



St. Luke's Lutheran Church

Congregational Meeting

September 26, 2021

The Call Committee invites you to join them on Sunday, September 26th as Pastor Michael Galica leads St. Luke's in worship. Pastor Galica is the candidate selected by the Call Committee for congregational consideration to fill our pastoral vacancy. He will preach at both services (8:15 and 10:45 am). The 10:45 am service will be livestreamed. Visit stlks.com for the livestream link.

Meet and Greet Koinonia Café

Following each worship service.

There will be a meet and greet following each worship service in the Koinonia Café. Light refreshments will be provided.

Congregational Meeting Centennial Hall

12:30 pm

A congregational meeting will be held at 12:30 pm in Centennial Hall. At this time a congregational vote will be taken as to extend a call or not to Pastor Galica.

As the coronavirus still plagues our daily lives, we understand the want and need to keep all of our parishioners safe. If you are not able to attend in person, the congregational meeting will be livestreamed with voting conducted virtually.

If you are planning to join the meeting **either in person or remotely**, please notify the church office (email - stlukessaxonburg@gmail.com or phone - 724-352-2333), sign up in the café or register online (stlks.com) by September 21, 2021. For those who will be attending virtually a direct link to the meeting will be sent via email to those who register.

A letter to the congregation from Pastor Galica is on the following page.

Dear St. Luke's,

Greetings! I am Pastor Mike Galica, and your Call Committee asked me to write a brief introduction so you can get to know me a bit before I meet you in person. It's always an interesting proposition to try and summarize myself in the span of a page, but I hope this letter will give you an idea of who I am and what my vision is for ministry.

I was born in Connecticut and baptized at First Lutheran Church of Rockville. My parents always brought me with them to church, and one of their favorite stories to tell is from when I was 3 or so years old. I would stand behind a Fisher-Price table and exclaim with passion, "Da dor be did oo!" Hearing this, my parents would look at me, confused; and wonder what I was saying. It took some time, and much annoyance on my part, for them to realize the proper response: "And also with you!" (Apparently, God had a call on my life to pastoral ministry before I even realized it!)

When I was in 7th grade, my dad's job moved our family to Utah, where we were active at Good Shepherd Lutheran. Through confirmation, and my own involvement in the work of the church, I grew to understand better who God is and what it means to have faith and follow Jesus. After graduating high school, I went to the University of Tulsa, studying Electrical Engineering and intending to work in the music industry. But a series of "coincidences" (that would take too long to share in this introduction) meant those plans changed and I ended up enrolling in Salt Lake Theological Seminary for preparation for pastoral ministry. Since then, I have served a congregation in northern Utah for the past 12 years. During this call, I met and married my wife, Michelle (a proud Presbyterian!), who also brought into my life a delightful bit of chaos in the form of a now-8-year-old Black Lab mix dog named Izzy.

I view my role as a pastor to not be the "professional Christian", but instead to empower a congregation to *be* the church, something I think is especially important as we find ourselves living in a "post-Christendom" world. It is the call of all followers of Jesus to not just be Christian on Sunday mornings, but to proclaim our faith in every aspect of our lives, both in word and deed.

To accomplish this goal, our Lutheran heritage is especially helpful! Our worship services are designed around being strengthened in Word and Sacrament to go out into the world in service to our Lord. Our theology of vocation, that all are called to do ministry as part of the priesthood of all believers, embraces a holistic and consistent view of faith and life that is much needed. We are all meant to be "little Christs" in the world, and my goal as a pastor is to help us all show the world who God is through who we are, as we follow Jesus together.

Outside of pastoral ministry, I have some hobbies and "side-gigs" that I enjoy. I'm a musician; primarily a drummer, but I also sing and play guitar, bass, and piano. I've done consulting for churches looking to improve their live sound systems. I enjoy teaching, and have been known to annoy Michelle by going on long tangents about obscure passages of Scripture.

I hope this brief introduction gives you some better idea of who I am, and I'm looking forward to getting to know you as you also get to know me!

