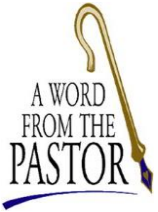




Good Shepherd  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

# April / May 2021 News

1504 Spruce Avenue, Coquitlam, BC  
604-936-2939  
Pastor: Eric Krushel 604-936-1864  
Ministers: You the people of God  
[www.GSLCC.ca](http://www.GSLCC.ca)



## VISIONING QUESTIONS

- vision: 1. The faculty or state of being able to see  
2. The ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom

“Vision” is one of those words that is easy to use and difficult to define. And so I am grateful for the editors of dictionaries for their skill in articulating the meanings of such words.

The first definition stated above is probably the one that comes first to mind for most of us. But it's the second definition that expresses the sense we intend when we speak about our congregational visioning process. This is indeed a process of thinking about the future. And there's rarely been a more opportune time for that.

So often when we think about planning for the future we think about how we can perpetuate what we've done before, or even return to what once was. But the pandemic has disrupted that temptation. We know things will never be exactly as they were before. So how can we take advantage of that and be a little more open-ended in our thinking and planning?

Which leads to the next part of the definition above, that is, to think about the future “with imagination or wisdom.” Actually, I think that should be “imagination **and** wisdom.” Using our imagination is not always something we're good at as church people. Maybe to some of us it even sounds a little dangerous.

But that's exactly what Jesus was doing in his parables. He wasn't simply teaching us tidy and moralistic little life lessons. He was painting pictures of a kingdom that blew open people's imaginations. A kingdom that included those no one ever thought belonged. A kingdom that covered more territory than anyone ever realized. A kingdom that brought together those who no one believed would or should have anything to do with each other. And a kingdom where God is revealed in unexpected people and places and activities. A kingdom where the wisdom of God turned the logic of human thinking on its head.

So what kind of future can we imagine for our congregation, remembering that God's imagination is surprising and challenging and creative? And will we allow God's wisdom to guide the process, remembering that God's wisdom often challenges our long-held assumptions and cherished ways of thinking?

May these questions set the stage for our journey ahead.

## CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

### Live Streaming Audio-Video

As many of you are aware, we have begun to make use of our new audio-video equipment which makes live-online-streaming of worship services possible in real time. Live streaming our 20 minute Holden Evening Prayer services through Lent has given us the opportunity to learn and test out the equipment and provide opportunities to learn and work out the audio and video equipment

Our many thanks go out to our volunteer-engineers who gave of their time to be trained in the use of this technology, and who continue to give of their time during the live-streaming of these events. Our AV Engineers are: Peter Schuler, Zach Schuler, Jerry Neiman, Mogens Hansen, and David Wills.

And our many thanks to you for your on-going patience as we continue to try to work out the kinks in our use of this new technology.

### Flowers on the Altar

As we shift to using our new live-streaming technology on a more permanent basis, many of you may have already noticed that we are returning to the practice of placing live flowers on the altar. While this is just a small step in our journey towards a full return to in-person worship, we would like to also reclaim the practice of members placing flowers on the altar to commemorate a celebration or in memoriam of a loved one lost. See the article on page 5 for further details on how we see this practice transitioning for the time being.

Thank you Heather Edwards who has been creating our live arrangements on the altar since the beginning of Lent. We have enjoyed witnessing your creative gifts that you offer at the altar each week.

### Vision Process Update

As you are aware, a new visioning process for our church has begun, and you have been invited to prayerfully consider where you think God might be leading us into the future. Pastor Eric and Elina have been working behind the scenes, along with the assistance of ELCIC Pastor Kathy Martin, Assistant to the Bishop of the BC Synod, to develop questions to inspire dialogue around this process to help us discern where God might be leading our church in the future.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's current vision statements is *"to be an inviting, inclusive, caring community grounded in God's Word and Sacraments which nurtures Christian faith and shares God's love."*

You are invited to participate in this period of discernment by volunteering to attend Cottage Meetings currently being organized around membership availability. Please let the office know if you would prefer to attend a session in either the morning, afternoon or evening. Thank you to all those who have let the office know their preference already.

Stay tuned for further communication as more information and details on this process becomes available.

## For Our Prayer

For specific requests for prayer, please contact Kate Wright at [kfwright@hotmail.com](mailto:kfwright@hotmail.com) or Claire Thompson at 604-939-3086. Your prayer request will quickly be passed to our congregational prayer chain.

**Al Startin** as he continues his cancer treatments.

**Bob Berry** as he continues to recover from his recent cancer surgery.

**Susan Wills** and her family, that Susan stays safe and that the family cope well during her time of isolation.

**Don Forss** (Lois's brother) as he continues his cancer treatment.

**Linda Berry**, as she continues to recover from her recent stroke..

**Christine Stanley** as she mourns the recent loss of her sister Betty.

**Elaine Sturhahn, Theresa and Diana** as they mourn the recent death of Gunter.

**Jacqueline Hupe, Roland Durand's niece** who was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer and is in her final days.

