

The Epistle

Happy New Year!



We're all hoping that 2021 is better than 2020! Some would say it can't get much worse. As Christians, we really can and do have hope that God will bring His preferred future for us, our congregation, and the world. This hope is perhaps better named as trust --not wishful thinking, but confidence because God keeps his promises. We

love and are loved by a God who has made all things knew in Jesus Christ and who continually makes us new.

As you look forward to 2021, dare to trust that God will be at work through you and for you for the sake of the world. And be on the lookout for ways you can participate in serving God as we continue to discern about how we can be Christ's body for one another and our neighbors, come what may.

In Christ,
Pastor Emily Beckering



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Music Dept..... 2
- Youth Group 2
- Celebrations..... 3
- OWLS 3
- Prayer Ventures 5
- Prayer Requests..... 6
- Annual Meeting..... 8



ANNUAL MEETING JAN. 31

Reminder that the annual Congregational Meeting will be January 31 after worship. The meeting will be live-streamed on our Youtube channel and website for those who are attending from home.



DEADLINE FOR COMMITTEE REPORTS: JAN. 11

Committee chairs and ministry leaders, please send the 2020 reports on your activities in to the church office by January 11, so that they can be printed in the Annual Report.

Thank You from the Music Directors

Thank you musicians of SPLC!

It's been such a challenging time, and you have generously shared so much in November and December. Your talents are very much appreciated. Through our music together we were able to bring joy and love to so many in the congregation both online and in person.

All the bell choir members, thank you: Joyce, Linda, Susan (and Eric), Nancy, Nick, Carolyn, Noah, Addy, and all the Cathcarts. Also a big thank you to our vocal soloists Addy & Chrissy as well as our instrumental soloists Nick, Nancy, and Carolyn.

We are sincerely looking forward to more amazing and blessed times ahead.

Yours in Christ,
Kate and Kris
Music @ SPLC

Youth Group Zoom on Jan. 23



The youth group has been busy over Zoom with fellowship. In December, we got a head start on setting up our personal goals for the year and as a group. We are thankful for our health and any new skills 2020 taught us or gained due to the pandemic. 2021 will eventually allow us to come back together in person with more adventures. Mark your calendars for January 23 from 7-9 pm for our next youth night gathering. Our topic of discussion is yet to be determined.

Donald, John, Chrison, and Chelsea

Celebrations in January



- 4 Erin Detzen
- 10 Rick Hedges
- 14 Michelle Flege Hollon
- 18 Jeff Ford, Chris Geiger

- 21 Sherry Bronner, Janet King
- 23 Kathryn Keith, Ali Truax
- 24 Christian Lohmeier
- 28 Mathea Harbaugh
- 29 Chandler Clemmons
- 30 Jamie Hirt, Robyn Reed

From the Presiding Bishop

“WE ARE NOT ALONE”



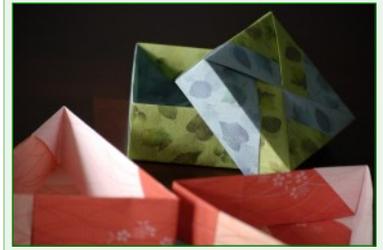
This article was originally published in the December 2020 issue of Living Lutheran magazine.

The room was spare and dimly lit. We sat on folding chairs in a circle— young Honduran women and some of us from the ELCA. We had come to Honduras to observe the work of AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). This is the ELCA’s strategy to help youth who have been forced to flee

their home countries because of violence, abuse, extortion by gangs and extreme poverty. Amparo is the Spanish word for shelter or refuge.

In this case, AMMPARO partnered with the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonites to resettle returned migrants—

(Continued on page 4)



OWLS HOME CRAFTING DAY

The OWLS are working on a plan for another crafting day—this one at home. Chrissy, Becky and Doris are currently planning to deliver packs of supplies to those who wish to participate, and then each member can create the craft at home. Craft leaders will be available by phone for those who have questions or need help with the craft. Please stay tuned for more details about dates and times!

From the Presiding Bishop: “We Are Not Alone”

(Continued from page 3)

those who had tried to seek asylum in the United States but had failed or had been denied and deported back to Honduras.

One by one they told us their stories of fear and desperation. Not a one undertook the long and dangerous trek north on a whim. They told us about the abuse they had suffered, about family members who had been killed by gangs, about the inability to make a living because of the extortion by organized crime. They talked about the bitter sadness of leaving home and family, and the uncertainty of the future.

I remember one young woman in particular. She was pregnant when she tried to migrate to the United States. She had the baby somewhere along the way. She was far from home, mostly alone and desperately wanted her mother to be with her. None of this is what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new and strange existence. She and her baby were now back in Honduras—but not at home. Home was too dangerous.

