

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Weekly Update

*Our mission is to be more visible, to become more connected,
and to draw closer, with Christ as our center.*



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Wednesday, February 3, 2021



New England Synod
FYI - Pandemic Letter
from Bishop Hazelwood



February 1, 2021

Congregations of the New England Synod,

Our pandemic winter continues. I, like you, feel the fatigue that is circling about our lives. The good news of vaccine distribution beginning is offset by concerns about variants of Covid19. While I remain hopeful for the longer term (next six to nine months), I remain vigilant and cautious in the near term.

We may be getting close to gathering in-person, but we are not there yet. Some of our states are beginning to relax their rules around some in-person gatherings, and this may, in some places such as Connecticut, include relaxation around gatherings for worship.

I would exercise extreme caution in moving too soon toward this practice!

Much of the reasoning behind state governments taking more relaxed positions in relation to houses of worship, versus other public spaces, is related to concerns around first amendment considerations. Earlier last year, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a synagogue that believed it had the legal standing to hold worship services, even when the Governor stated, out of health and safety concerns, that they should not meet. Since that ruling, most states have adopted a "request approach" toward houses of worship. For instance, in Rhode Island, the governor asked churches to not hold in-person worship during a recent outbreak.

My point in this letter is this:

Just because a state government may grant permission or shift its language around holding in-person worship does not mean your congregation should. As my grandmother used to say, "*just because you can....doesn't mean you should.*"

This letter serves as encouragement to be thoughtful, careful and mindful of our role as servants.

The ELCA has released "Considerations for Returning to In-Person Worship." You may view the full document [here](#). Last year, I provided you with a letter offering suggestions on how to approach re-opening, which is copied below.

"As I review those documents, along with several news stories of churches that attempted to meet for worship and then had spread of this disease, I want to offer my own personal reflections. If I were serving as a pastor in a congregation, I would say the following to my church council:

"I see no upside to gathering in person for worship for the foreseeable future, and I think we should begin now to plan for many months without it. Let's put together teams of people that will work together on four areas.

Spiritual Life including Worship & Devotions - This group will plan worship and devotional opportunities for the congregation in ways that maximize engagement from as many in the congregation as possible.

Caregiving/Shepherding Ministry - Let's focus our energy on how we can connect our community via a shepherding group model.

Social Justice/Community Advocacy - Let's find ways to both serve our community and act on matters involving the most vulnerable in our communities and beyond.

Generosity Team - This team will work on ways to engage people on matters of Stewardship and Generosity. What can we do to help people see the value of increasing their giving during this time when our church is so important to so many people?

Let these four teams be the center of our energy. I as pastor will work with each of these teams, but I can't do it alone. I need you to step up and be involved. In many ways, by doing this, we are also setting the stage for a new way of being church that will be determined when we come through this time of change."

I still believe that is the best path forward.

It seems likely (though who can predict the future these days?) that we will be able to gather for in-person worship in 2021, certainly outdoors in warmer months. Therefore, let's be mindful of that coming opportunity and not rush too hastily into indoor worship.

I have great confidence in the patience and wise leadership so many of you are exercising. We are moving forward into a new day. I know it is hard, and I know the loss many have experienced during this pandemic is painful. Let us continue to exercise patience and wisdom!

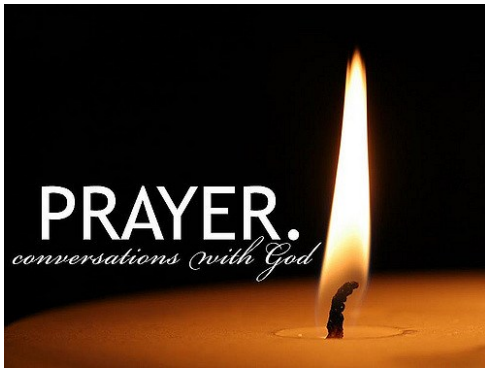
Sincerely,

Bishop James Hazelwood

New England Synod, 20 Upland Street, Worcester, Mass. 01607 | 508 791 1530 |

office@nesynod.org | www.nelutherans.org





A Community of Prayer

For those in need of healing and comfort:

Members and Friends of the Congregation: Lauren, Ray, Tim, Joan, Marie, Audrey, Elizabeth, Gordon, Sarah, Miriam, Scarlet, Jason, Brian, David, Tricia, Cate, Cecilio, Donna, Anthony, Steve.

