

EASTER NEWSLETTER

A message from the pastor

Our treasurer Claudia asked me for a few “words of wisdom” to be included in the newsletter you’re reading. In attempting to sort thoughts and write them, I’m reminded of the messages to Seven Churches that serve as the opening for the book of Revelation. Each place has its own challenges and a message unique to that challenge. In the case of this little missive, my writing task is complicated because of the great variation in our life circumstances in relation to First Lutheran Church.

-Some of you are here. A lot. You are tired. Yet here you are...still putting out effort to ‘keep things going’. My words to you are “be kind to yourself and guard your health”. Thank you for all you do. Remember the “why” behind all those things we do here.

—Some reading this blurb would be here if they could. We remember you and want to be sure you know that. Cards, phone calls and visits are a way we can stay connected. These days you might be surprised at how different some things are—yet you might sense a familiar warmth and good humour that seem part of the ‘culture’ here.

- Some readers could be here if they wanted to be; and maybe would just rather not. Chances are your ‘official membership’ lapsed a long time ago. It is what it is. Let me assure you also that as long as we’re able, we’re here for you for life passages like baptisms, weddings and funerals. In fact, we offer our care to anybody who calls on us and this pastor doesn’t consider your membership status when it comes to being there for you in your time of need.

-All of us are facing the same set of circumstances..We all more or less see what’s happening in ‘church world’. The Eastern Synod shared statistics more than a year ago that reflect significant trends.

*Many churches find themselves sharing a pastor’s time and energy with two or three other churches. That trend will accelerate in the next 3-4 years.

*In 2022 three churches in our synod were in the process of closing...by next year that number will increase by 15 fold (like 51 churches).

*Pastors are retiring as we boomers ‘age out’. We have one new pastor this year who grew up in Ridgeway and will be ordained to serve at Thornhill. We’re delighted at that news and realize congregations receiving recent graduates from our seminaries is increasingly rare. Next year it is expected that 14 congregations will be with out a pastor and the projected number in the next four years increases to 23.

-It is also significant that our synod will meet in convention in June to select a new bishop to succeed the Rev. Dr. Michael Pryse who has wisely and lovingly served us with an amazing heart for many years. Also the church will elect a vice president of the synod and other officers have already been named and will prepare to take on the many challenges coming at us all in such rapid succession.

In lieu of the requested words of wisdom, I'll offer a few questions...these questions are for all of us regardless of our present relationship with First Lutheran:

- WHAT are we trying to sustain?
- WHO is our neighbour and WHO needs us?
- HOW do we adapt (if we choose to adapt) to the changing landscape?
- WHERE do we see God working to 'find a new way' to carry out God's loving purposes in the world?

We carry on faithfully as people of the resurrection—even on the darkest of Good Friday God does what God always does—finding a way to life and liberation. How God's plan unfolds is known only to God. Meanwhile we pray words known to us from our daily prayers, "*God you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, but paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us grace to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord*". Amen. (Daily Prayer ELW page 304)