



The Messenger

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St. Mark's Lutheran Church

June 2020

Called by the Spirit. Equipped to Serve. Sent to love all!

A Final Word from Pastor Ken Thurow

“What then are we to say about these things?” St. Paul’s question in Romans 8 has wide application. By now we are all a bit tired of hearing that this is a (choose your favorite word) difficult, unique, stressful, fearful, trying time. From any aspect the numbers are striking: far more deaths in two months than in the entire Vietnam war; the USA, with about 4.5% of the world population, has over 31% of the cases and over 28% of the COVID-19 deaths. Schools closed, commencement exercises gone the way of worship services – that is, virtual! States and businesses are “opening up” though no state has met the stated guidelines. What are we to say?

First, we are community—a community of care and prayer, together in worship (though virtual), and ministry, touching Aurora and the world.

Second, we have the Spirit’s presence and the Lord’s promises that we are not abandoned. On the 7th Sunday of Easter we were reminded that the Lord prays for us. We refer to the “Our Father,” from Matthew and Luke, as “the Lord’s Prayer,” the prayer taught by Jesus when the disciples asked him to teach them. But John 17 is “the Lord’s Prayer” in a different sense—here the Lord prays for his followers, a statement of his love and care.

Third, for most this is difficulty, not catastrophe. The losses are tragic beyond anything experienced in our lifetime, and touch our hearts, but this is not nuclear war, or the Black Death, or widespread famine. Even in the midst of frustration, isolation, perhaps depression we are abundantly blessed, and can affirm with St. Paul in the verses following that question in Romans 8, “I am convinced that neither death, nor life, . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



Worship on Zoom, April 26

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Welcome Pastor Nic Leither

In life we are always in transition of one kind or another—but haven't we been overdoing it at St. Mark's? Less than halfway through 2020, and we are preparing to welcome our third pastor (but we plan to keep this one longer), plus COVID, schedules and worship services revised, call process, Lenten meals abruptly stopped, and more. In the midst of it all, we have learned to worship in a new way—and the community, THE CHURCH, remains intact! So, this is my last newsletter article.

First, then, my thanks for the welcome extended me. I have experienced St. Mark's as welcoming, adaptable, resilient, and attentive to the community. Staff and Council have been great, and worship leadership—Rose, Bill, Betty and choir, and assisting ministers—of high quality. Thanks.

Second, more vital for your future, a word of welcome and encouragement to Nic Leither, soon to be officially your pastor. Your new charge, Nic, is not without challenges, but you will find yourself surrounded and supported by fellow ministers who care to live out the congregation's mission.

And to the congregation, as you welcome Nic to his first call, remember that part of your ministry is to encourage and support him as he shapes his pastoral identity in your midst. Pray for him, cut him some slack, invite him into your life, keep perspective and sense of humor, and be the place that he will always praise as he lives with you and as he later remembers you.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Pastor Ken Thurow

A Word from the Council President

Dear St. Mark's Congregation,

Our long journey to find our new pastor to lead us forward is coming to an end. As you know from the vote on May 10, Pastor Nic Leither was presented to the congregation for acceptance. I made an announcement the following Sunday to inform all that we received 68 votes with 67 in approval and 1 not. With that vote the council moved forward to complete the paperwork for the official call of Pastor Nic.

I want to thank all those who accepted positions in this most important process of calling our new Pastor.

This all started with the hard work of the **Transition Team**. Please, when you have a moment, reach out and thank them as their job was not easy. The members of the Transition Team were Claudette Gilbert, Michele Gohl, Ron Maniscalco, Susan Saeugling, and Josh Vermaas. They did a great job utilizing surveys and talking with members to verify the future for St. Mark's

This then went to the **Call Committee**. The committee members are Michel Gohl, Ken Barger, Norma Duncan, Dorie Gerhardt, Clark Gilbert, Dawn Ramos, and Stefanus Tampubolon. Please also thank them when you have time. This team had the difficult job of taking the report from the Transition Team and putting it into a call document for potential pastors to read so they can gain some insight into St. Mark's. From that document they had to interview perspective candidates. They were able to complete all of this and present a potential candidate for vote even with the addition challenges of COVID-19. This forced them to work remotely through most of this process and as you can imagine that was not easy.