Military (on active duty), Fire fighters, and Police: Ryan, Teddy, Tyler, Ben, Kenny, Brian, Bill, Ken, John, Glen, and Vic.

Front Line workers in the COVID-19 pandemic: Diane, Alicia, Brittany, Loretta, Jay, Alyssa, Monica, Rachel, June.

Pour out your Spirit on all people living with illness, as well as their loved ones and caregivers. Help them to know that you claim them as your own and deliver them from fear and pain; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. Amen.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147 vs. 3

Devotional for the week of January 31st, 2021

Who: Jesus, disciples, observant go-to-worship folks honoring the sabbath. And, yes, a man with an unclean spirit. (Could he be the only such soul in the congregation?)

What: Reading holy words, the domain of scribes and scholars, and a shocking teaching given "with authority."

Where: In the synagogue.

When: On the sabbath.

Who is this one who cried out in the congregation? Was he a scared thief creeping from his hiding place? A lanky kid exhausted from bawling outside locked doors? An old man gasping beneath piles of ill-gotten wealth? A young woman cursing heaven by day and hell by night for reasons no one dares to name? A stumbling fugitive worn down by a lifetime of running? A robust profiteer, master of deception? An unjust judge solemnly wearing a robe woven from threads of secret favors? A miser in a mansion perched above slums? A hoarder of vengeance nursing metastasized hatreds? Have you seen, met, or known any of these among the congregation?

The one with an unclean spirit cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:24). Jesus silences the unclean spirit. But Jesus will not be the destroyer. The crucified one does not crucify. He does not build and fill prisons; he sets free. He does not shun, avoid, and send away; he calls the accursed to himself. He does not condemn the sinner; he rescues and saves.

Yes, they in the synagogue that day and we in the church this day are amazed. Jesus' teaching with authority contradicts all the rules that anchor us to a spirit of despair. Good news, indeed.

 AUGSBURG FORTRESS



Could He Be the Only One?

Devotional message and art based on the readings for January 31st, reprinted from sundaysandseasons.com.

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Do you wonder how to put a loved one, friend, neighbor, or yourself on the prayer list?
Simply email the church office at office@gsllc-ct.org. If you would like a prayer card sent to your loved one, friend or neighbor, please include the full name and address. Prayer requests may also be made by phone (203-268-7596) and will be included by the church office.
For privacy, only the first name of each individual will be listed.

Do you have something you would like to discuss with Pastor Doug?
Should you be in need of pastoral care, please contact Pastor Doug Ryniewicz by cell phone (860-595-9560—text if you like!) or by his email (dearynos@gmail.com).

To join us for Worship online:

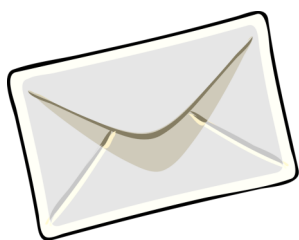
There are several options for you to join us for online worship:

- 1) go to the Good Shepherd website www.gsllc-ct.org. Click on youtube on the menu under News & Events to be directed to our church's YouTube page.
- 2) go to our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Good-Shepherd-Lutheran-Church-220717937953573/> Scroll down until you see the post with the current "Church Service (date)" click on this to be directed to our church's YouTube page.
- 3) To find us directly on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/> enter Good Shepherd Monroe CT in the search field and you will be directed to our page, then select the worship video you would like to see. Subscribe to our channel to make it even easier.

To join us for Worship in person: This Sunday, February 7th at 10:00 am. We will have Drive In Church, weather permitting (If it is extremely cold, snowy, or a steady rain, the service is cancelled).

