The Star of Bethlehem



April 2020

LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

We can't flee from it. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has spread around the world without sign of stopping. Global markets are shaking. Cities and even States are on lockdown and shelter in place orders. Florida beaches are closed. The media coverage vacillates between issuing public warnings and scoring political hits. The disease might affect the upcoming presidential election; we might be reeling from the effects of COVID-19 for months, if not years, to come. From all appearances, we can't escape the disease or its consequences.

To be clear, most of us will not die from COVID-19; it is not a new bubonic plague. Of 100 infected victims, 98 will probably survive and experience only mild, flu-like symptoms. But the effects of the disease on our lives will likely reverberate into the future.

In 1527, Luther wrote a letter to a friend because the bubonic plague was passing through Europe again and had struck both Silesia, where his friend lived, and Wittenberg, where Luther lived.

In the 14th century, the Black Death (the bubonic plague) killed between 75 million and 200 million people in Eurasia; it undoubtedly affected the course of European history. Fleas ferried the nefarious bacteria that caused buboes, or swollen lumps of infection, to develop under the victim's skin. Sometimes the lumps exploded in pustular discharge; other times they spread over the rest of the body. It usually killed its victims in two to seven days.

When the plague struck a town, the wealthy would often flee to the countryside. The question put to Luther was simple: Should a Christian flee this horrific plague?

We cannot escape COVID-19 by fleeing to the countryside. How, then, should a Christian live when he can't flee an oncoming disease?

Remember your Baptism. Baptism is not a magical incantation to keep Christians safe. But, in Baptism, the Holy Spirit unites you to Christ and His resurrection. St. Paul writes, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

You "live like you are baptized" when you believe that nothing separates you from God's love in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:31–39). You live in Baptism when you laugh at the devil's attempts to induce you to fear and dread. As Luther says, "Send those terrors right back to him" (Luther's Works 43:127). Be confident; you do not fear death, for you are united to Christ.

Death, however, still looms on the horizon for us all: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Or in the words of Luther: "Since death is God's punishment, which he sends upon us for our sins, we must submit to God and with a true and firm faith patiently await our punishment" (LW 43:119).

(continued on page 4)

April Bdays & Ann.

April D	uay	S & Allii.	
Alessandro Joseph	4/1	McCarty Hilton C.	4/14
Florey Steve & Nancy	4/1	Norton III Miller	4/14
Spock Terri	4/1	Truax Alice	4/14
Oberheu John	4/2	Donnelly Morgan	4/15
Perryman Kevin M. & Kristine	4/2	Moe Brad A.	4/15
Poe III John D. (Jay)	4/3	Brauer Constance	4/16
Wamsley Barbara	4/3	Briggs William N.	4/16
Grosshandler Charlie	4/4	Helberg John H.	4/16
Junk Sheryl	4/4	Swanson Tucker F.	4/16
Peacock Doug & Stephanie A		Mazzeo Tony & Jamie	4/17
Reichard Bryan	4/4	Sharp Addison	4/17
Riker Ann	4/4	Sullivan Savannah N.	4/17
Huber Stephen & Jennifer M.	4/5	Elvers Don & Grace	4/18
Young Ellen	4/5	Garner John B. & Laura	4/18
Larson Dennis	4/6	Vesta Declan O.	4/18
Gray Candace A.	4/7	Thies David & Elizabeth	4/19
Grider Jenna	4/7	Barley Dane T.	4/20
DeHart Bridget	4/8	Dellinger Cindy A.	4/20
Harcourt Katrina M.	4/8	Peacock Emma G.	4/21
Matthews Brian	4/8	Shimp Jean	4/21
Pietrasiuk Carol	4/8	Smith Matthew & Angela	4/21
Dellinger Bruce & Holly	4/9	Ekman Glenn	4/22
Heilig Alex and Lloyda F.	4/9	Van Ness Linda	4/22
Zarski Tammy	4/9	Beaty Robert	4/23
,	4/10	Crenshaw Tripp L.	4/23
•	4/10	Dellinger Kegan & Cindy	4/23
	4/11	Corbitt Canon	4/24
	4/11	Vesta Matthew	4/24
,	4/12	Adams Alyssa	4/25
	4/12	Heimbach Jamie & Susan	4/25
Zikeli Edelweiss	4/12	Addis John M.	4/26

4/13

4/14

4/14

Almaguer Rolando & Traci

Fluegge Mark

Zikeli David

Huckaba Danielle

McCarty Amelia R.

