



## July-August 2020

A Publication of  
Christ Lutheran Church  
113 Union Street  
Natick, MA 01760

Website: [www.christnatick.org](http://www.christnatick.org)  
Phone: 508-315-3170  
E-mail: [office@christnatick.org](mailto:office@christnatick.org)

The Rev. Rebecca Bourret, Pastor  
[Pastor.bourret@christnatick.org](mailto:Pastor.bourret@christnatick.org)

Tom Berryman, Music Director  
[musicdirector@christnatick.org](mailto:musicdirector@christnatick.org)

Gail Weston-Roberts,  
Youth & Family Ministries Coordinator  
[youthdirector@christnatick.org](mailto:youthdirector@christnatick.org)  
Gigi Agbasi, Administrative Assistant  
[office@christnatick.org](mailto:office@christnatick.org)

### Leaders of the Congregation:

Celeste Larson, President  
Dave Ripp, Vice President  
Edie Lohr, Treasurer  
Amy Lousararian Secretary  
Carol Virshbo, Professional Leadership  
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# Christ Lutheran Church REPORTER

Thanks to Bruce Schnepfer and Linda Lombardo, who have been lovingly tending the vegetable gardens!





## Pastor's Page

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*This is how St. Luke described the communal life of the early Church:*

*"All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." Acts 2:45-47, NRSV*

Church historians find evidence of two ritual meals celebrated by the early Church, the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, which included the Words of Institution, and the Agape (a Greek word loosely translated as unconditional, spiritual love) Feast, or Love Feast, which did not. The former was restricted to those who had been baptized, while the latter was open to catechumens, those preparing for baptism, as well as others, perhaps. The one was Sacramental, the other a devotional practice.

The holding of Agape Feasts fell off toward the end of the 4th century CE, but the Moravian Church, part of the early Protestant Reformation movement, with which the ELCA now enjoys full communion, revived the ritual in the early 18th century CE. From the website of the Moravian Church: *"After the memorable celebration of the holy communion on August 13\*, seven groups of the participants continued to talk over the great spiritual blessing which they had experienced and were reluctant to separate and return to their own homes for the noonday meal. Count Zinzendorf, sensing the situation, sent them food from his manor house, and each group partook together, continuing in prayer, religious conversation, and the singing of hymns."*

Over the centuries since, the Love Feast has become a treasured tradition of the Moravians, and other Christians, inspired by the sense of holy joy and devotion in connection to it, have from time to time introduced it into their own ritual practice.

So what, exactly, is a love feast? Put simply, it is a simple, ritual meal, marked by Scripture, song, testimony and prayer, celebrating and building the fellowship of Christians. It has its roots in the koinonia (fellowship) of the early Church, and in the many meals Jesus shared with his friends and disciples throughout his ministry. While it has connections to the Lord's Supper, the two are distinct. Holy Communion, we might say, is a Sacrament (with a capital "S"), whereas the Love Feast is sacramental with a lower-case "s." Holy Communion has been commanded by Christ as a

re-membering of his Body across time and space, the Meal where he meets us, as he has promised, as both host and meal. It is where we are renewed in our Baptism, assured of the forgiveness of sin, given nourishment for our spiritual journeys, and a foretaste of the feast to come. In the love feast, we are invited to recognize the holiness of all our eating, and to celebrate one of the places—among the countless places—where we might discern God’s presence.

During this pandemic, while we are unable to gather safely in person, many of us have deeply missed participation in the Eucharist. In some denominations, and, indeed, in some parts of our own, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, forays have been made into “virtual Communion,” a practice in which a tiny gathering, or perhaps the pastor alone, celebrates Holy Communion, and other members, gathered virtually, partake of their own bread and wine at home. In other denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, bishops have stated unequivocally that such a practice is not sanctioned. Our church has not had time to appropriately consider whether such a virtual gathering constitutes a “real” gathering of the Body of Christ; nor do our bishops have the same authority to declare such a practice valid or invalid.

