



Eastern Synod Newsletter

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Confirmation in a Pandemic *Rev Pam McNeil*

July 12 2020 was a special day for the South Grey Bruce Lutheran parish of Mildmay, Normanby and Neustadt as the congregation witnessed 6 young people affirm their baptism promise. After studying for two years, these young people and their families were not going to let something like a pandemic stop this celebration! Oh, and did I mention that I arrived as their pastor just weeks before Covid isolation began? The final confirmation class was an email assignment.

Following health guidelines, one family bubble at a time (up to 9 people) gathered in the church each week over 5 weeks to participate in the worship recording for that Sunday, and to celebrate with the young person as faith was professed. The parents or sponsors were invited to 'lay on hands' as the pastor spoke the blessing and prayer to "stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit". It was a powerful moment.

The congregation was represented by a 'word cloud' - an idea suggested by Sandra Powell, a friend from Resurrection Halifax.

Members of the congregation sent words of welcome, faith and congratulations for each confirmand, so no two clouds were the same. These were put on a card along with a personal verse of scripture, and presented to each person. The family celebrated Holy Communion together and then photographs were taken

Each confirmation was recorded and it is a sign of the connectedness of this community that the families wanted to have all of the individual affirmation events broadcast to the

congregation on the same date. Thus followed several hours of learning how to edit and combine videos and the result was shared on July 12 as part of the South Grey Bruce worship broadcast. (www.sweetlutheran.com) A confirmation collage was created from individual photographs for the archives.

We are excited and blessed to have these young people continue to grow in faith as part of this parish.



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Bethesda Sharecroppers

On July 8, a group of members from Bethesda Lutheran Church gathered at a distance at our Sharecropper Growing project to share a blessing for a good harvest. The crop, 50 acres of winter soft red wheat, will probably be harvested about two weeks on. The site is on the SW corner of Warden Avenue and the Stouffville Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville, ON. The crop and land are provided by Galten Farms operated by Arthur Schickedanz and his family and supported by the Bethesda Lutheran Church in Unionville. We have also been supported by St. Johns United Church in Oakville over the past number of years.

Pastor Roy Thakurdial based his blessing on a scripture passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 9, including verses beginning at 6 "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that by always having enough of everything you may share abundantly in every good work.... He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multi-



ply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us. For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.Thanks be to God for his indescribable gifts!"

It was a beautiful but hot late afternoon as the group gathered to share this blessing. Those present were pleased to gather at a distance in the outdoors to share in this blessing at a time when the pandemic of COVID-19 is bringing great harm to the entire world. The need for aid has never been greater and we hope this project and the generous donations from members of the congregation will demonstrate the thankfulness of the members of Bethesda for the life of plenty we enjoy in Canada today.

Official Historian



Filling a Fresh Produce Gap

Impacts of COVID-19 have been immense. On the top of the list for too many Canadians is greater food insecurity. We at St. Philip's Lutheran Church noticed the needs for food growing in the neighbourhood around us. A nearby food bank had closed, the calls to the church for food had increased and our neighbourhood partner organizations told us about increased concerns among their clients.

So we made a decision to pivot from our summer program 'The Neighbourhood Table' to 'The Neighbourhood Table at Home'.

"We delivered COVID-19 response emergency Good Food boxes from FoodShare"

With our two partners, The Arab Community Centre of Toronto and Polycultural Immigration and Community Services, we identified the most needy families within proximity of the church.

With funding from the Eastern Synod Mission Grant, our own fund-raising efforts and a \$10,000 grant through Good Food Access Fund, we were able to scope our program for 65 families for 8 weeks.

On Thursdays, a FoodShare truck pulled into our parking lot mid-afternoon. The driver unloaded 65 produce boxes filled with fresh vegetables and fruits along with loaves of fresh bread. At 4pm, 12 driving teams arrived, got their route maps and headed out.

And in an effort to build community with the families we included family-friendly activities around food. For example, this is the little planting kit that went out in week one. Other fun and educational resources for children and adults were available on Google Classroom. We encouraged engagement on social media with our #NHTathome.

