

The Luther Memorial News December 2020

*We are a
Reconciling in Christ Congregation.*

*A community committed to making
Christ's disciples, dedicated to worship,
study, and prayer while serving all in need.*

Rev. Monica L. Weber, Pastor

Vicar Alyssa Kaplan, Lay Campus Minister

Juanita Smoot, Director of Music Ministry

Michael Spencer, Custodian

Marcia Barrow, Office Manager

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As we face the end of 2020, a year of terrible disasters and challenges, it's tempting to believe that January 1 will bring us a clean slate, a fresh start, and a pandemic-free existence. We are called to be faithful as one year ends and a new year begins; and we are called to trust in God's abiding presence, no matter what happens in this life. As God's faithful people, we continue to hope and pray for a viable vaccine, and we give thanks for God's gift of science and medicine. But we are so very tired; our bodies, minds and souls ache from loss, anxiety and fear. We long to hug one another, to worship and sing together without masks; to gather together with loved ones and celebrate joyful occasions. We are saddened by the absence of cherished Advent and Christmas rituals and traditions. We are weary, wandering around in a wilderness of despair that seems endless.

But remember, dear friends, that we are also the beloved, claimed, baptized and forgiven children of the Most High God. Jesus himself continues to walk beside us, as we journey together toward the renewal of Creation and the gift of eternal life, made possible for all people by God in Christ. My prayer for you in this Advent season is that you will experience the tangible, life-giving hope of Jesus, every day. Step out of the holiday frenzy to reflect on the coming of our Lord. Pause in silence to listen for God's still, small voice, because it's there, if you will stop and pay attention. God's Holy Spirit is stirring mighty winds of change, to bring about our deliverance and our redemption. Jesus is coming: will you be ready to greet him with joy? As you navigate this Advent season of preparation and reflection, remember Jesus' words in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Thanks be to God! — *Pastor Monica*



Congregational Council Corner

2020

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2021

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2022

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Authorized payments up to \$10,000 for benevolence to be distributed as determined by the Committee on Social Ministry.

Welcomed Natalia Mielczarek to membership at LMLC.

Extended the contract with Vicar Alyssa Kaplan to serve as campus minister for the Well through spring semester, May 2021.

Established a task force to recommend how LMLC will partner with the Virginia Synod in the Virginia Synod Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Campaign to assist Pastor Monica in reducing seminary education student debt.

Approved use of the narthex for meetings of the AA group and boy scouts until completion of the fellowship hall renovation. Users will abide by the guidelines for safe use protocols established by the COVID-19 Task Group.

Recognized the expenditure of funds to complete essential mold remediation in the von Bora house.

October by the numbers:

General Treasury receipts: \$24,391

General Treasury expenses: \$28,150

Net General Treasury: - \$3,759

Our monthly cash flow is still negative but getting less so. We have very little cushion left in our checking account. Even with Council authorizing to pay \$10,000 towards local benevolences in November, we still have \$9,100 of outstanding benevolences that will be paid this month in December. We very much appreciate every effort that the Congregation is making to support us in these trying times not only for the Church but for yourselves. Please prayerfully consider catching up with your pledges in December if you have not done so already or making a final additional pledge contribution for this tax year. Finally, if you have not yet submitted your pledge form for next year it is not too late. Providing a written pledge gives us more confidence in being able to meet our mission goals for the next year.



Advent “Praise Ye!” Daily Devotions & Music

In your Advent Toolkit, you’ll find a “Praise Ye!” daily devotion booklet for use during Advent. Each day’s devotion highlights a beloved hymn or carol, and you can listen to the daily song online. Visit www.lmlc.org and click on ‘Daily Advent Devotion’ button. You can also listen to a compilation of all 28 Advent songs by clicking the ‘Advent Devotion’ button. Both buttons can be found the main page of our website.