Remember last Christmas? Remember all of the preparations, the travel to be with family? Remember the holy beauty of the Christmas Eve liturgy and receiving Christ’s grace and forgiveness at his table? The shopping and Christmas caroling? The in-person gatherings? All that has changed.

The pandemic hasn’t forced us from our homes but into our homes, sheltering in place, isolated. Not together, but physically distanced. Not gathered with family and friends, but forced apart because of the

threat of infection. Forced by circumstances beyond our control into this strange existence. Oh, there will be Christmas carols piped into grocery stores and other essential services, but they will be painful reminders of how life used to be.

We are reminded of the experience of the exiles in Babylon: “By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captives asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’ How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land” (Psalm 137)?

I told the young Honduran woman about another young woman who was forced to leave home because of a government decree. She, too, was pregnant and made a long and difficult journey. She, too, was far from home and without her mother when the baby came. She had to find shelter wherever she could. This wasn’t what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new existence.

That young woman was Mary and the child was Jesus. Precisely in our distress, in our dislocation, the Lord shows up. Emmanuel—God with us—makes his home in the very places we find foreign or isolating. The young Honduran woman, and all of us, can find hope because of the birth of Mary’s child. There is no God-forsaken place and we are never alone—not in hospital rooms, or sheltering in place, or Zoom calls or on dangerous roads.

Many of us will not be physically home for Christmas, but we are truly home in Christ.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

7 As the pandemic continues, pray for doctors, nurses, emergency responders and health care workers who need renewal, strength and our gratitude and recognition as they continue to serve at great personal risk and sacrifice for the sake of our health and well-being.

8 Give thanks for the people in our lives who inspire hope, faith and courage, and whose words and actions touch us, teach us the meaning of grace and move us to become bearers of mercy in the world.

9 In Christ we have received forgiveness of our sins and salvation through God's unfathomable grace, showered upon us every day. Praise God!

10 Give thanks for God's love and forgiveness in baptism, which marks the beginning of our journey with our siblings in Christ to share the good news, serve all people, grow the church and strive for peace and justice in the world.

11 Pray for parents, students, employees and business owners whose plans and routines change day by day and week by week due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, that they might be hopeful, resilient and able to adapt, change and endure.

12 Pray for our faith-based schools, early childhood education programs and day care centers as they provide experiential education, social interaction, stability and calm for the youngest of our children, who are often most vulnerable during times of uncertainty and anxiety.

13 God is mighty, majestic and eternal throughout the universe, generously sharing strength and blessings with us. Give glory and thanks to God, and shout for joy!

14 Ask God to help us practice justice, generosity and care for creation, sharing our resources with others who have few or who have lost resources or productive land as a result of natural and human-caused disasters.

15 Pray for the young adults who have applied for a yearlong journey in international service with our companion churches and organizations through the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program, which will resume in 2021-2022 after a time of sabbath during the pandemic.

16 Thank God for our special relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997; pray for the church, its members and its leaders, and pray that together we will find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these uncertain and challenging times.

17 Jesus invited Philip to follow him as a disciple, and Philip, in turn, invited Nathanael. Ask God to help us be faithful followers, students and, at the same time, disciples eager to invite others to join in God's good work in the world.

18 *Martin Luther King Day* Today we remember the life, ministry, sacrifice and activism of Martin Luther King Jr. Pray that his life and the legacies of others who have fought for civil rights and social reform will inspire our own commitment and persistence in working for racial justice, dismantling racism and combating white supremacy.

19 We may argue about what is legal, what we are entitled to or what we have the right to do with our bodies and lives. But Paul reminds us that we have been made one with the body and spirit of Christ; we "were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." Pray that the Spirit will guide us to live with humility and deference for who we are in Christ and in obedience to the ways and desires of God.

20 *Inauguration Day* As members of society and the church who represent varied political affiliations and perspectives, pray together for our nation's newly elected president and vice president, that the Spirit will grant them wisdom, strength, commitment to serving all people, a deep understanding of justice and mercy, and the courage to enact change for the well-being of our communities and nation.

21 Pray for the ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering, an online event happening right now that gathers ELCA World Hunger leaders for learning, networking, sharing ideas and planning for our common ministry to address hunger and its root causes.

22 Pray for reconciliation, understanding and renewal in our divided nation so that we might work together for justice, compassion and generosity, serving our neighbors in need and the well-being of our communities as they struggle with vexing, deep-rooted problems. Ask the Spirit to inspire and guide our lives so that our values, decisions, actions and words reflect the gospel, the teachings of Jesus and the ways of God, who is good, gracious, merciful and just.

23 Praise God that, as small and insignificant as we might be in the vast universe, we are wonderfully made and God knows every little thing about us and our human ways.

