

“Where the Word of God is preached and people come to know the Lord”

THE TIDINGS OF PEACE
Peace Lutheran Church
Ashland, Ohio

JULY
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From Pastor Karen

“But in humility, consider others as more important than yourselves.” -Philippians 2:3

Grace and Peace,

When asked what the most important commandment is, Jesus replied, to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love of neighbor, is therefore, at the very heart of who we are as Christians. Hopefully, this isn't news to anyone at this point. One thing I have been thinking about lately, is how we can go about showing our love of neighbor right now. I found myself using examples during sermons and children's sermons that, while good, are not conducive to the social distancing we are all being asked to observe. For kids, inviting a new neighbor or person at school to play would normally be a great example. But children haven't been in school since March, and play dates are probably at a minimum at the moment. For us adults, volunteering our time at food pantries or inviting a new neighbor over for a meal would be great examples. And I'm sure that's still happening. But for many, the risk of exposure from public volunteering is too high, and again, I don't know how many dinners we are open to sharing right now. How do we invite someone to worship with us when the church building is still closed? How do we show welcome when we can't actually welcome people into our lives at the moment?

Love of neighbor is still at the very heart of who we are as Christians, and we can still very much show our love of neighbor during this time of pandemic. We can call and check in on people who live alone. If not our time, we can donate our money to organizations that seek to help the most vulnerable among us. Perhaps one of the easiest and most prevalent means of showing our love of neighbor right now is mask wearing. This is because mask wearing is, let's face it, annoying, and does little to protect ourselves. It does, however, do a lot to protect others from us. I wear a mask to protect you, and you wear a mask to protect me. This is a great show of love for others. Seen that way, the inconvenience doesn't seem like such a high price to pay. Continue to look for ways to love one another, people of God! It's who we are.

In Christ,

Pastor Karen

We invite you to join us in the ELCA's Anti-Racism Pledge

Sign the pledge: "I commit to study, prayer and action to become an anti-racist individual in an anti-racist church," and share your participation on social media using #ELCA4justice. <https://www.elca.org/racialjusticepledge>

LEARN MORE

ELCA presiding bishop praises SCOTUS decision on LGBTQIA+ rights

As National Pride Month is celebrated across this country, I rejoice in the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that employment discrimination on the basis of a worker's sexual orientation or gender identity is illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The court's decision is an important recognition of equal protection under the law for LGBTQIA+ people and for all.

LGBTQIA+ people are not faceless or nameless. They are our children, parents, siblings and colleagues. They work hard and pay taxes. They serve in our congregations and communities. Our life together is enriched. They are us. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling brings us a step closer to realizing our founding conviction, "We the people of the United States."

St. Paul writes, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). The June 15 decision brings the civic body a step closer to the cherished American value of equal rights for all. There is more work to be done to guarantee equal rights for LGBTQIA+ people beyond the workplace — in housing, medical care and military service. We are committed to this work as we celebrate, during Pride Month and all year round, the gifts of our LGBTQIA+ siblings.

In Christ's peace,

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

07/01—Pastor Karen Liddy and Pastor Randy O'Donnell



07/09—Dave & Diana Kowalka



07/21—Rich & Pat Carlisle

JULY BIRTHDAYS

07/02—Diana Kowalka

07/30—Pastor John Wanamaker

Birthday High Light:

07/08—Ron Boyd

Jane Reed

July 2

Diana Kowalka

07/12—Robert McClaran

433 Buena Vista Ashland

07/13—Maisy White

07/21—Barb Dreher

July 30

Pastor John Wanamaker

Audrey Breault

845 Mowry Dr.

Evan DaHinden

Ashland

07/29—Jeff Davidson





Saturday, September 12
Sunny Lake Park, Aurora

The Gift of Life 5K is not only a fun way to support people with disabilities, but also an opportunity to honor those who received their care at Hattie Larlham. The Pagano family in particular found great comfort through their participation in 2019. “Team Nick” was formed in honor of their beloved son and brother, a resident of the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities, who passed away in 2018.

Nick moved to the Center when he was 9 years old, when the effects of a yet-undiagnosed disease made it difficult for his parents, Dr. Ron and Karla Pagano, to care for him on their own. Karla and Ron decided that Hattie Larlham was the right place for Nick to live because of the high-quality medical care and opportunities provided for him in the compassionate home-like environment of the Center. Nick was eventually diagnosed with Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease, which is an inherited condition that affects the central nervous system. Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease reduces overall neurological function, and can cause people to develop spasticity leading to joint deformities that restrict movement. Individuals with congenital Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease are never able to walk, and many are not able to purposefully use their arms. Nick lived at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities for 29 years, and passed away just four days shy of his 38th birthday. The Pagano family continues to support Hattie Larlham, and Dr. Pagano serves on the Hattie Larlham Board of Directors.