**Anne Christensen**, who was hospitalized with a fall.

**Bob Derksen**, whose sister Susana Waisenen passed away recently in Winnipeg.

**Karisa, Dale Wald's niece** in Edmonton recently diagnosed with leukaemia.

**All those suffering** with or affected by the Covid19 virus. Also for our doctors, nurses and first responders and all those caring for those affected.

**Thanksgiving!** Please join us as we thank God for the good news that



- **Jaclyn and Will Ruth** are now parents (see adorable picture on next page)
- **Jason and Anna Wood's** new daughter **Deirdre** is now growing healthily
- **Marilyn James and family** have now fully recovered from Covid
- The beauty of spring is bursting out around us!

## Milestone Birthdays

Our best wishes are extended to **Agnes Mattson** who celebrated her **95th birthday** on **April 16th**, and to **Alma Trent** who will be celebrating her **92nd birthday** on May 12<sup>th</sup>. We're so happy to be able to celebrate these milestones with you!



## April, May Birthdays

We send our love and birthday greetings to the following members as well who celebrate their birthdays in April and May:

Scott Stickler  
Barry Potter  
Lily Yen  
Leigh Marquess  
Larrisa Chenosky  
Tamara Chenosky  
Jill Schuler  
Monica Sommerfeld  
Kristian Hansen  
Amy Karhukangas  
Henry Schuler  
Davis Chow  
Donna Harris  
Cara Wills  
Bob Derksen  
Elaine Myers  
Nadine Darts  
Flora Pregler  
Judy Derksen  
Donata Startin  
Nathanael Inoue-Zwicker  
Liam Derksen  
Bernd Schadek

*With Blessings to all from  
your Good Shepherd Family*

## Births



We join with Jaclyn (our former Youth Leader) and Will in celebrating the birth of their first child

### **Mara Anne Ruth**

born January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, arriving at  
7 lbs 11 ounces.

Jaclyn and Will are overjoyed to welcome their first bundle of joy into this world.

*Congratulations!*

*It's a Girl!*



## Moved

### **Beade Rode has moved!**

Her new address is 206 – 3038 St George Street  
Port Moody BC  
V3H 0L3

Her phone number remains the same 604-939-9399

*God's blessings to you Beade, in your new home.*

*In my Father's house there  
are many dwelling places. If it  
were not so, would I have told you  
that I go to prepare a place for  
you? And if I go and prepare a  
place for you, I will come again  
and will take you to myself, so that  
where I am, there you may be also.*

*~John 14:2-3*

## Deaths

We mourn the loss of our brother in Christ and  
friend

### **Gunter Sturhahn**

who passed away suddenly on March 20, 2021 even  
as he was recovering from a series of health set-  
backs.

While the family moved out of the area a few years  
ago, Gunter and his family are still remembered as  
friends by many members of GSLC.

*...and the dust returns to the earth as it was  
before, and the spirit returns unto God who gave  
it.*

*~ Ecclesiastes 12:7 TLE*

*All men of the earth are made like Adam. But  
those who belong to Christ will have a body like  
the body of Christ Who came from heaven. Now,  
our bodies are like Adam's body. But in heaven,  
our bodies will be like the body of Christ.*

*~1 Corinthians 15:48-49*

# Worship Services

Now that we are getting more comfortable and proficient at using our new life-streaming audio-video equipment, we will be switching from pre-recorded services to regularly live-streaming our weekly Worship Services with Holy Communion at 10:30 am. Even though we strive to be prompt and begin on time, we do appreciate your patience in the event we run into any snags along the way. Just to let you know, if you tune in late to a live-streamed video, you can always put your cursor on the time bar at the bottom of your screen and rewind it to 0:00 minutes and watch it from the beginning. You can access our services by going to our YouTube channel (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Coquitlam) and clicking on the video that's identified as "live." There will be a recording of the service on our channel as well at some point after the live streams ends.

Provincial Health Orders and guidelines remain in place preventing gatherings of more than 10% of our capacity (15 people). As a result, church gatherings will be postponed until church council provides us with direction to go ahead and safely return to gathering.

Upcoming special services in May you may want to note of are shown below:

**Sunday, May 23:**

**DAY OF PENTECOST**



Live Streaming worship service with communion at 10:30 am, with the possibility of another Youth recording to mark the occasion.

**Sunday, May 30:**

**THE HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY**



Live Streaming worship service with communion at 10:30 am, full of special music, hymns and anthems that we all enjoy singing and hearing to mark this annual church event.

## Flowers on the Altar

Concurrent with our new schedule of live-streaming our services, we are also returning to our usual practice of Flower Chart Sign-up. Please call the office to make arrangements to provide flowers for the altar on any given Sunday. Dates will be secured on a first called-first secured basis.

Should you wish to make your own arrangements and deliver flowers to the church yourself, please deliver them to the exterior office door entrance on Sunday morning by 10 am. Alternately, Heather Edwards can provide an arrangement for you for a cost of \$50. She will purchase the flowers herself and make up the arrangements, and you can come back to the church on Monday at 10 am and pick them up (Please bring a pail or 2 vases in which to transport them). Note: This \$50 charge is for flowers and supplies only. Heather's time is donated.