Yet it seems the wrong question, as if it were one of whether the “magic” of the Sacrament were communicable across cyberspace, or whether Christ could truly be present in such a way. For we understand that, with God, all things are possible. Nor is it a matter of authority to preside over the Meal. In the history of the Church, where there have been too few pastors to serve too many congregants, provisions have been made, from time to time, for lay presidency.

Our own bishop, The Rev. James Hazelwood, has declined to police any pastor or congregation’s practice, but has made clear his desire that we refrain from celebrating Eucharist until we can do so in person. His reasoning has something to do with the call for us to be counter-cultural, particularly in relation to rampant individualism. There are also arguments against virtual Communion to be made in connection to our ecumenical relationships: what one part of the Body does affects the other; there are concerns, too, shared by the St. Paul, that we discern the whole Body, that is, that we be sure that all members are cared for and receive the Church’s ministry, paying closest attention to those most vulnerable. Nor do I believe that virtual Communion could adequately convey some of our deepest sacramental theology: the connection between our physical and spiritual hunger and its satisfaction, and the gathering of all saints at the Table—in Boston and Bahrain, the saints at rest and those of us who feebly struggle.

Still, I know our longing for a meal around which we might celebrate Christian fellowship. I wonder whether a virtual Agape Fest might satisfy some of that longing. It would entail the preparation, at home, of a very simple “meal,” perhaps rolls and coffee as is most common in the Moravian Church, or something equally simple and enjoyable. Congregational leaders would prepare music, hymns,

readings, and prayers, and perhaps seek out a testimony from among the congregation, or some questions to ponder together in small groups, via Zoom chat rooms (as we gather for virtual coffee hour). We could offer the ritual meal on an evening, mid-week, or perhaps a Sunday afternoon. The Agape Feast would last no more than one hour.

The church building is closed, but the church's ministry goes on. This might be an opportune time to experiment with an ancient-yet-new ritual, and see whether it has a place in our continuing life together. I welcome your feedback on introducing such a gathering.

Peace in Christ.

Pr. Rebecca Bourret



**The Worship, Music and Visual Arts Committee is interested** in your feedback on Zoom worship. Would you please take five minutes to respond to a few questions? Find the survey here: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeAa8ip2E-ExenNKzQCer52YsaW\\_M79ABh\\_IoeiI0nps8oJRQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeAa8ip2E-ExenNKzQCer52YsaW_M79ABh_IoeiI0nps8oJRQ/viewform)

Thank you!



## Music Notes

Tom Berryman, Music Director

July-August 2020

*How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Psalm 137:4*

As a leader of choirs, congregational singing and a singer myself, this passage from Psalm 137 has particular resonance for me these days. How do we continue to sing the Lord's song, socially distanced as we are? We can make videos and recordings, and even combine individuals to create virtual choral and hymn singing. Still, making music is an in-person, communal enterprise, offering praise, thanksgiving, intercession, blessing and testimony of our faith together. ZOOM is a useful but pale substitute. We live in hope: we will return to making music together, live and in person. But not just yet.

You may know that Psalm 137 begins by recalling the woes of the Babylonian captivity (587-538 BCE). The exiled Israelites cannot sing because they have no temple for the formal songs of worship. And then they are taunted by their captors, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" Later, in the Psalm, the Israelites remind themselves (with Ezekial's help) to not give up hope and to remember what they have lost. The conclusion of the Psalm takes a dark turn, calling for retribution on the oppressors. Cyrus, King of Persia, traditionally gets credit for ending the Babylonian exile in 538.

