



Vol. 65, No. 7

September 2020

HOW ARE WE DOING SO FAR? A STATE OF THE CONGREGATION REPORT

How is Grace Lutheran Church, San Mateo doing so far, after about five and a half months of mandated “shelter-in-place” orders due to CoViD-19?

Surprisingly well, in my opinion, all things considered!

The best news is that, to my knowledge, no member of our congregation has contracted CoViD or been hospitalized due to the virus. May our Lord continue to keep us safe and sound! Our members are being careful, following health orders, and reaping the benefit of sound health habits while the pandemic rages around us. Our members are still seeing their doctors when necessary, getting treatments, getting their medications, etc. The only deaths we have had since the onset of CoViD are Rufus Clapp and Floyd Oatman, which were not due to CoViD, but to pre-existing health problems. Mary Clapp died after she moved to Denver, but that was also due to pre-existing health problems. We will certainly miss Rufus, Mary, and Floyd, but they are in a better place with our Lord and the saints!

Other good news is that we are continuing our practices of preaching, prayer, and worship, although individually in our own homes for most of this time.

We had an interim period, from June 14 to July 26, in which we could

worship in-person in our sanctuary with facemasks, 6-foot social distancing, no singing, with a modified distribution of the Lord's Supper. From March 17th to June 7th, and from August 2nd to the present, I have provided to the congregation, via email, audio podcasts of the lessons and sermon, along with texts of the lessons and propers, the prayers, and various hyperlinks to hymns and cantatas. From August 16th to the present, we have also offered a "livestream" service via YouTube. You can find the recordings at our website at: <http://gracelutheransanmateo.org/church/sermons.html> If for some reason you are not receiving the emails that connect you to these services, please give your email address to our Office Administrator, Mrs. Rebecca Young at: ryoung@glcssm.org or at: 650-345-9068. Let me express my hearty thanks to our elders for helping guide decision-making in all of this!

The sad news, as you probably know, is that we have lost our school. With the loss of almost half of our students due to CoViD concerns, and no clear sign of new students to replace them, the school finances were not good in the Spring quarter and looked worse for 2020-21. The decision was made by the School Board, Planning Council, and Voter's Assembly to close the school at this time. Our situation during the pandemic was like many LC-MS congregations that own or operate a school. On the impact of CoViD on LCMS congregations, see: <https://blogs.lcms.org/2020/survey-reveals-impact-of-covid-19-on-congregations/>

We will only be able to plan for a future school of some sort, if that is possible, once the pandemic has passed and the local economy has returned

to some sense of normalcy. I cannot predict when that will be, or what that future might look like. I will certainly miss the opportunities to teach Bible and theology to the upper grade students, to lead chapel on Wednesday mornings, and most of all, I will miss the fellowship of students, parents, faculty, and staff members.

Our Planning Council, Board of Administrators, and Board of Elders continue to meet via ZOOM technology, and occasionally in the parish hall when that is permitted. Our next Voter's meeting is scheduled for September 27th at 10:30 AM, originally planned for the parish hall. Please watch your email for the official notice about when and where it will be held.

Our Future Worship Practices During the Time of CoViD Restrictions

As you may know, there has been a great deal of controversy over the matter of enforced restrictions by the state on the churches. In the state of California, we have had a longer period of restrictions, and have had to endure GREATER restrictions than most of the U.S. I will not go into the politics of that, but I do want to address the theology of worship as that applies to our current circumstances.

The local gathering together of believers, in-person, for worship, preaching, and Sacraments is one definition of the "church." When we are not able to meet "in-person," we are also not able to engage in "corporate worship." But that does not mean that the "church" ceases to exist. We confess in the Nicene Creed that the church is "one, holy, Christian, and apostolic." This is a reality that transcends the local gathering of believers. When it is not

possible for Christians to gather in-person, the social aspect drops out, but the faith—if there is faith in Jesus and His Word—remains. Christians have been worshipping in households during times of persecution for two millennia, and the church survived and grew. This time of CoViD is no persecution, but the effect is the same on the church.

In normal times, Lutherans assemble for worship in the same way that Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Reformed, Baptists, and others do, but for slightly different reasons. Lutherans understand corporate worship to be the time when we hear the Word of God in the lessons and preaching and receive the Sacraments. It is also the time when we “pray together” through our hymns, the liturgy, and the spoken prayers. All of this is commanded by God in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd commandments, was taught by Jesus and the apostles, and has been practiced by the Christian church ever since.