From the Call Committee recommendation, the council looked at the qualifications of the candidate. We voted unanimously to present Pastor Nic to the congregation. If you are not aware the council members are Claudette Gilbert, Ellie Weaver, Shannon Walsh-Vermaas, Dorie Gerhardt, Bill Stephenson, and Ryan Gohl. We presented

Pastor Nic was accepted and as they say the future will have no end. I for one know that it will be positive and with some changes we will continue to strive.

Many others have played key parts throughout this journey and I want to put out a big thank you to them as well. A couple key people are Mary Katherine Smith and Kinna Nordstrom Kemp. If I have left anyone out please accept my apology. I have always said we are stronger together and this journey has proved that. St. Mark's is resilient, and I cannot wait to see what our future holds.

God Bless,

Ryan Gohl, Council President

Please Keep in Your Prayers

We welcome your requests for prayers for persons in need or prayers of thanksgiving for blessings received. Please note that prayer requests will remain on the list for four Sundays; a request may be extended by contacting the church office.

Recent hospitalizations, illnesses, and concerns:

Judith Graham (*Quai Barker's mother, cancer*)
Irene Seelmeyer (*dislocated shoulder, rehab*)
Palma Kruger (*bacterial infection*)
Kristine (*Karen Arensen's sister, hiatal hernia*)
Karen Arensen (*healing of internal infection*)
Chris Prillwitz (*health*)
Susan Saeugling (*employment closing*)
Shelly and Nathan (*family of Sandy Day*)
Gladis (*mother of OHLANA Youth member Joshua*)

For the faithful departed and those who mourn:

Brandon Stasny (*Ann Howell's grand-nephew, Mary Crum's great-grandson*)
Family of Vivian Ryden (*Anne Barger's mother*)

For those diagnosed with cancer or long-term illness:

Fran Carlson (*former member, congenital heart failure*)
Allie Nicodemus and family
Roxanne Bell (*Sally Lynch's neighbor, cancer*)
Jean Rose (*back pain*)
Ellie Weaver (*breast cancer*)
Reid Shea and family (*friends of Mary Katherine Smith, lymphoma lung cancer*)
Charlie Robertson and family (*friends of Chelsea Thompson*)
Susan Saeugling (*recovery from surgery*)
Chuck Martell, II (*Lou and Bubbles' son, heart issues*)
Virginia Martell (*Chuck's wife, Alzheimer's*)
Lisa Wild (*friend of Patty Costello, kidney cancer*)
Cindy Lenzen (*Doris Seline's daughter, health*)
Isaiah Daniels (*Ollie Daniels' grandson, deployed to Kuwait*)
Jean (*Jackie Kirk's sister, cancer*)
Darrell Hesselius (*incurable health problem*)

For homebound members and friends:

Gil Bliss George Devers
Colleen Graham Mark Heflin
James and Marie Hughes
Palma Kruger Les and Diana Ortt
Dorothy Parker Gerry Redlin
Daphne Remington Lillian Ripper
Arlene Selk Vernita Wild
Don Snook and Trish Kulp

From the desk of the Director of Youth and Family Ministry

Kinna Nordstrom Kemp

Affirmation of Baptism Final Projects, Part I

Affirmation of Baptism classes are now finished, and all 11 students have finished their final projects/papers. We are excited to share their projects with you over the next few months. Enjoy!

