



Shepherd's Staff

HOUSE CHURCH

A mid-week service of Holy Communion

- In your home
- At your table
- Gathered digitally with your community

The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church • June 2020



Glenn Kraft
Council President

Transition

In consideration of our Constitution, our need to continue moving forward in our work as church, and in order to gather digitally, the Council has agreed to hold a mid-year congregation meeting on June 14th at noon via Zoom. Specific instructions to join on computer or phone will be forthcoming as well as communication about forwarding the information by mail as requested. The ballots for Council and Endowment Committee will be mailed, so the agenda for this meeting will be to provide important ministry updates. In this format, we will offer options for you to ask questions. It may be bulky, but we feel your ability to ask questions is important. We look forward to seeing you and sharing more about key issues.

Pastor Josh, Pastor Amy and Deacon Suzie Everingham have collaborated, in conversation with the Bishop's office, on an interim plan which has been reviewed and approved by Council. During the next months, Pastor Josh has agreed to serve as our **Interim Staff Lead**. This is to help to cover day to day decisions. The Council will support Pastor Josh and the staff for issues that require further input. Pastor Amy and Deacon Suzie will also take on some extra duties during the interim, to make sure that ministry needs are met. I want to thank Josh, Amy and Suzie for their flexibility to support our needs in this way.

We have further engaged the part-time services of Pastor Callista Isabelle as **Transition Advisor**. Callista is an ELCA pastor with transitional ministry experience. She has worked directly with our former Interim Pastor, John Mann, and is currently serving at

Washington University as Director for Religious, Spiritual and Ethical Life.



In her role as Transition Advisor, Pr. Callista will be offering some listening sessions with GSLC members and staff to better understand your key concerns and questions about the transition process. She will be working with Council to form a Transition Team and will guide that team to plan a process to engage our congregation on each step of the transition process. We will consider ***our past*** - how God has been at work throughout Good Shepherd's history. We will reflect on ***our present*** - how is God at work through GSLC now? And we will discern where God is calling us as a congregation into ***the future***.

Pastor Callista will be advising us through at least mid-August, even as we understand the transition process will last beyond that. This is an important opportunity for us to come together as a congregation, to pray for one another and for our leaders, and to listen to how the Spirit is leading us.

I am excited to continue supporting our ministry as head of the Stewardship Committee and in serving one more year as Post-President on Council supporting our new President, Bob Fingland. I appreciate your support and guidance during my time as your Council President. The openness by so many to support the church, to serve on Council and in other important leadership roles and to look forward to our future has been inspirational.

Even as we face the sudden changes of these virus-times, we continue be the church together.

We have so much to look forward to in our ministry together.

Glenn
Council President



Pr. Amy Stewart
**Director of Youth
Ministry**



Pr. Josh Brecht
**Associate Pastor/
Interim Staff Lead**

House Church: A Means of Grace - Holy Communion

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” - Matt. 18:20

When the pandemic forced us to shift to online-only worship, your pastors discussed the question of Holy Communion. We discussed if and how it might be received virtually, and unanimously felt it was best to fast from Communion until we could gather again. Our Lutheran theology of Holy Communion understands the Sacrament to consist of both the elements (bread and wine), and the Word of God,

proclaimed *in* the gathered community of believers. Without the gathering and proclamation of God's word, the elements cease to be sacrament.

However, as we move into our third month without Holy Communion, we have decided to provide this means of grace through the digitally gathered community. It is not the bread, nor the wine, nor the physical presence of one another that creates the sacrament, but the spiritual gathering and the Word of God.

On June 10, we will begin gathering on Wednesdays in digital House Churches through Zoom to receive Holy Communion. We may be virtually gathered, and physically in our own homes, but we will be gathered together spiritually as church.

For all the questions, concerns, and reservations that may be racing through your mind, I invite you to take a deep breath, hang with me for a moment and read on.

A few questions you may be asking:

- **Why not celebrate Communion in our recorded worship?** Recorded worship is just that: recorded. Through this we can proclaim the Word of God, pray, and worship, but it is not interactive. We believe Holy Communion is to be received in the presence of other believers.
- **Why not have family units or small groups schedule times and come to the church to receive Communion?** Again, this goes back to the value of being in community to receive the sacrament. We also feel that even this presents too much risk to our pastors and our members right now, and we love one another too much to risk anyone's health and safety.
- **What if I don't have access to a computer or smartphone?** Please call us and we will gladly work to ensure anyone who wishes to receive communion can do so.