Lambert Jan

Stewardship

	Feb 2019	Feb 2020
Monthly Totals:	\$52,522.80	\$61,065.90
Restricted:	6,812.06	10,589.00
YTD Totals:	\$105,302.28	\$115,108.00
	\$10,228.25	\$17,389.00

February Attendance

Date	8 am	9:30 am	11am	<u>Total</u>
Feb 3, 2019	76	77	85	238
Feb 2, 2020	73	107	91	271
Feb 10, 2019	68	66	100	234
Feb 9, 2020	61	98	122	281
Feb 17, 2019	76	69	88	233
Feb 16, 2020	88	95	90	273
Feb 24, 2019	72	97	94	263
Feb 23, 2020	58	82	110	250

SENIOR GAME DAY Hand and Foot

Monday, April 6—TBD

Disciples Hall at 9:15 am
Talk with MaryAnn Lawrence 708-9492

Save the Date

4/26

4/28

4/29

In the midst of uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we look forward to better days when the crisis is over and life returns to normal. Here's one joyful event to put on our calendars for later this year when things have settled down.

The 2020 Women's Advent by Candlelight will be Saturday, December 5, 2-5 p.m. The event has been moved to a Saturday afternoon instead of the Sunday evening of past years. The change was made by the ABC Planning Committee at its recent meeting.

There are multiple reasons for moving to a Saturday afternoon. One of the most important is feedback that nighttime driving is difficult for many women, especially seniors. This sentiment was expressed by a significant number of attendees, as well as some women who did not attend because they didn't want to drive in the dark.

Another reason for the change is to accommodate women with young children. These mothers said they wished to be home Sunday evening to help with their children's nighttime routines.

A third reason is to reach out to employed women. Some of these members stated they like to be home Sunday evenings to prepare for the next day's work.

In response to these comments and in order to make ABC accessible to as many women as possible, the committee decided to move the event to Saturday afternoon. The worship service will remain similar to previous years, but the fellowship meal will be lightened to resemble a High Tea, with appetizers, petite sandwiches, and desserts instead of the hearty potluck of last year. There will still be the elegant tables and beautiful decorations that have become much-loved hallmarks of ABC.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 5, 2-5 p.m. Lord willing, the coronavirus will have run its course by then, and the women of Bethlehem will be able to gather in worship and fellowship to start the Advent season focusing on our Lord at Advent by Candlelight

As we pencil the event on our calendars, we are reminded that the current health crisis will pass in God's good time, and our Christian gatherings with other believers will be graciously restored. In the meantime, we pray God for His love and protection during the corona pandemic. And we appreciate more-than-ever the daily gifts He provides.

In His service, Bonnie Arndt

Easter – It's Kind of a Big Deal

April brings with it several things: Tax Day; Administrative Professionals Day; our twins, Hilton and Amelia's, birthday; and oh yeah, this little thing called Holy Week and then Easter, a.k.a., the Resurrection of Our Lord. One of these things is much more important than all the others. And it ain't your taxes!

Easter is a big deal. There's a reason for all the preparation beforehand. There's a reason why, in addition to Easter Sunday, we will celebrate *seven* Sundays of Easter. This is too much for only one day. Easter is the celebration of a Savior who beat death in the tomb, beat your sins on the cross, and rubbed that victory in Satan's face when he descended into Hell.

If we think of the Apostle's Creed as a story, then the Holy Week and Easter portion of that narrative begins after Jesus has been born of the virgin Mary, when we confess that He **suffered under Pontius Pilate**. Have you ever stopped to think about the significance of this little detail? Pontius Pilate was a real Roman governor, who actually lived and governed the Jewish people on behalf of Rome. He is an historical figure. Ancient records of his service and activities exist, corroborating the details we have in Scripture. When we confess that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, we are placing our Savior – indeed, all of Christianity – into a very real, historical context. Our faith is not a nebulous, wishy-washy fantasy – disconnected from history and observation and fact. Our faith is not something we believe because it makes us feel better. Our faith is something that we hold to because it actually happened. And that makes Easter a rather big deal.

The narrative goes on. Jesus was crucified and buried. Crucifixion - the punishment for a criminal. Way on back in the early days of the Israelites, God articulated what this kind of punishment indicated. "If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God." (Deut. 21:22-23) *Cursed by God.* Jesus was cursed by God the Father... so that we wouldn't be. He had committed no crime, done no wrong. (While we can't seem to *stop* committing wrongs!) But Jesus took our place, took the cursing we deserved. He didn't merely give His life – He endured the cursing, the shame, the embarrassment of God being against Him. So that we might know the blessing, the innocence, and the joy of God being for us! And that makes Easter a rather big deal.

