

CHIMES Newsletter

MAY 2020 VOLUME 82, ISSUE 5

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JEN...

Most minister I know are exhausted after preaching on Sundays. It's a good exhaustion, one that comes from doing our best and giving all that we are to the glory of God. We have this incredible build-up all week. We read the texts and pray. We do research. Then the words and ideas in the texts simmer in our minds as we go about our work during the week. Toward the end of the week we sit down and write out some notes, ideas, manuscripts, or whatever our sermon prep dictates. On the day of worship, we get in the pulpit, or in front of the camera, as is now the case, and share with our beloved communities what the Lord has given us.

In the beginning of "Safer at Home" when we all were no longer in the sanctuary, I have to admit that I was NOT exhausted after worship. Honestly, without you with me in person I don't know exactly how I felt. I felt drained, but not in the usual way. There wasn't that sense of connecting with you, Jesus, and the biblical witness to the love of God in Christ. There wasn't that familiar spiritual draining that required a light lunch and a heavy nap after worship on Sunday.

This Sunday was different! This Sunday, April 19, I felt it again! The moment I hit the "share" button on Facebook Live I felt that glorious draining of Spirit within me. Exhaustion was immediate—and welcomed. Something recognizable about being a parish pastor was back. In the uncharacteristic nature of life right now, I feel a little more like myself again.

The reality of COVID-19 in our midst has us all feeling a little, or a lot "off" these days. For many of us we are trying to get back into our routine and we now find ourselves having to figure out first what that routine is. Working from home is now the norm. So is school. A stable internet connection that can handle multiple people online at once is precious in these times, as is a space in which to work. For those of us who are not able to be working due to the virus, that poses a whole new set of obstacles. Even for our retired church family members, life is different and there is that feeling of life being "off" here, too.

So today the groove of preaching returned to me. Again, I give thanks! If this were the only aspect of ministry as your pastor I'd be jumping for joy! You and I know there is far more to it than the Sunday sermon. I am designated as your Renewal Pastor, and this designation brings with it a special area of ministry. Ideally the ministry of any pastor and especially a Renewal Pastor is done in person-to-person contact. After all, it's all about relationship. Well, "Safer at Home" has thrown a wrench into the workings of Renewal Ministry in our church, as well as the other Renewal congregations in our synod and beyond.



UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 10

Mother's Day

MAY 25

Memorial Day

MAY 31

Pentecost Sunday



CHOIR DIRECTOR & PRAISE TEAM LEADER POSITIONS AVAILABLE

BLC is looking to fill these positions. If you are someone you know is interested, please contact Pastor Jen or the office.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, ELCA

W8267 Hwy 33, E
Portage, WI 53901
608-745-8502

Email: bethluch15@gmail.com
www.bethlehemLCportage.org

Rev. Walter Baires, synod Director of Evangelical Mission and mentor for Renewal Ministry and I had a good telephone conversation last week. We talked briefly about what our original plans for Renewal were and explored at length what Renewal looks like right now. I'll share with you the main points. This is the same information that I've shared with our Renewal Ministry Team and our Church Council.

1. We are in extraordinary times.
2. Our original Renewal process is on hold until the crisis has passed.
3. Our focus as the Renewal Team is still on relationship.

Essentially, it is taking what a few of us have been doing already, with reaching out to members of our church family, and expanding our calling team to be able to reach more people. It is also taking the work of the church from the few and putting it in the hands of the people. This is what faithful ministry looks like.

I know this feels like we're taking a step backward. In a sense we are, but in another way, we are still doing the work of Renewal. I also know that it feels good to plan ahead, and that work still needs to happen. However, the work that I briefly outlined above is crucial to our life as Bethlehem Lutheran Church now. Furthermore, this work also serves to lay the groundwork for future ministry, when we are able to be together again.

Our Renewal Ministry Team continues to meet via electronic means. We are putting together our action plan and will have it up and running to you by the first week in May. The ministry of Bethlehem Lutheran Church continues! The Holy Spirit continues to gather us in, inspiring us with the means necessary to live together as the Body of Christ. Thanks be to God!

Amen, amen, amen!