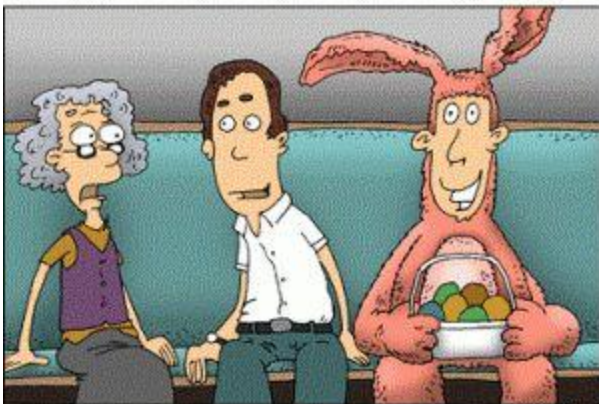


## Good Shepherd Women

While the Good Shepherd Women's Group is still unable to meet in person due to Covid restrictions, the support requirements for our projects such as Aunt Leah's, CLWR, Share, and Talitha Koum still exist. We are grateful for the support of our members during 2020 (with only one in-person meeting.) Your designated or mailed in offerings enabled us to continue funding these organizations. If you wish to continue your support in 2021 until we are able to meet again, our Treasurer, Flora Pregler has offered some suggestions as to how you can do this. Some of the options are:

1. Send a cheque made out to **Good Shepherd Women** to Flora's home address: 762 Cannon Green, Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 6E3
2. Add an amount to the Sunday offering designating it **GSW**
3. Take a cheque made out to **Good Shepherd Women** to the church and Flora will pick it up.

*Thank you for your faithful support of the Good Shepherd Women's Group.*



YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE HIM ... HE'S NEW  
TO THE FAITH AND THIS IS HIS FIRST  
EASTER

## PRAYER GROUP

Zoom prayer gatherings continue every Wednesday at 1 pm. Every 2 weeks we read and reflect on scripture together and then close in prayer. On the alternate weeks we gather simply to offer the concerns and thanksgivings of our lives in prayer.

As is our practice, we invite you to join us every second Wednesday of the month in focused prayer on a specific theme in your own prayer practices on that day.

Please join us on April 14<sup>th</sup> as we pray for **Vision**, and on May 12<sup>th</sup> please join us as we pray for **Justice**.

See article on page 15.

## Refugee Report

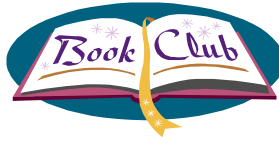
The two young men's arrival into Canada, for whom we recently gathered basic home necessities, has been further delayed. While the exact reason hasn't been proffered, one can assume that the Covid pandemic is a contributing factor.

While we continue to wait for these young men to arrive in Canada, as well as our own sponsees Solomon [currently living in Sudan] and Tesfay [currently living in Ethiopia], let us lift them to God in prayer for their continued safety.

*May God continue to keep and protect these refugee seekers - guarding their physical, emotional & mental health - while they await their arrival to Canada to begin their new life here.*

*'The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*

~ Psalm 145:15-16



On May 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 pm over Zoom, the Book Club will be reading and discussing:

### **Dear Church:**

#### **A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US**

**by Lenny Duncan**

(recommended reading by Bishop Susan Johnson)

Lenny Duncan is the unlikeliest of pastors. Formerly incarcerated, he is now a black preacher in the whitest denomination in the United States: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Shifting demographics and shrinking congregations make all the headlines, but Duncan sees something else at work--drawing a direct line between the church's lack of diversity and the church's lack of vitality. The problems the ELCA faces are theological, not sociological. But so are the answers.

Looking ahead for June over Zoom (Date and time - TBD), the Book Club will be reading and discussing:

### **Braiding Sweetgrass:**

#### **Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants**

**by Robin Wall Kimmerer**

The Book Club will take a summer hiatus, and for September they will be reading and discussing:

### **Resisting Structural Evil**

**by Dr Cynthia Moe-Lobeda.**

#### **EASTER FIND**

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

- ACTS 17:27 NIV

## **From Our Treasurer**



The following is an update on our financial YTD Status as of March 31, 2021:

Total Income	\$57,785.66
Total Expenses	<u>\$53,115.83</u>
Surplus	<u>\$ 4,669.83</u>

Project Contingency Fund \$46,991.51  
(After paying \$4,992.94 for emergency storm sewer work.)

*Thank you for your continued generosity in these "unprecedented" times*

## Property Matters

### Grounds

As many of you know, in February the Property Team had Al Startin and Jerry Neiman busy procuring emergency repairs to degraded storm water drain which prevented building flooding from occurring. Greg Seidel was spotted helping out with roof and gutter clean out, and David Stroud continues to be kept busy doing parking lot sweeping, raking, picking up tree debris, and green recycling drop off.