This is how it works:

- Pastor Doug will be on a platform at the rear (east edge) of the large, main parking area.
- Cars should park facing that direction (east – towards the wooded area) with taller vehicles closer to the main road. This will allow shorter vehicles visibility by parking in front of the taller ones.
- The radio frequency of the broadcast is **FM 94.9**. Please tune your car radio to that station to hear the worship service.
- You should stay in your vehicle and keep your windows closed.
- Bring your own bread (as you did for Outdoor Worship) for communion.
- You must wear a mask if you exit your vehicle.
- Other recommendations of social distancing apply when you are outside your vehicle.



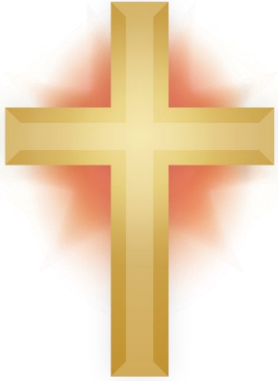
Financial Statements for 2020 and Offering Envelope Boxes for 2021

Year End Financial Statements are being mailed this week. If you do not receive yours, please let us know.

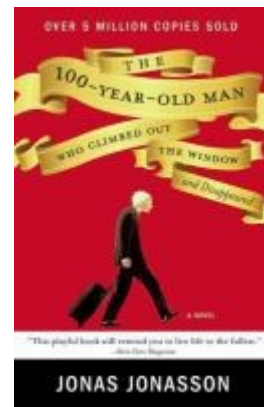
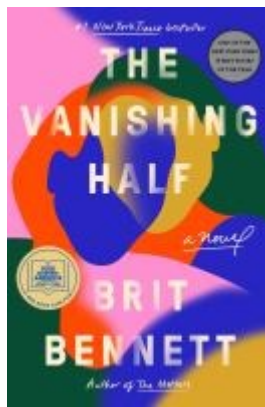
If you attend the Drive In Service, please stop in and pick your offering envelope box up. If you would like to pick it up during the week, please make an appointment to stop by during office hours - Monday through Thursday, 9 am to noon. If those times are not convenient for you, just call the church office at 203-268-7596 or send an email so that other arrangements can be made.



Upcoming Events



On **Sunday, February 7th** at the Drive In Worship Service, the Church Council and Officers of the Congregation will be installed for 2021. Our gracious thanks to Donna Duessel, Brian Immel, Tim Carlson, Roy Remlin, Thelma Cleland, Barbara Abraham, Trudi Black, Tricia Bobowick, Jeff Jackson, Karen Merrick, Renee Shoop and Riley Immel for their dedication and service to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. The installation was postponed last week due to the extreme cold weather.



The Book Club is meeting on March 2nd at **1:00 p.m.** when we will discuss ""The Vanishing Half"" by Brit Bennett. In April, we will discuss "The 100 Year Old Man Who Jumped Out the Window and Disappeared" by Jonas Jonasson. We will either meet via Zoom or possibly indoors using the new handler system if the infection rates are low. We welcome new members!

Reaching Out, Serving Others:



Food for Summerfield

There is an ongoing need for nutritious food for the kids at Summerfield. Protein is especially needed. GSLC Council has challenged the congregation to provide funds for the purchase of nutritious food. GSLC will match donations from members for up to \$250 per month. Pastor Gaston has told us that \$500 per month would meet their nutritious food needs. If you wish to donate please write a check to GSLC with the notation "Food For Summerfield" or place cash in the Summerfield box.

News from

The Council of Churches
of Greater Bridgeport



Leveraging hope, changing lives.

The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport
Presents

Winter Coat Drive

FROM JANUARY 11TH - FEBRUARY 15TH ONLY

We are accepting new and gently used winter coats youth and adult sizes small to extra-large.

DROP OFF LOCATION:

1718 CAPITOL AVE

BRIDGEPORT, CT

Drop off: Tuesday and Thursday ONLY between 9:30 am - 1:30 pm.

Please call: (203) 544-4015 once you arrive. All other calls regarding questions should be forwarded to Adilene Garcia at (203) 334-1121 extension: 13.

You must be wearing a mask over your mouth and nose at drop off

Coats dropped off on other days/times will not be accepted until the following drop off day between the times stated above.



