

# Eastern Synod Newsletter

[www.easternsynod.org](http://www.easternsynod.org)



Oct 15, 2020  
Volume 100

It's every year. Every year. Every year the big family get together. Every year the kids come home from university or community college, and banks and stores and businesses for the most part take the day off. Every year there are favourite foods and second helpings and third helpings that you have to loosen your belt and lay down and take a nap. Every year. Except this year.

We celebrate Thanksgiving every year and in Canada we have been celebrating since 1921 by an Act of Parliament. If you have a perpetual calendar and enough patience you could figure out the exact date when Thanksgiving would be celebrated for the next hundred years.

So here we are, celebrating a national holiday, a day of overeating and television watching and hikes and drives to take in the fall colours and catching up with the relatives. Here we are celebrating a national holiday, despite Covid-19, even in church. You have to wonder why.

It's not in the Bible. Jesus and his disciples didn't sit around a long table and eat turkey and cranberry sauce every fall. It's not part of the ancient tradition of the church, either.

Thanksgiving is not a religious

celebration. It's a national holiday. You don't see people going to church on July 1 or Remembrance Day unless it falls on a Sunday. So why do we celebrate Thanksgiving in church?

We are in church on Thanksgiving, in person or online, because a day set aside for giving thanks raises an inescapable question. To who, exactly, are we giving thanks? You give thanks to someone. We teach our children to be polite and respectful. We teach them to say "Please", when they ask for something, and to say "Thank you" when they get it. Yet you can get a gift and use that gift and love that gift without ever saying, "Thank you." Giving thanks isn't about the gift. Giving thanks is about the giver. You say "Thank you" to someone. Saying "Thank you" acknowledges that there is another person in-

involved. Giving thanks establishes a relationship. If we as a nation are giving thanks over this weekend, Covid or not, then somewhere wrapped up in all of it is the question of whom we are thanking.

Now we Canadians don't always acknowledge this but the first well-known Thanksgiving celebration took place in Massachusetts among the Pilgrims in 1621, and there was no question whatsoever as to whom they were thanking. They were thanking God. It was a day and a feast set aside for the express purpose of thanking God. The colony was new and survival was anything but certain. Colonial settlements had collapsed or given up or just plain vanished. The colonists had learned to adapt to the climate of their new home. They were in good shape,

*Cont'd on page 2*



Like us on Facebook  
[ESynodELCIC](https://www.facebook.com/ESynodELCIC)

Follow us on Twitter  
[@ESynodECIC](https://twitter.com/ESynodECIC)

and Instagram [easternsynod](https://www.instagram.com/easternsynod)

with enough shelter and enough food to survive the harsh New England winter. The colonists were Puritans, a conservative group of Christian believers. God had clearly blessed them and they knew it. They had been taken care of and given gifts, so they gave thanks.

But that was 1621. What about 1622? What is somewhat less well known is that there was no Thanksgiving celebration in 1622. The harvest was not so good the next year and so the colonists were going into the winter with more fear and much less security. The Puritans had concluded that God had not chosen to bless them that year and so a feast of Thanksgiving would not have been in order. To the Puritans, Thanksgiving was not an automatic celebration that happened every year in and year out no matter what. They gave thanks in times of plenty. They repented in times of want.

But we are not the Puritans! Unlike the Puritans, we celebrate Thanksgiving annually. That in itself, raises another question. If we are thankful every year, right on schedule, then what is it we are giving thanks for? Not every year is a good year. Given Covid how would you rate 2020? Sometimes things are going great for ourselves, our loved ones, our coun-

try. Sometimes there is health and happiness everywhere you look. Sometimes there is peace and plenty. Sometimes, but not always.

There are other times when serious matters like climate change, and racial injustice, and political strife, and most especially a pandemic called Covid-19 dominates our thoughts and our days and our headlines. These days are filled with worry and sickness for some, dysfunction and anxiety for others. Yet here we are in October and Thanksgiving still comes.

So what is it that we are giving thanks for this year? Do we give thanks for our material blessings? Absolutely we should and absolutely we do, although good fortune comes and goes. Do we give thanks for the people that we love and that love us? Of course, we do, knowing well that families and friendships have good times and bad, that people come into our lives and people move out of our lives. Tragedy and heartache can come upon us at any time. We don't know what will happen. Whoever foresaw this pandemic last October?