With the usual spring weather of showers and wind that we've experienced lately, the Property Team has been kept very busy. While it is still not yet safe to organize a Spring Clean-up day with multiple people attending, the Team is looking for additional volunteers who *may* have some spare time and *may* be able to help them sporadically with outside clean up as it comes up or presents itself as necessary. If you are someone who likes to spend a couple of hours in the sunshine and fresh air and don't mind a bit of yard work and free exercise, let David Stroud know. He's keeping his finger on the pulse of what is needed for the exterior grounds, and it would be helpful if he had a few names he *may* be able to call upon to help him and other team members should the need arise in the future.

Thank you to all who have devoted your time, energy and efforts into cleaning and maintaining our church building and our grounds.

### Building Security

As members may now be bringing flowers for the altar, we anticipate more people accessing and exiting from the building in the near future. This is just a friendly reminder to double-check that the exterior door has been securely locked upon exiting the building. You are asked to 'just give it a final tug' to make sure the lock is engaged properly after you remove your key.

Thank you from the Property Team.

### A Message from GSLC's Lay Internship Committee

#### **Lay Committee Seeking Feedback**

The Lay Internship Committee has been working and supporting our Intern, Elina during her time with us. One way we do this is by getting feedback from the congregation for Elina. If you are interested in giving some feedback, please let Rob Karhukangas know at [r.karhukangas@gmail.com](mailto:r.karhukangas@gmail.com). Then one of the committee members will contact you to set up a time to ask you some questions. The feedback will be given to Elina anonymously. For those of you who have already given feedback, we thank you!





## A Message from GSLC's Stewardship Team

April 6, 2021

Dear members and friends of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,

This past year has been extraordinary, not only because of Covid-19, but because of the incredible generosity and care for the church shown by the congregation. Even though our lives have been turned upside down and many have been faced with significant financial and other challenges, the members and friends of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church have continued to make their offerings to ensure the on-going ministry of the church.

Along with continued faithful stewardship our budget has been helped over the past year by reduced expenses. However, as our activities (hopefully) resume in the months ahead so inevitably will our expenses. So we'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all our members to keep up their giving. If the challenges of the past year have made it difficult for you to contribute please know that we understand and we hold you in our prayers for a better year ahead. If, on the other hand, you have been able to weather the pandemic reasonably well we hope you will continue to remember the needs of the congregation and God's gracious providing in your giving.

With the roll-out of vaccinations there is promise that the pandemic will be coming to an end. The process will not necessarily be rapid and there will be bumps along the way, but there is hope. As our public health officials continue to remind us, we need to be patient to stay the course until life returns to a new normal. The same will be true for the life of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

With your continuing generosity the church will be in a strong financial position to move forward. For this we are most grateful. Thanks be to God.

Yours in Christ,

Bob Knudson, Jerry Nieman

The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Council Stewardship Team

# REFLECTIONS...from our Student Pastor

Happy Easter!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

An Easter morning is usually a jubilant celebration in the church, and it sure feels different this year, again. What is the good news of the empty tomb for us, here, now? For us who have come to know death more closely in the past year than possibly ever before?

Our Easter morning gospel reminds us that it wasn't all that jubilant for the disciples either. There was grief, and there was confusion when the tomb was empty. They would only understand it all later on.

Maybe we will also understand more later on, when the pandemic is behind us and we know how things have changed. But for now, we just continue to trust in God's goodness. And we trust that the empty tomb is a source of life for us as well.

And as we trust, we can also ask questions about what God is calling us into. We are about to engage in a visioning process that will hopefully guide us as a congregation into a better understanding of what God might have in mind for us.

Because God is alive and active in the world – the empty tomb reminds us about that. God is alive, outside the church building walls – the pandemic restrictions have shown us that. While we haven't been able to gather, we have still continued to be the church.

What could our future look like in God's mission, joining in God's activity in our community? We don't yet know, but hopefully we'll find out when we ask these questions together.

And then something completely different... The weather is improving, and that means more chances to be outdoors. I would love to meet you all in person, if possible – maybe for a walk, or outside on your yard or deck, or the church parking lot. This depends on the pandemic situation, of course, and the restrictions we face – no meetings until April 19th at least... But if the situation improves and you'd like to arrange a visit, please let me know! You can reach me through the church office. It might take me a while to get to everyone, but I will do my best – as soon as we can do it safely.

With spring greetings,

Student pastor Elina



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**Contributed by Gene Blishen ~ to enhance our understanding of who we are as a church and how we are directly impacting the world around us.**

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## Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

### National Bishop Susan Johnson

This month is a return to an interview with our ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson. There is a connection with Coquitlam here as she did work for our school district as a music teacher at Port Moody Senior and George Pearkes Junior. Elected in 2007 she has been our Bishop for 14 years and resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba and works out of the national office there. You can see her musical talent singing a daily hymn by following her on Twitter @NationalBishop

Her dad was a pastor at Gloria Dei in North Vancouver and one would think that would influence her call to the ministry, but there were many in her family that were ministers; her Dad's brother, her mom's father, 2 uncles and others who were missionaries. The family did shape her to a point of her being scared about a call into the "family business" but then God got loud and she left teaching.

