

# Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church



## The Teller May, 2020

### A Pastoral Letter from Bishop William O. Gafkjen to the People and Friends of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod regarding the Way through the Wilderness

*While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel..." Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.*

[Luke 24:15-20]

*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." [John 20:21]*

### **Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Dear People of God of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod,

As we continue our journey through the fifty days of Easter, I must admit that I am weary of walking the coronavirus wilderness. I have little doubt that you are weary, too. This has been such a challenging time as we live at a distance from one another with so much anxiety and uncertainty, in a

world where borders and boundaries – of time and space, work and home, self and relationships – have become so ambiguous and, in some cases, indiscernible. Not to mention that many of us are concerned about the future of our congregations and ministries and the way forward is so unclear.

Yet, as Easter people – those who know both the agony of loss and fear and the power and presence of the One who appears behind locked doors and comes up alongside those who walk the way of dashed hopes and deflated dreams – we are empowered to move forward together, trusting that God is present and rendering resurrection even now, giving ourselves away the best that we can in cross-shaped love and service to our neighbor, and being patient and intentional in living one step at a time into God's unfolding future. After all, I don't think Jesus was talking only about the afterlife when he proclaimed and promised, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also*" (John 14:1-3). Already Jesus is circling back from preparing a place for us in the future to take us to himself and into that dwelling place just over the horizon.

### **Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

As conversation and debate have begun about "reopening America" and we begin imagining when and how we will move forward faithfully in our life together as the body of Christ, it is more important than ever to be patient, intentional, prayerful, Christ-centered and cross-focused, and committed to the common good and the well-being of every neighbor. I am convinced by medical leaders, including the CDC, that we will not be able to just flip a switch and be back to what we once knew as normal. This will be a slow, gradual, months-long process and its pace will be different in different places across the synod territory.

I am also convinced that the "new normal" we are beginning to move toward will be very different from life before Lent 2020. Isaiah's words (43:17ff) on God's behalf, which I have so often referred to over the last nine years, are as important for us to hear now as they were for our ancient ancestors in faith who languished in exile.

*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

This passage follows Isaiah's recounting of the way God delivered God's people previously, through the Red Sea and wilderness wanderings. Is God suggesting that the people forget those stories of past deliverance? I don't think so. The stories – like the stories we tell one another about how God got us or our congregation through an incredibly hard time in the past – remind us that God delivers, God saves, God makes a way and a place for God's people. But the next deliverance, the next way and place, will look and be different from the last one. If we expect and look for the new normal to be the same as the previous normal, we may very well miss the new things that God is doing among and through us, as well as the new ways we are called to be the body of Christ.

In many ways, this tragic crisis is accelerating the deep and significant changes in the ways we are and will be church together, how we proclaim and embody the Good News of Jesus crucified and risen for the life of the world, and how we love and serve and work with our neighbors. God is at work, even now, and will continue to lead us forward. Discerning the path forward calls for patience and intentionality, prayer and collaboration, trust in God and cruciform commitment to the well-being of our neighbor.

As both governors begin to consider how and when things will reopen, I invite all the leaders, congregations, and ministries of the Indiana-Kentucky mission territory, to be aware of and to align with the recommendations, guidelines, and mandates that are and will be in place. This is going to be a long rolling-out; some people think perhaps as long as 6, 8, or even 18 months. It is crucial that we not endanger ourselves or anyone else by lunging headlong into in-person gatherings without due consideration, caution, and care. In coming days and weeks, my office will offer some guidelines and suggestions for gentle, gradual, helpful, and healthy ways to ease into new realities.

For now, it is crucial that deacons, pastors, other leaders and ministers, and congregational leadership and members begin prayerful conversation about next steps. Here are some

resources that may be helpful for you to share and discuss:

- 24 questions to consider before people return: <https://bit.ly/2zq744s>. This blog post is from a Baptist Christian educator. His context and theology are a bit different from most of ours, but he asks some important questions. Review of his questions may also spark other questions that you need to consider for your particular community. I would add, for example, “What have we learned from this experience that can shape our future?” and “What is sustainable in the practices we've developed and engaged, and what do we need to let go?”
- The CDC is reminding us that water in unused buildings can become contaminated. They recommend that someone stop by the church to flush toilets and run faucets occasionally: <https://bit.ly/2XZ4EEb>
- Indiana Stay-At-Home FAQ: <https://www.in.gov/gov/3232.htm>
- The CDC's “Opening Up America Again”: <https://bit.ly/2Y16a8S>
- Indiana Guidelines and Recommendations for Places of Worship: <https://bit.ly/3cH7NMP>
- Kentucky benchmarks for reopening the economy: <https://governor.ky.gov/covid19> (Look for the action on 4/20/2020 and click on the link “announced benchmarks”)
- “Coming Back Together as Congregations,” recommendations from three Texas ELCA bishops: <https://bit.ly/2KsLcI3>
- The Indiana-Kentucky Synod's online collection of resources related to COVID-19: <https://iksynod.org/covid-19-resources/>

Like the disciples walking the road to Emmaus, we are in this together and for the long haul, dear people of God. The crucified and risen Jesus walks with us to draw us deep into God's Word, into our companionship and collaboration with one another, into our love for our neighbors, and into the future. I give thanks to God for you and pray for you daily (and more!).

**Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Peace be with you,  
The Rev. Dr. William O. Gafkjen, Bishop

## **Ponder Anew...what the Almighty can do!**

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain  
your touch can call us back to life again,  
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been;  
love is come again like wheat arising green.*

*(Now the Green Blade Rises ELW #379)*

***When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain  
...love is come again like wheat arising green.***

Here we are, still. Still under stay-at-home quarantine. Now wearing masks and gloves. Waiting. And waiting. Wondering. Wondering when it will all be over and we can go back to our lives- even though we've been told many times that we won't be able to go back. Won't be able to go back to our old "normal", our familiar way we lived. For those of us who do not like change, this is bad news. For those of us who do like change, it still may not be good news. So, like any death, we grieve and mourn. We go through the stages of grief- denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance- as if a loved one died. Oh, not in a nice, neat, ordered package but rather more like a child's scribble- back, forth, up, down and all around and then repeat. As if a loved one had died. And a loved life has died- ours. And also like grief, it affects us all differently with varying levels of intensity. And in the midst,

***When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain  
...love is come again like wheat arising green.***

Spring. Easter. Resurrection. Death raised to new life.

This experience is nothing new for the church. Read Ezra. After the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple and held the people captive and exiled, King Cyrus of Persia put out a call for the Temple to be rebuilt. And the descendants (Ezra 2 has a list of them) made plans, gathered resources and returned to Jerusalem. They begin to rebuild and it takes time. At the very end of Ezra 3, v. 12 on, we are told that, in the midst of the joy and celebration of the laying of the foundation for the new temple, there were those who had seen the old Temple and wept loudly. So loudly that the sound of the weeping was indistinguishable from the sound of the celebrating. I suspect we will experience something similar.

In my many Zoom meetings with the Bishop, the Synod staff, colleagues, our Zion Council, in online workshops and articles read, all are moving into acceptance- and with intentionality. We are beginning the process of imagining what our new life, our new Church, will look like. We weep and we celebrate- often at the same time. Our Bishop, since becoming bishop, has used Isaiah 43:18-19 and the words: ***Listen Deeply Think Creatively Act Boldly*** to guide our Synod in being the Church. These came to him during his times of prayer and study after being elected. They are wise counsel for us as we enter into this new phase of our lives.

***Listen Deeply***- to how God speaks to us; to the moving of the Spirit, to the yearnings of our hearts, to the wisdom of the experience; to the ideas of the new, in the speaking to each other.

***Think Creatively***- We cannot go back to the same old, same old. Life is not the same and the old way of doing things will not fit the same as before. It doesn't mean we throw everything out- but like our closets, drawers, garages, we sift and sort, keep some, let go of other stuff. We look at new ideas, new plans. What can be revitalized and what needs demo work to be replaced with something that works better for these times. It is not a criticism of what was but a looking forward to what might be and fulfillment of God's plan.

***Act Boldly***- this means we take risks and try new things, knowing some will work and some won't. Some will be good ideas and some may be more "What were we thinking?" But we evaluate and continue to try- with prayer, thought, openness. These three work hand in hand and are dependent upon each other. One, without the other 2 may be a good exercise but will not help us move forward fully. And for all the grief and pain and uncertainty, I am also excited. I am excited to see what God has in store for us! Because I am certain that God is in the midst of this, not causing it but walking with us. God doing God's part and we doing ours, together, for the sake of the world.

*Blessings to each of you as together we share  
Jesus Christ for Life, albeit in a different way!*

*Pr. Amy*

## *Report from your Church Council*

As you might expect, our last Church Council meeting was not normal. We met electronically from the comfort (and safety) of our own homes and we discussed issues that were far from typical and ordinary. Here are a few highlights.

Pastor reported on her activities which included making regular contacts with members via phone, email or written notes; conducting the electronic fellowship time via Zoom; providing at-home communion kits; developing weekly at-home worship resources; spearheading the drive-in Easter Service; and participating in frequent COVID-19 related videoconferences with the offices of the ELCA and the Indiana/Kentucky Synod.

The Council reviewed our financial position and other financial matters impacted by the pandemic. Cheryl Working, our Treasurer, has provided a more detailed report elsewhere in this issue of the Teller. In case you wonder, Zion did not apply for funds as part of the Federal Government's Paycheck Protection Program. Some congregations have. There was consensus that Zion should be able to fulfill our financial commitments without relying on this funding source. We believe our good folks will continue to support Zion as we have become accustomed and we will meet our budgetary needs as planned. Further, we felt that applying for, and potentially receiving, these limited assistance funds could prevent some deserving small business to be excluded. That would be sad.