Advent Midweek Worship by Zoom, “What is Peace?” Begins December 2nd

Join the 5 ELCA congregations of the Blacksburg-Radford Fellowship every Wednesday during Advent for **Holden Evening Prayer at 7pm**. A copy of the Holden Evening Prayer service has been provided to all Fellowship households in your Advent Toolkit, along with a votive candle to light as we gather together virtually. Our Advent theme, “What is Peace?” will be explored through a weekly clergy reflection, special musical interludes, and the sharing of Joys & Concerns at the close of the service. Watch your email for the Zoom link for Holden Evening Prayer, beginning December 2nd at 7pm!



Advent & Christmas Worship Schedule:

Wednesday Dec 2, 7pm; Holden Evening Prayer by Zoom; Music by Nita Smoot. You will receive an email with the Zoom link; recordings will be posted at www.lmlc.org, “Midweek Advent Worship” on Thursday.

Sunday Dec 6; Advent II worship presented by Shiloh & New Mount Zion Lutheran churches. View online at www.lmlc.org.

Wednesday Dec 9, 7pm; Holden Evening Prayer by Zoom; Music by The Paulsons; you will receive an email with the Zoom link; recording will be posted at www.lmlc.org, “Midweek Advent Worship” on Thursday.

Sunday Dec 13; Advent III worship presented by Christ Lutheran; view online: www.lmlc.org.

Wednesday Dec 16, 7pm; Holden Evening Prayer by Zoom; Music by Christ Lutheran; you will receive an email with the Zoom link; recording will be posted at www.lmlc.org, “Midweek Advent Worship” on Thursday.

Sunday Dec 20; NO DRIVE-IN SUNDAY WORSHIP: Pre-recorded Advent IV worship presented by St Michael; view at www.lmlc.org.

Monday Dec 21; The Longest Night Service of Remembrance by Zoom, 7pm (link will be emailed). Remember departed loved ones during this special service of lament and hope.

Wednesday Dec 23, 7pm; Holden Evening Prayer by Zoom; Music by St Michael; you will receive an email with the Zoom link; recording will be posted at www.lmlc.org, “Midweek Advent Worship” on Thursday.

Tuesday Dec 24, 5pm; Drive-In Christmas Eve Worship with Holy Communion at St Michael Lutheran. Bring donations of non-perishable food for Micah’s Backpack. Luminarias and glow sticks will light up this special evening!

Tuesday Dec 24 & Wed Dec 25; Pre-recorded Christmas Lessons & Carols, view online at www.lmlc.org (these recordings will be available at noon on 12/24 and available until Epiphany).

Sunday Dec 27; Christmas I Worship with St Philip Lutheran, Roanoke; view online at www.lmlc.org.

Sunday Jan 3; Christmas II/Epiphany Worship & “Star Words” hosted by Luther Memorial; watch your mail to receive your 2021 Star Word! View online at www.lmlc.org.

A Word of Thanks from Pastor Monica

Friends in Christ Jesus, I would like to express my deep gratitude to our faithful church staff: Office Manager Marcia Barrow; Director of Music Ministry Nita Smoot; Sexton Michael Spencer; and Audio-Visual Technician Daniel Taylor. This has been a trying and difficult year of continuous challenges, as we worked together to worship our Lord, stay connected to our members in Christian fellowship, and serve our community in new ways. Please hold them in prayer, giving thanks for their dedication, imagination and perseverance. I also give thanks for all our grounds keeping and maintenance volunteers; our tireless committee chairpersons and their teams; and the Magdalene Ministry volunteers who have reached out to our elderly and homebound members. I am so blessed to be the pastor of such a loving, generous faith community. We truly can do all things through Christ who strengthens us! I hold all of you in prayer for good health and joy in our shared baptismal covenant through Christ Jesus. — *Pastor Monica*

Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry Update

Thank you for your generous contributions to our Food Pantry. It has been a rough year for many and being able to provide nourishing food is much appreciated. Any checks sent to the church are put in a designated fund that can be used for purchasing food for the Pantry.