And then He was **dead**. God doesn't save you part way. He is no milquetoast savior, taking the easy way out. When God does something for you, He does it all the way. Physically, there is no possible further length to go to beyond death. And because Jesus was fully God, we can in truth say that on Good Friday, our God was dead! Such was the complete and total cost your Savior paid for your salvation. Never doubt that gift of salvation. It is yours. All that could have ever possibly been paid was paid. By God Himself, dead on a cross. Out of love for you. A rather big deal.

But of course, on the third day He rose again from the dead. Easter is my favorite holiday because it means that death has no hold on me. The grave couldn't hold our Lord, and His stronger-than-death-life is part of the salvation He gives to us. Sure, I may suffer in this life. Indeed, I will suffer. And eventually, sooner or later, I will die. But Easter is proof positive that death is not the end of the story. Jesus' life is the end of the story. An eternal, unending, ultimately victorious life! That He gives to us.

Of course, in a sense, Easter isn't the end of the story; the Creed continues. But man, oh man! It is a rather big deal.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Nathan



Your orders from Amazon do help, as of August 2019 we have earned \$375.10 for BLC. All charities as of November 2019 have earned \$156,109,909.51. Keep on shopping and thank you for designating BLC.

Amazon donates to Bethlehem Lutheran Church when you shop at smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7061413. Thank you for your support!

Mission House

Request for all worshippers: We need Mission House help every 3rd Friday. 6:00 to 7:30 PM feeding the hungry and poor. They are always in need of your hotel shampoo and small soaps. A basket is in the narthex. 800 Shetter Avenue, Jacksonville Beach. There is a sign-up sheet is in the narthex.

Food Support

We have a great group of ladies that help support grieving families with a luncheon following a Memorial Service at BLC. We are blessed. If you would like to help with your time or with food donations, please talk with Joan Richards or email her at nana-ioan1977@comcast.net.

Please remember to sign the Record of Fellowship that is in your pew and pass it to your neighbor.



Normally our path takes us north to Washington state at this time of year. This year we have lingered in the southwest and the desert. It is amazing to see what a little rain will do! The cacti, succulents, brush, trees and all of God's creation blooms almost instantly! We were amazed at the vibrant color and liveliness of the desert. It was as though every growing thing was waiting, having marshalled its resources and put everything in preparation for this one strong rain. Everything was longing for that one missing ingredient and prepared for its arrival.

Now a couple of weeks ago when we witnessed this sudden blooming, we both thought, "Well, there's our newsletter article." We'll talk about how God often works in bursts and surges, and how in between He preps and gathers and makes ready for just the right moment to act, almost certainly without our having the foggiest notion of what is happening around and even within us. But if we have the foresight to stay immersed in His Story and ally ourselves to His cause and stay alert, then, when the call goes out, by his grace and power we find ourselves equipped to act. In that sense, we followers of Jesus are like first responders: slow periods of training and making ready punctuated by periods of intense activity. It doesn't always work this way. Sometimes the Lord works more steadily. But it seems the norm, at least for me.

Some nice thoughts there, right? But by the time the article is due, 'prepping' suddenly means there is no toilet paper on the shelves, and precious little else. Suddenly there is a flood of irresponsible denial (at least until the court prophets admit there might actually be something to it) walking hand in hand with irrational panic and fear (Can we eat Chinese food?). And hoarding toilet paper – presumably for all that dry coughing.

Whatever is happening, it is not the result of careful planning and wise marshalling of resources. Some nations have done better than others, but each one has fallen on its face in some way.

But my concern here is the church. And what I see from those whose citizenship is in heaven gives me encouragement. They are finding ways to connect without gathering together. They are learning how to set up a video feed. There are some great stories of ministers connecting with their people over the phone, some of them going deeper into sorrows and joys than they ever have – both ways. Putting their own need for excess toilet paper aside, they are seeing that the most vulnerable are cared for and looked after. They are taking up their crosses as usual and losing their lives for the sake of Jesus and 'the least of these.'

It's almost as if these Kingdom of God first-responder types have been immersing themselves in Jesus' story, catching his vision of what his little colony of resident aliens in a world gone mad looks like, prayerfully resisting the siren call of the things of man, and have been standing ready and alert, well provisioned for just such a time as this.

