

Covenant News



October 2020

Pastor's Spin



Sisters and brothers in Christ of Covenant

Here we are in the Reformation-themed month, when we try to consider how the church continues to reform hundreds of years after the one we claim to be THE Reformer (although the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and some others have done their fair share of reforming as well) unleashed a tidal wave of organized religion alterations that Martin Luther himself did not envision. Nevertheless, this 2020 year has... well, given us no choice but to “reform” worship, face-to-face ministry in general, including how we do music.

That isn't to say music hasn't changed, to say the least, since the 1500's, for instance, when Luther wrote his fair share of hymns. We allow different instruments into the sanctuary to lead us in song, you can move with the music (although we Lutherans are still working on that), not to mention the language and focus of the musical texts have shifted over time; just to name a few. During this Reformation build-up month of October, the church, also, recognizes the work of another famous Lutheran hymn-writer, named Paul Gerhardt.

We don't use the majority of his hymns all that often. Our tastes in styles have...”reformed,” let's say, in a few hundred years, to put it mildly. His music may be a little drawn out for the majority of us 21st century singers, even if he is connected to nine songs in our *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) hymnal (although two are “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”). When it comes to our hymnals, though, the church goes through its fair share of alterations to keep with the times, in a sense, and one hymn of Gerhardt's that was in the good 'ole green *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW), but not included in the ELW was “Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me.”

My college choir director loved Paul Gerhardt, and absolutely adored this hymn. Even though he lived the majority of his life in the latter half of the 20th century, I often wondered if he was straight out of Reformation Germany. He wasn't the type that just put the music in front of us and directed us to sing. He made sure to let us in on the story behind it. Evidently, there was a reason why that text was written, why that music was shaped to convey a certain emotion to connect with that story.

About 400 years ago, Gerhardt served as a pastor in Germany during one of the most horrific wars in history, the Thirty Years War, when death seemed to reign as approximately one in every three Germans died. He would witness first-hand Swedish troops burn down his family's home

and the church building, but the personal suffering did not end there. Four of his children died before they reached fifteen months of age, with only one surviving into adulthood. After thirteen years of marriage his wife died. His life, to most of us, would be synonymous with absolute despair. And yet, for some life-reforming reason, Paul Gerhardt managed to become, what many church musician historians believe, one of the greatest hymn writers in our church's history.

Shortly after the battles ceased from the Thirty Years War, Gerhardt looked upon the horrifying devastation of an entire nation and wrote the words to one of his most beautiful hymns, "Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me" (as translated by another famous hymn-writer, John Wesley, into English):

*Jesus, thy boundless love to me
no thought can reach, no tongue declare;
unite my thankful heart to thee,
and reign without a rival there!
Thine wholly, thine alone, I am;
be thou alone my constant flame.*

*Oh, grant that nothing in my soul
may dwell, but thy pure love alone;
oh, may thy love possess me whole,
my joy, my treasure, and my crown!
All coldness from my heart remove;
my ev'ry act, word, thought, be love.*

*This love unwearied I pursue
and dauntlessly to thee aspire.
Oh, may thy love my hope renew,
burn in my soul like heav'nly fire!
And day and night, be all my care
to guard this sacred treasure there.*

*In suff'ring be thy love my peace,
in weakness be thy love my pow'r;
and when the storms of life shall cease,
O Jesus, in that final hour,
be thou my rod and staff and guide
and draw me safely to thy side!*

October will, also, mark for many of us the six-month point of this virus "reforming" our lives, including how we sing (or don't) in public. And yet, the words on their own remain just as true amidst COVID-19, as well as plenty of justice-related issues, 2020 as they were in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War. May "[God's] love, our hope renew, burn in [our] soul like heav'nly fire," leading us to continue to reform our lives not just for our own spiritual benefit, but to better care for all of God's precious children, as if Jesus' love is, actually, truly, boundless, after all. Amen (so let it be, o God...so let it be)!