Some well-known musical settings of Psalm 137:1-4 come to mind. The Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak musical



show GODSPELL (1971), based on the Gospel of Matthew, offers the song “On the Willows” just before Jesus’ crucifixion. For the original cast recording, go to [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO6r\\_hajQvM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO6r_hajQvM)

You may know the Jamaican Rastafarian setting of “By the rivers of Babylon” by Brent Dowe and Trevor McNaughton of The Melodians (1970). This particular tune and text appear as a hymn in the Lutheran hymnal “This Far By Faith.” Here is Bob Marley’s performance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tAb5rYRXvs>

My favorite setting is the one Don MacLean recorded in 1970 on his “American Pie” album. MacLean took a canon “By the waters of Babylon” by Philip Hayes (1786) and offered a three voice performance with guitar. Go to the url for MacLean’s version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fCs05UD8so>

## Psalm 137: 1-4 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup>By the rivers of Babylon —  
there we sat down and there we wept  
when we remembered Zion.

<sup>2</sup>On the willows there  
we hung up our harps.

<sup>3</sup>For there our captors  
asked us for songs,  
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,  
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

<sup>4</sup>How could we sing the LORD's song  
in a foreign land?



**When I saw the video of George Floyd being asphyxiated** under the knee of a white police officer, in the clear light of day, with three fellow officers silently standing by, and a crowd of onlookers pleading for Mr. Floyd's life, and Mr. Floyd protesting, "I can't breathe," before calling out for his mother, I was horrified and heartsick. But I did not immediately expect that the heinous and blatant homicide would become a turning point in our nation's long and shameful history of racism. It pains me to say that, and I can scarcely imagine how

much it pains our Black sisters and brothers who may have shared that slowness of hope, and perhaps still do.

Thirty-eight years ago, the late *Washington Post* writer David Broder delivered the commencement address at Wittenberg University, and cautioned our class to refrain from cynicism regarding the nation's and world's issues and injustices; in the tender years of our adulthood, he suggested we hadn't yet earned that right. As a highly privileged white woman, I'm not sure that I have earned the right to be cynical about a serious reckoning with racism in this country; but having witnessed the unanswered deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, and, perhaps most disturbing, Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy shot within a few short seconds of being seen playing with a toy gun, I had no automatic thought that the patently unjust extinguishing of a Black man's life would awaken white folks like me to the persistent, pervasive, and lethal menace of racism in America, and our need as white people to commit ourselves to its riddance.

There have been numerous stumbling blocks, all of which fall under the umbrella of white privilege: a misunderstanding of racism as only or principally a matter of personal animus toward Black people and other people of color—in "enlightened" circles this is almost non-existent; a misunderstanding of white privilege as an absence of hardship, or suffering, or struggle, when these are all part of the territory of human life—it's just we white people have not had the additional, inescapable disadvantages based on our skin color; and, finally—and this is, in my mind, anyone, the quintessential white privilege—we can choose whether to engage in efforts to dismantle racism--*or not*. For Black people and other people of color, there is no avoiding the matter. As one op-ed writer in the *Boston Globe* recently wrote, he didn't have the option of "calling in white" for the day, as one might call in sick. We exercise this privilege, to the detriment and diminishment of all, but most painfully to our Black siblings, when we perhaps begin to address racism, but grow uncomfortable, and defensive, and back away.

We white folk have been, if not content, at least willing, to allow Black folk to bear the primary burden of confronting racism, and that is simply wrong: Black people did not create it, and should not be expected to fix it. If you broke your neighbor's window, whether intentionally or otherwise, you would take responsibility for repairing it. How much more responsible are we for remedying a systemic problem that is literally killing so many of our fellows.

One of our common defenses is to note how long ago chattel slavery was legal, or how little any of us may have personally contributed to the problem; nevertheless, it is ours to fix. Writer Will Brumett put it this way in a contribution to the "Practice Showing Up" movement: "But when you live comfortably in the towers of white supremacy It does not matter if you did not intend to build it. It matters that you've

stayed.” It is not enough that we do not ideologically support racist systems. Unless we change them, we are complicit in unfair treatment of Black people and people of color in virtually every aspect of our life together: health care, education, criminal justice, housing, banking, representation in media and culture. And the thing is: we don’t have to agree with it for it to continue; all we have to do is...nothing.