Andrea Sinaga – 10th grade

I've learned many things in Affirmation of Baptism. One of them happened to be how I could strengthen my relationship with God and learn more about that personal connection between Him and I. I also learned that a saint is a forgiven sinner which makes us 100% both sinners and saints. Making mistakes proves our humanity as well as doubt. Having faith means to trust in the uncertainty. We may stumble because of what we can't see but I learned from the true messages told from the Bible. It can be a rocky road to give 100%, but regardless our God is a God who loves and His kingdom will come to us. It's important to share His word with a community because perspective is important and it could take many eyes to see the bigger picture. Part of the bigger picture also includes seeing the importance of both testaments. Both testaments need each other. The Old Testament showed us why we needed Jesus and the New Testament shares stories about Jesus.

The images on my project of a foot stepping on the person and a social pyramid represent the oppressors and the oppressed. It represents a society that God did not want. Humans could never succeed in following the manna way. The manna way is where there's no such thing as too much or too little. Everyone has just the right amount. With that, Jesus came to re-teach the manna way. Jesus was crucified for speaking against the empire but he did it because of his unconditional love. The 10 commandments are what guided us when it comes to living in relationship with others and in relationship with God. God also gave us the gift of grace. This gift was not earned but something God gave us so instead we should live in response to it. The way we can have a physical connection to God is through the sacraments, baptism and holy communion. A sacrament is where ordinary elements are mixed with the word of God.



Kalani Heath – 9th grade

In Affirmation of Baptism class I learned a lot of things about God and everything He has done. I've learned that while not everything in the Bible actually happened, everything in the Bible has a purpose for being told. I've learned what a miracle really is and what the purpose of them really are. I think my faith for God and for the Lutheran church has grown a lot.

I've learned why it's great to be baptized in the Lutheran church. I've learned that you don't have to do anything special or be anyone or anything special to take communion in the Lutheran church. My relationship with the Bible has grown a lot because of everyone that wrote it, and everything that went into the making of the Bible. So many different people wrote about the things Jesus did when he was alive. We may never know for sure but we should still believe. It's crazy to think how the Bible came together and how long it took for it to all come together. It is full of Jesus's life he lived on earth and even before and after his time on earth. There are stories upon stories to tell about Jesus or that even had something to do with Jesus in it. I would like to continue in the path of Jesus and his work and give back to the church and everything. I learned that God is everywhere and you don't have to be someone or something specific to worship him. I want to learn even more about Jesus and His ways.

Another thing I liked a lot to learn about was how Jesus forgives you no matter what you do and who you are. I also remember learning about how bad they treated Jesus. They whipped Him and stabbed Him and put a crown of thorns on His head. It was horrible what they did to him and his family just sat there and was forced to watch it happen to Him. I learned about the rebirth and holy baptism. I also learned about grace and how God gives us his grace and free will, which is like giving us freedom of what we do with our lives and how we live our lives. He doesn't force us to do things, we just do them ourselves. I learned about what Affirmation of Baptism meant by having us affirm our faith. I also learned about the three big deals who were the kings, pharaohs, and the Roman empire and how they ruled and what their people went through like battles, good kings, bad kings, and how poor people and sick people were treated differently. Jesus did miracles for everyone to see the true power of His father. I learned about the five main parts of worship, which are preaching, prayer, scripture, communion and offering. Another thing I learned was what *shalom* means. It's God's peace, like abundant life. I also learned about cosmic koinonia and how it's the mending of the universe, which is God's dream for God's creation. I guess I kinda learned about the whole universe.

Honoring our Graduates

Since we couldn't meet together in celebration, I took gifts to our youth who graduated from high school and college this month to honor their achievements.



Council Corner

Council Highlights—May 12, 2020

President Gohl called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. on Zoom. Pastor Ken led devotion.

Secretary, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary reports were reviewed and accepted. Patty updated the council on all our renters.

President's Report

There has been some vandalism in the park area to lights, outlets, and fans. Mary Katherine has contacted the police and asked them to patrol the area more.

