

Star on the Hill

The newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro, Minn.

May 2020

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Our Website

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Online worship to continue through at least the end of May

On April 28, Bishop Regina Hassanally sent an email to all the rostered ministers and leaders in our synod offering guidance for when we might physically gather in church again. She said, in part, *"At this time, it is still my strong recommendation that congregations continue to suspend in person worship gatherings. We have not yet seen the steady decline in cases used as a benchmark in federal guidelines."*

In addition, Bishop Hassanally stated, "It is also my recommendation that you begin to think about how you will start to foster congregational life and corporate worship as groups of

people are able to gather." In other words, congregation leaders need to "begin thinking through plans and logistics."

Two days later, on April 30th, Governor Tim Walz extended his stay-at-home order for another two weeks, until May 18. Near the end of his briefing that day, Governor Walz referred to places of worship, theatres, and other large group venues, but no date was given on when they could open their doors again.

What this means is that we still are not able to return to "the way we were" before the coronavirus crisis. Therefore, we will continue to worship online, live streaming services on our Facebook page. In addition, Sunday school, confirmation, WELCA, LYO, and all other activities remain cancelled until further notice.

Update on our church in the time of coronavirus

By Dave Ruen,
congregation president

We have news to share with you regarding our thought process for in-person Sunday worship and where we currently stand with our church finances. But first ... a huge THANK YOU to those of you who have been sending in generous offering gifts by mail while in-person worship remains cancelled under the “shelter in place” policy! It is worth pointing out that offering from members who signed up for automatic bank account withdrawal has never been so critical for our church – THANK YOU to all of you who do this!

Many of you may have heard of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) – one of the financial aid programs embedded in the CARES Act passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump a little over a month ago. In addition to small businesses it also is available to 501(c)3 organizations and churches. Long story short, council authorized the submission of the grant/loan application via Merchants Bank and the loan application was approved. Funds totaling \$22,900 have already been deposited into our general fund. The amount is based on total compensation for our church “employees” for

essentially, 2.5 months. This has given us “breathing room” to continue to make payroll and pay our bills. In theory, the two-year loan will be forgiven, but we must not assume this is a given. Our first loan payment will be November 24th and carries an effective interest rate of 1% per annum.

As you might expect, our dependence upon regular offerings and other gifts of money continues now that member contributions have lessened a bit since in-person gatherings have been cancelled.



The Council asks that each of you prayerfully consider what you can give and to do so via mailed personal checks, or via electronic methods which use direct deposit, or even your smart phone. As they say, “there’s an app for that”. On the next page Brett Clarke shares some information on how easily you can make contributions via the GivePlus mobile app from Vanco.

During our most recent council meeting on Tuesday, May 5th, we discussed whether we are in a position to set a date for resuming in-person church services. We decided it was still premature to do this given that Gov. Walz has extended the “shelter in place” order through

May 18th and it is possible it could be extended even further depending upon infection metrics. We do believe that we have the physical space to accommodate social distancing guidelines for our regular services once the “shelter” order has been lifted. We are beginning to work on the preparation details preparing for in-person services and the “do nots”, e.g., singing, coffee hour, hand shaking/greeting, etc., and making accommodations for communion. Of course, Live streaming of services via Facebook will continue each Sunday and we decided it will continue even after we resume in-person services so that everyone has the opportunity to “attend” church in the manner for which they feel most safe during this on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

Look for more information over time on the church’s Facebook page and website.

Our Facebook Page

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Lanesboro

Our Website

www.staronthehill.com



A Giving Program from Vanco

By Brett Clarke,
church council member

Bethlehem Lutheran partners with a company called Vanco that allows our members to make automatic and regular payments from their checking or savings account to the church. It is like a bank's bill pay service.

We recently learned that Vanco also allows giving through a mobile app. You can download it from the App Store on an iPhone, or Google Play Store on an Android device. The app is called "GivePlus Mobile". GivePlus Mobile makes it easier for anyone who prefers to give electronically to give conveniently by simply downloading this free mobile app. In this time of remote worship, that could be any or all of us!

Vanco has a short video about the app that can be found at <https://vimeo.com/262292774>. In the video it instructs you to search the app store for GivePlus Church. You can search for our church by name or allow your phone to use your location. Confirm that you choose Bethlehem Lutheran in Lanesboro, MN. Currently Vanco will make payments to the church using your bank account information, but not debit or credit cards.

