

EPIS⁺LE



*St. Paul's Lutheran
The Church On The Hill*

Volume 64 No. 6

June - 2020

Pastor's Message

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." <Matthew 18:20>

These times we have lived recently have been strange beyond anything we have had to endure as a nation for the past 100 years.

Since I have been your Pastor during the past two years and nine months, I have seen the St. Paul's Church building closed only 4 times, once in 2018 for ice and 3 times in 2019 for ice and snow. I was very happy in March of this year when we didn't have to close the building one time for weather.

And then, a true disaster struck our nation with the Covid-19 virus. I never imagined we would have to lock the doors after March 15, 2020 for an unknown time because of the serious nature of this virus. Two of our members contracted the virus and I was worried about them due to their age, but thankfully they are strong people and were able to overcome and return to good health.

Our Church Council has been meeting regularly, actually more often than regular and keeping a close eye on the local situation. They most recently met on May 27th and after noting Cole county had reported 4 new cases in the past two weeks decided to remain with the current online worship only until meeting again on June 8th. As of June 1, Cole county has added one additional new case raising it to 5 in the past two weeks.

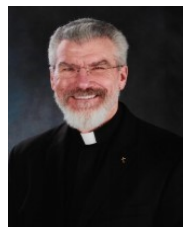
The good news, if we maintain little or no more increases, I hope to see St. Paul's opened on June 14th with restrictions in place, to continue as safe a gathering as possible.

I am thankful for our Church Council's diligent and cautious approach to keep us safe so we can ALL return soon. According to the email Poll I sent out on May 22nd, I have received responses from 22 families showing 24 are willing to come in person and 24 are hesitant and will continue to watch on Facebook for a while. You will be contacted after June 8th to let you know the details.

In the verse I chose for this message, Jesus says where two or three are gathered he is among them. I know it doesn't matter how people are able to gather, it can be in person sitting in the same room or it can be family units or single persons gathered together on Facebook or even in prayer. Jesus does not make a distinction, it is enough that we gather in his name however it is possible. Where ever we are, we can be sure that Jesus abides in us and we in him.

Thank you for your faithfulness in continuing to gather together. I look forward to the day we can shake hands and hug and be united in person, but until then, the peace of Christ be with you always.

Blessings to you in Christ Jesus,
Pastor David



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to you!

- 2 Lori Meyer
- 6 Ron Loesch
- 6 Rose Strobel
- 8 Luke Frasher
- 8 Becky Weber
- 8 Jason Wood
- 9 Jahanna Koestner
- 10 Brenda Heidbreder
- 11 Roger Pennell
- 13 Larah Russell
- 14 Stacy Bubach
- 14 Kelly Grunden
- 15 Abby Bubach
- 18 Heather Morgans
- 19 Kate Freiner
- 20 Denny Linhardt
- 20 Bethanee Plochberger
- 20 Dalton Garner
- 27 Shirley Loesch
- 28 Gary Hanks
- 28 Angie Stubinger
- 29 Laurie Koestner
- 30 Price Tschirgi



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Roger & Tamara Hartley 1991
- 2 Lori & Paul Meyer 1990 **30 Years**
- 6 Abbie & Paula Linsenbardt 1981
- 7 Jonathan & Laura Kalaf 2014
- 7 Gary & Audrey Bunch 1975 **45 Years**
- 12 Richard & Rosemary Heidbreder 1976
- 12 Leon & Elda Pistel 1965 **55 Years**
- 13 Kevin & Tracy Pistel 2015
- 18 Nicole & Andy Benne 1994
- 27 Scott & Cori Soell 1986
- 27 Delores & Robert Vlach 1981

Happy Anniversary

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Month	Attendance	Offering
May	1,063 Views	\$10,525

In Addition:

- Darrell Viles Memorial: \$250.00
- Calvin Lowell Flessa Memorial \$370.00
- Helen Girard Gift \$ 50.00

Congratulations to Chase Pistel and Riley Bond Pistel on their Marriage

Chase and Riley were married on May 23, 2020 at the Wasserlauf pavilion surrounded by family and friends in a joyous event filled with love.



Photo Courtesy of Theresa Pistel Facebook

Continued prayers for healing.

Marie Schepeler, Julie Carel, Gert Strobel, Jade Cary, Vanessa Pyatt, Amy Buechler, Donna Viles, Chris Russell and Pat Collins.

Ask the Pastor

Question: What is the meaning of life? Here is my understanding.

Answer: *“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”* <Revelation 4:11>

To give glory and honor to God, the creator of all that is good.



God in his great love created us in his image, and he gave us dominion over all creation, not to dominate but to care for it. God entrusted this beautiful creation in to us as caretakers over all he had done. In the process of doing this job, God has given us the bountiful produce to sustain us and bring us the pleasures of beauty and life lived in a place we could never have had without his love for us. We haven't done a very good job of keeping God's creation pristine and beautiful. Often we have used the land for greed and polluted the air and waters beyond use to sustain us as it was intended. But God's grace is such that we continue to receive his love and he protects us against our own foolishness. In response to such a love as this, we live a life to give glory and honor to God, the creator of all that is good.

