



The Parish Messenger

Church Newsletter

March 2021

Trinity

Worship 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School 10:15 a.m.

Sept. –May

Georgetown

Worship 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Sept.-May

Mission Statement

We are a Christian community rooted in God's love growing in Christ through reaching out and serving.

## **Pastor's Ponderings by Pastor Diane House**

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, preserver in prayer.” Romans 12: 9-12

In pondering this excellent advice given by the Apostle Paul to the Church in Corinth so long ago, I notice much that is appropriate to our time. March 8th will mark the one year anniversary of isolation and precautions due to battling the Covid-19 viral pandemic. It has been an interesting year. There is light at the end of this long tunnel, but I ponder ways in which we can “be ardent (committed) in spirit...patient in suffering, and preserver in prayer.”

I understand that like me, many of you are eager to gather together again in our church buildings. I also understand that many of you still have reservations about that and how that can be done while guaranteeing the health and safety of those still vulnerable to the virus.

I think the key is in verse 9: let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is goo; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in zeal. Because we love and care for one another we have been careful and considerate this whole, long year. Our councils still diligently study the data on transmission rates, vaccination rates, positive case numbers, and risk factors associated with the virus.

The hope we can rejoice in is that we are getting closer to being able to gather together. Where we will need patience in “suffering” is that we will still be asked to follow health and safety guidelines. It is my hope that we can agree to follow together the best practices that enable us to be together in person!

In our discussions we have decided to worship together on Easter Sunday. That may be outdoors or indoors depending on where we are at with all the above mentioned data. As we continue to track and study the data, we may find that we can gather as early as mid to late March. It all depends on how much risk we are willing to take on, and on whether or not we are willing to do things like wear masks, sanitize, hands, check for fever, contact trace, sit apart, not sing, and be creative with ways to share the Holy Communion.

It may be some time, yet, before we can “go back” to what we remember as “normal” worship. We have learned to follow good health and safety practices and we may always follow some of them, like being careful about physical touch, sanitizing hands, mask wearing for awhile, etc. But, I do “rejoice in hope” because I know how much you all love Jesus and love one another and your love is genuine! I am thankful for that, and for your commitment to one another. Together as a community following the guidelines developed by our excellent church councils I

am confident that we are much closer to being able to gather together once again! What a joyous celebration that will be!

[Blessing and Peace](#), Pastor Diane

## ~Announcements~

In-Person Worship at Georgetown Lutheran Scheduled To Begin March 14, 2021

Georgetown Lutheran Church Council has made the decision to resume, in-person, indoor worship on Sunday, March 1. Church Council has put in place the following practices, to ensure that we are doing all that we can to worship together safely. We do know that the risk of spreading illness cannot be completely eliminated, but we can also find ways to gather.

In-person worship will be at 10:30 Sunday mornings. Recordings will be uploaded to YouTube and Facebook for viewing after worship.

The following measures will be in place for all inside events at Georgetown Lutheran Church.

1. Only attend if you are feeling well. Stay home if you feel ill.
2. Social distancing will be practiced at all times, both inside and outside of the building.
3. Attendance will be recorded by an usher/event leader.
4. All attendees over the age of 3 years must wear a mask while in the building.
5. All attendees will sanitize hands as entering the building.
6. Worship attendees will enter and exit the east door (closest to the sanctuary) of the building.
7. An usher will regulate the flow of attendees in and out of the building, as well as direct worshipers where to sit if necessary.
8. Church will be open 15 minutes prior to and after worship. Worshipers may begin entering the building at 10:15.
9. Worshippers will sit in ‘family units’ in designated pews. Bulletins will be in pews that are available for use.
10. Worshippers should plan to keep their coats with them, as windows may be open for increased ventilation.
11. Bathrooms will be open for urgent needs only.
12. Fellowship hall will be off limits during worship. A barrier will be placed to ensure attendees do not go further than the bathrooms.
13. Worshipers are to refrain from singing or sing quietly during hymns.
14. At the end of the worship service, an usher will dismiss attendees by row. Please stay seated until you have been dismissed. There will be no group gatherings or fellowship following the service. Do not block the area nearest the entrance door.
15. Communion specific instructions will be communicated on the designated Sundays (1st, 3rd, 5th). Worshippers are encouraged, but not required, to bring their own communion elements.
16. If necessary, adaptations will be made for individuals requiring handicapped access into the building.
17. The church will be cleaned and disinfected after each in-person event as suggested by the CDC.
18. The church council will keep diligent watch over the local health status. If local activity reaches an unsafe level for meeting in person, or If a church activity is determined to be the source of an outbreak the church council will meet to determine the necessary course of action.
19. Church groups using the building will follow the health (social distance & wear masks),