In 2019, Karla and Ron’s eldest daughter Carrie saw the email announcing the date of the Gift of Life 5K and rallied the family together to register. They created a family team and had custom “Team Nick” t-shirts printed. A total of nine Pagano family members participated in the event – walking, running and cheering from the sidelines. Three Pagano family members even placed first in their age groups! The Pagano family will be participating again in the 2020 event, and have already registered their team. Their goal is to raise funds in support of the Hattie Larlham programs that were so beneficial to Nick during his life.

“Nick was a blessing in our lives. We are grateful for the care that Nick received at Hattie Larlham, and the staff became our family. That’s what made Hattie Larlham so special to us. We feel strongly that all residents of Hattie Larlham deserve every opportunity that Nick had, and that’s why we continue to support Hattie Larlham.”

*Team Nick will be at it again this September! Walking and running to honor and remember one of the best people there ever was ❤️. This year will be a special one since it will be grandson Nico’s first year honoring his uncle and namesake. We would love to have you on our 11 member team. Run with us, walk with us, or donate with us. We are forever grateful to Hattie Larlham for caring so thoroughly with their hearts and souls for Nick.
~Ron and Karla Pagano*

Link to donate: <https://p2p.onecause.com/giftoflife/team/team-nick-2>

Witnesses to the transcendent



An amazing thing happened in March. Churches were closed but more people came to church. Millions of us were complying with shelter-in-place and physical distancing recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local officials to stop the spread of the [coronavirus](#). In a matter of days our lives were completely disrupted. The places where we sheltered became our offices, classrooms, day care centers and recreational facilities. Traffic dissipated—I was tempted to leave my house and drive unimpeded up and down the Kennedy Expressway just because it was possible.

Measures to slow the spread of the disease work against in-person gatherings. Coming together for [worship](#) wasn't possible. Maintaining 6 feet of distance between people, refraining from touching and wearing face masks aren't conducive to corporate worship. I was in a CDC briefing that pointed out that singing was right up there with sneezing and coughing in spreading the virus. Conventional all-together-in-the-building church was out.

So, what did we do? We found new ways of receiving the word and singing praise to God. All across this church, pastors and deacons, musicians and lay leaders created imaginative and fresh ways to worship. Virtual church, recorded church, livestreamed church happened everywhere. In parts of the country without sufficient Wi-Fi, congregations phoned each other, some on landlines. Pastors and deacons kept in contact with the people, and parishioners called each other. Worship resources to be used at home were shared. We might have been physically distanced, but we were not spiritually or socially isolated.

Many congregations and worship sites reported that online attendance was up and, in some cases, exceeded average Sunday in-person participation. People “attended” several services in a day. And we know that many attending online would never walk into one of our churches.

The problem comes when people confuse the sacred space with the Sacred.

Now, before we get too excited about this new evangelism tool, we need to consider factors that may have contributed to increased attendance—no sports, no Starbucks, limited travel, convenience. This won't last forever. But the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have made it clear that people are searching for hope and meaning and love. The gospel, the good news, the reality of God's unconditional love “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” ([Romans 5:5](#)), is the message that people long to hear. It is life for the dying, water for the parched, food for the starving, liberty for the oppressed. God has entrusted this word, this evangelical word, to the church and has commissioned us to tell it.

People wonder what the post-COVID world and the post-COVID church will look like. No one, except God, knows for certain. Our experience with worshiping remotely has taught us at least two things: the word of God expressed in worship, lament and praise is not irrelevant. And people who find our congregations—the building and people—intimidating or off-putting also long to be part of a community that witnesses to the life we have in Jesus.

I am praying for the day when we gather again. I miss going to church. Church, including the buildings, are sacred spaces. Human beings are drawn to places where they have experienced the holy. Congregations—buildings and people—are witnesses to the transcendent.

The problem comes when people confuse the sacred space with the Sacred. We must take care that our congregations don't become idols. Since we have concrete evidence that people who long to hear about the life, hope and grace that comes to the world through Jesus won't come into our churches, we need to go to them. We have done this in creative ways and through online worship during the pandemic. Don't stop. When we are able to return to our sacred spaces, let's make an honest assessment of the ways that our congregations are witnesses to the transcendent, places where we are nourished for the journey and then sent out to serve. Or have they become barriers to those seeking the love and freedom God has given to all people in Christ?

In Christ's peace, Elizabeth A. Eaton Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America