Blessings to you,
Pastor David

Congregational Council Meeting, May 11, 2020
Respectfully submitted by Becky Weber, Church Council Secretary

A Congregational Council meeting using electronic online and "phone in" format was called to order at 6:45pm on May 11, 2020 by Council President Zola Finch. This change in format from our regular in-house meetings is used as a Covid-19 prevention tactic, and thus ensuring the safety of council members and Pastor David. Present were council members Zola Finch, Laurie Koestner, Kathy Meller, Paula Linsenbardt, Dan Tschirgi, Delores Vlach, Mitch Plochberger and Becky Weber. Absent was Scott Soell. Also present was Pastor David Viles. Council Treasurer Kay Pascoe was absent and emailed her report to all prior to the meeting. The meeting was opened with a prayer by Pastor Viles, followed by a devotion based on Exodus 13: 19-22, "When Pharaoh let the people go, God didn't lead them on the road through Philistine territory, although that was the shortest route. God said, 'If they see that they have to fight a war they may change their minds and go back to Egypt.' So God lead the people around the other way, on the road through the desert toward the Red Sea. The Israelites were ready for battle when they left Egypt." Pastor David equated this reading with our current Covid-19 Crisis in that perhaps God is showing us a different, safer route to get through this pandemic. Pastor listed three concerns, first, we do not want to return to our normal lives too soon and risk more deaths, second, on the other hand, will people be driven away from church during the absence of church services and activities being held in church? And third, we must believe and trust God, and pray for the right course of action as we move forward.

President Finch called for approval of the previous council meeting minutes. A motion to approve was made by Paula Linsenbardt, seconded by Dan Tschirgi, and passed via voice vote.

President Finch directed the council members to council treasurer Kay Pascoe's report previously emailed to all. President Finch praised our congregation for their generous giving, and asked an email to be sent to our parishioners to thank them for keeping up with their church donations. After discussion, a motion by Kathy Meller was made to transfer two memorial fund contributions into the endowment fund, seconded by Dan Tschirgi and passed via voice vote.

Pastor David emailed all council members his activity report for April. He reports there was no mileage for April. He reported the following activities for April, 2020: One email exchange for Worship and Music committee, one Church Council meeting via electronic online meeting, and one electronic online meeting for Synod Clergy. There were six online Facebook live worship services, one communion and five non-communion to include Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. Pastor David reports multiple phone calls to check on many of the elderly. He reported that he worked on the yard and flowerbed for cancelled church workday. Pastor David created and emailed, and post mailed the Epistle for May. He emailed all council members the Missouri Covid 19 data report outlining Covid cases from the past seven days.

The Food Bank in Russellville for May was held in the parking lot at St. Michael's Church, and staffed by Food Bank employees.

President Finch called for the Standing Committee Reports which are included below.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

President Finch called for discussion regarding transfer of a very small parcel of land owned by the church to Robert and Barbara Mueller. Mr. and Mrs. Mueller sent our church a letter of request for this land, adding they will pay for all land transfer costs. We will continue our discussion at a future council meeting.

Pastor David reports the Lohman Lion Days and all related activities, as well as St. Paul's Fireworks Festival is cancelled for 2020 due to Covid-19 crisis. President Finch opened discussion on the reopening of our church. She directed our attention to two reports previously emailed council members outlining

most current Covid-19 information, and current Missouri Covid-19 cases. President Finch adds extreme caution must be used in our decision to reopen, and that we consider keeping our elderly church population safe as we make our decision. After discussion, it was unanimously decided our church remain closed until more discussion at our next council meeting. Pastor David will continue with live stream Facebook worship service. President Finch called for a motion on such. A motion to continue with online services for May, with further discussion regarding when to reopen our church at our next council meeting was made by Becky Weber, seconded by Delores Vlach, and passed via voice vote. Pastor David will email a letter to our congregants with the following: to connect with them, express well wishes, asking if all are doing alright, if there are any needs in our church community, and inform them there will be no church services in church throughout May. He will also mail this via post to those not receiving emails.

President Finch called for a motion to adjourn, Paula Linsenhardt made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Dan Tschirgi, and passed via voice vote.

Pastor closed the meeting with a special closing prayer asking God for guidance and safety during these trying times.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:10pm Respectfully submitted by Becky Weber, council secretary.

Evangelism: Delores Vlach

Delores reported the pancake breakfast was well attended, with thirty more attendees than last year. She reports a net profit of \$1,641.00, expenses totaled \$370.00, but after receiving \$250.00 from Thrivent, additional donations and the sale of leftover food/supplies, our expense was zero dollars. Delores praised the workers for their hard work, and added they did a fantastic job. The change in the menu for this year will most likely be utilized next year. Delores reports due to the Covid-19 Crisis, there will be no food served at the next election.

After discussion, it was decided Delores will send emails and cards to all of our graduates. It was reported that both Russellville and Helias held "reverse drive through parades", where by student and their families stood outside on school parking lots and greeted a parade of cars occupied by grandparents/relatives/friends to greet and congratulate the seniors, while practicing Social Distancing.