We learned that every congregation that is a member of the Lutheran Foundation received a grant in the amount of \$11,250. The Foundation recognized the challenges facing each congregation and took this major step to help out. The total amount given exceeded \$1,000,000. There are no stipulations for the use of the funds. The grant can be used for operating costs, mission support, or it can be passed on to another charity in our community. It is each congregation's decision. The Council made no decision about the use of these funds. However, there was a strong sentiment that we use these funds to support our local community in some way rather than use it for our operating costs. We will consider possible uses for the funds at a subsequent meeting and make a recommendation to the congregation. (Last Fall I was chosen to serve as a member of the Lutheran Foundation Board. I'm pleased

to represent Zion as well as all the Lutheran Congregations in our area and I was honored to be a part of this major grant decision.)

And finally, we spent some time talking about what "CHURCH" will look like after the pandemic. How will our worship service change? How will our group activities change? How will we greet people? How will we collect offerings? How will we share the Sacrament? How will we do fellowship? It's a whole new world. Your Council will meet again, electronically, on May 5 for the sole purpose of future and strategic planning.

We welcome your input. Feel free to share with any of your Council members: Amy Neild, Mary Chrastil, Cheryl Working, Sally Krouse, Teresa Pattison, Carol Miller, Pastor Amy, or me.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dave Lawrenz, Council President

## *Report from Treasurer*

Like everyone, the Zion Council is learning to adapt to social distancing and stay-at-home orders. We met last week via video conferencing for the first time! Although our congregation cannot be together on Sunday mornings, the council continues to engage in discussions of strategic planning, monthly church business, and discussions of 'where do we go from here'. As Council Treasurer, I wanted to take the opportunity to give you a financial update.

During the pandemic shut-down, Zion will continue to fully fund our Mission Support. Although our Baskets of Hope recipients will not benefit from Sunday offerings, Zion will donate to each organization during their chosen months. Zion will also continue to make quarterly payments to the I/K Synod and fulfill our financial commitment to the Fellowship of Churches.

In addition, we will continue to have Clayton in the office, have the building regularly cleaned, and compensate our musicians. I hope you had the opportunity to see the wonderful recordings put together by Pamela Haynes last Sunday!

As part of the Zion family, and in order to fulfill our commitments, we ask that you continue to financially support Zion during these uncertain times. Until we can again place our offerings on the altar on Sunday morning, please consider mailing your contribution to the church office. This may also be a good time to

consider enrolling in the Simply Giving program. If you have questions regarding Simply Giving, please contact me. We are also looking to make other electronic options available in the near future. Stay tuned!

~Cheryl Working, Council Treasurer



To those who helped with and/or attended the Community Easter Service.

For staying home and following the rules.

For your continued offerings.



**Current:** Heather, Marge Mudge, Tom Webster, Robert & Lois Dowd, Jon Perkins, Elizabeth Schilling, Linda Rager Hampton, and George Killian and family

**Ongoing:** Peggy Gilbert, Barbara & Dan Speicher, Mara Joy Nelson, Owen Vannoster and his family, Pastor Judy, Janice Ferrell, Clayton Marcum, and Jayden Plotner

**Homebound:** Marie Betten-Niccum, Bo & Joanne Boettcher, Nancy Coble, John Gaerte, Betty Hamlin, Ruth Hauser, Betty Lawrenz, Vada Lee Nixon

**Please add Clint and Myra Witte to your prayers. He had an aneurysm and was in IU Methodist Hospital, but is now doing much better now.**

## Video Sermons

We are excited to announce that we will be posting video sermons from Pastor Amy both on Zion's website and Facebook page. Be sure to check them out!



## May Birthdays

- 6 Cheryl Working
- 8 Sally Krouse
- 13 Nicholas Miller
- 14 Phyllis Werking
- 16 Erika Kambs
- 21 Amy Neild  
Von Frieden
- 23 Soren Neild
- 25 Barbara Speicher
- 28 Bill Meinert
- 29 Linda Hampton  
Sarah Grant



## May Baptisms

- 10 Jack Williams
- 19 Patrick Rosenbarger
- 20 Vada Lee Nixon  
Teresa Pattison
- 22 Cheryl Spratt  
Nicholas Miller
- 23 Kira Hawkins
- 28 Morgan Meinert



## May Anniversaries

- 22 Jeff & Kathy Hawkins
- 25 Dan & Barbara Speicher

# MAY

BASKET  
BOUQUET  
BUMBLEBEE  
BUTTERFLIES  
CATERPILLAR  
FLOWERS  
FROGS  
GARDENING

LADYBUG  
MAY DAY  
MOTHERS DAY  
PLANTS  
SPRINGTIME  
SOIL  
UMBRELLA  
WORMS



B K E T B O U M B R E L L A M  
A S W O R M S Q U O T B U G B  
F Y B E E B E L B M U B E A L  
L A D Y B U G U T T E Q F R I  
O D E M I T G N I R P S U D E  
W S L L I P R E T P A Y C E S  
E R C A T E R P I L L A R N T  
R E A R E F F L O W A E D R I F  
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R T D E S N I N G T L A D G O  
S O I L A Y A M G S U M B Y G  
Y M A D B U T T E R F L I E S

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**COMMUNITY MEAL**  
We will be serving  
the Community  
Meal on May 12<sup>th</sup> as  
carryout only and  
with CDC  
regulations followed.  
Please let others  
know!

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