Our practice for many years at Grace Lutheran Church, San Mateo has been to conduct corporate worship with “every Sunday communion.” We have used Divine Service III since the introduction of “every Sunday communion,” and occasionally Divine Service I. The Divine Services, settings I to V, are all communion services, although I, II, and III provide an option for omitting communion. Since we cannot provide communion over the Internet, for our first two “livestream” services, we used Divine Service Setting Three, without communion. For August 30th, we used the “Service of Prayer and Preaching” which is specially designed for non-communion worship, as are the Matins, Vespers, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer services.

Music is a wonderful part of worship but is not essential. The elders, our music director (George Melke), and I want the music to enhance worship when we offer it over the Internet. We have found that having the pastor sing the entire service by himself is tedious and distracting. Not having any music at all is dull, boring, and discouraging. So, we are at the present time working on other options, until we find something that really works. In the meantime, you can click on the hymn and cantata hyperlinks that are included in my emails to you to get some church music every week.

The Lord's Supper, which we are not receiving during much of the CoViD period, is more than wonderful, it is a means of God's grace. But in the Lutheran church it is understood to not be necessary for salvation since faith, baptism, and the Word of God suffice for salvation. Luther wrote: "For the Eucharist is not so necessary that salvation depends on it. The gospel and baptism are sufficient, since faith alone justifies and love alone lives rightly" (Martin Luther, "Concerning the Ministry" [1523], *Luther's Works* 40:9; see also *Luther's Works* 40:70, 145; *Large Catechism*, 5th Part, 49-52).

Some churches have practiced "online communion," where the pastor blesses the bread and wine over the Internet, or people pick up the bread and wine in the parking lot and take it home to consume when and where they please. This disconnects the congregation from the words of Institution and brings doubt on the validity of such practices. The Lutheran church dealt with this sort of issue early on in its history. In the Formula of Concord, the Lutherans stated clearly that the "entire external and visible action of the Supper as ordained by Christ" must be retained, including doing this "before the

congregation” (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII, 79 & 86*; see the full discussion in paragraphs 73-90 of the same article). The LC-MS has addressed the practice of “online communion” in three documents here:

<https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=FVBMM2dfdn2php19lRaR71Ynh9QrKFSB&mode=list>

If we will not be able to resume in-person services in our sanctuary for a long period of time, the elders and I will need to decide on a way to provide the Lord’s Supper for our members. One possibility that is being used, with some success, by our sister LC-MS congregations in the San Francisco Bay Area is outdoor services, where the congregation sits on chairs six feet apart from each other with facemasks on. Our facilities are not as usable that way as theirs are, but it would still be possible. Another possibility is “drive-in” services (not “drive-by”), where the congregation stays in their parked cars, the sound is transmitted via radio signals, and the pastor and assisting elder distributes to each parked car.

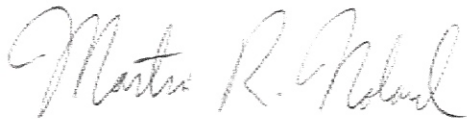
If we would do either one of those methods, the service would probably have to be shortened, and may include just the “Service of the Sacrament,” unless the congregation would be willing to sit in their cars for an hour, or on a hard metal chair outside for the same time period. You need to remember that the weather in San Mateo’s west side is unpredictable. During the summer, it can be as cold as San Francisco; at other times, the wind can be a distraction. And “it never rains in California,” except when it does. The smoke from late summer and autumn wildfires may be another problem with outdoor services. The other issue for outdoor services is acoustics. Without some sort of P.A.

system or amplification, you will not be able to understand what the pastor is saying, even if you can hear it.

The factors that constrain this are, on the one hand, administering the Sacrament according to our Lord's Institution and sound Lutheran theology, and on the other hand, accommodating the needs and comfort levels of our members. Regarding the latter, please express your concerns and opinions about our present and future worship opportunities and the Lord's Supper to your elder. We are trying to accommodate your needs and desires but can't do that if you don't talk to your elder.

May our Lord keep you and yours safe in this time of trial and testing!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Martin R. Noland". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Pastor Martin R. Noland

Lutheran Women's Missionary League



Grace LWML Mission Statement

“Our mission is to encourage the women of Grace to grow spiritually through Word and Sacraments that they may serve our Triune God with their time, talents and treasures.”