With approximately \$2,400 available, I discussed needs with the Pantry Director and ordered based on her recommendations. The Pantry received 1,555 pounds of food which included: 640 bottles of ketchup, 780 cans of chicken, 150 cans of Pinto beans, and 150 cans of Red Kidney Beans. These are some of our staple items and will meet the Pantry's needs for a couple of months. We also purchased 20 boxes or 1000 packets of cocoa mix and 250 bags of marshmallows. These items will be used in our special Christmas bags along with a recipe for sweet potato casserole.

Please consider following the Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry on Facebook. If you have any questions, about the Pantry and how your money is spent, please feel free to call or email me:

sandy.hagman@comcast.net or Phone: (540) 951-0270. When we are through this COVID crisis, I will be happy to give you a tour!



One of four shipments!



The Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry is in great need of volunteers. We have four teams of volunteers that have been working weekly since the beginning of our COVID procedures in March. Some of our team members have moved or had circumstances develop that prevent them from continuing to serve. These teams are a great group of dedicated servants and they need help! November resulted in a significant increase in volume to the Pantry and we expect December to reflect as much of a need or more. We are putting out a call for volunteers that would be willing to be a part of our teams.

Can you commit to working with us once a week, or possibly every other week? We are open Monday/Tuesday 4 - 6 pm and Wednesday/Thursday 10 - 11:30 am.

Are you physically able to lift 25 pounds and stay on your feet for two hours? This is a physical job and another reason to be thankful to our volunteers. We stay busy and we stay on our feet. We have to lift heavy grocery bags and canned goods.

Do you have concerns about your exposure to COVID? We protect our volunteers by limiting the number of people in the facility. All volunteers wear masks and gloves. We have also installed Reme-Halo air purifiers for the facility that destroys the COVID virus, the flu virus, SARS and others. The warehouse side of our facility will be similarly protected on December 16th.

Please consider serving our customers and giving our teams a much needed boost. If you think you can help us, please email Beth Abel at gsbhabel@gmail.com. If you have questions about this opportunity, feel free to contact me at andrea@webmail.us.

From the COVID Task Force:

1. The Virginia Synod encourages us to use on-line resources for information about virus symptoms, tests and medical care. Check out these websites: www.virginia.gov/coronavirus and www.Buoy.com/va
2. The Boy Scouts and the Tai Chi group are meeting in the narthex, following the guidelines for restricted use.

Christmas Eve Food Drive for Micah's Backpack @ St. Michael's Lutheran Church at 5:00 pm.

Micah's Backpack addresses food insecurity for youth at 10 local schools. Each child gets 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners, snacks and juice in his or her backpack to take home each Friday. This gives them food for the entire weekend. The child brings the empty backpack back to be filled again on Monday. This is so important. John Stramiello is the Director of Micah's Backpack Program at St. Michael's Lutheran Church. Our Church is joining SMLC in this food drive at our Christmas Eve Drive-In Service at 5:00 p.m. in the parking lot of St. Michael's Church. Items needed for Micah's Backpacks:

- Pasta in a can
- Individual Juice Boxes
- Fruit Cups
- Mac and Cheese Singles

Please join us Christmas Eve in the Food Drive. John will be there. There will also be an envelope where monetary donations will be accepted. If you cannot make it to the service there are two ways you can still give: you can deliver your food donations to the LMLC Narthex the week before or you can go to st-michael-lutheran-church.org and click on 'Get Involved' and then click on 'Micah's Caring Initiative' and hit the 'Make a Donation' button.



Fellowship Hall Renovations Continue:

We are almost there! The long awaited renovation of the Fellowship Hall is nearing completion – expected by mid-December. We will have a welcoming, flexible space, with greater sound control and aesthetics.