Her most memorable experience as a Bishop was in 2017 at the THE TWELFTH ASSEMBLY OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION held in Windhoek, Namibia to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation at a global level. It was an incredible honour for her to preside at the Eucharist with so many other Lutherans from around the world. You can see the Namibian newscast of the event at [here](#).

For the next generation of Lutherans in Canada the pandemic has changed her view. She has seen a resilience and flexibility now and hope for the future. This is moving us to a deeper sense of mission and an understanding of spiritual renewal.

Her favourite author is Robertson Davies and she is currently reading *The Mirror and the Light* by Hilary Mantel, the third in her series on Thomas Cromwell. With literature she describes herself as having a selective interest in history.

When asked if she had any closing thoughts there was a quick 'no'. She, as well as the rest of us, are pandemic-ed out. Our Bishop has a sense of humour and humbleness that is remarkable. Her leadership over the years has brought a renewed sense of purpose and understanding to Canadian Lutherans. We are blessed to have her.

*Keep a careful watch over yourselves and over the church. The Holy Spirit has made you its leaders. Feed and care for the church of God. He bought it with His own blood."*

Acts 20:28



## An Easter Youth Update

Over the last couple months, Rachel, Abbey, Sam, and Betty kept things going as Jason went on paternity leave. A big thank-you to everyone who stepped in and provided extra support!

If Lent last year brought the onset of the pandemic, this Easter brought renewed hope as our youth met together again in person on Easter Sunday. Since we've been waiting for this so long, we've decided we wouldn't let the

weather stop us - rain or shine, we'd find a way of gathering! Gathering outdoors also makes for a good opportunity to explore how our Christian faith connects with our relationship to the rest of creation. As we move into the last couple months of the school year, pray for rich connections among the youth, protection from COVID, and strength and joy for all our youth who are struggling with mental health, fatigue, or discouragement as this pandemic drags on. Pray for us also as we begin to plan and prepare for a local, adapted CLAY gathering in August, when we hope to be able to gather in person for an amazing shared experience, livestreaming with youth from across the country.

Jason Wood  
(He/him/his)

Youth and Families Ministry  
Coordinator

*He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal  
by the Holy Spirit.*

~ Titus 3:5

### *And Now... a Thank You Note from Jason and Anna Wood*

Jason, Anna, and baby Deirdre want to say a hearty thank you to all those in the Good Shepherd community who supported us with prayers and prepared meals during those precarious first weeks of Deirdre's life. Deirdre is now healthy, growing well, and even smiling, to the relief and joy of her smitten parents!







The **Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth** gathering is happening this year on **August 20-22**, and we're hoping you can join us!

### **What is CLAY?**

The Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth Gathering (CLAY) is a program of the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada \(ELCIC\)](#) and the [Anglican Church of Canada \(ACC\)](#).

Canadian Lutheran Youth Gatherings have a history that goes back as far as 1966. In 2010, the gathering became a joint gathering of the ELCIC and ACC. CLAY is an immersive, several-day event where youth gather from across the country to worship, play, learn, and grow together.

### **Who can participate?**

CLAY is designed for youth **ages 14-19** (born between 2002 and 2007). But since CLAY 2020 was postponed, youth up to age 20 (born 2001) are welcome to participate. Youth born prior to 2001 are still welcome to attend and are invited to do so as a **Leader in Training**.

With the endorsement of their Home Team Leader and their local congregation/parish, and with the permission of the CLAY Registrar, youth who will be 13 years old (born in 2008) by the end of the year may be permitted to attend the gathering.

### **What will CLAY look like this year?**

You can expect about 3 hours of online group gathering time each day featuring: worship, workshops, and a large group gathering with the CLAY band, drama team, and our keynote speaker, **Melanie Delva**.

There will also be Late Night Spots every day (a CLAY participant favourite), activities engaging with our **National Youth Project** happening outside of the online gathering times, and local activities planned for these three days.

As home team leaders, Rachel and I committed to making this as engaging an experience as possible. As much as it is safe to do so, our aim is to spend these few days together in-person, following any public health guidelines necessary.

### **How much will it cost?**

The national organizers are making this a pay-as-you-can event, suggesting a **donation of \$45**. Depending on what we are able to do by then, locally planned activities by Rachel and I may increase this cost somewhat. But we'll make sure to let you know as we make plans. Just know that we don't want money to prevent anyone from coming!

### **Where can I find out more?**

Check out the [CLAY website](#) to find out more. Then sign up for the CLAY newsletter to receive direct updates!

**Let us know if you're interested!** With registration opening up any day now, we're hoping to start compiling a list of interested people for the ignYte Home Team.