Ryan asked council members to start thinking of what the next steps should be to start reopening the church.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Ken has been working at St. Mark's on Wednesdays to catch up at the office and help record music for Sunday worship. He participates in a Zoom text study of Boulder-Broomfield pastors.

Pastor Ken shared his thoughts around considerations in regard to reopening the church in the near future, including his recommendation that St. Marks should explore affordable options for continuing good quality video, preferably for real-time broadcast similar to our Zoom worship.

Youth and Family Ministries

The St. Mark's Luther League checking account has paid for the last two months of Zoom subscription. The Council will ask Kinna and Mary Katherine to look into St. Mark's getting an account. Patty suggested that we could use Thrivent money to pay for it.

Pastor Ken and Shannon have been able to renew Kinna's position as the Director of Youth and Family Ministry for another year (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021). Funds were received from St. Mark's Foundation and Bethany Lutheran Church's Foundation to support her salary. They continue to search for salary funding to support this position in the future.

Old Business – Review of Voting Results from Sunday, May 10

The council reviewed the minutes from a special meeting of the Council that was held on Monday, May 4 to discuss how to vote on calling a new pastor and to decide if council members can extend their terms until after things settle down from COVID-19.

The Council also reviewed an outline of the Sunday, May 10 meeting of the congregation that was conducted online following the worship service.

The voting results from May 10 were announced at this regular Council meeting:

- To accept Pastor Nic Leither as call pastor at St. Mark's: yes—67, no—1 abstain—0
- For extension of council member's terms: Yes—67, no—1, abstain—0

Council voted to accept the congregation's vote to call Pastor Candidate Nic Leither to serve as pastor at St. Mark's. Ryan will send voting results to the Office of the Bishop, who will contact Nic and guide both parties on next steps.

Meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Summarized Report of Income and Expenses

Submitted by Bill Stephenson, Treasurer

April, 2020

<u>Current Month</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Total Income	\$16,601.64	Total Income	\$55,164.59
Total Expenses	-\$12,141.00	Total Expenses	-\$53,158.60
Net Income	\$4,460.64	Net Income	\$2,005.99

BUDGET COMPARISON OF ENVELOPE OFFERING			
<u>Monthly Budget Amount</u>	<u>Actual Current Month</u>	<u>Budget Year to Date</u>	<u>Actual Year to Date</u>
\$13,941.05	\$12,248.99	\$55,764.20	\$45,521.96
Over/Under Budget	-\$1,692.06		-\$10,242.24

A Word from the Financial Secretary

Patty Costello, Financial Secretary

First trimester giving statement letters were sent out by email and/or postal mail to all who pledged to donate in 2020 and are making installments towards their pledge. These letters did not include information on giving for specific funds or occasions but focused solely on progress towards what was pledged for the year. If you have any questions, please contact me or the church office.

A great thank you to everyone who has continued to mail in or drop off their donations to the church over the past few months since we moved to worshipping online when we no longer could worship in person. Your support of the ministries of this congregation is appreciated.

In Memory of Bob Lopeman

Ele Lopeman shared some pictures that the family captured of Bob's gravesite. She wrote, "He was such a good man and loved the Lord dearly. And he served his church until he couldn't anymore."



Community News

Welcome Baby Liliana

Shannon and Josh Vermaas welcomed St. Mark's newest member, Liliana, into the world on May 21, weighing 6 lbs., 12 oz. Liliana was 19 inches long at her first measurement at University of Colorado hospital. Mother and baby are doing well, and are looking forward to a socially distant baptism in the near future.



Card Angels

Thank you so much for all you do. Your time and attention you give to this activity is appreciated more than words could express.

Some of our church family have changed residence. Please check to make sure the addresses you are currently using are correct. The most recent addresses are in our new 2019 directory. And if you have any concerns, please check with Mary Katherine or me.

Again, thank you all. If I may be of help to you, please let me know.

Blessings —Dorie Gerhardt

Thank you

I'd like to thank the talented ladies who have made masks for our food pantry guests, as well as those who contributed financial donations for the purchase of masks.