Coats may also be dropped off at Good Shepherd and will be delivered to the Council of Churches. There will be a blue box at the front door of the church on Monday—Thursday mornings and Sunday during the Drive In service.

Church Council Meeting Highlights - January 25, 2021

Attendance: Pastor Doug, Donna Duessel, Tricia Bobowick, Jeff Jackson, Barbara Abraham; Karen Merrick. Absent: Renee Shoop and Trudi Black. Absent: Brian Immel, Riley Immel. Donna called meeting to order at 7:35 pm

Election of Officers:

President: Donna accepted to continue as president, Brian Immel was elected as Vice President, Thelma accepted to continue as Secretary, Tim Carlson was approved as Treasurer and Roy Remlin was approved as Financial Secretary

Reports

Finance: see Finance Minutes and Year End Reports.

Donna Duessel reported Church had a financially good year; \$18,587 surplus for the year ending Dec 31, 2020.

Barbara Abraham & Donna Duessel reported Church Financial documents are ready for audit. Church property mortgage was paid off.

Pastor

Installation of Council members to occur on Sunday during Drive-in Service. Members to stand outside their cars weather permitting

PD mentioned that a church member, Janet Reck had died

Recorded services will continue; they appear permanent for now; even people we don't know are watching them

PD indicated that there has been some concern with communications from GSLC and mentioned that GSLC, as a member of the ELCA, he made a vow to post communications from the Church Synod, as a Lutheran pastor, he is obligated to post national church communications by providing a link to ELCA pages

Ash Wednesday: to be recorded as an online service

Lent: A weekly Lenten Zoom meeting featuring the poems by Emily Dickinson. A new Bible study to occur after Lent.

Property:

Mouse problem in Gibiser Hall is being resolved; traps have been catching mice

Property Committee is working with Town of Monroe and Eversource to remove dead trees near Lovers Lane

Council of Churches:

Church is conducting a Winter Coat Drive – Need coats, scarfs, hats, and socks; Donna Duessel has already delivered coats to Council of Churches

Trudi Black thanks to Donna Duessel and Tim Carlson for their advice to Pastor Gaston and help with PPP loan application – P. Gaston's church is in dire straits

Old Business

Indoor Facilities: RFG REME-Halo System for Sanctuary Air Handling \$2,891.20 – anonymous donation will cover the cost; installation was done in November. Rural Fuels installed it, but need to learn how to operate it efficiently. Donna Duessel mentioned that small groups such as Book Club (if they choose) can meet indoors, however, because of COVID, no more than 10 people can be present and following safety guidance of distancing and mask wearing.

Confirmation – Discussed at annual meeting and deferred to Council

Long discussion took place; Sunday School (Donna Duessel) and PD indicated that Confirmation graduation and classes will occur in some form once indoor gathering can occur in person; faith formation for 7-8th grade should occur; Donna Duessel asked Pastor Doug and Council to brainstorm on how to make a more meaningful program in 2021

New Business:

Venmo – e-giving: Barbara Abraham reported that the committee is trying to set up Venmo account for offerings that cannot be set-up alone; Venmo account is required to be tied up to a PayPal account, which requires a fee; discussion ensued about who would pay the fee per transaction. Council was asked to authorize Finance to have PayPal account for this purpose. Barbara Abraham requested that this information be published in Church's newsletter to apprise members. Motion was made to accept the committee's proposal and seconded to create account. Discussion ensued re extra PayPal charges; Barbara Abraham indicated it would be paid by donor/giver; suggestions were made that Venmo is more popular with younger people and that this trend would be the way of future trends re money transfers. All voted Aye

Memorial Committee:

Church Council discussed and approved the request from the Memorial Committee to approve the procedure that any memorial funds of less than \$500 will be moved to a general memorials account after 6 months and any funds of more than \$500 will be moved to a general memorial account after 12 months. This will allow smaller amounts to be aggregated in a general account and used for other more significant church projects.

Next meeting: February 15th

Respectfully submitted,

Thelma Cleland, Council Secretary

Sunday, February 7 — Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

Prayer of the Day: Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

First Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

Psalms 147:1-11, 20c

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39



As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to