Here's a preview:

- New materials and finishes including painted drywall and vinyl flooring;
- New ceiling tiles and lighting;
- State of the art audiovisual system;
- Separate storage area for tables and chairs;
- Moveable wall panels (with pin-up space) to create a separate area for dual use of the Hall;
- Accessible water fountain;
- A refurbished library and small meeting space; and
- New exterior door (easy to open!).

Also, not visible, but critically important, is a reinforced and stabilized north wall that corrected problems resulting from past water issues.

This renovation was supported by the donations to the Capital Campaign that was begun in 2017 and by generous donations from the estates of several past members.



Lutheran Campus Ministries At Virginia Tech

With the end of the semester, along with all the stress of final papers and exams, comes the chance to look back and reflect on the past three months of ministry and community. It has been a privilege to accompany the Well Students these past few months. In spite of the challenges of this pandemic and a semi-virtual semester, I am inspired by the ways that our students were inspired to cultivate innovative community. Our students focused on a renewed emphasis on worship and theological education, with weekly worship and bible studies. As zoom fatigue grew, safe in person gatherings became that much more critical to student well-being and spiritual health. Sunday night gatherings around a firepit in the picnic shelter have been a highlight of my week where our community is able to reflect on their past week and engage in guided discussion around a broad theological theme.

In the coming weeks, even amidst a well-deserved break, The Well will engage in two important discernment processes. Out-going Well President, Andy Taminger will continue to work with interested students to draft a Well-specific Reconciling in Christ Welcome Statement. The students will also continue to work on refining their sense of identity and mission while identifying key competencies and passions they value in a campus pastor, all to prepare for a call process this spring.

While I grieve the end of our semester together and seeing the amazing Well students regularly, I'm so looking forward all the amazing ministry that awaits us in the new year.

Advent peace and blessings to you,
Alyssa Kaplan

Nita's Notes – December 2020

Advent/Christmastide 2020 at LMLC will be different than any we've experience together. And, yet, these upcoming liturgical seasons will still be filled with spiritual gifts of hope, peace, joy and love and with musical gifts of songs, hymns and carols. While you listen, watch and participate in the variety of special musical additions to the website and our worship services, may you receive not only a blessing, but also a renewed sense of awe and wonder throughout these Holy days of preparation and celebration. Each musical selection is part of the Christmas story we share year after year. They are songs of our faith, our history and our divine encounter. They are God with us and God in us. They proclaim a love so sacred and yet so human that we humbly embrace the Christ Child and invite all to join us in His family of love.

It has brought me great joy to plan, prepare and present our extra musical concerts and service music with our LMLC staff, choir members, guest musicians and video/audio editors. Together we offer our individual and collective talent and creative energy during this unique time of Covid-19 restrictions. May you know a season of extraordinary beauty and grace.

Following is a schedule of these major musical events:

NOV 29: Advent I audio/video organ concert of Advent hymn arrangements presented by Juanita Smoot.

DEC 20: Advent IV audio/video vocal/instrumental concert of Appalachian and African American carols performed on autoharp, mountain dulcimer and guitar by guest artist, Dr. Jill Trinkka.

DEC 24: A Christmas Eve musical celebration including a very special gift surprise for our parish! Also, local musicians, Jay Crone (trombone/euphonium/voice), Julee Hickcox (flute) and Bridget Seidel (violin) will join with Jill Trinkka and me to provide a wide variety of delightful arrangements of Christmas carols and songs. Traditional Scriptures will be read by laity.

JAN 3: Christmas II audio/video piano concert of carol arrangements presented by Juanita Smoot.

Soli Deo Gloria,
NITA

Longest Night Service of Remembrance & Hope

On Monday, December 21st, the longest night of the year, join the Blacksburg-Radford ELCA Fellowship for a Service of Remembrance & Hope. This gathering includes contemplative readings and music designed to honor departed loved ones, even as we rest in the hope of Jesus Christ, whose light shines in the darkness and cannot be overcome. This service will be conducted by Zoom at 7pm; you may join by clicking this link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82536794536> and entering the Passcode 711592.