Peace to you in Jesus, Dave and Sabra (continued from page 1)

Christ's death paid the price for your sins so that even though you "patiently await" physical death, you wait with the hope of the resurrection. To "live like you are baptized" means not fearing the deadly plague — or any disease — more than you fear, love and trust in God.

Christians also fulfill their vocations to their neighbor. Husbands care for wives; parents care for and protect their children; children help aging parents. So also a pastor stays and cares for parishioners. He stands by the deathbed of the plague-ridden and points them to Christ. He buries them. Likewise, doctors and medical professionals should remain at their stations to care for the sick.

Business owners should operate their businesses as they are able so their employees can continue to provide for their families. Parents must care for their children; children likewise must provide for their aging parents.

While the Christian is given responsibility to care for his neighbor, he should not tempt God. Some people in Luther's day refused to take measures against the plague. In response, Luther said: "They say that it is God's punishment; if he wants to protect them he can do so without medicine or our carefulness. This is not trusting God but tempting him" (LW 43:131).

Not only does the careless man test God, he also risks the health and safety of his family. Take your medicine; wear your mask. Follow your doctor's direction and try to prevent the disease from spreading to others in your home. Luther encouraged his readers to "fumigate your home." Today we might say, "Follow the CDC's quidance."

As far as you are able, obey the directives of the government. Do not, of course, give up your hope in Christ Jesus, but God has provided those in authority to care for us. We obey their directives to care for our neighbor.

In all things, cling to Christ. Confess your sin. Receive absolution. Receive the Lord's Supper, which Luther described as "a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy that grants salvation and comfort" (Large Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, 68). If you become ill, do not fear an illness that merely harms your body, but fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. He chose to die for you and to redeem you from every illness of soul and body. This gives us peace and comfort.

I commend you all to the care and keeping of our gracious Lord. Please know that I miss you terribly. I simply miss seeing your faces. If you are in a non-risk category, please come between 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. on Sunday morning for private Holy Communion. This brief but private service is a very intimate time with the Lord. There is a Scripture reading (one or two verses), a brief spoken word (message), consecration of the Sacrament, receiving of the Sacrament, prayer and benediction. This brief but important time (about 5 minutes) will impact you spiritually and emotionally. You will be given hope in Christ. Please come if you are able. Pastor Nate and I would love to see you!

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

I love you all, Pastor Dana Allen Brones

"You Can't Always Get What You Want"

"But if you try sometime, you might find, you get what you need."

So sang the Rolling Stones many years ago and it has always stuck with me, probably because I have not always got what I wanted, but always I have had what I needed. Sometimes Blessings come through pain and sadness, etc. - I don't need to tell this to anyone - we have all experienced it. Well I certainly did not want a cat (or dog or any other pet!) I have had many cats in my life and I definitely like them, find their many unique actions very funny and sometimes even endearing. BUT, I don't want one! Period, end of story. Clearly God had a different idea. As I battle (with the help of many prayers and good wishes) the mild return of cancer and terrible numbers in my blood work caused by the chemo therapy, I continue to play music, rehearse with the choir and praise team and pretty much go about my normal life which I dearly love. Enter: some cockamamie new/old virus which sweeps the world upsetting all applecarts. Definitely not what I (or anyone else) wants. What is this all about? Why? What is God thinking? I want choir rehearsal. I want Praise team rehearsal. I want church every week like always. I want to have the choir over for one of our great Woe-Be-Gone parties. I want life to be as I have come to know it........ I want...... well guess what: Breaking News: I am NOT in charge - alas!

So it is difficult to understand what is going on, how long it will be going on and what the long term effects will be. But I know this: God has a plan. I believe that one of the things we can do is stop, reflect, pray and wait for the plan to reveal itself. We are forced to slow down and be less selfish (I want, I want), be more kind and thoughtful to others and take note of the many gifts which are part of our lives, even in this very difficult time. I am reminded of the story of the little boy who was put in a room with a giant pile of manure. Rather than whining and feeling sorry for himself, he started digging. His reasoning was in a pile of manure his big there must be a pony in here somewhere.