And what makes us so certain that there will be something to give thanks for next October? Why do calendars come already printed in the confidence that there will be

reason for gratitude next year? There is, in fact, a rather simple answer to that question. We schedule Thanksgiving every year because there is no doubt that there will be something to be thankful for every year.

Dear friends in Christ, even in the midst of catastrophe, even in the midst of a pandemic, there are blessings. Is this just optimism? Is this nothing more than a perky, Pollyanna attitude? A happy can-do attitude? No! We can say with certainty that we will always have blessings to count because we know what those blessings are. God loves us no matter what and God loves us most perfectly in Jesus Christ and that God cares for each of us to the core of our being. That was true last year and it'll be true next year. All of us are God's children. All of us. Always there is mercy. Always there is life. God gives us purpose. God gives us a future. We are never alone. God gives us each other. God opens our eyes and opens our hearts and gives us the strength and the will to care for each other.

Whether we have much or whether we have little these things don't change. When our hearts are joyful and when our hearts are breaking, God always loves us. God never forsakes or forgets us. We are never abandoned. We are never alone.

So, my friends, let us give thanks. Let us give thanks with our words or in the silence of our hearts. Let us give thanks with our time. Let us give thanks with our thoughts and our emotions and our love for our neighbour. Always, every year and every day and every minute, we have reason to give thanks.

In the name of the God who loves us all. Amen.

Rev. Douglas Reble  
Assistant to the Bishop  
Eastern Synod, ELCIC





# LUTHER

October 2020



## Info sessions, video tour

If you or someone you know might be interested in studying at Luther, we will be holding information sessions for [MA Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy](#) on Oct. 23, and [PhD programs](#) on Nov. 6. Feel free to join PhD candidate Mark Ehlebracht, who also serves as pastor at St. Peter's Church in Kitchener, on a spirited [video tour](#) of campus.

## National exposure

What a delight it was to see our staff and faculty featured in Canada Lutheran! That's Rev. Anne Anderson, our community pastor and leader of the third-space\_ community, on the cover.

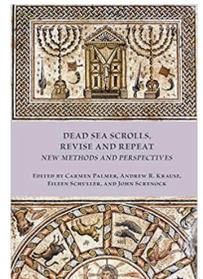


Connect with [thirdspace\\_](#) on Sunday mornings. Anne leads liturgy for the alternative worshipping community starting at 10:30 a.m. Participate through the Zoom video chat platform. Please email [Anne](#). And the magazine's In Mission feature

shone a spotlight on Debbie Lou Ludolph, dean of chapel and director of the [Kanata Centre for Worship and Global Song](#). "Mission is being God's love in the world through engaging in compassionate justice," she says.

## Dead Sea Scrolls

Kudos to Carmen Palmer, adjunct faculty member, on being one of the lead editors for the recently released book [Dead Sea Scrolls, Revise and Repeat](#). The essay collection contains new theoretical frameworks and Qumran scholarship.



*Vol. 3 Issue 9 Luther is a collection of news from Martin Luther University College in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Website: [luther.wlu.ca](#) Events: Dorinda Kruger Allen [dkrugerallen@luther.wlu.ca](mailto:dkrugerallen@luther.wlu.ca) Stories: Mirko Petricevic, [mpetricevic@luther.wlu.ca](mailto:mpetricevic@luther.wlu.ca)*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[< View More >](#)

TUESDAY, OCT. 20, 2020  
[Reflections On Ruth And Esther](#)  
ONLINE  
12:30 P.M. - 12:50 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21, 2020  
[Glebe Centre Breakfast - Grief, Loss, Ritual And Hope In The Time Of COVID](#)  
WATERLOO, BRANTFORD, ONLINE  
8 A.M. - 9:30 A.M.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21, 2020  
[Walking Meditation](#)  
12:30 P.M. - 12:50 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21, 2020  
[Learning Styles Workshop](#)  
WATERLOO, BRANTFORD, ONLINE  
2 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.

## Public events

Although we are not hosting events at Luther, we continue to make many of our online offerings available to the public. Keep in the loop by going to our website [luther.wlu.ca](#) and scrolling to the timeline (pictured) at the bottom of the page.

### Financial Update (as of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Benevolence offerings received by the Synod office during the month of September decreased by 14.4%, compared to September 2019. Over the first nine months of the year, the Year to Date benevolence offerings have decreased by over 6.5% compared to the same period in 2019.