The Easter Crisis of 2020

By Pastor Kerry Eversole

100 years ago, at Easter time, the people of Denmark were at a political crossroads. Briefly, the king and the cabinet were in conflict over their method of governance. The disagreement eventually led to the development of a constitutional monarchy. This point in time would later be called the Easter Crisis of 1920.

Four years earlier, interestingly at the very same time of year, Ireland was at a governmental intersection. In fact, it was a bloody junction in the struggle between the Irish and the British that was named the Easter Rising of 1916. Beginning on Easter Monday, thousands of Irish men and women seized locations in Dublin and proclaimed an Irish Republic. Britain responded by sending in troops which resulted in fierce street fighting and heavy casualties. Almost 500 people died, and 2,600 were wounded. After six days, the British Army suppressed the Easter Rising. Thousands of people were taken prisoner, and most leaders of the movement were executed.

Britain's reaction to the Easter Rising was not popular, however. Public opinion shifted, and Ireland steadily moved toward independence.

In 2016, on the centennial anniversary of the Easter Rising, Netflix aired a mini-series called *Rebellion*. The trailer described the docudrama this way: "lover is pitted against lover, friend against friend, and brother against brother". One of the creators of the series said that "there was a huge appetite for

people wanting to learn more."

If you're like me, you probably have never heard of the Easter Rising of 1916 or the Easter Crisis of 1920. But there is an Easter Rising and Crisis that we are much more familiar with: the Easter Rising and Crisis of the First Century — the events that

concerned Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem. This rising was more peaceful and more life-giving than the armed rebellion and death of 1916. This crisis did not lead to a new form of government as in 1920, but instead to a powerful new faith. This rising and crisis worked together to launch a movement that changed and is still changing the world.

Continued on the next page



The Easter Rising. After Jesus's death, resurrection and ascension, and during the extraordinary experiences of the first Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), the apostle Peter stood in the streets of Jerusalem and boldly preached for the first time (Acts 2:14-21). Peter spoke about Jesus and accused the Israelites of having "crucified and killed him". "But", Peter declared, "God raised him up having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:22-24). In other words, the resurrection was an uprising, in fact a

successful rebellion against the oppressive power of death. Peter proclaimed, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses" (Acts

2:32). And having conquered death, Jesus now sits on the right hand of God in heaven. "Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

Like the British Army in Dublin, the people in power in Jerusalem

thought they had crushed the agitation created by Jesus by killing him on a cross and laying him in a tomb. But something amazing happened: three days after his death, Jesus's tomb was open and empty; women were told by heavenly

messengers that he was raised from the dead; public opinion began to shift as the disciples and more and more people saw Jesus alive (Luke, chapter 24).

Here is a summary of what the *Easter Rising* was and accomplished.

- The rising was a grassroots rebellion in which a man from Nazareth was the right-hand man of God.
- The rising was a liberation movement in which God freed Jesus and the world from death.



BEHOLD, CHRIST HAS RISEN!

- The rising was a revolution in which a crucified criminal became Lord and Messiah.
- The rising was a promise of freedom for everyone who believes in and follows Jesus — freedom from sin, freedom from oppression, freedom from death itself.
- The rising was a first step toward the transformation of the entire world: a dramatic change in which injustice is replaced by justice, violence is replaced by peace, discord is replaced by harmony, suffering is replaced by joy, and death is replaced by everlasting life.

The Easter Crisis. The book of Acts tells us that when the people of Jerusalem heard Peter, they were "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). In other words, Peter's preaching revealed that they were in a crisis, a crisis of conscience, and they had to make a decision about their way of life. So, they "said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' " (Acts 2:37).

Peter's answer to their question was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will

receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Peter asked them to do two things. First, repent, which means to make a complete reversal

of course and move in a new direction.

- If you have been opposing Jesus, begin to support him.
- If you have been the lord of your own life, begin to live for a new Lord.
- If you have been serving an earthly ruler, begin to serve a heavenly Messiah.
- If you have been putting faith in yourself and your own abilities, begin to put faith in Jesus and his power.

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The second thing Peter encouraged them to do was be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This relatively new ritual, Peter says, gives you forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. To put it another way, once cleansed of your sins and their burden on your soul, you move forward knowing that you will never be alone, but the Father and Jesus will always be with you in the form of the Holy Spirit.