Additional funding from Good Food Access Fund acquired late in the program will allow us to wrap up with the delivery of \$150 of grocery gift cards to each family.



Our volunteer drivers can absolutely attest to the gratitude of the families. They also expressed their own gratitude to be part of a community effort in the time of COVID. If there is any uncertainty about whether the program made a difference in the lives of these families, you just need to know about one phone call. My cell phone rang on a Thursday afternoon two weeks after we had finished our 8-week program. A young child told me his mom had asked him to call and ask why we had not delivered boxes in the past two weeks?

Rev. Tuula Van Gaasbeek



Shifting Paradigms: Lectures now online

A series of eight audio lectures exploring Martin Luther's revolutionary and lasting impact on the world is now available [online](#). The series, Shifting Paradigms: Martin Luther's Enduring Global Impact, was delivered by Luther's scholars during a Third Age Learning Kitchener Waterloo program in early 2020. Dr. Mary (Joy) Philip, pictured, concluded the series with her talk [Martin Luther in Global Context](#).

Convocation video

Given the pandemic protocols under which we are operating, Laurier postponed convocation ceremonies for this year's graduating class.

Nevertheless, as is our custom, we held a ceremony of thanksgiving and blessing (albeit, online this year). Feel free to view the pre-recorded [video](#) portion of the ceremony. The video includes prayers and personal reflections by our new graduates.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Class of 2020!



Congratulations to the Class of 2020!

Ordination in Jerusalem

We celebrated the recent ordination of Rodny Said in Jerusalem with this [visual/musical tribute](#). Rodny was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). He first came to Luther in 2014. His presence was an expression of the school's commitment to the Companion Synod relationship between the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the ELCJHL. Rodny earned BA and MDiv degrees.

In-person counselling

The [Delton Glebe Counselling Centre](#) has resumed in-person counselling sessions. Call 519.884.3305 or email glebecentre@wlu.ca. If in crisis, please call 1.844.437.3247

International worship

thirdspace_'s online worship is regularly drawing folks from near and far — including B.C., Alberta and Germany! If you're searching for connection on Sunday mornings, join Rev. Anne Anderson as she leads 10:30 a.m. liturgy for the alternative worshipping community [thirdspace](#). Participate by visiting the community's [Facebook page](#) or through the Zoom video chat platform. You can access Zoom chats using a web browser — you don't need special software. To join through Zoom, email [Anne](#).

Tribute in photos

We bid farewell to Rev. Dr. Mark Harris as he retired in mid-July. View the [photo tribute](#) of his time at Luther, which included teaching, a historic name-change, campus renewal and more.

Consensus

No doubt, sustainability and religion are top-of-mind for stewards of God's community. So the latest issue of [Consensus](#), the Canadian journal of public theology, explores the intersection of both...and more.

The journal is co-edited by Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, and Martin Luther University College.



Vol. 3 Issue 7 Luther is a collection of news from Martin Luther University College in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.
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Sharing Stories – What I find exciting

I recently had the chance to engage with a donor about her experience as a planned giving donor and why giving and community are so important to her and her husband. With the donor's permission, I'm pleased to share her touching story.

Margaret and her husband, Bob, had recently moved to a new community. When I inquired about their church membership, Margaret indicated that they were going to keep their membership with their original church, as they were excited about the shared ministry opportunities that were occurring in their Ministry Area. It was great to hear from someone so excited about this new ministry. I wanted to find out [more](#).

Kathryn Smith | Giving Advisor | ksmith@elfec.ca | 1-888-308-9461

2020 Offerings Impacted by Pandemic

Financial Update (as of July 31st, 2020)

Benevolence offerings received by the Synod office from congregations during the month of July decreased by 9%, compared to July, 2019. Over the first seven months of the year, these offerings have decreased by 8% compared to the same period in 2019.

Offerings designated for Canadian Lutheran World Relief have decreased much more significantly, showing a decline of 30% so far this year.

If we were living in more normal times, these would be disappointing results. Given that these are unprecedented times, we are very grateful for the many members and congregations who are continuing to help fund synodical and other church-wide ministries by faithfully remitting their offerings on a regular basis. These ministries that are supported through your offerings have always been important – they are even more critical in these unprecedented times!