Thank you: Norma

Duncan, Ann Howell, Anne Barger, Shirley Kerezsi, Terrie Gunther, and Sally Lynch.

P.S. Thank you also to Ken Barger for his help with our recent purchase of food pantry supplies from the Food Bank of the Rockies (FBotR) in utilizing a \$500 grant that we received from FBotR.

—Claudette Gilbert

Thank you to everyone who remembered me on my birthday. Your cards, notes, and blessings added a special touch to my day. I consider myself a very blessed person and I count my St. Mark's church family among my many blessings. God's blessings.

—Dorie

I would like to thank everyone for all the "Get Well" wishes, flowers, phone calls, and all the beautiful cards following my surgery and recovery. Thanks for all of your prayers. I am feeling 100% better than I was before the surgery and I'm so grateful for all the good thoughts sent my way!

—Susan Saeugling



WORSHIP LIFE AT ST. MARK'S

June 2020

Sunday, June 7, 2020 ~ The Holy Trinity Sunday – Zoom Meeting ID # 389 867 134

Though the word *trinity* is not found in the scriptures, today's second reading includes the apostolic greeting that begins the liturgy: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In the gospel Jesus sends his disciples forth to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. More than a doctrine, the Trinity expresses the heart of our faith: we have experienced the God of creation made known in Jesus Christ and with us always through the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity in word and sacrament, as we profess the creed, and as we are sent into the world to bear witness to our faith.

Note: *The meeting number we use for Zoom worship will change after June 7; watch your email for communication of the new number, or you can call the office the Friday before. The password will remain the same.*

Sunday, June 14, 2020 ~ Second Sunday after Pentecost

Moses tells the Israelites that they are called to be a priestly kingdom and a holy people. Jesus sends out the disciples as laborers into the harvest. In baptism we too are anointed for ministry, sharing God's compassion with our needy world. From the Lord's table we go forth to proclaim the good news, to heal the sick, and to share our bread with the hungry.

Sunday, June 21, 2020 ~ Third Sunday after Pentecost

God does not promise that the path of the disciple will be easy. Jeremiah feels the pain of rejection from those who do not want to hear what he has to say. Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division. Even so, we need not be afraid for God accounts for each hair on our heads. Though we may experience rejection, frustration, division, and death, God's grace and love make us a new creation each day. Marked with the cross and filled with holy food, we are sent from worship to witness to Christ in the world.

Sunday, June 28, 2020 ~ Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The welcome of baptism is for all God's children. This baptismal gift sets us free from the power of sin and death. In today's gospel, Christ promises that the disciple who gives a cup of cold water to the little ones serves Christ himself. From worship we are sent on our baptismal mission: to serve the little ones of this world and to be a sign of God's merciful welcome.

Weekly Attendance

May 2020

May 3 th	74
May 10 th	77
May 17 th	75
May 24 th	63

Without Pentecost the Christ-event—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—remains imprisoned in history as something to remember, think about and reflect on. The Spirit of Jesus comes to dwell within us, so that we can become living Christs here and now.

Henri Nouwen

Bishop Gonia's Recommendations Regarding In-person Gatherings

Beloved in Christ in the Rocky Mountain Synod,

I am writing to share with you three key recommendations for our life as church becoming in the Rocky Mountain Synod during this time of pandemic, including guidance on the question of in-person gatherings for congregations and communities of faith. Let me begin with some overarching thoughts and a description of the process by which these recommendations were developed.

First, the question at hand is not about “reopening the church.” Although most of our buildings have been closed during this pandemic, the church itself is not a building. The church is the called people of God, marked by the cross of Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit for our life and witness in the world. The church of Jesus has never been closed; it has taken new shape and form during this pandemic. More than ever, in ways we could never have anticipated, we have been experiencing what it means to be church becoming. The pandemic is not an interruption in our life as the Body of Christ, after which we will return to “normal.” Rather, in the hands of our God who brings life from death, this pandemic—with all of its pain, suffering, disorientation, and frustration—is a serving as a means by which we are being reshaped for our ministry and witness. We will never be the same; we will not return to what we once knew. We are Christ’s Church Becoming, becoming what the Spirit needs us to be for the life of the world.