In Christ,
Pastor Mike Galica

September
2021



The Angel

From the Pastor

A few days ago I was stopped behind someone at a familiar intersection on the North Side of Pittsburgh. It is one of those intersections where three different streets come together and only one even remotely resembles a straight line. The car in front of me was from out of state and stopped in such a way as to suggest the driver wasn't familiar with the intersection. When the light turned green the car hesitated and slowly crawled to a parking place. As I went on, I felt sorry for the driver. He or she obviously didn't know where they were going. It seemed to me that she or he was depending upon GPS, which is often worthless navigating the streets of the North Side. The kindly, helpful voice coming from your smart phone sometimes simply doesn't correspond to the tangled mess of pavement you see through the windshield.

As a pastor, I often feel this way as I look ahead to September and the closing out of our summer months. I know roughly where I want to go, but the way to get there seems strange. At St. Luke's we approach a point that we familiarly call 'Rally Day' but little that we see looks very familiar at all. We have all just taken an almost two-year detour away from all to which we are accustomed. And we have done it while looking for a new shepherd to help steer the car. (I know that what I just wrote is a terrible mixed metaphor).

This September brings a lot of important dynamics for the life of St. Luke's. We have the return to Sunday School and related educational activities. We have the return to a fuller liturgical life in our congregation. We have the return to a more visible presentation of our congregational ministries and benevolences. We have important steps in the process of calling a pastor. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this September and activities it brings is one of the most important times that St. Luke's has ever faced. Let's not simply pull off into a safe parking space and wait to see what happens. Let's move forward with boldness and determination. St. Luke's needs each of us and each of us needs St. Luke's. Let's recommit ourselves to this congregation and this ministry. On August 15th, our first reading was a passage from the book of Joshua. The people of Israel are in transition as they prepare to enter the land that God had promised them. We, like them, are at a moment of transition. But we have God's Word and our faith to guide us. Do we do the hard work of moving forward or do we let it slip away? Let us answer, as did Joshua,: "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

May God bless you and St. Luke's in this time of transition and new beginnings.

Reverend Brian Shirey, Interim Pastor



St. Luke's Lutheran Church
310 West Main Street
PO Box 187
Saxonburg PA 16056

724-352-2333
stlukessaxonburg@gmail.com
stlks.com

Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday
8:30 - 2:30

Sunday Worship Times
8:15 and 10:00 (9/5 and 9/12)
8:15 and 10:45 (9/19 and 9/26)



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Council Communique
- Rally Day
- Monthly Mission
- September at a Glance
- Attendance and Finances
- Remembering September 11th



Church Staff & Leaders

Rev. Brian Shirey,
Interim Pastor
412-916-0122
bfshirey@gmail.com

Jeannine Sanford, AiM
724-594-5533
sanfordjeannine@hotmail.com

Music Department

Cortney Christoforetti, Organist
Ellen Dodge, Assistant Organist

Sextons

Linda Heade, Centennial Hall
Bobbie Shearer, Church

Marge Kollinger,
Parish Coordinator
724-822-7760
margiek@zoominternet.net

Shannon Miller, Office Manager
724-352-2333
stlukessaxonburg@gmail.com

Church Council

Bill Gordon (V.P.),
Barb Reuning (Treasurer),
Judy Moser (Secretary)

Amy Amadee, Cindy Bearrow, Ron Boltz, Carl Bowman, Dave Fugate, Adam Hartzell, Cindy Bearrow, Ron Boltz, Carl Bowman, David McRandal, Jeff Hartzell, Rachel Steiner

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3: 5-6

Anticipation implies waiting, and we've all had to experience that over the past 18+ months. We've been waiting for the pandemic to be over, waiting for our fellowship activities to resume, waiting for our lives to be normal again, and waiting for the pastoral call process to play out. Each of us has had a different waiting experience. Some waited with anticipation, while waiting caused anxiety and stress for others. As children of God, we waited for worldly circumstances to change, but we also kept moving forward in faith to fulfill our mission and trusting God to reach our ministry goals.

Council and Pastor continued to meet regularly to address our needs to keep us physically, financially, and spiritually sound. The majority of our August gathering was time spent in a virtual meeting with candidate Rev. Mike Galica. He met council members to introduce himself and to provide some background about his education and ministry experience. He eagerly interacted with us and answered every question posed to him.