To return to my cat/pet story. Shortly after I was told by my oncologist that I would not be able to go out except to church (that has been since taken away), due to my shabby bloodwork, I opened my front door as someone was knocking. As soon as the door opened, a beautiful cat walked into the house, went into the living room, jumped on the couch, curled up and looking up at me as if to say, "I am here, so thank you. I like breakfast in the morning and treats at night; I am very polite (which she is) and I like to cuddle (which she does). P.S. I do not need a liter box as I have been living outside and know the proper way to conduct myself. She then proceeded to go to sleep (Cat Nap). I certainly was completely unaware that I could benefit from a therapy cat, but I most surely have. I sent a picture of Daisy to my daughter who replied "she looks so happy, Mom; she needs you." I do not know if she needs me or not, but I certainly have experienced much joy form her presence. Even Joseph, who initially said "NO PETS" has come to love this special little creature whom God sent to us just when we needed her.

There are so many opportunities for us to practice love and kindness and joy and to just slow down and see what God has in mind for us. I will be looking forward to returning to some of our better activities, like rehearsals and wonderful music in church and praying together. Now that my drawers and closets are reorganized, I would like to make music together again - sooner than later. Patience may very well be another quality on which to work.........

Blessings to each and every one of you and many thanks for all the prayers as I continue my journey to wellness and cancer-free life.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know when to stop talking and just go play the piano.....

Much love, Kathleen, Minister of Music



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latest in news,
photos and fun!

Apr 2020 (Eastern Time - New York)

Bethlehem Lutheran, Bible Study, Children and Families, Ministry Meetings, Music Ministry, Official Acts, Outside Groups, Pastor/Staff, Preschool, Special Events, Youth and Young Adults, Christian Holidays

Sun Mon	30 l	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
)		J	î	4
Fifth S. in Lent		6pm - Hand Bell Choir Reh	9:30am - Preschool Chapel-	9:15am - Prayer Group @		8:45am - AA Meeting @
8am - Liturgical Worship-	***************************************		12pm - Mid-week Lenten	9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage		9:30am - Confirmation practice -
9:30am - Adult Bible Study-			1pm - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm	6:45pm - AA Meeting @		10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @
9:30am - Family: Contemporary			5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation			
9:30am - Sunday School-			6pm - Young Adult Fellowship @			
11am - Liturgical Worship -			7pm - Mid-week Lenten Worship			
5:30pm - 7th Grade Conf. Class			8pm - Choir Rehearsal @			
9	9	7	8	6	10	11
Palm Sunday 9:30am - Senior Game Day TBD	Game Day TBD	6pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal	9:30am - Preschool Chapel	Maundy Thursday	Good Friday (regional holiday)	Holy Saturday
8am - Bells playing 6:45pm - Gideon's Meeting-TBD	's Meeting-TBD	6:30pm - Small group at	11am - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm	9:15am - Prayer Group @	9am - Church Office Closed	8:45am - AA Meeting @
8am - Liturgical Worship @				9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage	12pm - Good Friday Worship	10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @
9:30am - Adult Bible Study @	eri ali verinina		es e	6:45pm - AA Meeting @	7pm - Good Friday Worship	
9:30am - Family: Contemporary				6:45pm - Gideon's Ladies Mtg @		
9:30am - Sunday School @	Majoria de Caración de Caració	o consideration of the constant of the constan		7pm - Holy (Maundy) Thursday		
11am - Liturgical Worship @	mara ya wa sa					
12pm - Confirmation Dinner-TBD						
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		6pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal	9:30am - Preschool Chapel	9am - Circuit Pastor's	6pm - BLC Serves Supper at	8:45am - AA Meeting @
7am - Liturgical Worship @ Office Closed		7pm - Elder's Meeting @	11am - Staff Meeting @	9:15am - Prayer Group @		10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @
8am - Easter Breakfast @ 6:30pm - "South of the Border"	the Border"		11:30am - Gideon's Luncheon @	9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage		
8:30am - Easter Egg Hunt @			7pm - Adult Bible Study @	6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @		
9am - Liturgical Worship @				6:45pm - AA Meeting @		440000
11am - Liturgical Worship @						
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Feed My Sheep Sunday @		6pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal	9:30am - Preschool Chapel	9:15am - Prayer Group @		8am - LWML Rally @ Our
Second S. of Easter			11am - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm	9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage		8:45am - AA Meeting @
8am - Liturgical Worship @			7pm - Adult Bible Study @	6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @		10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @
9:30am - Adult Bible Study @				6:45pm - AA Meeting @		
9:30am - Family: Contemporary						
9:30am - Sunday School @						
11am - Liturgical Worship @						
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ster		4pm - Call Day 2020 6pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal	9:30am - Preschool Chapel	9:15am - Prayer Group @		8:45am - AA Meeting @
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