

**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
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The Rev. Gregory W. Frey, Pastor

**APRIL, 2020**

In an open letter dated March 6<sup>th</sup> from the ELCA presiding bishop Elizabeth Eaton shared insights from Martin Luther's open letter to the people of Wittenberg during an outbreak of Bubonic plague in 1527. I shared Bishop Eaton's letter with you in an eBlast so you may be familiar with it.

In 1527 the bubonic plague returned with a vengeance to a European continent weary of such outbreaks which had been occurring since 1306. Some local leaders reached out to Martin Luther for advice as to what they should do. A common response to an outbreak of plague, for those who had the means to do so, was to flee to the country. Some church and civic leaders appealed to Luther asking his advice on what they should do. (*Sir Isaac Newton retreated from Cambridge to study "remotely" in 1665-66, and while social distancing lay down the essential principles of his calculus, pioneered the field of optics, and began his work on the revolutionary physics theories of gravity and motion.*)

Luther responded with an open letter entitled: *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague*. In that letter Luther discussed the responsibility church and civic leaders have in carrying out their God-given vocations to care for those under their charge. Bishop Eaton characterized Luther's response as follows, *"To provide Care for the neighbor, Luther recommended that pastors, those in public office, doctors and public servants should remain in the city. Luther himself remained in Wittenberg to care for his people. He recommended that public hospitals be built to accommodate those with the plague. He condemned those who took unnecessary risks that put themselves and others in danger of contagion. Luther also encouraged the use of reason and medicine,*

*writing, 'God has created medicines and has provided us with intelligence to guard and take care of the body...Use medicine; take potions which can help you; fumigate house, yard, and street; shun persons and places wherever your neighbor does not need your presence'".*

What Bishop Eaton did not mention, and neither did Luther in his letter because he did not yet know, was what Luther's dedication to serve on God's behalf would cost his family. In December of 1527 Luther's wife Katharina gave birth to their second child, a little girl named Elisabeth. The child was sickly from birth, undoubtedly affected by her mother's exposure to the plague. In August of 1528 Elisabeth died. Katharina wrote: *"The good Lord gave me a little girl, the sweet little Elisabeth. I am happy and grateful to the Lord! Here, the plague is dead and buried. However, it seemed as if the terrible scourge had marked the child, even before she was born. After eight months, the sweet little Elisabeth said goodbye to her father and her mother to go to Christ, passing through death into life. At the cemetery, you can still see the tombstone with the simple inscription: "Hic dormit Elisabeth, filiola Martini Lutheri, 1528". Here sleeps Elizabeth, daughter of Martin Luther.*

What we are facing in the Coronavirus is not nearly as devastating as the plague, yet it is the challenge we have before us. Our response as Christians must be twofold. First, for the sake of our neighbor (and ourselves) we must commit ourselves to doing and making such sacrifices which will contribute to the goal of minimizing the range and scope of the virus as much as possible. If the spread of the virus can be slowed because of contact restrictions, our medical community will have a better chance of using our medical capacity to deal with the virus in its most serious forms. It is essential that we observe contact restrictions regardless of our physical condition or age. **Therefore, we will cancel all public gatherings at the church and do as much of our ministry remotely as we are able.**

We must also commit ourselves to being attentive to the special needs closures and social distancing will have on the most vulnerable in our society. Some will manage fine under the restrictions beginning to come into place and others will fare badly. We must be there for one another and be especially mindful of those with greatest need and susceptibility.

Even in a time of physical distancing Christians must also be about the worship and praise of God through our Lord Jesus Christ and offering to one another care and consolation, especially in challenging times. For this purpose, we do not simply close-up, hunker down and wait it out. Clearly, we need to find expressions of faith and community which will help us persevere in the days ahead.

How to find meaningful expressions of community when gathering in groups is discouraged is a challenging proposition. We will increasingly turn to our online and media capability through more livestreaming of worship, Bible study and other remote means of connecting to one another.