In Christ,
Pastor Brad

To listen to a recording of "Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me" from The Kantorei of Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne, IN): please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SQjWQeH5ww>



10/1 Jane Schuetz
10/6 Elaine Knerem
10/7 Marquise Lane
10/17 Katie Garberich
10/24 Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
10/26 Steve Dobush
10/31 Bishop Allende
10/31 Ryan Spychola



*10/10 Donna & Steve Kobella
Happy 39th Anniversary!*

*10/12 Steve Dobush & Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
Happy 24th Anniversary!*

*10/18 Marie & Bert Zahn
Happy 51st Anniversary!*

*10/18 Nancy & John Werner III
Happy 45th Anniversary!*

*10/22 Madeline & Dick Ptak
Happy 60th Anniversary!*



As we see colder temperatures in the forecast, especially for the morning hours, we anticipate moving back into the sanctuary for the foreseeable future for worship on Sunday mornings. As much as we look forward to returning to what was our physical worship home, in a sense, for so long, we also know worship will not be the same for a while. We will continue to do our part in providing the safest environment possible knowing the risk for those with pre-existing health conditions and compromised immune systems. We want everyone who worships with us to feel safe, so that they may focus on worshipping God with their whole heart. With that in mind, here is what to expect in the meantime (of course, all plans are subject to change as we enter this cold and flu season with the presence of COVID-19 as well):

- You will be asked to wear a mask the entire time you are in the church building (unless you have a health condition that prevents you from doing so).
- Worship will be made shorter with the lack of air flow in the sanctuary during the fall and winter months.
- Bulletins and individual Communion elements in plastic cups (as they have been setup in the driveway for our worship in the parking lot) will be available for you to pick up as you enter the back of the sanctuary.
- An offering basket will also be in the back of the sanctuary for you to drop your offerings into, as there will not be a time during worship for offering plates to be passed around.
- Blue X's have been placed in front of the pews to mark where we encourage you to sit to maintain physical distancing from those who are not of your household/family. Each spot also has hand sanitizer bottles on that respective pew.
- We will not be singing together as a congregation, as more published scientific studies reveal the harm with the potential spreading of aerosols/droplets.
- Also, for the bold print in the bulletin, we ask you speak in a whisper voice as opposed to speaking loudly as a group for the prayers of intercession responses, the Lord's Prayer, etc.
- There will not be a processional or recessional of the cross, as well as no receiving line after worship with Pastor Brad. He will continue the monthly calling check-in's, but if you have anything you wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact him.

We understand this may seem extreme, but we will always err on the side of caution for our Covenant family's health and safety, including your individual family and friends whom you may come in contact with during the week. We greatly appreciate your patience and understanding as we take on this unique journey together with God's help to be sure. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our Covenant council members.

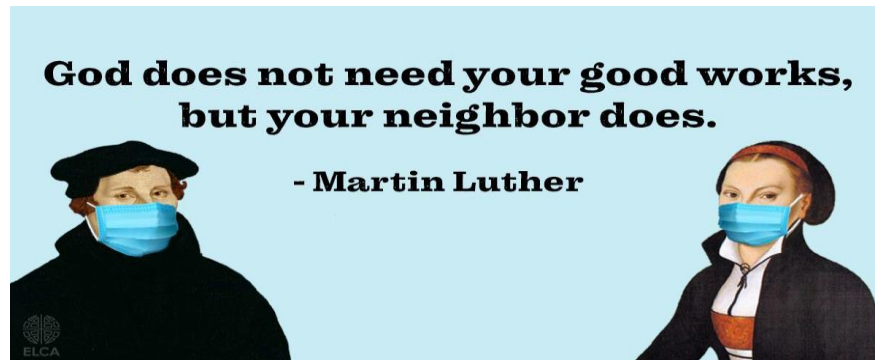


Our semi-annual congregational meeting that we often hold in October will, instead, be done in November, and will be immediately after worship on a Sunday morning in the sanctuary. Once the date is finalized, we will be sure to inform you through Wednesday's Word, Sunday bulletins, as well as the November newsletter.