attendance, cleaning, and disinfecting rules as stated above, and document the activity on the appropriate form provided by the church council.

## A Second Checking Account for Trinity that helps others also?

Trinity's 2020 Annual Report reported that the congregation received \$21.63 in interest in 2020 from its checking and savings accounts in a Cumberland bank. The interest rate on that savings account is currently 0.25%, which is at the higher end of local banks' rates.

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) of The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) is currently offering checking accounts that offer two or three times that local savings account rate, depending on the account balance. With those options, Trinity's Church Council is considering opening a new checking account and transferring a significant portion of the congregation's funds to that new account. It is not the intention of the Council to close out the local checking account, but to add a MIF checking account. Most, if not all, of the congregation's checks would continue to be written on the local bank and offerings would continue to be deposited locally. The MIF account, while a checking account, would serve as the congregation's savings account, while still making those funds readily available by means of a check. With this rearrangement of funds, yearly interest could be as much as \$225 at current rates, and Trinity would become a partner in the development of new and existing ELCA congregations. Currently, there are 340 new congregations under development throughout the ELCA.

What is the MIF? Established in 1988 with the founding of the ELCA, the MIF is a revolving loan fund. Loans are made to newly developing ELCA congregations for the building of their first unit. These congregations would rarely, if ever, qualify for a loan from commercial lending institutions. Loans are also made to ELCA congregations for building or renovation projects at below market rates. The payments received from these loans are recycled to lend to additional congregations, while maintaining strong capitalization. The MIF's strong financial position enables giving back to the church. Over the last five years, that strong capitalization has allowed the MIF, after paying interest to its depositors, to provide approximately \$8 million in gifts to the ELCA for new and renewing congregations, as well as \$5 million in support of established congregations, synods, and ELCA-related ministries.

At the end of 2019, the MIF had \$575 million in loans, \$493 million in investment obligations and a total of \$712 million in total assets. As a ministry of the ELCA, MIF investments are not eligible to be insured by the FDIC. In its 32-year history, the MIF has never defaulted on any of its obligations.

Trinity's Church Council wishes to be transparent as it considers this option of a second checking account and wants to hear of any concerns from church members. Concerns or words of approval should be directed to Steve Anderson, Congregational President.

More about the Mission Investment Fund can be found at [www.mif.elca.org](http://www.mif.elca.org)

## Trinity Church Council Minutes

### February 15, 2021

**Members present:** Kathy Grenquist (Treasurer), Pastor Diane House, Debbie Wickstrom, Robin Denver, Lacy Sellent, Steve Anderson, Chris Wetzel and Christine Anderson.

Devotions led by Pastor Diane.

Meeting called to order by Steven Anderson.

Welcome to new council members! Thank you to Chris Wetzel and Lacy Sellent for serving our congregation in a leadership role.

Election of officers: Steven Anderson was elected to serve as Council President. Christine Anderson was elected to serve as Council Secretary.