I am heartened that, it seems, more and more of us have determined that the society in which we have lived is, indeed, one of white supremacy, and we choose **not** to stay any longer. But I know, too, that as sinful human beings, it is far too easy to fall back into old, familiar behaviors and complacency, and that we need both God’s grace and shared accountability to persevere in this hard work. It goes without saying that we will make mistakes, and we will surely be tempted to ease up when it becomes uncomfortable, and so I ask you to join me in praying for the Spirit’s fire and direction, and in holding one another to this work.

One of the privileges of being white, a part of the dominant culture, is not to have to reflect on what it means to be white. Ask yourself these questions:

When did I first become aware of racism?

When did I first become aware of being white?

What does it mean to me to be white?

Racism is imbedded in our culture, even if we’re not aware of it, which is another way of saying that it is systemic: a goldfish is not aware of the water in which it swims, but it is no less real. How has your life been shaped by racism?

Reading alone will not end racism, but it can help us to become acquainted with parts of history we did not learn, and to become aware of our blind spots. A few books with which we might begin, or continue, our education include:

Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880 by W.E.B. Du Bois

How to Be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi

White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo

The Cross and the Lynching Tree by James Cone

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein

Race for Profit by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.

Maybe you’re on board, but wondering where to begin. Here’s one place: <https://debbyirving.com/21-day-challenge/>

It has been said that history is written by the victors. In the United States, that has meant that Black history has often been relegated to a footnote, if it is observed at all. As the Body of Christ, however, we know that God in Christ has won the final victory, and it belongs to the poor, the humble, the peacemakers, the pursuers of justice and righteousness and lovers of God’s marvelous array of people. Trusting that God is at work, restoring creation, ending racism and every form of oppression, we have no right to be cynical, and every reason to be hope-fully participating in the fulfillment of God’s just and merciful reign.

Peace.

Pr. Rebecca Bourret



**CLC held its first-ever semi-annual congregational meeting by Zoom on June 7.** Even though we were forging a new path, it went quite smoothly. Should we need to do so again, we'll practically be pros!

Hannele Saramo-Raja was elected to a second term on Council, and Patricia Bianco and Kristina Stjernfeldt were elected as well. Unfortunately, a marked increase in responsibilities in Kristina's medical practice have required her to step down.

At its first meeting, the Council elected the following officers:

President: Celeste Larson  
Vice President: Dave Ripp  
Treasurer: Edie Lohr  
Secretary: Amy Lousararian  
Financial Secretary: Frank Miller

We have a full year ahead, as we continue to grapple with the changes and challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and establish active committees to coordinate social justice and evangelical outreach, two areas of central importance that have functioned without a cadre of folk to steer those efforts in a disciplined fashion.



## Summer Worship Time

Summer worship will continue to be held at 10:00. Log in on Zoom! The invitation and password are available on our website, [www.christnatick.org](http://www.christnatick.org). Feel free, as always, to invite a friend!



## Intercessors and Readers for July and August (including September 6):

### Prayer Leader

July 5 - Phil Roberts  
July 12 - Carol Virshbo  
July 19 - Joyce Simon  
July 25 - George Hall

Aug. 2 - Cathy Gallagher  
Aug. 9 - Russell Pollard  
Aug. 16- Marianne Swenson  
Aug. 23- Phil Roberts  
Aug. 30- Carol Virshbo

Sep. 6 - John Whitlock

### Readers

George Hall  
Carl Stjernfeldt  
David Ripp  
Margit Smith  
Ellen Zagajeski  
Mary Pollard  
Celeste Larson  
Edie Lohr