I also cannot give up on the ability of the church to provide opportunities for worship, prayers and consolation. This is the trickiest needle to thread. While we will be canceling many of our activities (i.e. Sunday School, Fellowship Hour, Basket Social, Pie Sale, Easter Breakfast, etc.) I plan to continue to offer our numerous opportunities for communal worship (Wednesday in Lent at 7:00 PM, Sat at 6:00 PM, Sunday at 8:00 AM) in a livestreamed format. You can connect with this livestreamed service on the Church website or Facebook page.

I believe this situation is going to persist at least through May, probably longer. This means our Holy Week and Easter services will be livestreamed. We will seek other means of keeping you connected to this church community and, most importantly, the good news of Jesus Christ. God will give us the strength, courage and perseverance to meet this crisis and we must encourage one another in this promise.

So, for now, take some time to participate in our livestreamed worship services and other content we will make available. Take advantage of newfound time to develop your faith with an online Bible study [www.elca.org/Resources/Bible-Studies](http://www.elca.org/Resources/Bible-Studies) (Year A seasons of the church) or do it the old fashioned way, perhaps reading the Gospel of Matthew. Pray for people around the world struggling with this coronavirus, our nation, our church community and the sustenance of our ministry in the midst of the present challenge. Contact me for pastoral care needs, let me know if someone you know becomes ill. Keep an eye on your neighbors and if you observe a need or have a concern call the church. Call your friends at church and keep contact with them, especially those

without online community capabilities. Technology can do a lot to keep us connected but let's not forget those who do not have these connections.

May God bless and keep you in the coming days. Remember these words which have maintained hope and encouragement in the church through so many difficulties and challenges. *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28-30).

--Pastor Frey

#### --WORSHIP IN APRIL--

**Public gatherings have been cancelled.  
(All services will be livestreamed on the Church website or Facebook page)**

April 1 7:00 P.M. – Mid-week Lenten Worship  
April 4 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion  
April 5 8:00 A.M. – Palm Sunday--Holy Communion

#### HOLY WEEK



#### WORSHIP SCHEDULE

April 6,7, & 8 7:00 P.M. – Service of Word & Prayer  
April 9 7:00 P.M. – Maundy Thursday--Holy Communion  
April 10 7:00 P.M. – Good Friday--Tenebrae Service  
April 11 8:00 P.M. – Easter Vigil—Holy Communion  
April 12 8:00 A.M. – Easter--Holy Communion  
April 18 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion  
April 19 8:00 A.M. – Holy Communion  
April 25 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion  
April 26 8:00 & 10:30 A.M. – Worship

**FROM THE PARISH RECORDS.....**

**Baptisms:** 2/24 – **Clara Victoria Britton**, daughter of Eric & Emily (Schlear) Britton  
 3/15 – **Julianne Katherine Sowers**, daughter of Jeffrey & Katherine (Harrison) Sowers

**Funeral:** 3/2 – **Anne Schlear**

Contribution to the **Agape Fund** in memory of **James Rhoads** given by **Jane Kinder**

--YTD Giving thru February 2020--				
	<u>Jan- Feb.,2019</u>	<u>Jan-Feb.,2020</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% chg.</u>
Offerings	\$ 55,061	\$ 62,034	6,972	12.66
Vision 2020 Contr.	8,127	10,257	2,130	20.76
<b>Total Giving</b>	<b>\$ 63,188</b>	<b>\$ 72,291</b>	<b>\$ 9,103</b>	<b>12.59</b>



**Due to the pandemic the following activities have been cancelled until further notice:**

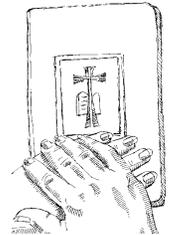
- |                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Worship services (view on-line) |                        |
| Women’s Group on March 24       | Coconut cream pie sale |
| Sunday School                   | Choir practice         |
| Basket Social                   | Easter breakfast       |

**THOUGHTS.....** by Joy Gerhart

WOW! Is this for real? Over the last week (March 8-15) things have changed so quickly! For a while I wasn’t able to think straight. At this time we are still making many decisions here at church for the safety and health of all.

I keep thinking of the people of Jesus’ day and the lepers who hid away from the community. They didn’t have scientific tests to prove that they were afflicted, or hospitals or medicine, but they also did not have phones or computers or televisions to receive news or communicate. None of us are lepers, and none of us should feel utterly shut off from others.