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Serve the Lord with Gladness
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Already paid #2 – 2020-2022 Mission Grant below:

2. Loving retreat for the Lord's Disabled
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Stockton, CA \$7,075.00

Mites are being collected for:

3. **Bringing Children to Jesus Christ with Noah's Ark - \$6,340**

LWML Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Kahului, Maui, Hawaii

Two Lutheran churches, Emmanuel in Maui, Hawaii and Trinity in Manila, Philippines are participating in an international weekly Bible study. Participants in the study span 12 time zones and use Zoom videoconferencing. As a result of this cooperative venture, two young girls have been baptized into the Body of Christ at Trinity in Manila. The grant proposal seeks to sustain and expand these combined efforts, especially with a program known as Noah's Ark. It is a weekly Bible study for teaching children from Scripture, singing hymns and group activities that help develop social and interactive skills. Noah's Ark children reside in the neighborhood close to Trinity; their parents are too busy toiling for their daily food to spend time to hear the Word of God, but do not prohibit their kids from attending Bible studies or catechism. The funds would help to procure Bibles, catechetical and Sunday school materials, micro-projectors, and food to help fund the mission work of Noah's Ark.



Save your mites

Send a check for your mites to Ellen Bordy

Prayer Page

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. ~Galatians 6:10

Egon Adam	Charlotte Custino	Donald Iocco	Patty O'Donnell	Gina Tuft
Bella Archer	Robert Doody	Heather Iocco	Elizabeth O'Donnell	Mark Tuft
Marilyn Bailie	Natalie Dubbel	John Iocco	Gil Ramirez	Sue Tuft
Patricia Bailey	Bob Egan	Judy Iocco	Kathleen Ramirez	Martin Udisches
Richard Bailey	Maria Eggert	Ko Ishikawa	Fred Robinson	Leann Udisches
Rev. Frank Balgeman	Doris Emery	Mariko Ishikawa	Roberta Robinson	Christine Ullrich
Valerie Balgeman	Bill Eng	Yuzo Ishikawa	Akram Saber	Zachary Ullrich
Chandler Balgeman	Sara Eppler	Lance Johnson	Ghada Saber	Octavian Vasilescu
Mike Bannister	Carly Eppler	Doreen Johnson	Daniel Saber	Diana Vasilescu
Tami Bannister	Larry Franquez	Katarina Johnson	Michael Saber	Flora Lisa Vasilescu
Nathanael Bannister	Shelly Franquez	John Kilcullen	Maria Schaefer	Joan Weckerle
Mike Beebe	Nick Franquez	Stefanie Kilcullen	Martin Semmler	Randy Wimmer
Jolene Beebe	Chad Franquez	Katie Kilcullen	Michelle Semmler	Caden Young
Kay Bell, III	Pam Frisella	James Kilcullen	Scott Semmler	Rebecca Young
Kay Bell, Jr.	Shirley Gangelhoff	Michael Kilcullen	Daniel Semmler	Chandler Young
Nathanael Bell	Rev. Glennon Genthner	Barbara Kilpatrick	Julia Semmler	Logan Young
Adele Bergstrom	Brooke Genthner	Bill Koester	Sandy Shanks	Rowan Young
William Bethke	Alex Gomez	Faye Koester	Jessica Shanks	Eugene Zahnow
Susan Bethke	Anjanette Gomez	Ryan Koester	Detlef Starkowski	Judy Zahnow
Alice Boerschinger	Angelique Gomez	Amanda Koester	Hannelore Starkowski	Charles Zimbelman
John Bordy	James Graziano	Glenn McEnroe	Ethan Smith	Mammie Zimbelman
Ellen Bordy	Roger Guse	Allison McEnroe	Dave Smoot	
Judy Boyd	Dan Hahn	Alexis McEnroe	Barb Smoot	
Fred Brauer	Lori Hahn	Fred McKenna	Paul Soals	
Karla Brauer	Abby Hahn	Marilyn McKenna	Stacey Soals	
Jordyn Brauer	Arthur Hayame	Steve McLaughlin	Jacquelin Soals	
Justin Brauer	Barbara Hayame	Heather McLaughlin	Dimitry Spencer	
Klayton Brauer	Tim Hayame	Sandra Means	Tamaray Starling	
Paul Brownlee	Darren Hayame	George Melke	Darryl Sterner	
Lois Brownlee	Joy Hayame	Molly Munson	Sandra Sterner	
Marcus Brownlee	Hannah Hayame	Caroline Nagy	Michelle Sterner	
Scott Brownlee	Miriam Hitzeman	Pamela Nelson	Chris Strom	
Katherine Brownlee	Richard Hoffmeister	Rev. Martin Noland	Brett Toensing	
Robert Crews	Theresa Mui	Karla Noland	Anne-Marie Toensing	
Veronica Crews	Robert Innes	Renee Noland	Brooke Toensing	
Clara Crews	Shirley Innes	Heidi Noland	Ryan Toensing	
Celeste Crews	Michael Innes	Doug O'Donnell	Hans Tuft	