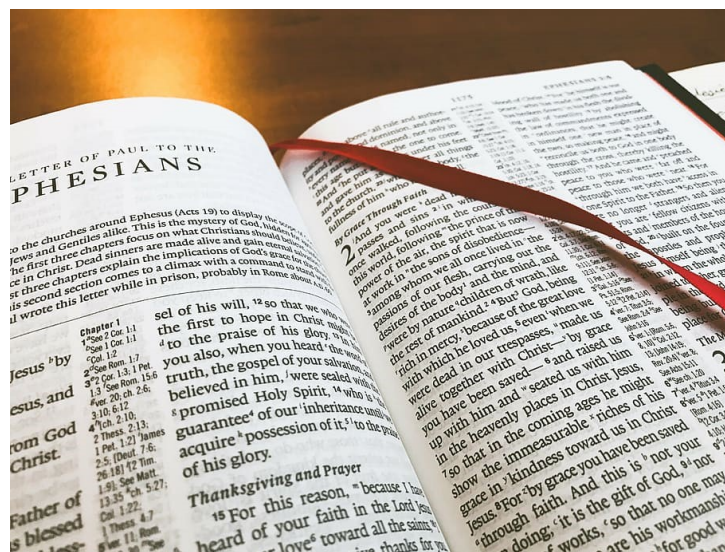
Rolf Larson  
Martha Cronin  
Gyongyi Molnar  
Amy Lousararian  
Harold Lohr  
Ellen Zagajeski  
Lana Peta  
Alan Avalos  
Joyce Simon  
Cathy Gallagher

Beth Castro  
Lisa Eck

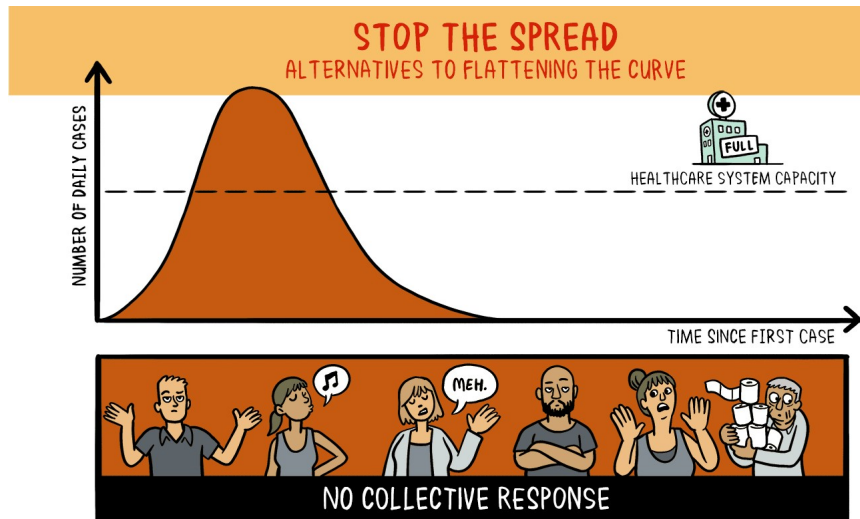
***Are you willing to be the voice of the assembly, speaking the responses (e.g.,  
And also with you")? Please contact Pr. Bourret!***

“

*All worship leaders are asked to prepare for Sunday worship on Saturday at 6:00 p.m. (via Zoom).*



**Two ad hoc working groups have quickly and ably come together to meet the particular challenges of these peculiar days.**



Our thanks to the COVID-19 Working Group:

Lana Peta, Joyce Simon, Phil Roberts, Bruce Schnepfer, Pr. Bourret, and John Whitlock, Chair. This team is keeping abreast of recommendations from Governor Baker, the CDC, the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in America and New England Synod, and other ecumenical partners and trusted resources, in order to make sound recommendations concerning our response to the epidemic, particularly as we ponder in-person gatherings and use of the building and grounds.

While we continue to worship exclusively by Zoom, and to conduct virtually all other work of the church...virtually...we also thank our "Tech Team":

Wally Long, III, Joyce Simon, Phil Roberts, Jim Nail, Anders Carlson, Pr. Bourret, Alan Avalos, and Tom Berryman, Convener. These folks endeavor to learn and implement best practices as we balance "production quality" with a sense of liveliness and intimacy in our gatherings.