For details, refer to [Financial Update](#) on the synod website.

Our prayers are with the family and friends of Rev Harold Brill as they mourn his death.



*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
Psalm 73:26*

Hey have you heard?

We have a new Assistant to the Bishop in charge of communications and he wants to know what's happening in your congregation.

If you send out a newsletter please subscribe Rev Adam Snook, asnook@elcic.ca

A Person of Hope and Kindness

The time of COVID-19 has sped up what is a very fast-paced ministry on any given day, says Rev. Dan Bowyer, who serves as the chaplain at Trinity Village, Kitchener, a long-term care centre that is a ministry of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, full-communion partner of the Anglican Church of Canada. Asked if in retrospect he felt adequately prepared for dealing with the pandemic crisis in his role as a healthcare chaplain, Bowyer points out that he is thankful that he has served in ordained ministry in the Diocese of Huron for fourteen years before accepting this role at a long-term care facility.

“The chaplaincy ministry at Trinity Village is not one that I would have wanted to begin without having had some pastoral experience in ordained ministry”, says Bowyer.

He admits that he often found himself recalling the words of his supervisor at his parish internship placement back in the summer of 2005, before he was ordained: “He pointed out the importance of being present in the moment, so that God’s presence could be made known for those I am called to serve in the times of great pastoral need and to find time afterwards to do my own processing. I have never forgotten this, and it has been particularly helpful now.”

Part of the stress during the pandemic has come from the unpredictability of what each day will bring, says Bowyer. Strict rules introduced at the home care facility have imposed various limitations to the usual way of providing his ministry. Worship, discussion groups, music ministries – all activities he typically leads or co-ordinates at Trinity Village – require group gatherings, and those have been on hold for months. Rev. Bowyer’s role has been directed to one-on-one spiritual and pastoral daily support. And this has been done in difficult circumstances with limited move-

ments throughout the facility while wearing personal protective equipment.

“We have to change into new PPE when we move from one area of Trinity Village to another and I change into new PPE immediately after I have visited and offered prayer in the room of a resident who has COVID-19”, says Bowyer.

As the numbers of infected declines and life at the residence slowly returns to what resembles the “old normal”, the chaplain is able to contemplate on what has given him strength to persist in his role in the last several months.

“This experience has shown me that God’s presence is faithful in the midst of challenges. Prayer and the knowledge of God’s guidance with me, first and foremost has been the source of my strength, hope and encouragement”, reflects Bowyer.

Many of the staff have told Rev. Dan that prayer has helped them in their everyday tasks throughout these difficult times.

“Dan’s gentle words of comfort and encouragement gave many of us the strength and courage”, says Charlotte, Trinity Village RPN summing up a notion which emerged at this time of crisis – that having a chaplain on staff at any long term centre is a necessity.

[READ REV. HILTON GOMES’ STORY: ‘Give the best you have, and it will never be enough’](#)

For Trinity Village residents and their families these last few months have only reaffirmed that Rev. Dan Bowyer’s presence covers much more than providing religious services. In the words of Natalie, one of the family members, the time of anxiousness and fear amplified the need to have a chaplain at the long-term care facility, especially one like Rev. Dan:

“He is a person of hope and calmness – a reason to smile”. Rev. Dan Bowyer is thankful to his wife Sarah who has been a constant support amid his exhaustion. He has also much appreciated the pastoral care and support of Bishop Todd who has checked in with him pastorally numerous times. His gratitude goes to Bishop Mike at the Eastern Synod of the ELCiC, his Archdeacon Megan and all colleagues in the Deanery of Waterloo of the Diocese of Huron who have assured him of their prayers and have sent gifts to Trinity Village for the staff, like donations of lunch and “ear savers” for staff’s masks.

“I have been blessed by God’s work through so many different people to make known his presence both with me and with Trinity Village in these days”, concludes Rev. Bowyer.

Davor Milicevic

*From the Huron Church News
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*Chaplain
Dan with
Trinity
Residents*