**Are you a youth hoping to participate? A potential Leader in Training? Let us know!**

**Jason Wood**

(He/him/his)

*Youth and Families Ministry Coordinator*





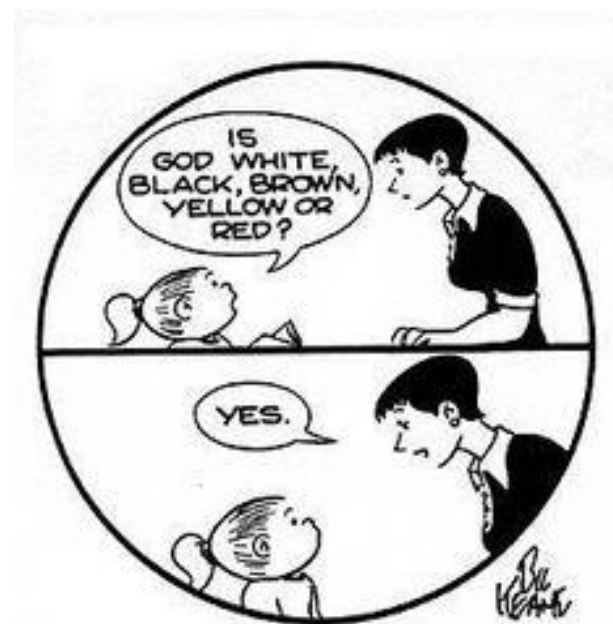
# KIDS CORNER

## EASTER WORD SEARCH

L	E	E	T	Y	Y	V	O	L	S	T	M	H	I	P
P	L	G	M	A	R	Y	D	A	D	S	C	Q	C	N
V	H	E	D	P	C	A	L	I	P	I	R	B	M	U
N	S	N	G	R	T	V	V	Q	Q	R	O	M	F	S
N	U	J	O	N	A	Y	K	L	F	H	S	O	Y	I
S	X	W	Q	T	A	A	K	X	A	C	S	T	C	L
E	N	D	I	S	T	O	N	E	N	C	D	C	O	P
T	Y	O	O	P	Q	R	I	S	E	N	W	V	H	O
P	N	Y	L	O	R	D	O	Y	J	E	S	U	S	Q
O	P	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S	X	D	O	G

Can you find these Easter words?

Angel	Love
Calvary	Jesus
Christ	Mary
Cross	Risen
Crown	Salvation
Disciples	Stone
Empty	Sunday
Lord	Tomb



The following is a full article submitted to Canada Lutheran Magazine penned by some members of the weekly Prayer Group. It has been accepted for publication in the July August edition of the Canada Lutheran magazine but it will be edited significantly.

We thought you might enjoy reading the entire article as submitted...

## Journey of a Prayer Group

" There are as many ways to pray as there are souls who walk the earth." Brown (2003)

A small number of people from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (GSLC) of Coquitlam took a journey together that began with the God-inspired idea of forming a prayer group, and the adventure was launched. The direction of the journey has evolved, but the compass point for the travelers has remained constant: to share a deeper communion with God in prayer together. The route has been guided by internal member preferences, external circumstances, and listening to God's spirit. By being open to exploration, to the voice of God, and listening to each other, the group remains focused on communal prayer. This is their story.

### **Inspiration for the Journey:**

Three women from GSLC began praying together while they were serving on a committee that met several times per year. They consistently began meetings with prayer, and when they had difficult topics they would stop and pray again, asking for God's guidance. They realized that the practice of praying was natural and wonderful, and it made their work lighter. As they prayed, they recognized the importance of communal prayer. When the time came that some were no longer to be serving on that committee, they remained resolute in their desire to continue praying together.

### **Making the Trip Plan:**

As the women discussed forming a prayer group, an opportunity presented itself. Dr. Faith Nostbakken of the Lay Academy offered an online learning opportunity in November, 2018, on the topic of prayer. The women attended and discovered that they were not alone in the desire to pray together regularly with others.

In consultation with Pastor Eric Krushel and another church elder, they discussed some fundamentals for the focus of the group. Three guiding principles were key at the outset. They believed that each meeting should start and end in prayer that asked God's wisdom and teaching, and closed by thanking God. Secondly, scripture would guide the prayer practices or activities, and lastly, that they would experiment with a wide range of prayer practices.

With those guidelines, they scheduled a bi-weekly prayer time and invited members of the congregation to join them. They chose as a guiding resource to begin the journey, *Pathways to Prayer*. Brown, (2003).

### **Beginning the Journey:**

The group journey first began in early 2019, with nine people. Leadership of each session was voluntary and rotated within the membership each week. Members started by finding their individual preference of prayer type(s) among experiential, relational, innovative, and searching prayer. They expanded their experimentation with prayer into a variety of practices including; centering, contemplative, and meditative prayer.

The route they travelled included: learning about praying The Lord's Prayer, praying the Scriptures (Lectio Divina), writing prayer journals, and praying with icons. The group continued their voyage and created home prayer altars, and members experimented by taking an Emmaus Walk with a partner. They learned about unfamiliar prayer traditions that included using prayer beads, the prayer shawl, and praying in tongues to enrich communion with God. What resulted from 'testing out' new prayer practices were lively discussions and opportunities to pray and explore together. Through these shared times of seeking a more intimate relationship with God in prayer, they deepened their friendships and Christian walk together.