This “New Normal” is causing severe disappointments and disruptions for us all, including financially. I certainly can’t control any of that, but maybe we can use whatever lack of busyness we may be experiencing to spend some time reading the Bible or in prayer. This is the time to build up our spiritual reserves and our trust that God will see us through. This is the time to connect in new and creative ways with each other and let the best of our caring and community-mindedness shine. We have phones and computers here at church, so feel free to write or call! Maybe we can view this as a new climate in which to exercise our Christian witness to the world, through our caring support of one another and our careful restraint.



**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS.....**

**NO SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR A WHILE**

Since schools are closed it makes sense that our Sunday school is closed too. So there will be no Sunday school at St. Paul’s for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, we will be creating and/or sharing material we have already purchased with you online. For everyone, here are the upcoming Gospel passages we will be studying:

March 15—The woman at the Well (John 4:5-42) (Jesus speaks to a Samaritan Woman)

Theme: Jesus came for all People everywhere

March 22—Pool of Siloam (Jesus Heals a Blind Man) (John 9:1-41)

Theme: Jesus opens our eyes

March 29—Lazarus (Jesus raises him from the dead) (John 11:1-45)

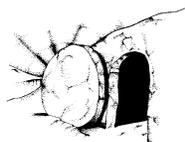
Theme: Jesus feels happy and sad. Me too!

April 5--Holy Week (Matthew 21:1-11; 26:14-27:66)

Theme: Jesus' Love is SO big!

April 12—The Empty Tomb (Matthew 28:1-10)

Theme: Jesus is Alive! Alleluia!



April 19—Doubting Thomas (John 20:19-31)

Theme: Jesus helps us believe

April 26—The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Surprise! Jesus is with us!

**YOUTH NEWS**.....



**Youth**

As we mentioned in the previous newsletter, we plan to travel with both SPYY and SPLAT youth to Ozzy's Family Fun Center in Leesport for some activities. In addition to Miniature Golf, Ozzy's has Laser tag and rock climbing. The plan is to eat lunch at church. travel to Ozzy's and split into SPYY and SPLAT groups to enjoy the activities there. At this time of writing (3/16) Ozzy's is open, but everything is open to change so stay tuned.

**Weekly Prayer Service -- Wednesdays--9:00 AM**



We pray for every member of the congregation on Wednesday mornings at 9 am. If you see your name here it is not because we think you have a specific need for prayer, but to let you know you are in our prayers whatever your need may be. On Wednesday mornings we also pray for churches around the world, leaders in the ELCA, our staff and council members, our political leaders, those in the military, special requests, and many more. If you are free a Wednesday morning, stop in and join us. We are always finished before 9:30 AM. Included this month in our prayers will be: Herbert Schoenly, Darlene Schoenly, Karen Schreier, Gabriel Schulze, Harry Schweikert, Susan Schweikert, Rose Secord, Zachary Secord, Joshua Secord, John Serrian, Jeane Serrian, Emma Serrian, Tori Shaffer, Daulton Shaffer, Aspyn Shaffer. If you have anyone to add to the prayer list, please fill out a Prayer Request Card found in the pew racks or call the church office. Please pray for those with special concerns: : Makayla Becker, Blaine, Janice Boccella, Kathy Carpani, Gail Clifford, Melanie D'Alessandro, Diane Davis, Barbara DePrefontaine, Terry Eberly, Ellen Edman, Emily, Jerry Evans, Tom Flood, David Friedman, Mary Graefe, Keith Greusel, Helen Guss, Chet Habeker, Connie Hunter, Terry Johnson, Sue Keay, Jane Kinder, Jean Korf, Rich Kucharik, Jacob Oister, Patricia Omilak, Reaghan O'Rourke, Mildred Pate, Ernie Pizzico, Joseph Pollock, Ollie Pribanick, Antonio Rodriquez, Karlina Schmidt, Audrey Serrian, Marge Sloan, Eva Thomas, Roslyn Tornetta, Len Trauger, Erna Vroman, , Elaine Woudstra, Sandi Zelinski, family and friends of Jeannie Crass, Ruth Kresge, Jack Omilak, James Rhoads, Bev Schoffstall, and all others listed below or those we name in our hearts: Cynthia Adam, Jake Campbell, Karin DiSanto, Ron Glaser, Diana Gower, Charles Heffner, Larry Herbst, Bobby Hubert, Robin Hynes, Linda Loshnowsky, Karen McGavin, Edith Moyer, Jerry Muller, Ron Mutter, Richard Pool, Richard Randolph, June Rhoads, Lenore Robinson, John Shaner, Vernet Spence-Brown, Jason Stalneckner, Craig Williams, Jane Williams; homebound -- Peggy Burns, Jennie Clouser, Carol DeLong, Jan Haas, Arlene Hildebeitel, Alma Shirey, Patsy Smale, Dale Szajek, Pauline Trout, Richard Wise.