How will this work?

- We will host three times each Wednesday with Pastor Amy or Pastor Josh presiding. (Links and Zoom instructions will be included in weekly Good Shepherd Emails) - **8:00am, 12:00pm, and 7:00pm.**
- Each House Church gathering will be approximately 30-45 minutes.
- This will include prayer, scripture, Holy Communion and a time for discussion in small groups (breakout "rooms" on Zoom.)
- We are including discussion in small groups to provide a way to connect and care for one another.

How to Prepare before House Church

The Holy Spirit will be present whether you make preparations or not, but with a few small, intentional preparations we think you will find a deeper sense of holiness through this experience.

- **Prepare the elements** (bread & wine/juice) - Any bread will do, but consider baking bread for Communion. We are providing the recipe we use for bread at Good Shepherd so it can feel like home. Wine or white grape juice is fine. *If*

you do not have wine or juice available, communing with only bread is fully acceptable. Jesus is fully present!

- **Create a Sacred Space**
- Find a **table** you intend to use, and create your own “altar” there, perhaps with a small cross, holy artwork or elements of nature (flowers, water, rocks, etc.)
- Consider lighting a **candle** to remind you of Christ’s presence.

We are excited to offer this opportunity for community, prayer, and receiving Holy Communion together, and hope you will join us on Wednesdays. We cannot wait to receive this gift of grace with you.

In Christ,
Pastor Amy & Pastor Josh

CLICK HERE for the recipe to bake your own communion bread. **it doesn’t keep very long at room temps, so be sure to refrigerate if you make it early!*



Emily Harrow (on leave through July 20th)

Director of Children & Family Ministry

eharrow@gslcelca.org

Faith at Home

Faith Formation in the home is no foreign concept in the Lutheran Church. In fact, faith formation in the home is why the Small Catechism was written in the first place. Pandemic or not, teaching and exploring faith at home with one’s family is at the heart a very Lutheran practice. It is a good and holy practice. And it is something you can do without a degree in biblical studies!

We have been experiencing family time like never before. It is a wonderful time to introduce spiritual practice and ritual into your everyday life. I challenge your family to gather together each night to share your highs and lows, read a Bible verse or story, talk about how the reading might relate to your highs and lows, pray for one another, and bless one another. This is something you can do no matter how young or how old your children are. Your children are learning how to be faithful from what they watch you do. Why not do it together?

Creating a safe and comfortable place to share is key. When you share your highs and lows, it is important not to place judgement. A person’s low can be the same everyday. I recommend beginning with the high as it can open the door to a more honest low. But it is also okay to have no high at all, we all have bad days. It is okay to have no low at all, some days are really great! A judgement free zone is the only requirement for this part of your daily ritual.

When choosing a story or verse to read, find what makes sense for your family. You can Google a verse on a certain topic that your family is dealing with. Try reading the

Sunday lesson each day. You can use a devotional as guide. Let a different family member choose what to read each night. When you dig deeper into the text and explore how it applies to your highs and lows, remember that it is okay not to have all the answers. In fact it is perfectly okay to have no answers at all! Wonder together as a family.

When it comes time to pray for and with one another, there is no wrong way to do it. You can recite a family prayer. Pray for family, friends, and your community. You can pray for each family member individually. Teach your children how to pray. I encourage you to allow a different family member to pray every night. This may not be able to happen with your 1 year old, but a 2 or 3 year old may be able to pray with a little help from parents or an older sibling. Give it a try!

And finally, bless one another. Make the sign of the cross on one another's forehead, hand, or in front of a family member. Choose an age appropriate blessing or simply a blessing that feels right for your family. Say "You are a beloved child of God" or "God loves you and so do I," any words of blessing will do. Keep it consistent for a season. Change it as circumstances change.

Whether the church is meeting together or we are apart, nothing will change the unique way faith is grown at home.



From Rachel Griffard:

The letter below is written by Romy Keuwo, a graduate this year of the University of Kansas. He is one of three new hires in an internship program designed to develop the leadership of lay people in the church and greater world. Thanks to the generosity of Good Shepherd [Endowment Fund grant] the internship was able to pay for these students, opening this opportunity to students that certainly would not have had time for faithful formation or leadership development if they were entrenched in another job just to pay the bills.