*We are thankful for both groups' generous sharing of time and expertise.*



**1** As this time of stress and uncertainty continues, pray that we will be persistent in our generous support for the mission of the church: comforting and caring for our neighbors, responding to the global impact of the pandemic, providing food and basic necessities for people in need, reaching out to the isolated and lonely, and aiding organizations that work for the health, well-being and restoration of our communities.

**2** Give thanks for God's ever-present love and care, and for the message of the psalmist who proclaims, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

**3** Ask the Spirit to help us express our gratitude and concern for first responders, nurses, doctors and hospital employees, and to show us how to serve as God's hands and voice in caring for their spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

**4** Ask God to help us cherish and not abuse the blessings of freedom and liberty, work to change our society where there is injustice and oppression, and accompany our global neighbors and companion churches striving for freedom, justice and voice.

**5** Give thanks that God's love and truth are revealed to us through faith in Jesus Christ and that the Spirit is at work inspiring and equipping us to share the good news, spread truth and invite others to believe.

**6** Pray for wisdom and patience as we navigate how to gather as congregations and discern what is appropriate, safe, caring and respectful of the ongoing concerns of our members, communities and nation.

**7** We understand well Paul's struggle between the inclinations of human nature and following the ways of God and teachings of Jesus. Pray for forgiveness and strengthened faith when we are weak or make poor decisions; pray that we will be guided and encouraged by the Spirit of God that dwells within us.

**8** Thank God for our special relationship with the Episcopal Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1999. Pray for the church, its diverse ministries and its members and leaders, and pray that together we will find mutual support, new partnerships and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

**9** Give thanks that "the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made." Pray that our joy and thanksgiving will move us to be witnesses to God's presence, grace and mercy in the world for the sake of all people.

**10** Pray for the 120 ELCA companion synods that connect our congregations with Lutherans and ministries worldwide. Give thanks that together we participate in God's mission, support each other, share our joys and sorrow, and use our gifts and resources to respond to human needs and grow the church.

**11** Remember in prayer refugees and immigrants throughout the world and at our borders who hope for and seek welcoming, safe communities where they can reestablish their lives and raise their families. Pray that they will have access to health services, food and resources to meet their daily needs during this time of heightened vulnerability and isolation.

**12** Pray that we will sow the seeds of the good news of Jesus Christ without bias or judgment as to how people will receive it, and that we will trust the Spirit to accomplish what God intends through our witness and service in the world.

**13** Pause to reflect on the significance of the 50th anniversary of a Lutheran church choosing to ordain women in the United States. Give thanks for the leadership, ministry and gifts of women who have served the church throughout history and for those women who endured the hardships and work leading to the ordination of women.

**14** Pray for Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, that God will sustain her faith and strength and guide her leadership and decisions, particularly during this difficult and uncertain time in our church and society when we are looking to her for guidance and vision.

**15** Give praise to God, for God's word is powerful, clear, true and trustworthy.

**16** Pray for businesses that are struggling or reopening or have shut down, and for their owners, their employees and all the other people and businesses they impact. Ask God to help them make decisions and implement new health precautions that take into consideration the well-being and needs of their employees, the people they serve and their community.

**17** Pray for voting members of the Western North Dakota Synod gathered for a special meeting and elections, and for members throughout the synod who will participate through livestreaming. Ask that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

**18** Give thanks that God's word is a light to our path throughout life that guides us in our baptismal journey, fills us with hope and joy, and illuminates truth and justice.

**19** It is a painful, nagging reality that there are both good and evil in the world. Pray that the Spirit will renew our faith, trust and patience that God's righteousness, judgment and mercy will reign when the end of time comes.

**20** Give thanks for rostered ministers in our church who are active in call, on leave from call, awaiting call or retired. Praise God for their faith, gifts, caring leadership, example and sacrifices in response to God's call to a life of ministry and service.

**21** We are church together, many members of the one body of Christ. Pray that the Spirit will unite us in our commitment to condemn sexism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy and racism against indigenous people and people of color, whenever and wherever these sins occur.