Benediction Sculpture Installation at Luther Memorial in December and January

Beginning December 15, 2020, Luther Memorial will be hosting the moving “Benediction” sculpture for 40 days, until January 26th. The sculpture has been installed at many places of worship in 2020 including Zion Lutheran and Pleasant Valley Church of the Brethren in Floyd County, Mount Tabor United Methodist Church in Montgomery County, Grace Episcopal and First Presbyterian in Radford, Community Christian in Dublin, Mennonite Fellowship in Christiansburg, and Halls UMC in Elliston; Luther Memorial is the final stop for 2020. The human figure sculpture is stained white and posed with arms raised in a traditional gesture of blessing; it will be placed on the Luther Memorial property, facing out towards the surrounding community. According to Charlie Brouwer, Floyd County resident and sculptor, “Although religions and ways of worship can seem vastly different on the surface, they do have many similar core beliefs. One of them is a desire to have a positive impact on their communities and I hope this project helps emphasize that. Although I began the project well before the pandemic, its positive and uplifting message seems right for our times.” Please come and visit the sculpture, and invite your family and friends as well.



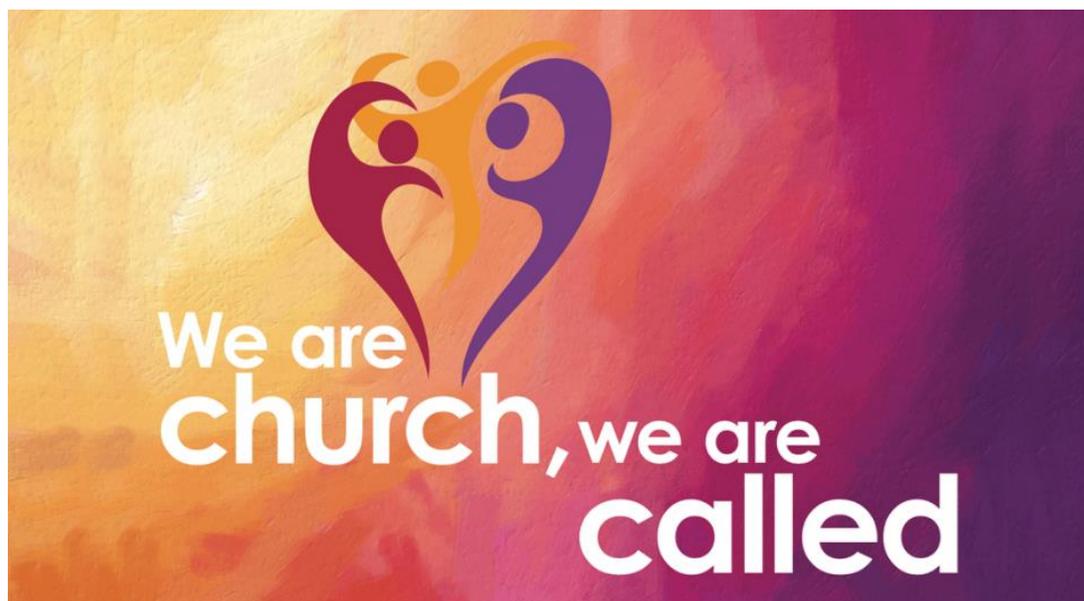
NEW Women’s Bible Study begins January 21

This new study explores the history, intent, and meaning of the Bible as God’s revelation of love and forgiveness for all people. Books of the Bible are grouped by key themes: “Creating”, “Living”, and “Trusting”. Pastor Monica will co-lead the Covenant Bible study with Pastor Michelle Stramiello.

If you are interested in joining this Bible study and fellowship, or if you have questions, email: pastormonica@lmlc.org.

Women of the ELCA New River Conference Fall ZOOM Gathering Sunday, Dec 13, from 2-3:30 p.m.