In that light, these recommendations will not guide you back to something that once was. These recommendations do not offer a step-by-step guide for “getting back to normal.” Instead, these recommendations—taken together—invite us to embrace our becoming and invest in the Spirit’s continuing work in and through us.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that congregations and communities of faith continue to use an online/digital platform for corporate worship through at least August 31; there is a strong likelihood that such need will continue through the end of the calendar year or longer given public health requirements for all parishioners to safely gather for corporate in-person worship in church buildings. This recommendation will be reevaluated in mid-August in light of any new developments.
2. It is recommended that congregations and communities of faith consider how to offer low-risk in-person gatherings tailored to the needs and vulnerabilities of the various people within your setting.
3. It is recommended that congregations and communities of faith use this time to pay particular attention as people of faith to those in your community, in our nation, and in this world who are most vulnerable during the pandemic and let that inform your ministry efforts.

View the full letter and recommendations at https://www.rmselca.org/sites/rmselca.org/files/media/rms_in-person_gatherings_recommendations1.pdf.

The St. Mark's Congregational Council is engaged in conversation regarding these recommendations.

Happy Birthday!

June 2	Lucius Balsley	June 23	Marcia Daugherty
June 4	James Arensen Chelsea (DeLong) Reinis	June 24	Mary Ann Dominguez
June 7	James Falk	June 30	Abel Ramos
June 11	Philip Wyatt	July 6	Rusty Bliss
June 17	Richard Oakes Brooklyn Lopeman		

Happy Anniversary!

Joshua Vermaas & Shannon Walsh-Vermaas

June 4, 2016

Gilbert & Rusty Bliss

June 5, 1955

James & Ella Weaver

June 6, 1971

Robert & Terri Gehler

June 26, 1976

Bob & Terri Gunther

June 26, 1976

Austin & Christina Nicodemus

June 30, 2001

SMLCW News

Mary Stephenson, President

Here we all sit, still social distancing, wearing a mask when out in public and doing Zoom worship service. I often wonder if we will ever experience another normal again.

Last month I had shared information about the Southeast Colorado Cluster's gathering in Colorado Springs—that has been postponed until 2021. Also, the Triennial Gathering for the Women of the ELCA that was scheduled for July is now postponed until August 2021. Even the biennial convention of the Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization that was to happen this fall has been postponed until 2021. This virus has changed group plans and gatherings but only for the safety of all.

My heart goes out to all the parents dealing with children in the home during these weeks of quarantine. It is extremely difficult to keep little ones from social distancing when all they want to do is play with their friends. Then looking at us adults, all we want to do is gather in the church with our church friends to visit and have coffee. So, I guess it is just plain hard for all ages to social distance. Continue to stay safe and healthy!

My favorite phrase is "find a splash of joy" in each and every day. Never forget God is in control and it is Him we turn to for daily strength and comfort.

JUNE BLESSINGS

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*Called by the Spirit.
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If you wish to change how you receive our monthly newsletter *The Messenger*—whether it is via email or hard copy (either by picking up at the church or by receipt in the postal mail system)—please email admin@stmarksaurora.org or call the church office 303-366-9702.

St. Mark's Council Members

Ryan Gohl—President	OPEN—Building/Grounds
Bill Stephenson—Treasurer	Shannon Walsh-Vermaas—Youth
Patty Costello—Financial Secretary	Dorie Gerhardt—Parish Ed/Women
Ellie Weaver—Secretary	Terri Maniscalco—Stewardship
Claudette Gilbert—Social Concerns/ Fellowship	