After everyone had an opportunity to speak with and question Pastor Mike, he left the meeting. Council then proceeded to discuss the proposed benefits package Personnel had negotiated with Pastor Mike over the past few months. The compensation falls within the middle range of the NALC guidelines, and members discussed each item listed. Items like mileage, continuing education and conference expenses were not included in the package because they are budgeted annually. However, they are still attributed to the total cost of a pastor in our financial reports. Once all issues had been discussed and questions answered, council unanimously voted to approve the benefits package as proposed. This was an important step because council had to approve the financial package before the Call Committee could extend a formal call.

In other business, community groups have been waiting to use Centennial Hall. Some asked for clarification on a slight ambiguity in our Property Use Policy that

stated: "Property use for fundraising by non-profits is *discouraged*." To protect St. Luke's while keeping to our mission of community outreach via offering our campus for community use, council unanimously voted to change the policy item to read: "Property use for all fundraising purposes must be approved by church council." Council also agreed any policy changes (*with reason and date of each*) should be noted on the original policy.

Under Property, it was noted Sprankle's Market was told of council's conditional approval to use our parking lot as a shuttle turnaround for its Octoberfest and the Arts Festival in September. They have agreed to adhere to our normal entrance and exit traffic patterns for safety reasons.

Also, under property ministry, Carl Bowman has been diligently working to repair and paint walls to restore the nursery in the former office space for Rally Day. Dave McRandal has replaced a much-needed toilet in the upstairs ladies' room in Centennial Hall. Thank you, Carl and Dave, for giving so much of your time and talents to keep God's House in good order and welcoming condition!

Council discussed the possibility of a separate window/wall AC unit for Centennial Hall kitchen. Dave McRandal will check into that and get prices. Due to such extremely limited supplies, even if approved, we may have to wait until one is available.

Waiting is not easy, but how we wait matters. Whether waiting gives you angst or anticipation, God's Word tells us to wait on Him, and waiting for his timing is never in vain. God knows what we need and when we will be ready to receive it. He alone can take us from angst to assurance. Our Heavenly Father has given us a family of faith to love and support us while we wait. So, don't wait alone in worldly chaos when you can discover what blessings await you in our Father's House.

Come and See!

~ Judy Moser, Secretary



September 19, 2021

St. Luke's will return to our fall worship schedule (8:15 and 10:45 am) and we are excited to start the new Sunday School year off at 9:30 am in Centennial Hall. We hope you can join us!

Children's Sermon

Children's Sermons are back!! Children are invited to join Pastor Shirey for a brief lesson during each worship service.

King's Kidz

King's Kidz will resume at the 10:45 am service. Children ages 5 through 4th grade, will be dismissed before the Gospel so they may enjoy hearing the daily lesson in "kid's terms". King's Kidz will be held in the youth room in the church basement.

Backpack Blessing

A Backpack Blessing is an expression of our congregation's support for the callings of everyone associated with the education of children.

All students....bring your backpacks with you to worship for a blessing for the new school year. During worship, students and everyone involved in education will be recognized and a blessing given for the new school year.

First Communion

Sixth and seventh grade students, or those who have not yet had their first communion instruction and their parents / guardians, are invited to attend an instructional meeting for their First Holy Communion on Sunday, August 29 following the 10:00 am worship (11:15 am) in the Fellowship Hall (church basement). If interested, please contact Pastor Shirey (412-916-0122 cell).

Celebration of First Communion will take place at both services on Rally Day.



8:15 and 10:45

Worship

The 10:45 am service will continue to be livestreamed.

Join us Sunday morning or watch later.

stlks.com

9:30

Confirmation

(every Sunday)

Sunday School

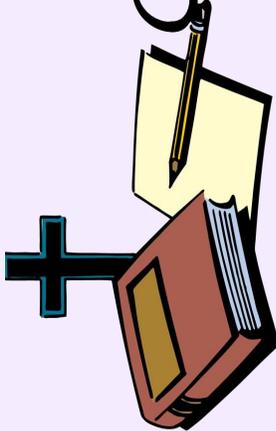
(3rd Sunday)

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19: 14

Cry Room

A cry room is available for parents as needed. It is located in the former office area downstairs. You will find a changing table, rocking chair, books and even a few toys. The speaker system allows those in the room to listen to the service.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Sunday School Teachers

Many thanks to this year's teachers! We are excited to start a new year with such gifted, spirit-filled and dedicated teachers.