A Celebration of Women in Ministry



This is the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church and we are privileged to worship with an amazing group of women leaders in the New River Conference. Join us as we meet them and hear their stories of joys, struggles and gospel hope.

Pastor JoAnn Bunn	Gladesboro Lutheran
Pastor Wanda Childs	Floyd-Willis Parish
Vicar Alyssa Kaplan	Christ/Radford and VT Campus Ministry
Rev. Rachel Larson	Member/Luther Memorial/Blacksburg
Pastor Terrie Sternberg	Trinity/Pulaski
Deacon Lavelva Stevens	Holy Trinity/Wytheville
Pastor Michelle Stramiello	St. Michael/Blacksburg
Pastor Marty Wagner	Church of the Good Shepherd/Galax
Pastor Monica Weber	Luther Memorial/Blacksburg

Our celebration will include beautiful music and a timely message as we join in fellowship and sisterhood during this Advent season.

To register, send an e-mail message to Jody Smiley: [jdsimiley29@comcast.net](mailto:jdsmiley29@comcast.net)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THOSE BORN IN DECEMBER

December 01	<i>Bill Knocke</i>
December 05	<i>Lauren Widner</i>
December 12	<i>Joanne Watson</i>
December 18	<i>Gail King</i>
December 25	<i>Christian Peterson</i> <i>Randy Shifflett</i>
December 26	<i>Wava Vigen</i>
December 28	<i>Carla Liversedge</i> <i>Carol Papillon</i> <i>Stephanie Valencic</i>
December 30	<i>Gilli Freeman</i> <i>Fred Rencsok</i>



Happy Anniversary



Fred & Dianne Rencsok; December 27th
Mark & Jennifer Freeman; December 28th
Leah Wechtaluk McFarren; December 28th

Council Annual Reports Due Jan 15

2020 Annual Reports are due to Marcia Barrow **no later than January 31**. Council members, please coordinate your annual report with your committee chairpersons so that all committees are represented for 2020.

Church Office Holiday Schedule:

Thursday Dec 24: CLOSED

Friday Dec 25: CLOSED

Thursday Dec 30: CLOSING AT NOON

Friday Jan 1: CLOSED

We've gone social!

Thanks to everyone who is following us on social media - we hope you are enjoying the posts! For those of you who may not be aware of all our social media platforms, please follow and like us on:

Social media is a wonderful way to keep everyone informed of upcoming events, post pictures of congregational life, and hopefully provide some inspirational messages along the way. We need your help to spread the message about Luther Memorial and let people know about our wonderful church and its activities! Here are a few ways you can help:

- Be sure to follow and like us on Facebook and Instagram if you are not doing so already
 - Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/luthermemorialblacksburg>
 - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/luthermemorialblacksburg/>
- Share our posts on your personal Facebook feed, or share them on Instagram via stories. This increases engagement and introduces your friends and followers to Luther Memorial.
- We love it when you comment on any of our posts with your personal insight or to answer any questions we might ask.
- If you participate in any activities at Luther Memorial, consider taking a picture, tagging it with the location (if it's at the church) and sharing it on our page. This is a great way to support us online.
- Once we resume our in-person worship services and other activities at church, consider "checking in."
- Share your enthusiasm for Luther Memorial by leaving a review on Facebook. Your feedback and review could be valuable for someone contemplating worshipping with us in the future.

We also have a YouTube channel, and post our weekly worship services there every week (also on Facebook). Our YouTube channel can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTDz76wqGtrhazExzLCUc-Q>

If you subscribe to our channel, you will automatically receive notifications whenever we post a new video.

If you have any questions or need assistance with any of our social media platforms, please feel free to contact Carol Webster at cwebster@casselinternational.com



Luther Memorial Lutheran Church
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STEWARDSHIP NUGGET FOR DECEMBER 2020

“...all we possess are the gifts of God to us; now in distributing it to others, we act as God’s stewards...”

John Woolman