Offerings designated for Canadian Lutheran World Relief saw an increase in September 2020 over September 2019 by 45.6%. This increase was in part due to donations to support the CLWR campaign aimed at the Lebanon crisis. The Lebanon crisis donations made up 9.7% of the 45.6% increase. There was also a single donation from a congregation of \$7,500 which represented 46.4% of the overall monthly CLWR donations. The Year to Date offerings to September declined by 20.6%.

Given the uncertainty of the pandemic and how long it will last, we still feel 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 you support through your offerings have always been important, and as the months during this pandemic stretch on, they are even more critical.

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

We hold the following rostered ministers in our prayers following the death of a loved one in recent weeks:

Rev Gini Cookman on the death of her mother  
Rev Sylvia Swiatoschik on the death of her father  
Rev David Maginley on the death of his father  
Rev Richard Schwass on the death of his father

*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,  
and saves the crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18*



### Mission Grant Application Deadline Fast Approaching

In light of the fact that most of our congregations are currently consumed with the process of navigating their way back to gathering physically for worship. It is our belief, that a deadline extension will allow some breathing room for congregational leaders.

Also, applications for funding of electronic equipment will now be considered.

**The new deadline for Mission Grant applications will be October 30, 2020.**

[Click here for more details.](#)

### Looking for handbells

Redeemer Lutheran, London would like to start a small, handbell choir.

If you know of any used handbells please get in touch with Christel Mikelic,



[cmikelic@rogers.com](mailto:cmikelic@rogers.com)

### It's not too late to be part of the Bishops' Company for Mission.

**Please sign up for one of the sessions below. A Zoom link will be sent to you along with instructions as to how to join online.**

Oct 21 (1 pm) - <https://form.jotform.com/202255237812248>

Oct 31 (1 pm) - <https://form.jotform.com/202256122620239>

Questions? Check out this video for more details. <https://easternsynod.org/bishops-company/>



# LUTHER

OCTOBER 2020

DONOR UPDATE



## From the archives

Among the many ways Auxiliary members supported students throughout the decades, they created dozens of quilts and donated them to seminarians. Centre: Auxiliary board members and Luther's principal-dean gather in Keffer Memorial Chapel in 2018 for the AGM in the recently renewed building. Right: Jean Hachborn, Ruth Gillespie and Ida Stahlschmidt (Auxiliary founder) with a seminary cake. Auxiliary members sold recipes as a fundraiser. For links to more images, please visit the Stay Connected webpage and open the Auxiliary tab.

## Deepest thanks to our Auxiliary for more than a century of service!

We extend our deepest gratitude to members the Auxiliary of Martin Luther University College for more than a century of service to students in Waterloo.

The Auxiliary's board recently decided to disband the organization. The Women's Auxiliary began its existence in 1913 when Ida Stahlschmidt (of Preston) gathered four women who believed that a women's group could be a good support to the newly established seminary. For over 106 years, the Auxiliary has been supporting students studying for the Lutheran ministry, as well as those who were enrolled at Waterloo College School; Waterloo College of Arts; and in later years, Waterloo Lutheran University.

In recent decades, Auxiliary members have focused their work on supporting students enrolled in clinical pastoral education (CPE) programs; tending to the school's gardens; gathering quilts crafted by Lutheran congregations and

presenting them to newly rostered ministers; and decorating the school for festive seasons.

**Join us for Open Door  
Wednesday Oct. 7 at 5 p.m.  
when we will express our gratitude  
for the Auxiliary's work  
Zoom link:  
[bit.ly/LutherODThanksgiving](https://bit.ly/LutherODThanksgiving)  
meeting ID: 886 1517 4573  
passcode: 867295**

**We also hope to gather next  
spring to express our gratitude  
to Auxiliary members in  
person. Stay tuned to  
correspondence from the  
Synod office and to Luther's  
social media for details.**

The waning number of women's groups in local congregations has been reflected in declining support for the Auxiliary, decreasing attendance at annual meetings,

and a lack of volunteers to provide ongoing leadership. We are rightfully proud of the rich legacy of the Auxiliary and all that it has done to support pastoral students in their education at the seminary for over a century. There remains a desire to continue the work to provide scholarships for students enrolled at Luther to take CPE. If you wish to donate to these scholarships you can send a cheque made out to Martin Luther University College, noting CPE scholarships, or donate online.

As well, the quilts continue to be stored at Luther and will be given to Lutheran students when they are ordained.

To recognize their contribution to the life of the church, we planned to hold a celebration this past spring. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled because of COVID-19. We hope to hold an in-person gathering in 2021.