24 In Scripture we read about Jesus' simple, personal and compelling invitations to Simon, Andrew, James, John and the other disciples to drop everything and follow him. Pray that when God calls us to follow and serve, we will respond with faith and trust, even if we do not yet know where God is leading us or what God is calling us to do.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

PRAYER VENTURES

JANUARY 2021

25 Pray for ministries, nonprofit organizations and agencies that serve the daily needs of communities, families and individuals; pursue justice and equity; build resilience to cope with disasters and crises; accompany immigrants and refugees; and bring the hope and love of Christ where there is despair and weariness.

26 When, like Jonah, we are reluctant to forgive, practice mercy or share the gospel with those we deem undeserving, ask the Spirit to help us discern God's ways, grace and mercy for all people, and to act boldly without personal bias.

27 *Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith* Praise God for the witness and ministry of women of the early church. Give thanks for women of all ages and backgrounds who, responding to God's call, continue to use their gifts, life experiences, knowledge and passions to grow the church, serve all people and be bearers of hope and healing in the world.

28 Give thanks for the Lutheran liturgy and worship practices that equip us for daily life, helping us to praise God, listen to God's word and experience unity in the body of Christ.

29 Give thanks for the self-sacrificing generosity of people who demonstrate their gratefulness for God's gift of life and their concern for their neighbors' well-being by donating blood, plasma and even organs.

30 Remember in prayer those who continue to struggle with unemployment, underemployment and job searching as a result of the economic and health impacts of COVID-19.

31 Though our creeds do not speak of Jesus' teachings, miracles or example, give thanks that, through Scripture, the Spirit reveals Jesus to be the source of our redemption and a trustworthy guide, instructing us how to live with one another, serve our neighbor and do God's work in the world today.

These petitions are offered as guides to prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the ELCA, as well as for the needs and circumstances of our neighbors, communities and world. Thank you for your continued prayers for the life and mission of this church.

1 Give thanks and praise that God knows intimately our complexities, failures, accomplishments, questions, goals and hopes, and still looks upon us with loving kindness, newness and a desire for us to thrive as individuals and communities.

2 Pray for our companion churches and international leaders as they confront multiple waves of the pandemic. Ask the Spirit to fill them with hope, resilience and reassurance that our faith in the presence and love of God, which we share as siblings in Christ, will unify us in caring for one another and in doing God's work in the world, using our diverse gifts, cultures, languages, resources and perspectives in every circumstance.

3 Give thanks and praise to God that we are children of God, knowing and testifying to the good news that Jesus Christ became flesh and lived among us, and that we have seen the glory of God's only son, full of grace and truth for the world.

4 *National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month* We remember and pray for victims of sex trafficking, involuntary servitude, debt bondage and forced labor in our nation and around the world, and we ask God's guidance in caring for victims and actively working to end this abuse, injustice and oppression.

5 Pray for Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, members of the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops. Give thanks for their humble service, their faith in Christ, their leadership and gifts, and their commitment to wrestle with difficult decisions and issues for the sake of the church and the world.

6 *Epiphany* As people of faith, we are not immune from wondering about God, Jesus Christ and the Spirit. Pray that God will be patient with us, illuminating the truth of who we are as baptized children of God and the reality and certainty of the good news of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, our Savior, Messiah, Redeemer and teacher.

This resource may be copied and shared among members and friends of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
Contact info@elca.org *for additional information. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4101.*
Telephone: 800-638-3522, ext. 2458.

Our Life Together

For emergency pastoral care, please call the after-hours line at 513-760-5884.

If you have requests for the Prayer Chain, call Penny Huber, 513-931-6420. To remove people from the list, contact the office.