Pastor Jen

OUR CHURCH

NEED HELP WITH PICKING UP YOUR GROCERIES?

We want to make sure we take care of our most vulnerable members, so staff and members continue to reach out to those members. If you are not able to get to the store and need help because you are at a high risk with the Covid-19 virus, please reach out to Pastor Jen via call or email.



APRIL 26TH CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SUMMARY

A special Congregational Meeting was held on April 26th via Zoom, a video and telephone conference platform, to discuss and vote on approval for refinancing of the church's mortgage. Sixty-three people were in attendance with a quorum of 24 needed to hold the meeting. BLC's current mortgage is with Thrivent Financial. Our current interest rate is locked until July 2020, but will become a variable rate after that time period. We currently hold \$201,000 in loan certificate liabilities with only \$85,000 in reserves to pay these loans back if members choose to redeem. With the refinance the mortgage will remain in the same amortization time table of 23 years. The mortgage will be locked into the new rate for 10 years with adjustments in 2034 and 2041. Each loan certificate holder has been contacted to identify their intentions if the refinance of the mortgage is approved. Many of these members intend to donate some or all of the certificates back. This limits the amount BLC has to provide at closing to keep the reserves at an acceptable level. The refinance of the mortgage will allow us three main goals:

- With the new mortgage we will gain interest rate security for the next seven years.
- The church will save \$800 a month/\$9,600 annually
- The risk of not having enough funds to pay back loan certificates is eliminated.

The vote was unanimous to approve the refinance with Thrivent Financial. The next steps will be to finalize forms with the certificate holders. After closing in May, funds will be distributed appropriately to loan certificate holders.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Thank you to all of you who have mailed in your offerings or have signed up to contribute electronically. Your generosity is greatly appreciated! If you choose to mail in your offering envelope, we ask that you do mail it and not drop it off since the office will be closed. Here is the church address: W8267 Hwy 33 E, Portage, WI 53901. Staff will be picking up mail daily. If you are able and would like to adopt a bill, please contact the church office by sending an email to bethluch15@gmail.com.

Below you will find a profit and loss statement capturing how we are doing now with the COVID-19 crisis compared to this time last year. As you can see, we are doing well and that is all due to generous support of our members. Thank you again, for your continued support as we continue to do the Lord's work during this difficult time.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church PROFIT AND LOSS COMPARISON April 1-21, 2020

	TOTAL				
	APR 1-21, 2020	APR 1-21, 2019 (PY)	MAR 1-21, 2020 (PP)	JAN 1 - APR 21, 2020 (YTD)	JAN 1 - APR 21, 2019 (PY YTD)
Income					
Income	19,207.60	18,720.60	14,178.62	76,844.96	80,134.86
Other Income	1,435.00	1,330.00	524.00	4,403.67	9,763.19
Total Income	\$20,642.60	\$20,050.60	\$14,702.62	\$81,248.63	\$89,898.05
GROSS PROFIT	\$20,642.60	\$20,050.60	\$14,702.62	\$81,248.63	\$89,898.05
Expenses					
Operating Expenses	13,885.38	8,695.40	14,076.47	77,145.15	82,954.71
Other Expense		2,290.00	1,160.00	2,769.60	10,678.52
Total Expenses	\$13,885.38	\$10,985.40	\$15,236.47	\$79,914.75	\$93,633.23
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$6,757.22	\$9,065.20	\$ -533.85	\$1,333.88	\$ -3,735.18
Other Income	\$0.00	\$3,725.00	\$1,500.00	\$4,472.61	\$10,055.36
Other Expenses	\$0.00	\$3,613.50	\$1,404.50	\$4,269.25	\$9,930.70
NET OTHER INCOME	\$0.00	\$111.50	\$95.50	\$203.36	\$124.66
NET INCOME	\$6,757.22	\$9,176.70	\$ -438.35	\$1,537.24	\$ -3,610.52

Cash Basis Tuesday, April 21, 2020 06:33 PM GMT-05:00

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NEWS FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

As a reminder, the church office will not be open until the "Safer at Home" order is lifted and staff have been directed to work from home. However, staff are checking mail on a daily basis. We want to ensure you that if you mail in anything to the church it will not sit in the mailbox. Julie and Janice are reachable via email (bethluch15@gmail.com). And Pastor Jen is reachable via email (bethlehemELCA.pastor@gmail.com) and phone (608-485-3976).