**22** Pray that, like God, we might be "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

**23** Pray for our ELCA colleges, universities and seminaries and their faculties, staff and students as they work to adapt to and overcome the disruptions and difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pray that faculty and staff will find effective ways of caring for students, continuing educational experiences both in person and from a distance, enriching faith and helping students discern and prepare for their vocations.

**24** Pray that we will be filled with and led by the Spirit so that our actions, words and faith reveal who we are — children of God, followers of Christ.



**25** Remember in prayer the leaders, voting members and others gathered for the South Carolina Synod Assembly, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

**26** How do you envision and understand the kingdom of heaven? Pray that we might stay well-rooted in Scripture and the teachings of Christ to better understand the kingdom of heaven, and to be cautious in embracing cultural myths, traditions handed down and false promises about the kingdom of God.

**27** Pray that we will continue turning to and prayerfully studying Scripture — individually and together. Pray that doing so will strengthen and deepen our faith, comfort and encourage us, guide us in loving our neighbor, and be a source of joy and thanksgiving.

**28** What gives you cause for happiness and hope these days? Give thanks and praise to God for desiring joy, healing, renewed life and freedom for us and all humanity.

**29** Praise God for the joy and reassurance of knowing that there is nothing — absolutely nothing — that can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ.

**30** Give thanks for the special gifts, skills and minds of scientists, researchers and explorers who strive to better understand creation, improve the human condition, solve complex problems that cause us suffering, and restore and steward creation with a long view of sustaining future generations. Pray that they will make wise, responsible and just use of their research and discoveries for the well-being of all people and our planet.

**31** Lift up in prayer our neighbors who are unemployed or underemployed and seek safe, meaningful work that will help them develop self-sufficiency and confidence and meet the needs of the people for whom they provide care, assistance and support.

Please note: Prayer Ventures for August have not yet been published. To find them later in July, please visit

[https://www.elca.org/Resources/Prayer-Ventures?\\_ga=2.116088454.1039388414.1593348809-2001630770.1572458124](https://www.elca.org/Resources/Prayer-Ventures?_ga=2.116088454.1039388414.1593348809-2001630770.1572458124)



Over the last few weeks we have received a number of thank-yous!

*From Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey (in part):*

This letter is to acknowledge that Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey received your blessed donation...for registration of the donated mini-bus. We certainly appreciate all of your help due to the fact that we are located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in El Paso. Our members are mainly immigrants with no legal status in this country. For this reason, they have only odd jobs and very low income...

On behalf of Pastor Rose Mary Sánchez-Guzmán, please receive our appreciation for your kindness and generosity toward our ministries.

With God's blessings,

Ceci Herrera, Volunteer Assistant

*From Resurrection, Roxbury:*

Thank you and the congregation for your generosity in helping Resurrection's ministries during this challenging time. [We] hope you, your family, and your congregation are faring well in the face of the COVID-19 crisis...So far we have had three cases of the virus, however none of them required hospitalization.

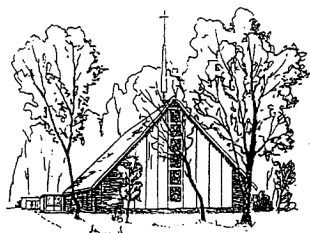
The church musician has a new ministry sewing face masks, which I, in turn, distribute to the community...We suspended our food ministry...We will reopen when it is safe to do so. We know that the demand for food will increase as folks strive to catch up with their bills...So we will be ready to meet their needs.

May God continue to bless you, your family, and the congregation of CLC's ministries.

Peace.

Rev. Miriam E. Sedzro, Pastor

**The September Reporter deadline is AUGUST 20, 2020**



**Christ Lutheran Church**  
113 Union Street  
Natick, MA 01760  
(508) 315-3170  
[office@christnatick.org](mailto:office@christnatick.org)  
[www.christnatick.org](http://www.christnatick.org)