4/1	Fred Hoffert	4/15	Bryce Johnson
	Jason Ware		Ann Myers
4/2	Jason Parduski		Carol Pearson
	Margaret Reitmeyer		Janet Suglia
	Joan Wendel	4/16	Sara Hartline
4/3	Diane DiSandro		Mindy Haring
	Vicci Eidell	4/17	Elizabeth Dollhopf
	Madison Kochert		Anne Weiser
4/4	Taylor Eisenhuth	4/18	Penelope Gaskins
	Charlotte Moser		Daulton Shaffer
	Megan Poux	4/19	Jackson Leck
	Olivia Yuhasz		Helen Strain
4/5	Colin Leahy	4/20	Adam DiSandro
	Ryan Parduski	4/21	Wendy Frey
	Olivia Raber	4/22	Chester Springel
4/6	Brett Berger	4/23	Amy Bartra
4/8	Avery Main		Avery Hampton
4/10	Grayson Cloutier	4/24	Sean Berger
	Gabriel Schulze		Graysyn Emery
4/11	Jackson Albright		Guy Graefe
	Kaylin Berry	4/26	Vicki Hiser
	Katrina Fusco		Ashleigh Hoover
4/12	David Childs		Stephanie Vernon
4/13	Patrick Dollhopf	4/27	Carey Coyle
	Karen Glaser		Ashley Finkbiner
	Barry Gross		Lindsey Yoder
	Sue Kucharik	4/28	Aimee DiSandro
4/14	Tyler Fusco	4/29	Angie Kutz
	Vincent Fusco	4/30	Joseph Duffy

## HAPPY WEDDING ANNIVERSARY TO –

Joseph & Betty Dowd	4/3	66 yrs.
Kevin Fisher & Rob Edinger	4/11	5 yrs.
Barry & Sieglinde Fretz	4/14	17 yrs.
Carl & Carlene Yerger	4/14	47 yrs.
David & Diane Stauffer	4/15	48 yrs.
Richard & Debra Geiger	4/17	10 yrs.
Calvin & Ellen Sheeler	4/20	68 yrs.
Joe & Kim Koury	4/30	26 yrs.



**CANCELLED**

## WOMEN'S GROUP.....

Our Women's Group speaker responsibly cancelled her engagement for MARCH 24, which we would have had to cancel anyway. We would like to schedule our next gathering for Tuesday, April 21 at 7:00 pm which our Enneagram cannot make. So we will bide our time and see if a gathering is even desirable on April 21, and go from there. Stay well and use your telephone!

## EASTER FOOD BASKETS.....

Please bring your donations no later than April 5 and the baskets will be delivered to the school on April 6, 2020. You may also donate money to defray the costs of the hams. Thank you in advance for your participation.

# SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

## St. James, Pitman: Rural and Vibrant



St. James, Pitman, is a very rural congregation that maintains a vibrant ministry of outreach, Christian education, worship, and social ministry. The congregation recently dedicated its new ADA accessible restrooms and wheelchair lift with Bishop Zeiser and a packed house in attendance. The new restroom and wheelchair lift became a reality after the congregation received a significant bequest from a former member's estate. Making the building accessible was the logical way to open the doors and welcome in the community.

