

# Covenant News



May 2020

## *Pastor's Spin*

Sisters & brothers in Christ,

Talk about another item to add to the substantially extensive list of “Things They Didn’t Teach You in Seminary!” I don’t remember anything pandemic-related being discussed. Nevertheless, here we are; actually, here *we have been* for several weeks now. Here we are still not overly sure if we have this whole thing figured out (no, we don’t have it figured out!), including not certain as to when and how we go about returning to see a movie in theaters, dining in a restaurant, going to see loved ones in nursing homes and/or hospitals, and yes, worshipping together in the same physical sanctuary.

As of this newsletter’s writing, the stay-at-home order remains in effect, including the recommendation to continue not gathering in groups of 10 or more. Also, you will read, below, a letter from our own Bishop Abraham Allende of the Northeastern Ohio Synod (ELCA), who, after consulting with task forces that included medical professionals, recommends that congregations not host in-person public worships throughout the month of May. As of right now, that is our tentative plan. At Covenant, we will *not* host any in-person public worships through May.

One of the main reasons behind this is the reality of our membership, many of whom may be extremely vulnerable not only to COVID-19 itself, but with pre-existing health conditions and age, puts them at higher risk at much more significant suffering, if infected. We will always err on the side of caution with the ultimate interest in the health and safety of you, and other just as precious children of God you may come in contact with, as we continue to do our part in a state/nation/world-wide effort in minimizing that pain and suffering.

Nevertheless, at some point, we will gather together, again, as a community of faith still united by the same Risen Christ whatever day that may be, as much as any Sabbath day before. However, when we do return, it will not be normal. During this month, your congregational leadership will make plans as to how worship will continue for the foreseeable future, knowing the virus remains active. It's quite likely we will have to sit so many pews apart. We will not leave our respective spots to share the peace. We will not pass an offering plate around. Communion will be different, to say the least. Who knows how long we will be strongly encouraged to wear masks? For the church-going Christians, whether they be Lutheran or otherwise, the do-absolutely-anything-at-all-costs to avoid even the slightest possibility of *change* is about to be put to the test in a way that most of us could never imagine (unless you were around for the Pandemic of 1918, when yes, churches shut down then, too)

All such curveballs to our Lutheran liturgical wheelhouse may seem quite drastic, and it will be. It will take getting used to (just like not being at worship on Saturday/Sunday has taken some "getting used to," to put it rather mildly). Except, the Great News is not limited to a certain way of worshiping. Christ is still Risen even today, and will be throughout the month of May as well. Christ will still be Risen no matter when or how we show up. Our Lord is not even limited to sanctuary walls. Hope of new life and Resurrection even finds its way through locked-up doors to isolated life.

So, we will continue to worship together, even at a distance, for the weeks ahead, as we e-mail out worship guides and accompanying devotions. We will, also, electronically send out weekday Scripture images with prayers to keep our hearts and minds focused on hope and commitment to the cause of praising God and loving our neighbors as our very selves. We will continue to lift each other up in any way we can. We will remain a family in Christ, no matter what. And if you ever need to talk, please do not hesitate to contact me whether it be through text, phone call, or e-mail. God's blessings of the Resurrection power continue to be with you all!

In Christ,  
Pastor Brad



*May Birthdays*

5/2 Christopher Dickey

5/3 Phyllis Welker

5/19 Steven Kobella

5/19 Arlene Lasher

5/19 Bernice Novak

5/21 Joan Garvin

5/23 Don Schirmer

5/25 Ron Schirmer

5/30 Jayden Kyle

5/30 George Lautanen

5/31 Barbara Gerstenberger

5/31 Matthew Kobella

*5/4 Michelle & Doug Pekar*

*Happy 46<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

*5/7 Charlotte & Robert Zaranka*

*Happy 54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

*5/11 Karen & Raymond Zack*

*Happy 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary*

*5/22 Jennifer & Larry Garberich*

*Happy 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary*

*5/22 Nanetter & Ron Schirmer*

*Happy 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

*5/25 Daralynn & Bruce Constant*

*Happy 41<sup>st</sup> Anniversary*





Northeastern Ohio Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.*

[Isaiah 43:18-19 NRSV]

April 27, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ of the Northeastern Ohio Synod,  
Let me say at the outset that I can never tell you enough how grateful I am for all of you and the ministry you do in Christ's name here in the Northeastern Ohio Synod. I never cease to be amazed at the creative ways you continue to share the Gospel and witness to the glory of God in all the twenty counties of our mission territory. You have been resilient in your faithfulness. I give thanks to God for you and feel blessed to be among you as we travel this COVID-19 journey together. It has been a long and arduous path that we have walked thus far, by faith and not by sight. Yet we take a measure of comfort in knowing that the risen Lord walks alongside us, as he did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

On Monday afternoon, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine rolled out his "reopening plan," that is scheduled to begin May 1 and will involve three phases. This plan has obvious implications for us as the body of Christ. We are called to imagine what this will look like in our congregations as we ponder when we will be able to resume in-person public worship.