Technology: Dan Tschirgi

Dan presented council with a few options for enhancing our live stream Facebook worship services. He will continue to work on this.

Worship & Music: Kathy Meller

Kathy reports the June hymns were selected for worship services. She reports Gary and Carol Elliott will put flags on the graves of our past Veterans. Council recognized our high school seniors to include Kaitlyn Finch, Jahanna Koestner, Anna Stubinger and Matthew Miller, and our college graduates to include Natalie Benne and Bethanee Plochberger. Pastor David reports he plans to complete Confirmation classes with our confirmands via electronic meeting using Zoom or Facebook format. Pastor adds parents are anxious for classes to be finished.

Parish Education: Laurie Koestner

Laurie was previously present and then emailed President Finch that she lost contact due to spotty internet. She has no report.

Church Improvement: Mitchell Plochberger

Mitch Plochberger. Mitch reports plans are underway for bids to replace parsonage roof due to hail damage from a recent storm. He also reports he fixed a leaky downspout. Mitch reports he is in the process of securing bids for replacement of our church doors, and downstairs windows of the church. He also plans to meet with the Kitchen renovation committee.

Stewardship: Paula Linsenbardt (No report)

Mutual Ministry: Scott Soell

Scott Soell, absent. Pastor reports there is nothing to report, adding the committee has not met for the past two months.

Special Called Church Council Meeting Minutes

May 27 2020

A special Church Council Meeting was called to order at 6:37pm, on Wednesday, May 27, 2020 by President Zola Finch. Present were President Finch, Dan Tschirgi, Paula Linsenbardt, Scott Soell, Laurie Koestner, Kathy Meller, Mitch Plochberger and Becky Weber. Also present was Pastor David Viles. Absent was Delores Vlach.

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Pastor Viles.

President Finch explained tonight's special meeting was called in response to growing concerns from numerous emails, phone calls and conversations with various church members and attendees, as to when to begin having worship services in our church. President Finch referred us to previously emailed documents sent to all council members to include guidelines put forth by Governor Parsons, and the CDC, Pastor Viles' Church Opening Poll survey results received from our congregational members, as well as a video of today's interview by CNN correspondents with our Presiding ELCA Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. President Finch then asked each member their opinion about church services resuming, their reasons for their opinions and any concerns regarding such. Following extensive discussion that included a recent rise in Covid-19 cases in Cole County as well as surrounding counties, and scientific data put forth from leaders in the field of Covid-19 virus, a motion to stay the course by continuing with FaceBook live online worship services, and to hold off with resuming worship services in church was put forth, seconded, and passed via voice vote. Church council will meet as previously planned on June 8, 2020 to reevaluate current data and discuss the possible reopening church at that time.

Other business included requests from church families to host private Confirmations for small groups of confirmands from the 2020 Confirmation class on private grounds this Sunday, May 31, 2020 and potentially others in the future. A motion to approve Pastor Viles performing private Confirmations of confirmands from the 2020 Confirmation class was put forth, seconded and passed via voice vote.

Pastor Viles offered to send out an email informing our congregation of the decision to wait until further discussion to be held June 8, 2020 at our regular Church Council meeting regarding the potential of church services resuming.

A motion to adjourn the Special Church Council meeting was put forth by Scott Soell, seconded by Dan Tschirgi, and passed via voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

Pastor Viles closed the meeting with a prayer asking God to grant the council members guidance in making wise and safe choices for the health and safety of all our church members.

Respectfully submitted by Becky Weber.

Church Groups and Events: All monthly group meetings and events are still postponed until we are able to gather in-person again. The Church Council will release updates as they meet and consider current situation and circumstances.

Mobile Food Pantry: Audrey Bunch

Due to the Coronavirus lockdown, the Food Pantry was not held at Trinity Church in May and our St. Paul's Church members chose to follow Governor Parson's mandate to remain at home. The Food Pantry will again distribute food from the St. Michaels Catholic Church on May 12 from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

This month we honor our graduates from High school and College. Some will have ceremonies at their schools. This year the Russellville High School will have an outdoor Baccalaureate Service on Sunday, June 21, 2020 at the High School Track.

I am honored to once again preach the message during this service as I did last year. I am especially grateful to do this since three of our four High school graduates are from the Russellville school. Please plan to attend if you are able.

CLASS OF 2020

PROUD OF YOU

Matthew Miller
Kaitlyn Finch
Jahanna Koestner
Anna Stubinger

Trenton Thompson
Bethanee Plochberger
Natalie Benne
Adam Grunden

Our St. Paul's Congregation is proud of the hard work and sacrifices these students have made this year to achieve their degrees. No other national class during the past one hundred years in the United States has had to endure the hardships and difficulties as these students have during this Covid-19 Pandemic. Their school year was disrupted as they had to leave school buildings in March and finish the year at home using technology from a distance. Proms, Baccalaureates and Graduations were postponed. But these Students persevered and these students will make a difference in our future.