#### **Reports:**

**Secretary's Report:** Minutes from the January Trinity Council meeting were read. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Robin Denver and seconded by Debbie Wickstrom. Minutes approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** The monthly statement was provided and discussed by the council. The summary for Jan. 15-Feb. 15 is:

Income ..... \$5530.15

Total Expense.... -\$5495.83

Dec. 15 balance ...\$ 34.32 (monthly balance only)

Checkbook Balance: \$23,365.02

Motion to approve the report as written was made by Christine seconded by Robin. Report approved.

#### **Pastor's Report:**

- Ash Wednesday: We will hold a short outdoor worship on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>. There will be a drive through imposition of ashes at the close of that service. Georgetown at 11am and Trinity at 5:45.
- Synod "Walking Together": Free, virtual event on Sat. Feb 20, 2021.
- Synod Assembly: Will be entirely virtual this year. Dates are April 15 (Thursday) and April 17 (Saturday). We are looking for a representative from Trinity. Registration is due in March.
- Lent: Lenten bags were delivered to families with children and to those adults that do not have access to on-line worship or e-mails. Each week Pastor Diane's e-mail will include a devotional from "Walking Dusty"
- Confirmation Update: Confirmation continues via e-mail.
- Easter: We will plan to have a parking lot worship if we can't be inside by Easter.

#### **Old Business:**

- **Conference Call Annual Meeting**—We had 23 people present. Many people who were on the call did speak, raise questions and offer opinions.

- **Covid Update**

Looking at Barron and Polk counties numbers and the guidance from the synod, WI council of churches, local health departments, we are gaining confidence to return to the building. The numbers are nearing a level to allow in person gathering outside and possibly inside. Many people have gotten the vaccine making this possible. When we do return we will need to begin slowly, wear masks and use physical distance.

A motion to continue with virtual worship only until March meeting was made by Steve Anderson and seconded by Christine Anderson.

- **Mission of the Month/Quarter:**
  - January-March donations will go to Benjamin's House.
  - April-June donations will go to local food shelves (Split between Cumberland and Luck)
- **Egress Window** at the parsonage is nearly done. Steve Anderson made a motion to authorize up to \$500 to pay the person recommended by Steve Hansen to finish the trim work. Motion was seconded by Chris Wetzel. Motion carried.
- **Wi-Fi** Christine will make the call to begin Wi-Fi April 1,2021.
- **Virtual worship** even when we return to in-person worship, we need to have the capability to continue virtual worship from Trinity for those who cannot or do not feel safe attending in person. At the annual meeting we discussed exploring our ability to broadcast our own services. Christine contacted Gretchen at Georgetown and Jamie Shaffer at Cumberland Schools for their advice. They both advised the use of Sling studio. Since this is what Georgetown is already using, it makes sense to use the same technology so we could work together when needed. At the annual meeting, three people volunteered to help with recording and learning new devices for that purpose. The cost for all the pieces needed for the Sling studio will be between \$5000-6000. A grant may be available through the synod endowment fund, but these funds do not get disbursed until August. A simple and affordable place to start is with cell phone directly to Facebook Live. We will try that to begin with and later apply for the grant.
- **Youth**—Discussed issuing a Flat Jesus challenge to youth (and families). The challenge would be to take a photo with Flat Jesus and post it to the church Facebook page. The goal is simple and fun, whatever someone is doing just take a photo and send it in. Christine and Lacy will work on a letter to go out explaining the challenge.

### **New Business:**

**Palt** - Bill and Kelly Anderson have offered to help some with the use of their kitchen for storage, etc. Judy Kelch was consulted about the possibility. The recommendation was to hold off until the weather was nice enough for people to eat outside. This year's Palt Dinner will be held in the summer.