The Easter Rising created an Easter Crisis, one that forced the people of Jerusalem to decide whether they were going to oppose Jesus or support him, whether they were going to serve earthly rulers or a heavenly “Lord and Messiah”. They had to choose one way or the other. Peter urged them to opt for Jesus saying, “the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39). Wanting them to move in a new and life-giving

direction, Peter concludes with the words, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation” (Acts 2:40).

Acts tells us that those who welcomed Peter’s message “were baptized, and that day about 3,000 persons were added” (Acts 2:41). Three thousand new followers of Jesus; three thousand new disciples of Christ! What an

amazing response! And then we learn that “[t]hey devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). As with the Netflix series *Rebellion*, in the fledgling church “there was a huge appetite for people wanting to learn more”.

My friends, this story from Acts reminds us that the days after the Easter Rising were not just a joy-filled time because Jesus was alive and not dead, as once believed. No, the Easter Rising created an Easter Crisis — a shock to the system, a turning point, a time of decision — that had considerable consequences for the people of Jerusalem.

Providentially, the Easter Crisis led to the birth and quick development of the church from a few followers to thousands of newly baptized disciples. But instead of creating chaos, this rapidly growing church organized itself around the ministry of their master, teacher, and Lord for the sake of the world.

My friends, we must do the same.

There have been many crises in our nation’s history: The Boston Tea Party, The Declaration of Independence, The Abolition Movement, The Civil War, The First World War, The New Deal, The Second World War, The Civil Rights Movement, The Viet Nam War, The Space Race, the Environmental Movement, and 9/11 to name a few. Today, we

are experiencing another crisis. We could call it the Easter Crisis of 2020. The cause of the crisis, of course, is the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like the first century Jerusalem Christians, we need to adopt a crisis mentality and make a faith-based response to what is happening. Our focus must be the same as our forebears in the early church:

- The apostles’ teaching, such as the words of Peter: “God has made [Jesus] both Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36). Jesus remains the one leader who both deserves and rewards our allegiance.
- Fellowship, which in Greek is *koinonia*. Within the Christian community, fellowship means sharing, contributing, and spiritual communion. Fellowship is the mark of a generous community. To put it in today’s context, we can be connected through our giving even when we must be at a distance (apart, separated) from one another.
- The breaking of the bread. Since the best path to unity is through the stomach, we should never miss the opportunity to gather around tables for food and conversation. With the shelter-in-place, stay-at-home directives we have been able to more of that

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with our families. But we long for the day when we can do it again with our faith family.

- The prayers. God raised Jesus up and is the power behind our new life in Christ. Our prayers — whether privately at home or communally online — keep us connected to the God who continues to raise us up and move us forward.

Dear friends, the resurrection of Jesus, his rising from the dead, created a crisis in the first century and it has created a crisis in every period since. That crisis is a challenge – the challenge to follow the risen Jesus maintaining his mission and ministry to continue changing the world. In the face of the coronavirus and its economic, educational, medical, social, and other aftereffects we must take on that challenge. Amen.

Source: www.homileticonline.com/. March-April 2020 Issue. “The Easter Crisis of 2020”.

Hope for a New Day—A Devotion for Congregations

By the Southeastern Minnesota Synod

Introduction

The prophet Jeremiah’s words to the exiles in Babylon are most unexpected. He is writing from the city of Jerusalem, which is physically and metaphorically in ruins. One would think Jeremiah would be encouraging the exiles to come back home and start rebuilding. But instead, Jeremiah tells them to stay right where they are. God has a different plan for them.

Jeremiah’s words show us that finding hope in the future starts with living in the present.

Bible Text: Jeremiah 29:1, 4–14 NRSV

¹These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ⁴Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant

gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. ⁸For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, ⁹for it is a lie that

they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord.

¹⁰For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for

your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

¹²Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. ¹³When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, ¹⁴I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and

For surely
I KNOW THE plans
I have for
YOU,
says (the)
Lord ...
TO GIVE YOU A future
WITH
Hope.
 Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV

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gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Reflection

The ability to show resilience in the face of adversity takes energy and ingenuity and grit. Many churches today are certainly facing challenges that test this ability. And if we're honest, many church leaders don't always know what to do about it. Is it better to take big risks, or try smaller, safer experiments? How can we embrace our traditions while still

A quote often attributed to Martin Luther captures this idea: "If I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today." Sometimes the most hopeful thing we can do is fully participate in the little acts of humanity that make up our lives: cook a good meal; hug a child; listen to a stranger. By doing those things, we acknowledge that God is still present in our world and is still worth trusting. After all, small steps still bring forward motion. And by clinging to faith in God, we can ensure we won't be taking those steps alone.



adapting to a changing landscape? Where do we find a word of hope?