- ◆ Age 3 - grade 6 - Kim Lunn, Mandy Jockel and Bill Gordon
- ◆ Confirmation - Pastor Shirey
- ◆ High School (St. Luke's Youth) - Kelly Weston
- ◆ Adults - Susan Beatty

Children's Sunday School

WELCOME BACK! We missed you and we are so glad that we will have our children back in-house for Sunday School starting September 19th.

Sunday School format is changing this year. We will only meet on the third Sunday of each month from 9:30 - 10:30 using our successful Funday Sunday format. All the kids (ages 3 through grade 6) will be together for a Bible lesson, snack, craft and games.

We hope you will work with us as we transition back into Sunday School. We would love to have our children all back together learning about God's love this fall.

Fall Sunday School Dates

October - 17
November - 21

Adult Sunday School

We can't wait to be back together!! Our adult Sunday School will resume on September 19th (Rally Day) at 9:30 am in the Hattie Cooper Room. It will once again be led by Susie Beatty!! We hope to see you there.

Confirmation

Pastor Shirey will resume weekly Confirmation Class on September 19th (Rally Sunday) from 9:30 - 10:30 am in the Confirmation Sunday School room.

St. Luke's Youth: Food and the Word

Breakfast will be served the third Sunday of every month (starting September 19th) for Senior Youth, FCS participants, and friends. Over the meal they will have a discussion about the Bible and how it relates to their lives, with some discussions meeting the FCS requirements. Senior Youth activities will also be planned and discussed.

NALC Convocation Update

More than 400 delegates and visitors gathered August 4-6 in Corpus Christi, Texas, for the 2021 Mission Convocation around the theme, "God the Father Creates." The convocation and the events preceding it comprise the NALC's annual Lutheran Week.

Many items were on the agenda during the few days of the convention. At the 2020 NALC Convocation, amendments were presented to the NALC Constitution. Two of those amendments were deferred to the 2021 Convocation.

Those amendments added language naming mission districts and mission regions. Both were approved. The amendments must now be ratified by NALC congregations.

For a brief summary of the convocation please visit stlks.com.

On Eagle's Wings: From Pandemic to Praise

St. Luke's invites everyone to a special memorial service honoring those who have passed and entered their eternal home. "On Eagle's Wings: From Pandemic to Praise" will be held at 2 pm Sunday, Sept. 26. The special worship service will be dedicated to congregational members, family and friends who died during the pandemic.

Church Supplies Collection



The church is always in need of paper supplies (tissues, toilet paper, paper towels, etc.), hand soap, and bottles of water for in the cafe. If you like to shop for bargains, you can drop your donation off at the office any time.



Donut Sunday Is Back!!

On the third Sunday of every month, starting in September, donuts will be provided in the café. Please stop by for refreshments and fellowship. Donations will be accepted to help defray the cost. If any individual or group would like to sponsor donuts, please contact Marge Kollinger (724-822-7760) or the church office (724-352-2333).

Stained Glass Windows Tours

Stained glass window tours were held on August 19th, led by Jeannine Sanford. Fifteen people from the congregation and the community joined.

FCS Matching Funds

With the grace of God, our senior high teens had a successful summer of working. Work hour documentation for FCS matching funds must be turned in to the office or Barb Reuning by **September 15th**.

Thank You

Dear St. Luke Church Members:

Thank you so much for the beautiful flower arrangements you always send me. Your thoughtfulness is appreciated.

Love,
Mary Elder



The Prayer Circle will start meeting in person on September 14th and will continue to meet every Tuesday in Fellowship Hall. Bring your lunch at 12:00 or just come for prayer at 12:30. Everyone is welcome to join.

Sweet Hour of Prayer



Music is one of God's greatest gifts to us. Music touches our souls and lifts our spirits. It offers encouragement, comfort and praise. We worship God through music in our worship services.

St. Luke's would like to share with you "Sweet Hour of Prayer," a compilation of sacred music, the Word of God and Prayer. It is available through CD or by email. It will be made available shortly, and it can be shared with others.

We would like to thank the following who contributed to the project: Rev. Brian Shirey, Cortney Christoforetti, Richard Beatty, Dave Fugate, Judy Moser, Holly Puett, Jeannine Sanford, Noah Steiner, Rachel Steiner, Evan Weston.