Each year, the congregation, which has 150 baptized members, crafts and ships nearly 200 quilts to Lutheran World Relief sites around the world. Locally, St. James raises thousands of dollars to help people within the community, while meeting its benevolence tithes to our Synod. When Bishop Zeiser learned that the quilts were shipped to places like Madagascar, Tanzania, and Indonesia, he said, "some people may think you're 'in the middle of nowhere', but for the people receiving the work of your hands you are very much somewhere."

The congregation's vision of reaching out and being a welcoming place has already borne fruit. The quilting group, open to anyone in the community, now has its largest membership ever and the quilt production has taken off. As word about the accessibility project has spread in the community, worship attendance has risen as well. For a little church 'in the middle of nowhere', many more are finding that it is really somewhere to be.



## St. Paul, Fountain Hill, NFL Canned Food Challenge Award

The Bethlehem-Easton Mission District Council challenged their congregations to participate in collecting canned goods for the food bank(s) of their choice. It was an effort to join forces; and with a bit of a challenge, to help others.

The goal was to collect a canned good for each point scored during the playoffs! Yes, that meant each congregation was asked to collect 523 cans. The prize was not revealed to the congregations ahead of time.

The suspense grew from week to week as the scores piled up and the cans were counted. Who would win the prize? As the points total grew, it seemed like an unreachable goal; yet many remained hopeful and determined.

After 11 play-off games, watching their canned goods pile up at their altar each week to be counted, St. Paul Fountain Hill was honored to receive a framed award for their "Mighty Effort" in the NFL Canned Food Challenge by surpassing the goal as they collected a total of 594 items. A total of 2,279 cans were collected & distributed to several food banks within the district.

Yes, the "Mighty 45" (as their Pastoral Care Provider Marlene Werkheiser calls them) stepped up to the challenge! As she told them that first week, "This is a great way for our small congregation to help others and to possibly win bragging rights to the prize." "The challenge intrigued them enough to muster up an average of 13 cans per worshipping parishioner.

"I am beyond proud of them", said Werkheiser. "For a small congregation, they really wanted to show others that their congregation can (and wants to) participate in ministries that help to do God's work."

Pictured below is the "Mighty 45" on February 9, after they reached the goal.



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## PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC

May we who are merely inconvenienced  
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors  
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home  
remember those who must choose between preserving their  
health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their  
schools close  
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips  
remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the  
economic market  
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home  
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each  
other, let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our  
neighbors. Amen                      ~ *Bishop Michael Rinehart*

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

# April 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
No money counters needed, but the church office will be open so there will be someone available to accept your offering if you care to mail it to the church.			<b>1</b> 9 AM—Prayer Gr. 9:30—Bible Study 7 PM—Lenten service	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 6 PM—Holy Comm.
<b>5</b> <i>Palm Sunday</i> 8 AM—Holy Comm.	<b>6</b> 7 PM—Word & Prayer	<b>7</b> 6:15—Child Dev.** 7 PM—Word & Prayer	<b>8</b> 7 PM—Word & Prayer	<b>9</b> <i>Maundy Thu.</i> 1 PM—Prayer Shawl 7 PM—Holy Comm.	<b>10</b> <i>Good Friday</i> 7 PM—Tenebrae Service	<b>11</b> <i>Holy Sat.</i> 8 PM—Holy Comm.
<b>12</b> <i>Easter</i> 8 AM—Holy Comm.	<b>13</b> 7 PM—Pastoral Care**	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 9 AM—Prayer Gr. 9:30—Bible Study 1 PM—Prayer Shawl 6:15—Executive Com 7 PM--Council	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 7:30 AM--Property 6 PM—Holy Comm
<b>19</b> 8 AM—Holy Comm. 9:15—Social Ministry 9:15--Fellowship	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 9 AM—Prayer Gr. 9:30—Bible Study 7 PM—W & M** 7 PM—Youth & Fam**	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 6 PM—Holy Comm
<b>26</b> 8 AM—Worship 11:30---SPYY & SPLAT** 4—7 PM—game night**	<b>27</b> 6 PM—Bible Study**	<b>28</b> 7 PM—Women's Gr.**	<b>29</b> 9 AM—Prayer Gr. 9:30—Bible Study	<b>30</b>	** Tentative depending on coronavirus.	