**Money in savings**-Our savings account is not getting a very good rate at this time. A recommendation was made to move it to the Mission Investment Fund (MIF) through the ELCA. This would act like a checking account with a minimum balance. We could access funds at any time, but our interest rate would 2 or 3 times more than what we are currently getting. Trinity would keep it's checking account in Cumberland, the MIF account would be where we place our savings, but it is a checking account so we could access it any time. The added benefit of MIF is that the funds kept there are used support mission congregations as they start up. More exploration is being done around this option.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Robin and seconded by Chris. Meeting adjourned. Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next council meeting will be on Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm

Minutes submitted by Christine Anderson

### **\*\*Meeting Addendum\*\***

After this meeting, council conferred by phone conversation on Feb. 23 and 24<sup>th</sup>. A motion was made by Christine Anderson and seconded by Robin Denver to begin gathering information for returning to in-person worship. The motion passed. Council is gathering vaccine information from a sampling of congregation members, they will meet to formulate a plan and choose a date soon. This information will be communicated with congregation members by phone call. Worship will continue to be posted from Georgetown at 10:30, when we return to in-person, Trinity will also live stream at 9am to Face

## **Georgetown Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes**

### **February 23, 2021**

Present: Stephanie Fansler, Jody Bin fet, Sherry Doornick, Tom Levi, Gretchen Frendt, Judy Gammel, Dennis Weise, Tim Frendt, Keith Ward, Pastor Diane, Roberta Hansen, Treasurer

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Pastor led prayer and devotions and asked Council members to work together in small groups to think about and share when God has influenced our lives.

**Secretary Report:** Judy Gammel read the Secretary's Report as written. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Secretary's report. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Roberta passed out the Treasurer's Report for January 1 – 31, 2021. Our Net Operating Fund balance is \$4,967.85. It was pointed out that the offerings in January were \$3,430.00, which is \$3,018.15 less than the budgeted amount of \$6,448.15. We have not applied for forgiveness for the Payroll Protection Program funds of \$8,500.00 provided by the Government, but the forms are filled out and ready to be submitted. We may also have an opportunity to apply for a second loan and it was suggested that we wait to receive forgiveness for the first loan before we consider applying for a second loan. There is also new criteria for a second loan which will need to be considered. A motion was made and seconded to approve the Treasurer's report. Motion carried.

**Pastor's Report:** Georgetown Lutheran Church received a certificate from the 2020 Census for participation in Census activities during our blood drive. Vicki Dorner is home from Mayo Clinic and doing well. A "Welcome Home" is planned for Saturday, February 27 at 2 pm. Ash Wednesday services went well, but it was very cold for the Pastor to be holding services outside. Pastor will be participating in a Continuing Education opportunity through the Synod beginning in April. Jeanne Johnson and Steve Hansen are working on finishing the work on the egress window at the Parsonage. The Pastor is fully vaccinated for the Coronavirus and is through the quarantine period. With the recent mailing of the Georgetown newsletter, 15 people responded that they would like to have the newsletter mailed to them. Pastor mentioned that Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Church will be having a food distribution in their parking lot tomorrow, February 24, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

**Deacon, Elder and Trustee Reports:** The heater in the bathroom next to the kitchen does not work. There was discussion about replacing filters throughout the church and the various sizes needed.

#### **Old Business**

1. Nominating Committee.

Tom Levi agreed to work on the nominating committee and will be contacting a number of people mentioned at the meeting. We need to replace 2 Elders, 1 Deacon and 1 Trustee.

2. Annual Meeting.

The Annual Meeting will be held as planned on Sunday, March 21, 2021 at 11:30 am, after our church service. All reports for the Annual Meeting will need to be turned in by March 18.

#### **New Business**

1. Church Re-opening

After much discussion, it was determined that Georgetown Lutheran Church will re-open for in-person worship on Sunday, March 14, 2021 at 10:30 am. [Please note that Daylight Saving

Time starts on March 14<sup>th</sup> as well]. We will continue to use the practices put in place by the Church Council for October, 2020. Capacity will be limited to 50 people.

2. Modified Building Use Form

Church groups will be allowed to use the church facilities as long as they use the new form developed for Church Usage which includes basic information as well as attendance and time limits.

Closing prayer

Minutes respectfully submitted by Judy Gammel

**Next Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 6:30 pm**