Organ Concert and Hymn Sing

Stop by St. Luke's Church during the September 16th Mingle on Main for an organ concert and hymn sing. Music starts at 6:00 & 7:00 pm. Ellen Dodge will be the organist.



**Sarver-Saxonburg
Christian
Leadership
Network
(CLN)**

The Sarver-Saxonburg Christian Leadership Network (CLN) is September's monthly mission. The Christian Leaders Network is a group of local Christian congregations working together for the sake of Jesus Christ to offer a helping hand to all in our community. Pastor Shawn Smith, from St. Paul's in Sarver, is the CLN President.

CLN works together to help by:

- Offering pastoral care, prayer and counseling to the community through every congregation/ministry.
- Providing a small financial grant to offer a helping hand once a year to a family in need who lives in the Sarver-Saxonburg area,
- Holding community worship services to inspire and strengthen people to grow in faith and Godly character.

The group comes together on a monthly basis for Bible study and business planning. The network in the past has planned the rotating Lenten mid-week services, Holy Week activities and services, Thanksgiving Eve services and youth gatherings.

The Network also offers emergency crisis support, coordinates with the area food banks and assists people in need of care.

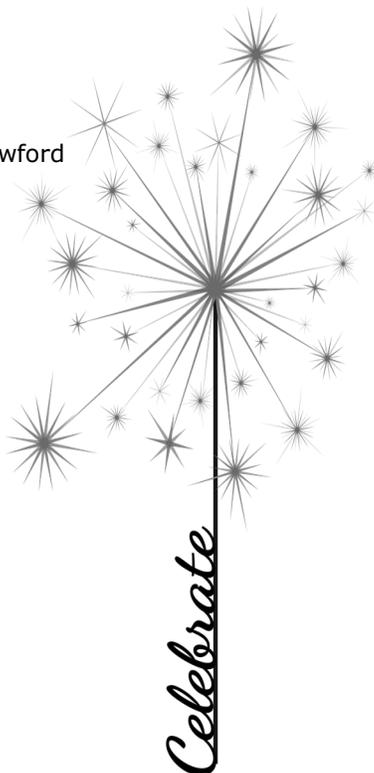
St Luke's Milestones

Birthdays

- 1-Sep Mikayla Crouch
- 2-Sep Dusty Olczak
- 5-Sep Charles Ekas
- 6-Sep Rebecca Carrozzo, Peggy Crawford
- 7-Sep Jennifer Ross
- 10-Sep David Fennell
- 11-Sep Karrigan Cranmer
- 12-Sep Noah Jockel
- 13-Sep Joyce Perkins
- 14-Sep Tayla Markwell, Natalie Savannah
- 15-Sep Ron Boltz
- 18-Sep Adam Hartzell
- 19-Sep Tim Markwell, Sadie Jockel
- 21-Sep Wendy Mendenhall
- 22-Sep Michael Gallagher
- 23-Sep Alicia Haas
- 25-Sep Neal Hay
- 27-Sep Francine Messmer

Anniversaries

- 3-Sep Charles and Jacqueline Bice
- 4-Sep Ross and Jeannine Strohmyer
- 5-Sep David and Judy Gundlach
- 25-Sep Neal and Cynthia Hay
- 25-Sep Wendy and Rick Mendenhall
- 27-Sep Eric and Julie Edder
- 28-Sep John and Rosa Nuti



Congratulations to Jason and Katie Bubb on the baptism of their son Kyler William Bubb on August 22nd. Kyler joins his brother Nolan and sister Emery and is the grandson of Tom and Gretchen Gallagher

Attendance & Finances

By The Numbers	July 2021
Avg. Attendance: 8:15	23
Avg. Attendance: 10:00	28
Monthly Income	\$11,822
Monthly Expense	\$13,249
Monthly Difference	-\$1,427
Year-to-Date Income	\$104,422
Year-to-Date Expense	\$83,747
Year-to-Date Difference	\$20,675

Prayer

Please continue to pray for:

Roger Walker, Sonya Winters, Patty, Jim Humes, Rochelle Harbison, Ann, Clara Pitschke, Kelly Kramich, Mark Kollinger, Bonnie Weaver, Bobbie Jo Shearer, Sue, Persecuted believers, Liz Gordon, Carol Zagorski, Nancy Daum, Joseph, Roy, Lil Bachman, Jim F., Brandi, Jeannie, Marilyn, Rich Gustafson, Ken Crall, Donna Tasker, Shawn, Angela & family, Afghanistan, Haiti, Debbie Sell, Robert McCormick

In Sympathy

Please remember in your prayers the family and friends of:

Norma Moser, Barry Huff, Mary Precious, Dwight Dinsmore, Vicki Jo Yurga, Catherine Drescher, Betty McCormick, Norbert Miller

Those unable to regularly worship with us :

Fred Crux, Ruth Cypher, Dorothy Kane, Allen Knappenberger, Jim McLafferty, John Nuti, Pat Ross, Pearl Parnell, Clarence Wagner, Ned Ziegler



Contact: Judy Gundlach, Prayer Chain
724-352-3543

Submit a request online:
stlks.com/prayer

Contact the office:
stlukessaxonburg@gmail.com

724-352-2333

SEPTEMBER AT A GLANCE

Sundays - Worship at 8:15 am and 10:00 am (9/5 and 9/12) or 10:45 am (9/19 and 9/26) with communion at the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

Sept 6
Labor Day – Office Closed

Sept 12
Happy Grandparents Day!!

Sept 13
6:30 pm - Council Meeting

Sept 14
12:00 pm - Prayer Circle Lunch
12:30 pm - Prayer Circle

Sept 16
6:00 and 7:00 pm - Organ Concert/Hymn Sing

Sept 19
Rally Day!!
8:15 am - Worship
9:30 am - Sunday School
10:45 am - Worship
2:00 pm – Orchards Service

Sept 20
10:00 am - Sewing Group
Angel Article Deadline

Sept 21
12:00 pm - Prayer Group

Sept 26
8:15 am - Worship with Pastor Galica

10:45 am - Worship with Pastor Galica

12:30 pm - Congregational Meeting

2:00 pm - Memorial Service

Sept 27
6:00 – 8:00 pm - Community Quiet Time

Sept 28
12:00 pm - Prayer Circle Lunch
12:30 pm - Prayer Circle

5-Sep Communion			
	Acolyte	Communion Asst.	Greeter
8:15	Cathy Boyd	Cathy Boyd	Audrey Lott
10:00	Rachel Steiner	Travis Yates	Susan Beatty
Counters: Jackie Bice and Bob Bicker			

12-Sep			
	Acolyte	Lector	Greeter
8:15	Ron Boltz	Beth Zellhart	Ruth Markwell
10:00	Bill Gordon	Doris Herceg	Rachel Steiner
Counters: Donna Shipe and Dave Fugate			

19-Sep Communion			
	Acolyte	Communion Asst.	Greeter
8:15		Amy Montag-Smith	Marge Kollinger
10:45		Jeannine Sanford	Susan Beatty
Counters: Kathy McRandal and Lil Bachman			

26-Sep			
	Acolyte	Lector	Greeter
8:15		Peggy Crawford	Kathy McRandal
10:45		Cindy Bearrow	Gayle Gundlach
Counters: Jeff Hartzell and Bill Gordon			

September Altar Guild	
8:15	Audrey Lott and Wendy Mendenhall
10:00/ 10:45	Jackie Bice and Helen McLafferty



... Mike Crouch

Congratulations to Mike on being inducted into the Knoch High School Sports Hall of Fame. Established in 2015, the Knoch Hall of Fame honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to Knoch sports through athletic excellence and/or exemplary leadership contribution in sports activity. Mike will be inducted on Sept 3rd during the home football game.

Remembering September 11, 2001 20 Years Later

It was a beautiful, clear crisp Tuesday morning. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. I started off to work as thousands of others that fall day in 2001. We did not know that our lives would be changed forever in just a few hours.

I was serving at a faith-based agency in Washington, DC, assisting the homeless with training and employment. I was in a training room discussing culinary concepts when a work colleague interrupted me to come and look at a computer. A jet just hit the first tower in New York. It was shortly after 8:45 am.

It's hard to believe that it has been 20 years since the events of 9/11. Time does fly by in a flash. At other times, it stands still, as I am sure for many people whose lives were forever changed that day.