I cannot express how grateful I am for this support, and I hope that this letter from Romy Keuwo can express even half of the good that this grant has brought us. Once again, I find myself lucky to be a child of Good Shepherd Lutheran.

To the Congregation of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,

At the end of December 2019, Rachel Griffard asked me to work under her as an intern through the grant provided by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. She expressed to me the vision of her internship and explained that she desired for students in Westwood's congregation to grow in their faith through whatever means best fits their ministries. I jumped at this opportunity and graciously accepted her offer.



In January 2020, Rachel asked me to outline a plan of what I wanted to accomplish

within five months of the internship. In lieu of the pandemic, I was not able to accomplish everything in my ministry; however I proud of what I did accomplish. The goal of my first initiative was to start a fundraiser for the Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS), the leading homeless shelter in Lawrence. With the help of the community and social media, we were able to raise \$300 by the end of March. My goal for my second initiative had been to incorporate my ministry into a more joint relationship between Westwood House and LCS. The plan had been to form a team of volunteers to provide supports and services to LCS (i.e. food kitchen volunteering, donation clothing drive, and etc.). It had also been in the works to expand my ministry to serve other populations within the homeless community, such as at risk teens and LGBTQIA+ youth through another emergency shelter located in Lawrence. The goal for my final initiative was to pass out sack lunches to the homeless community on Massachusetts Street, the busiest and most popular site for businesses and college life in Lawrence.

Although some of my initiatives were cancelled due to time and the pandemic, I was given the opportunity to evangelize and preach about joy; through an initiative I called "The Joy of Being." The goal of this initiative was to encourage interconnectedness and mindfulness within the Lawrence community. Through the mentorship of Pastor Susan Mercer and Pastor Shawn Norris, I was given two days to preach about joy in scripture and within my own testimonies as a person of faith. As the stay-at-home-order went into effect, I began thinking about ways in which to remotely support the community. With the help of other interns we were able to provide resources and funding options for unemployed workers in Lawrence. Covid-19 made the end of this internship seem closer than expected. However, through the power of technology I was able to see my congregation through Zoom every Wednesday night, and call my colleagues in order to discuss ways to best support the Lawrence community.

I am grateful to the congregation and Rachel for the opportunity I had this semester to minister through community outreach and fundraising. I owe the fostering of my friendship with Rachel to the internship that was only made possible by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Despite the manner in which this all ended, I believe other students could benefit from learning how prayer, community, and support can turn small ideas into impactful acts of service. This internship and the current state of our world has taught me the importance of leaning onto others. I hope others get to experience this same joy of community through this life-changing grant.

Thank you for your consideration,
Romy Keuwo

A "Wink" from the Welcome Ministry Team Elliott Haugen

Many years ago when Vicki, I and our young sons lived in Fargo, our church there rescheduled one of its three summer Sunday



services. It was moved to a local drive-in theater's parking lot. Attendees worshiped in their cars by watching the pastor through the framed view of a glass windshield and listening to an audio speaker. People worshiped in casual dress, sang along with the music, shared snacks and beverages with their passengers, and prayed together. This informal, remote option allowed for participation by some who were homebound or ailing; some who did not regularly attend or weren't members, some who worshiped by themselves or with family and pets, those who preferred really casual dress, and those who merely wanted to get a jump on the day's activities. We were not totally isolated since we walked to the stage for communion, shared the peace, and took an offering (although ushers were warned about passing their plastic ice cream pails into a car whose engine was running.)

Today, over 40 years later, our Good Shepherd faith community is viewing worship through a new type of glass/screen, listening via digital audio, and also experiencing this shared experience in varied ways. We are reminded that whatever the worship format, we are not alone because God is with us, we are part of the larger body of Christ, and our different personal situations and characteristics cannot diminish our love of Christ, each other, and the world. The apostle Paul declared this during his Christianity-advancing travels and writings:

So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another *Romans 12:5*

So what does this have to do with Good Shepherd's welcome ministry? Well, as we eventually return to in-person gatherings, we will be excited to see each other. But, it will be almost like we are visitors again. Thank goodness we are blessed that this church of Christ and people of God have a long history of welcoming, inviting and engaging each other in our shared message, mission and ministries. During our extended isolation we have a renewed sense of how important we are to each other and greater recognition that we are a singularly focused faith community that needs and loves each other and their differences. A phrase from Paul's letter to the Philippians (regarding his imprisonment) seems especially relevant to us:

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel *Philippians 1:12*

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