On Sunday, October 11, we will celebrate World Communion Sunday, as we pray and remember God's love for the entire world!



Don't forget that we fall back one hour on Sunday, November 1!



All Saints Day

-Rev. Dr. Benjamin M. Stewart (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago), LivingLutheran.org

There is a lot of meaning packed into the word all in All Saints. Let's explore the day through this simple word. All includes some most beloved to us. All Saints calls to mind specific individuals: particular beloved faces, names and memories... We may be all too aware of the particular names we are now carrying with us toward All Saints this year—names of those who have died in the past months.

All includes those beloved by others. All Saints creates a space that embraces with honor the multitudes of individuals among the beloved dead. We see their faces, say their names, and

recognize in the worshipers around us others who carry their own memories and litanies of saints. All Saints sets out a place for all of them—an assembly the book of Revelation describes as “a number no one could count” with saints “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (7:9). All Saints brings into focus our own beloved dead while also stretching our imagination toward the whole company of saints, more diverse and populous than we can fully comprehend.

All are saved by grace. The festival originally honored those who were considered especially holy: heroic figures from the Scriptures and martyrs who had given their lives nonviolently in witness to the faith. However, it is an especially Lutheran accent for the feast to honor not only those who lived exemplary lives, but all who have been baptized into Christ’s death. For Lutherans, All Saints resonates with the conviction that in Christ every saint is a sinner and every sinner a saint, *simul justus et peccator*. Lutherans especially remember on this feast that it is God’s grace, apart from our works, that makes us saints. We find lasting rest only in the mercy of God.

We share a mortal, earthy nature with all humans and all living creatures on the planet. Death is an inevitable part of life for all of us. It is part of our citizenship as earth creatures. In the Bible’s wisdom literature, the word all is like a bell ringing to remind us of the lesson of Ash Wednesday: *The fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again* (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20). John’s Gospel uses seed imagery: *Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit* (12:24). All Saints proclaims a mystery. We remain in communion with those who have returned to the earth ahead of us.

We wait with all creation. All Saints is commemorated when much of the North American landscape appears to be dying down. Days are shorter, tree branches are becoming bare, the air is colder and fields have been stripped of their harvest. November begins a cycle of readings extending through Advent in which the themes of death and danger are in dialogue with our deepest hopes. As the sun sinks lower in the sky each day, our Scripture texts help us seek answers to a searing question: “How can we live in hope and integrity when it looks like the end of the world?” All Saints begins a season in which we contemplate the hopes and fears of all creation, watching and waiting for signs of a new day dawning for all of us.

The themes of All Saints extend into all of Christian life. We call to mind every Sunday the great company of saints as we join their unending hymn around the communion table. We bear witness to new saints being born from the baptismal waters. Perhaps we visit a cemetery on the anniversary of a death or on other church festivals. Many congregations include every week a final petition in the intercessions giving thanks for the lives of saints who died during the week in this or a past year. Some Christians are rediscovering natural burial as a way to honor our return to the earth in hope alongside all living creatures. And every time we see the sign of the cross or trace it on our bodies, we remember the one whose death and resurrection has formed this company of all the saints, hallowing all our lives and deaths.

All Saints reimagines the world—all of it. Even in death, God is making all things new.

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
October 2020

| Server Schedule | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------|---|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| AG: Senderak, Rusher, Susanek | 4 Blessing of Animals 9:00 Eucharist | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| AG: Garvin, Zahn, Garberich | 11 World Communion Sunday 9:00 Eucharist | 12 | 13 7:00 Congregational Council | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| AG: Garvin, Zahn, Garberich | 18 9:00 Eucharist | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| AG: Werner, Copeland, Hohenstein | 25 Reformation Sunday 9:00 Eucharist | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

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The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
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