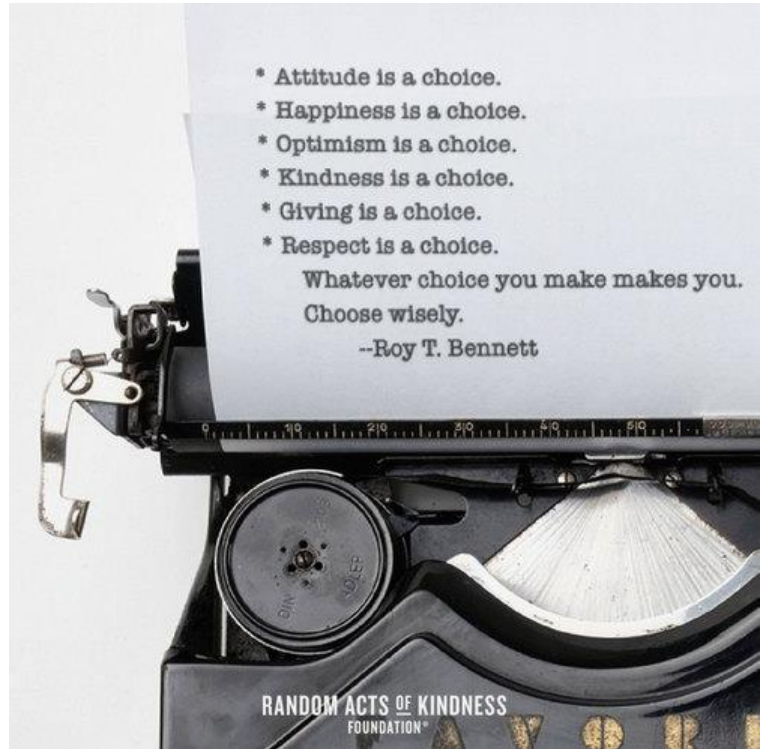
The weekly news emails will continue to be sent to keep you update to date on what is going on. Our church website is also being kept current with news, information, and the weekly bulletin. Pastor Jen is active on our Facebook page with psalm readings and posts, and this is where you will find our Sunday worship. If you are not receiving emails from the church and want to be on the mailing list, please email the church office.



DESIGNATION OF OFFERING FUNDS

I would like to thank all of you for sending your offerings to the church office during this difficult time. If your offering needs to be split between the Current Fund and the Building Fund please enclose your offering envelope indicating how the offering should be divided or enclose a note with this information. Our money counters don't have access to the pledge information so it is important that you provide this information, if not specified the funds will be deposited in the Current Fund. If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you,

Denise Derey
Financial Secretary



CHURCH WEBSITE

Don't forget to stay connected by using the resources on our church website. New to the

Home page: "Musical Inspiration" section which includes a music video from Youtube that will hopefully bring you some comfort and inspiration. The **Worship page** is where you can find the weekly bulletin. The **Daily Devotions page** has several options for you, which include:

- God Pause Daily Devotional emails you can sign up for
- Daily Bible Readings from the ELCA website
- Enter the Bible – a resource guide when you read your bible

You can access all of this here: <https://bethlehemlcportage.org/>

UPDATING MEMBER INFORMATION



We would like to take this time to update our database and make sure all of our members' information is current and up to date. Members will be receiving an email from the church office, if we have your email, asking you to review your information. If you could take the time to look things over and let us know if there are any changes, that would be greatly appreciated. If you are a member without an email/computer, or we don't have one on file for you, you will find your information printed on a separate sheet enclosed in this newsletter. Please review for any necessary updates. If you have changes you can either mail those back to the church or you can call and leave a message on the voicemail. Important to note: You will be able to mark information as "unlisted" if you do not want to share it with the congregation in a church directory. ONLY address, phone numbers and emails are printed

in a directory, NOT any other personal information. That information is for church records only. Thank you for your help with this.