### **Expanding the Journey:**

As group members travelled the pathways of communal prayer, their learning, practicing, and individual engagement increased. While Pastor Eric had always been a member of this group they resisted the temptation to put him in charge, and continued to share the leadership roles and responsibilities. The group remained a shared laity-led prayer group with the privilege of a very knowledgeable member in their midst.

The scope of their journey then broadened and one member led them in a study of The Angelus painting by seventeenth century Jean- Francois Millet. What lively discussion and learning they enjoyed as they discussed the images in the painting! The painting, two peasants at sundown, having worked in the fields all day, suddenly stilling their tools to be locked in pious prayer at the sound of the church bell, at the appointed time thrice daily. How different the world would be, they imagined, if that prayer practice had continued to this very day.

Their journey took them on exploration of Rembrandt's huge and only seascape, Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee, and discussed it from all angles, including the rich symbolism, the choices Rembrandt took in this masterpiece, including colour, and shadow, and even placing himself in the boat with Christ, and of course the Scripture story from Mark 4 itself.

Group members completed exploring what they wanted to of Brown (2003), with the exception of a Labyrinth Prayer, which needed to be set aside due to inclement weather. They decided to continue coming together, now weekly, and developed a schedule alternating between Prayer Conversations and Lectio Divina or other prayer explorations.

The "Prayer Conversations" were used to look at interesting theological topics, including elements and prayers contained in the Lutheran Book of Worship, and even a sampling of Aboriginal Prayers. They spent time examining A Franciscan Blessing, and explored comments on prayer by Karl Barth.

During the Lectio Divina prayer times, a volunteer led them in selected scripture readings and explored what God might be saying or teaching them.

### **External Influences:**

In October, 2019, one member pointed out that National Bishop Susan Johnson challenged member churches to join her and focus on a year of Prayer. This was an encouraging message and, rising to the challenge, the group continued to explore and expand their focus on prayer.

The prayer group journey was further inspired by the request from the ELCIC for Christians and people of different faiths worldwide to pray together on the same day in the midst of the spread of COVID-19. Members chose a monthly prayer-worthy concept and invited the entire congregation to pray with them on that specific focus in their own

prayer practices, on the second Wednesday of each month. So far, focused prayer concerns have been for peace, respect, courage, creation, trust, remembrance, hope, gratitude, healing, and repentance, as the spirit led them.

The prayer journey continued, and COVID-19 required the change from face-to-face meetings at a church to on-line gathering over Zoom. At the same time, members decided that it was important to continue to gather weekly. COVID-19 changed the world and there was much to pray about.

#### **Current trip co-ordinates:**

At this point, some members continue to gather weekly, with a change of focus every second week. At the time of writing, we have settled into a practice where a volunteer leads the group in a Lectio Divina prayer meeting one week, and the following week, a spontaneous "Community Prayer Group", that is less formal and more organic, meets to pray whatever the Lord brings to their hearts and minds on that day. Membership fluctuates weekly and remains flexible. All sessions end with approximately twenty to thirty minutes devoted to an open communal prayer.

Members don't know where this journey will take them next. From the beginning of this journey they asked for God to guide and lead them, and teach them ways to deepen their prayers and connection with God. As a result, the group loosened up its 'where to next' mindset and remained open to listening to the Spirit's gentle leading. Maybe post-COVID the group will be able to gather together for further experimentation and experience the labyrinth prayer after all.

#### **Lessons Learned While Travelling:**

Group members have spoken about the value of our prayer group. These are some of their words. "Each Prayer Practice that we looked at opened my eyes to God's personal invitation to meet God in prayer. I'm grateful to the heart of this group--as I see God's presence there. I am blessed by these meetings and by my brothers and sisters who join me on this journey of prayer."