We are frozen, staring at the computer. The second tower is hit at 9:03 am, all while watching the monitor. Workers are surrounding computers and listening to the radio. People start spilling into the streets. Then at 9:43 am, the plane hits the Pentagon. Still later, we heard that a plane went down in southwestern PA. Then the radio started reporting that bombs were going off all over DC (the White House, the capitol, the government buildings near us). Nobody was waiting for direction from supervisors. Most of my colleagues and clients took off. To this day, I don't know how people got home.

What happened after that dissolved into complete chaos.

The subway was stopped. Cars and people jammed the streets. You couldn't go anywhere. It was a flight or stay moment. What to do? I went outside and saw everybody scurrying around. I knew the metro was shut down. I go right by the Pentagon on my way home from work. I was trapped, the type of helpless feeling that I never felt before.

I felt that all points of my life were intersecting at one moment. My boss was literally on an airplane in New York, coming back to DC. Is she safe? I discovered later that her jet was on the tarmac ready to take off. She was one of many walking miles back into the city after the planes were grounded. Another plane went down in southwestern PA. Was it near my hometown? We later learned it crashed in Somerset County. An aunt said she saw the plane flying over our hometown before it crashed. I visited the site years later in solemn respect for those brave passengers and crew. It was believed that plane was heading to the White House or the U.S. Capitol.

And then the Pentagon. One of my culinary graduates was working there. Did she make it out alive? I learned the next day that she was one of the ones stumbling out and walking back into DC in order to get home. I happened to be into work early that morning. Later, when I realized the time of impact, it would have been the time that I was going by the Pentagon traveling to work. The smell and smoke were evident for days after the impact. The darkened, charred gaping hole in the side of the impenetrable fortress lasted much, much longer - a daily reminder of the face of evil. I did not lose anybody that day. But I knew people who lost loved ones from New York to DC.

My panicked sister kept calling until she could reach me. This scenario was playing out all over the world now. I assured her that I was safe.

Where could I find security and feel safe? The agency where I worked was connected to a church, the same church that started the community agency years before to help the hopeless. Those of us who remained that day gathered in the church. We held hands and we prayed to our Lord. We prayed like never before. We invited those around to come in for safety and a place to stay for a while - away from the screaming sirens and panic. At that moment, we still heard that bombs were being set off all over the city and jets continued to crash into buildings. Some of us thought we would not see the next day. We learned later that the bombings weren't true and that all jets were grounded. We didn't know this information until much later. But at that time, we felt the only safe security was to be in the Lord's presence.

I can't tell you when I got home that night, but it was dark. Driving by the Pentagon... when hours before.... it was too much.

If there is a face of evil, it was evident that day in the senseless, terroristic acts and the loss of so many people. It was a sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

But there is another side to this story, right? The faces of hope, of courage, of love, of caring., of reaching out. The compassion of God is shown through so many rescuers, helping those trapped, the self-sacrifice of so many.

Remember good always triumphs over evil.

God promises that in his Son Jesus Christ. We may not know the answer to the why of worldly events. But, we must put our confidence and trust in our Lord. God is with us in our suffering. God promises to never abandon us.

After 9/11, there was a surge in people returning to the church pews like it has not been seen in years. This didn't last long. Why? Why are we driven to the pews when only bad stuff happens? God will hold us in the palm of his hand now and always, in good and bad times. It doesn't have to be an act of terror. It can be an illness, death, tragedy, loss of job, bankruptcy, addictions. When we turn to the Lord, God will guide our path, be our comforter, our Savior, our protector.

The love of God is especially found in the community of Christ. Weekly corporate worship brings a sense of community and closeness to God. We can share each other's burdens, love one another, comfort one another in the presence of God. On September 12, please join us in worship as we lift up special prayers in the memory of lives lost on that day.

Please check in on your neighbor. Make a phone call or visit. Don't put it off. We don't know when the Lord will call us home. We will have all of eternity with Him when he does. Until that time, we cannot live worrying about the past, present or future. Live in the moment that God has given us, and spread the love and witness of his Son Jesus Christ in our lives, words and actions.

I know I wasn't one of the brave rescuers. But we all were affected in some way that day. With chaos all around, we gathered in prayer to bring a sense of hope to the hopelessness and a sense of peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeannine Sanford
Assistant Minister of Pastoral Care