As bishop, my chief concern is providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its people, and its rostered ministers. To that end, my principal consideration is the spiritual, physical, and emotional health of all. As I look at the demographics of our synod, it is clear that the majority of those that worship in our congregations fall into the most vulnerable age categories. 75% of coronavirus deaths occur among people 70-years of age or older. Several of our rostered leaders have formed congregational advisory teams that include medical personnel to guide their reopening process. I have asked them to share their wisdom to guard against my making any decision in a vacuum. I thank them for their willingness to assist me in this process.

Based on the information I've received thus far; **I am asking that congregations continue the suspension of public worship throughout the month of May.** I would rather err on the side of caution than risk the safety of our faithful by being too hurried in our return. But as you contemplate reopening, the Wisconsin Council of Churches has compiled a helpful list of questions to consider.

I am sensitive to the financial stresses this has created for many congregations. We continue to explore the economic resources that are available to assist in those challenges. We post those, and other information on our Northeastern Ohio Synod Resource page.

### **Synod Assembly**

The Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly has been postponed. It WILL NOT be held on June 12-13, 2020, but will be rescheduled to a later date yet to be determined.

The Northeastern Ohio Synod Council met on Saturday and officially voted, **“To direct the Executive Committee to develop a recommendation concerning possible rescheduling of the 2020 Synod Assembly; and to instruct the Executive Committee to present their recommendation to a specially called Synod Council meeting in the next 3-4 weeks for action by the Council.”**

Currently, the Executive Committee is looking at dates in August or September, and it seems highly likely that it will be a one-day assembly. The chief order of business is the election of a bishop. I have agreed to serve beyond the end of my term (August 31), until a successor is in place.

To give you some perspective, most synods that don't have bishop elections scheduled for this year, have already cancelled their assemblies until 2021. Those with bishop elections are, like us, in the process of rescheduling.

On somewhat unrelated note, the Fall Conference of Bishops, normally held the first week in October in Chicago, has already been canceled.

### **Other Cancellations**

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio (LOMO) Camps have made the difficult decision to keep camps closed until further notice. Therefore, traditional summer camps will not be held in 2020.

It bears repeating that God walks with us through this journey. Above all, that is what guides us in this adventure.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peace,



+The Rev. Abraham Allende  
Bishop



*For all the mothers in our life, we wish you a happy Mother's Day!*

## **A prayer for Mother's Day**

Lord, we remember the mothers  
who have gone before us.  
**For their love, sacrifice, struggle  
and joy, we thank you.**

Lord, we remember the mothers of  
Scripture who are a part of our story  
as we are a part of your story.  
**For their courage, faith, love and  
fierceness, we thank you.**

Lord, we remember those who have not  
given birth to us, but are mothers to us.  
**For their gift of themselves that they  
have given, we thank you.**

For the women who struggle with  
fertility, for those women whom  
society labels as less in their childlessness,  
for those women who have lost children.  
**For their tears, for their strength,  
for their wisdom, for their lives,  
we thank you.**

In your name we pray. Amen.

*by Claire Schoepp*



**GREATER LOVE HAS  
NO ONE THAN THIS,  
THAN TO LAY DOWN  
ONE'S LIFE FOR HIS  
FRIENDS.**

*remember*

**MEMORIAL DAY**

**JOHN 15:13**





## Covenant Lutheran Women Annual Plant Sale:

Orders must be placed with payment by  
Monday May 4<sup>th</sup> to the church office or  
Arlene Lasher

12411 Oak Park Blvd Garfield Heights,  
OH 44125

Pick-up is scheduled for Saturday, May  
23 from 9AM-1PM.

Limiting the number of people in the hall  
picking up at one time.

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The Lutheran Church of the Covenant  
19000 Libby Road, Maple Heights, Ohio 44137