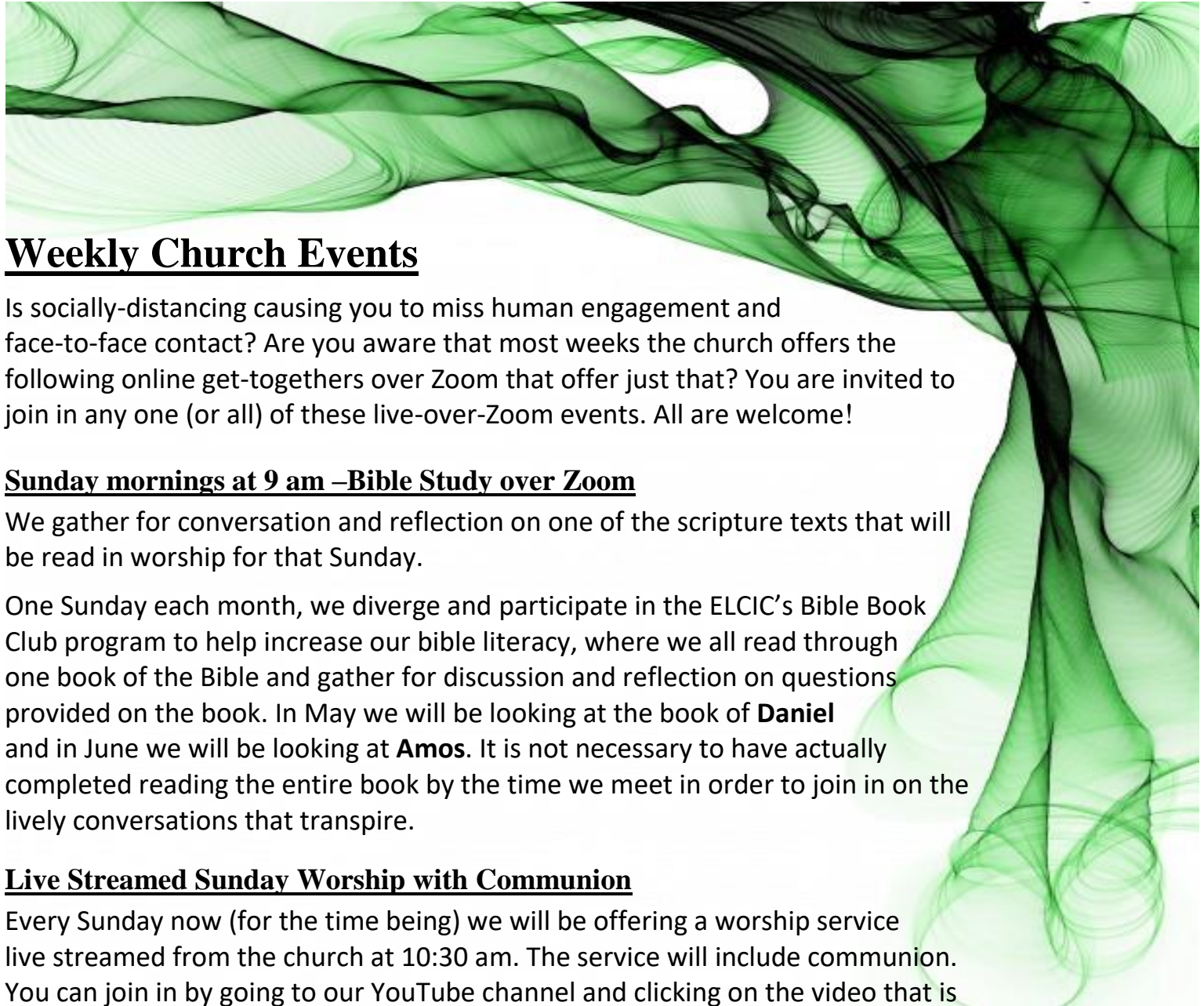
"Being in the prayer group has brought me closer into the presence of God. My loneliness and sense of isolation diminish greatly and I am strengthened in my faith." "I do feel blessed to be in and among this prayer group. I have learned how to better pray out loud and have realized that we are all more alike than different. One's fears are replaced with love and acceptance from the group."

"We were seeking God and found God in our midst. I feel blessed and understand that our time together is a gift from God. We come as individuals and join as the body of Christ, no one more important than the other. All of us come to learn and share the teachings of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and they are there before we arrive, with us as we pray, and ahead of us as we leave the group. What a wonderful gift."

#### **The End of Our Discussion but not the End of Our Journey:**

Speaking for the group, we thought you might enjoy reading about our little group of "pray-ers" and their journey into a closer relationship with God. May God use this to inspire you, too, to be curious and seek out your own journey of intimate prayer with our Gracious Lord. We have learned that all prayer, as a foundation for spiritual life, leads to a deeper knowledge of God who is present with us and in all creation. Prayer is the raising of one's heart and mind to God. Hallelujah!

**- THE END- ...for now**



## **Weekly Church Events**

Is socially-distancing causing you to miss human engagement and face-to-face contact? Are you aware that most weeks the church offers the following online get-togethers over Zoom that offer just that? You are invited to join in any one (or all) of these live-over-Zoom events. All are welcome!

### **Sunday mornings at 9 am –Bible Study over Zoom**

We gather for conversation and reflection on one of the scripture texts that will be read in worship for that Sunday.

One Sunday each month, we diverge and participate in the ELCIC's Bible Book Club program to help increase our bible literacy, where we all read through one book of the Bible and gather for discussion and reflection on questions provided on the book. In May we will be looking at the book of **Daniel** and in June we will be looking at **Amos**. It is not necessary to have actually completed reading the entire book by the time we meet in order to join in on the lively conversations that transpire.

### **Live Streamed Sunday Worship with Communion**

Every Sunday now (for the time being) we will be offering a worship service live streamed from the church at 10:30 am. The service will include communion. You can join in by going to our YouTube channel and clicking on the video that is indicated as "live". A recording of the service will also be posted to our channel at some point after the service end.

### **Wednesday afternoons at 1 pm – Zoom Prayer Gathering**

Alternating weeks between praying Lectio Divina style & free-style 'Prayers of the People'.

### **Thursday afternoons at 4 pm – Zoom Happy Hour**

Join in when we share anecdotes on the comings and goings of the week. It's always a fun time of social interaction and engaging in lively conversation about what's going on in our lives and in our world.