In the face of their own adversity, God's people in Babylon get a surprising word of hope from Jeremiah. He tells them to simply live their lives: to plant crops and get married and be the best residents of Babylon they can be. As they commit themselves to their present reality, Jeremiah says, they will affirm their trust that God does, indeed, have plans for them. And that will give them strength and help them be resilient.

The same is true for the church, isn't it? Every one of the 167 congregations, five South Sudanese worshipping communities, and two campus ministries in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod is facing a future that does not necessarily look like its past. And only God knows God's plans for our synod. Yet perhaps by joining together to share ideas, offer words of encouragement, and stand in solidarity, we can remember that we are on this journey together. And that can give hope for a new day.

Reflection Conversation

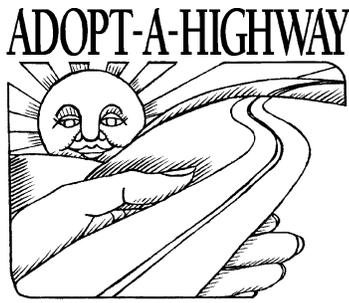
- Jeremiah 29:11 is a familiar and comforting text. How might you read it differently knowing that the word 'you' in this passage are all plural, not singular?
- What is one concrete way that we as a congregation affirm that God has called us to this community?
- What gives you hope for a new day – personally, or for the church?

Closing Prayer

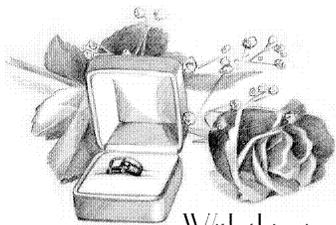
God of hope, we look to you for reassurance when the future seems uncertain. Ground us in the promise of your presence. Give us strength to press on. And fill our hearts with gratitude at all times. Amen.

SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA
SYNOD, ELCA
<http://semnsynod.org>

For a video presentation of this devotion, go the synod's Facebook page, Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA; click on "Videos" in the left-hand column; then look for "Hope for a New Day" (the creation date is "April 28"). The video was made by Kathy Chatelaine (one of the assistants to Bishop Regina Hassanally) and was posted on April 29.



On Saturday, April 11, Dave & Joan Ruen, Jody and Lynsey Ruen, Vern Groen, and Cindy Eversole cleaned up the ditches along our section of MN Highway 16.



With this ring...

Jessica Overland Easley and Wade Bakker were married on Saturday, April 25 in the picturesque backyard of their home in Rollinestone in a family-only ceremony because of current restrictions on large-group gatherings. Pastor Kerry presided.

Synod Assembly canceled

The 2020 Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly, scheduled to take place May 15-16 in Rochester, has been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.



With Deepest Sympathy

We extend our condolences to Vern Riddle and Jennifer Wood on the death of Vern's mother. Dorothy Riddle, age 96, died and passed through death into the eternal care of our Lord on April 1 in Moorhead, MN.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Kathy & Jeff Hebl on the death of Kathy's mother. Eva S. Randall/Bakken, age 94, died of natural causes and passed through death into the eternal care of our Lord on April 28 at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Home in Rushford where she had been a resident for many years.



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Our Confirmands

9th grade: Cameron Dahl, Sarah Eversole, Nadia Highum, MaKenzie Kelly, Peyton Olson, Andrew Peterson, Chloe Schnebly, Jessie Schreiber, Brock Taylor, and Logan Torgerson.

8th grade: Luke Ruen, Lynsey Ruen, and Kaden Stettler.

7th grade: Taylor Hanson, Dayton Haugen, Emma Highum, Cora Schnebly, and Holdyn Willford.

Those Living with Cancer

Mimi Abell, Carroll Danielson, Diane Haugen, Tara Hershberger, Sue Miehlisch, and Tom Pappenfuss,

Those Living in Care Centers

Lois Gilbertson at Chosen Valley Assisted Living in Chatfield.

Betty Hanson, Elizabeth Hollenbeck and Doris O'Dell at Park Lane Estates in Preston.

Kay McCarthy at Traditions of Preston.

Keith Burmeister and Allene Haugstad at Harmony Place in Harmony.

Nancy Soukup at The Gardens in Cannon Falls.

Our Members in the Military

Nicholas Benson, son of Deane Benson.

Lisa Peterson Abell, daughter of Linda (Hareldson) Peterson.

Leon Peterson, son of Linda (Hareldson) Peterson.

Tom Moen, son of Lolly Melander and grandson of Everett Johnson.

Brian Peterson, son of Larry & Debbie Peterson, grandson of Lois Peterson.

Claire Peterson, daughter of Joe & Jody Peterson, granddaughter of Lois M. Peterson.

and

Our Graduates in the Class of 2020

Payton Benson, Alida Berg, Ashlyn Guber, Madelyn Haugen, Kaylee Peterson, Sophie Pieper, Ariana Ramirez-Berg, and Zachary Torgerson.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Lanesboro, Minnesota
Church Council Meeting
Minutes of the April 8, 2020 Meeting Held Online Via Zoom

Members Present Virtually: Brett Clarke, Karen Dahl, Julie Jensson, Carrie Hanson, Susie Bradley, Elve Albrecht, Ed Taylor, and Dave Ruen.

Members Absent: Kate Glor

Also Present Virtually: Pastor Kerry Eversole.

President Dave Ruen called the meeting to order.

Devotions: Pastor Kerry

Due to limited agenda topic centered on CARES Act and Payroll Protection Program (PPPE) there was no formal agenda to approve nor treasurer's report.

Pastor Kerry informed council members that Ed Taylor and Lee Peterson had reviewed the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) grant application and had completed the document to the best of their ability anticipating that council may wish to submit the application following discussion.

President Dave Ruen called for a motion to begin discussion on the PPP.

Motion by Carrie Hanson to have Bethlehem Lutheran submit PPP application with Merchants Bank, Lanesboro with second by Susie Bradley. Motion carried.

Motion by Elve Albrecht to reduce synod contribution by half for the month of March and review decision monthly with second by Karen Dahl. Motion Carried.

Dave Ruen volunteered to review bills and payment to be made with church office visit April 9th and bring PPP application to Merchants Bank late morning same day.

Discussion on highway clean up: previously scheduled for Saturday, April 4; will now take place Saturday, April 11.

Motion by Julie Jensson to adjourn with second by Susie Bradley. Motion Carried.

Ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Susie Bradley, acting council secretary

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Income & Expense
April 2020**

	General Fund		Designated Funds		TOTAL	
	Apr 20	Jan - Ap...	Apr 20	Jan - Ap...	Apr 20	Jan - Ap...
Ordinary Income/Expense						
Income						
400 · Sunday Offering	9,557	31,599	0	0	9,557	31,599
401 · Simply Giving(GF)	3,150	13,316	0	0	3,150	13,316
410 · Other Offerings & Gifts	0	0	50	200	50	200
481 · Fountain Reimbursement	1,500	6,000	0	0	1,500	6,000
414 · Designated Income	0	30	115	1,820	115	1,850
416 · Memorial Income	0	10	0	0	0	10
480 · Miscellaneous Income	1,333	1,960	0	287	1,333	2,247
Total Income	15,540	52,915	165	2,307	15,705	55,222
Gross Profit	15,540	52,915	165	2,307	15,705	55,222
Expense						
500 · OUTREACH MINISTRY	1,450	1,526	210	1,373	1,660	2,899
550 · WORSHIP MINISTRY	30	1,151	1,880	1,880	1,910	3,031
600 · YOUTH & FAMILY MINIS...	0	112	0	0	0	112
700 · PASTORAL MINISTRY	8,740	34,955	0	0	8,740	34,955
750 · OFFICE MANAGEMENT	125	1,761	0	0	125	1,761
800 · FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	331	1,616	0	0	331	1,616
850 · OTHER EXPENDITURES	61	61	0	0	61	61
900 · PROPERTY MANAGEMEN...	1,949	10,291	0	1,632	1,949	11,923
Total Expense	12,685	51,474	2,090	4,885	14,775	56,359
Net Ordinary Income	2,855	1,441	-1,925	-2,578	930	-1,137
Net Income	2,855	1,441	-1,925	-2,578	930	-1,137

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