our mission of Jesus.

[Flcch.org/give](https://flcch.org/give)

PARISH NURSE NOTES—

WW.com/weeklytopics

AS I isolate myself due to my health issues, (I am considered “autoimmune compromised”). I can commiserate with many of the seniors that are quarantined in apartments, senior assisted living, and homes. HELP, I feel I have lost control!!

Many of you might be feeling a general lack of control right now, as my WW Weekly newsletter says, “like we're out of the driver's seat and just along for the ride.” Usually, the more in control we feel over what's happening in our lives, the more motivated, happier and less stressed we are. At a time when we're all reaching to take back the steering wheel, it's helpful to shift our focus and actions on what we **CAN** control.

What you cannot control: Government decisions, grocery stores shelves, being able to see our kids!

What you can influence: We cannot change what is on the news, but we can change how we respond to it. Turn off the TV. Dedicate one time a day for a news check-in, perhaps at Gov. Walz's news conferences each day at 2 PM? From there, spread positivity, avoid the negative talk.

What you can control: Focusing your attention is powerful. Zone in on what's in front of you in the present moment, instead of worrying about what may or may not happen in the future. One way to do that? Try something new you have always wanted to do but haven't had time for, I have been cooking a lot more from fun recipes at home, good food makes me less stressed.

A couple of ideas for FLC: Sew masks, sign up for the cookie train, or help on Sunday's meal curb-side delivery. Can't do any of that? Pray for the ministries and staff of your church, it helps!

In Christ, Nurse Jane Bugbee



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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

**SUNDAY ONLINE
WORSHIP 10 AM
YOUTUBE &
FACEBOOK LIVE**

**SUNDAY MEAL
SERVED CURBSIDE
DRIVE-THRU
11 AM—12 PM**

CHURCH OFFICE
is currently closed due
to COVID-19 crisis.

Please check our
website or call for any
updates.

*Many of us look forward to the opening of barber shops & gatherings with friends,
but ALL of us can't wait to see you back at First Lutheran Church!*



Community Garden and a beautiful grandchild!



Tulips (and two Pauls) spruce up the Garden Patio



Communion table, in Interstate State Park, Taylor's Falls, MN



Creating artwork



Support for Hope4Youth



After School Dinner Delivery