We pray for **Mary and her granddaughter Kyra** (friend of Paul Pieper); **Berkeley** (Carol Curless's great-grandson); **Pr. Lisa Bernheisel; Louise Barry; Teresa Bell** (former member); **Stephen Black** (Kim Coulehan's nephew); **Bobby** (Christian Lohmeier's friend); **Nancy Bose** (Kathy Hirt's friend); **Brett** (Kings' step-nephew); **Nicole Bucknam** (friend of Millers); **Jodie Calhoun; Christian; Frances Clemons** (Portmanns' friend); **Kathy Curless; Katie Demopoulos** (Diana Hawkins's niece); **Dick** (Linda Miller's brother); **Jeremy Doan** (Jean Winkle's grandson); **Jerry Doan** (Jean Winkle's son-in-law); **Lee Erbeck; Larry Faulkner** (Freda's son); **Justin Feldman** (Bess Sturgill's father); **Micki Ford** (Fords' niece); **Jeanne Fuller; Scarlett Gally** (Beth Wernery's great-niece); **Clara Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's sister); **George and Sherry** (Shirley Harbaugh's cousins); **Nathaniel Gibson** (Les Eckerle's step-nephew); **Steve Gollehon** (Elinor Schieman's cousin); **Hannah; Matthew Harrison** (Seals' neighbor); **Sandy Hatcher** (Linda Holt's sister); **Elain Heskamp; Richard Hoffman** (Cindy Mayhugh's brother); **Andrew Horton; Mary Ann Hudecki** (Linda Miller's sister); **Ellen Hunter** (Jeni Cathcart's grandmother); **Jo and her daughter** (Jeanne Fuller's friends); **Joan** (Penny Huber's friend); **Kate** (granddaughter of Dennis King's friend); **Dennis King; Jay King** (son of Jamie King); **Loretta Kombrink** (Marilyn Portmann's aunt); **Lewis Laine** (Chet Laine's brother); **Richard Lane** (Elinor Schieman's nephew); **Nelson Langefeld; Yvonne Lowery** (St. Paul Players); **Revea and Jim Mayhew** (Millers' sister & brother-in-law); **Carroll Mayhugh Sr.** (Carroll Mayhugh's father); **Samantha Mersch** (Mayhughs' daughter, Sarah Papin's sister); **Ann Miller** (Millers' niece); **Jessica Mink** (Donald Harris's cousin); **Doris Minton; Barbara Moorhouse; Jean Nolte; Ervin Oerther** (Portmanns' brother-in-law); **Ann Ohr** (Barbara Moorhouse's cousin); **Richard Osborn** (Betty Pack's brother); **Rosie Osborn** (Betty Pack's sister); **Eric Papin; Christian & Suzie Pereira** (Carolyn Koehl's granddaughter & grand-

son-in-law); **Richard Peterson** (Shirley Harbaugh's brothers); **Don Pflieger** (Kings' brother-in-law); **Ginny Pape; Linda Perin** (Moorhouses' cousin); **Paul Pieper; Faith Pirrmann; Pat Popplewell** (Dennis King's friend); **James Savoy** (Jean Winkle's great-grandson); **Shawn Schnetzer** (Sturgills' cousin); **Sheila Schultz** (Betty Pack's friend); **Brenda Schumacher** (Marilyn Portmann's friend); **Shannon and Dane** (friends of Riddle family); **Shear family** (Kings' daughter & son-in-law); **Kate Sheridan** (Kings' family friend); **Keith Shupe** (father of Kelly Shupe); **Jason Simpson** (Freda Faulkner's grand-nephew); **Patricia Smith** (Teresa Bell's mother); **Scott Songer; Judy Songer** (friends of Jean Winkle); **Crosley Spelman** (Spelmans' grandson); **Frank Sturgill** (Jim's dad); **Britney Jean Teems** (Jean Winkle's granddaughter); **Teresa** (friend of Marty Lohmeier); **Randy Thaman** (friend of Marie Calhoun); **Geri Toland** (Carole Replogle's neighbor); **Treasure** (Les Eckerle's cousin); **Ralph Turner** (friend of Dennis King); **Teresa Vogel** (Freda Faulkner's friend); **Jack Wagner; Jeanne Wagner; Daryl Wesselman** (Betty Pack's granddaughter); **Jean Winkle; Susan Winkle** (Jean Winkle's daughter-in-law); **Mike and Lou Zecchini** (Minton/Betsch in-laws).

We pray for those with ongoing health concerns who are unable to come to church every week: **Louise Barry, Barbara Moorhouse, Jean Nolte, Heather Segar.**

We pray for our armed forces members: **Graham Barton** (Fords' neighbor); **Paul Cordes** (Elinor Schieman's grandson); **Victoria Derry** (Elinor Schieman's great-granddaughter); **Jared Forst** (Jim and Loretta's grandson); **Beau Glenn** (Karen Koehl's son-in-law); **Kylie Hahn** (Gretta Hahn's granddaughter); **Donald Hosea** (Karen Koehl's son); **Samuel McLoughlin** (friend of Cindy Sieckman); **Scott Minton** (Doris Minton's son); **Jobeth Ramirez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Joshua Rodriguez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Trent Schwegman** (cousin to the Erbecks and Fords); **Dustin Silvey; Mack Thompson** (Freda Faulkner's grandson); **Alex Wisecup** (son of Nadine and Barry Wisecup).

**St. Paul
Lutheran
Church**

*Mission
Statement:*

Christians us-
ing God's gifts
helping others
know him.

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING**

—
Jan. 31 after worship
In-person and via livestream



**St. Paul
Lutheran Church**
106 Maple St.
Reading, OH 45215

Phone:
513-821-0987

E-mail:
mail@stpaulreading.org

Website:
stpaulreading.org



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE