



March 2021

the
SPIRIT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

Loving Spring and the Hope it Brings

What I love about spring is the hope that it brings! In March we will have sunny and cloudy days, we'll have warm days and cold, we'll have rain and maybe even more snow. But those cold, cloudy, rainy, snowy days won't get us down like they did in January or February, because every beautiful warm and sunny day will fill our hearts with hope that spring is almost here.

It's interesting that we're in a kind of springtime in terms of the pandemic as well. There are places in the country that are still suffering terribly from Covid and places where rates have gone down dramatically. Some people have received Covid vaccines and others are still waiting. There is some good data about the vaccines as well as things still unknown.¹ But those remaining uncertainties and challenges don't get us down like they have this whole past year, because good news is starting to outweigh the bad and that fills our hearts with hope.

One of the books that I read as a child that affected me most deeply was The Long Winter, part of the Little House on the Prairie series. In it, author Laura Ingalls Wilder details the story of the aftermath of a plague of grasshoppers that wiped out the crops so that everyone in their town was starving.

We, too, have been hit by a plague. Worldwide, there have been 112 million cases and 2.49 million deaths. In our country there have been 28.3 million cases and 505 thousand deaths – 5000 more than just a few days ago! As tragic and grim as these numbers are, they reflect only the tip of the iceberg. The collateral damage to our bodies, minds, hearts and spirits is beyond measure. Covid has caused unemployment and financial distress. That in turn has led to lack of food and shelter and the opportunity to thrive. A rise in anxiety, depression, substance abuse and other mental illnesses has followed. Families have fallen apart. Disparities in access to basic needs like medical care have become more apparent, as has racism, oppression, and injustice. Our familiar routines and cherished rituals have been taken from us. And our coping skills have been stretched to their limits.

But in the midst of this sea of chaos, the Spirit of the living God moves to create light out of darkness, hope out of despair, life out of death. Spring will come. Easter will come. And one day the coronavirus pandemic will be history and we will be giving thanks and praise

to the God who has brought us through this most challenging of years.

March 20th marks the one year anniversary when the governor of CT locked down all but essential services, so on Sunday evening March 21st, our Southern CT Conference is planning a Service of Remembrance on zoom. Stay tuned for more details. If you'd like to help plan or participate in it in some way, please let me know as soon as possible.

While we are glad so many of you have received your vaccines, PLEASE remember that because the vaccine is NOT 100% effective, we must ALL continue to wear masks and maintain physical distance from one another. So please be PATIENT. The last thing in the world we want is to be the cause of someone else's illness or death. The more disciplined we are, the faster we will all get through this.

The other thing that will help us get through the pandemic as well as all the other challenges that face us is prayer. Please join Pastor Mark, Momma Jeanette, and me on Wednesday evenings from 7:30-8:15 and/or Thursday mornings from 10:30-11:15 as we gather with Our Saviour's, Genesis, and Cross of Christ for our midweek series, "Lenten Adventures in Prayer: Y PRAY?" Just [click here](#) for the Zoom link or for the full invitation go to <https://SalemBridgeport.org/Resources/Calendar> and click on the event.

As we leap into spring, I wish for you a spring in your step, a smile on your face, and a flowering of joy in your heart.

Abundant Blessings Be Yours!

Pastor Marjo

Pastor Marjo Anderson

¹Many challenges remain, including logistics around how to safely and efficiently distribute and administer vaccines, the emergence of new variants, optimal timing of booster doses, vaccine hesitancy in some groups or individuals, and answering questions surrounding the long-term immunity conferred by the vaccines as well as their potential side-effect profiles. We are not out of the woods yet.

(*The Lancet Digital Health* 2/18/21 – [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landig/article/PIIS2589-7500\(21\)00024-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landig/article/PIIS2589-7500(21)00024-8/fulltext))

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

3160 Park Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604
Phone (203) 336-3300 ▪ Fax (203) 336-8813

Website - www.salembridgeport.org

Facebook - www.facebook.com/SalemBridgeport/

Church Office Hours

Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Worship Services

9:30am Zoom Worship

Salem's Staff

The Rev. Marjo Anderson, Pastor
Cell Phone (203) 982-3441
marjoanderson@aol.com

Karl Kraft, Office Manager
Office Phone (203) 336-3300
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net

Jennifer Reyes, Sexton
Pablo, Cruz, Sexton
Office Phone (203) 336-3300, ext. 10

LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

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Diane Tomasko
Bill Winter

We Are Grateful



Outreach

Richard & Mary Ann Kenyon

SAVE THE DATE

The Council of Churches will hold a Virtual Spring Fling on Tuesday, May 25, 2021. Musicians Chris Coogan and Michele Grace will provide entertainment throughout the event.

There will also be an opportunity to make contributions to support the Council's programs.

Congratulations to Johnny Wargo who just became Troop 103's newest Eagle Scout! Johnny has demonstrated leadership and determination during his time in Scouts, both of which he really needed during this past year. He also has been very helpful as part of our "clean out the building" team that meets on Saturday mornings. Troop 103 continues to serve the community thanks to Salem.

Newsletter deadline is the 15th of each month unless otherwise noted in the monthly calendar.

Next deadline date is March 15th for the April issue!

**Email submissions to
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net**



MIDWEEK LENTEN ADVENTURES IN PRAYER

TWO DAYS/TIMES

WED 7:30 PM

THU 10:30 AM

Week 1 (Feb 24/25) - The **Y** is for WHY Pray?

Week 2 (March 3/4) - The **P** is for PAUSE!

Week 3 (Mar 10/11) - The **R** is for REJOICE!

Week 4 (Mar 17/18) - The **A** is for ASK!

Week 5 (Mar 24/25) - The **Y** is for YIELD!

"Y PRAY?"



[Click here to join the Zoom meeting.](#)



March 2021

Salem Lutheran Church

SUN	MON Mar 1	TUE 2	WED 3	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6
	4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg 6:30pm Social Ministry Committee	9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk	12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 7:30pm MidWeek Lenten Adventures in P	10:30am MidWeek Lenten Adventures in	6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Cente	
7 Third Sunday in Lent 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	8 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg 6:30pm Social Ministry Committee Meeti	9 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk 6pm Stewardship Committee	10 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 7:30pm MidWeek Lenten Adventures in P	11 10:30am MidWeek Lenten Adventures in	12 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Cente	13 8am The NO BREAKFAST Gathering!
14 Fourth Sunday in Lent 9:30am Worship & Coffee Hour 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	15 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 7:30pm Executive Committee Meeting	16 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk	17 Golden Hill Supper 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 7:30pm MidWeek Lenten Adventures in P	18 10:30am MidWeek Lenten Adventures in	19 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Cente	20 11am Inner-View Chat n Chew
21 Fifth Sunday in Lent 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	22 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg 7pm Council Meeting	23 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk	24 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 7:30pm MidWeek Lenten Adventures in P	25 10:30am MidWeek Lenten Adventures in	26 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Cente	27
28 Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday 9:30am Worship & Coffee Hour 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 6pm Sunday Night Alive!	29 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg	30 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk	31 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray			

Carlee Claus	2
Bonnie Baronavski	3
Lowell Claus	3
Bryana Johnson	6
Dennis Pittu	7
Timothy Cotter	9
Tracy Hintz	10
Josephine Hahn	12
Todd DeWalt	14
David Lazarini	14
Noah Lansing	16
Elizabeth Watts	16
Laila Hietala	18
Jonathon Rosa	19
Joseph Bales	23
Stephan Dow	23
John Bryk	29



The Center for Family Justice invites you to its 125th Jubilee Virtual Gala, 7 pm Friday 26 March, featuring a special surprise announcement, as they celebrate their growth and transformation into the state's first Family Justice Center, dedicated to serving all victims of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse in sex local communities. For tickets go to:

centerforfamilyjustice.salsalabs.org/125thjubileegala/index.html.



Please contact your Parish Nurse Carol if you would like to call, or send a card or note to one of our shut-ins. Carol will let you know if the person would prefer a call or a note.

If you have extra cards that you do not need, please let Carol know.

The following people have asked for
healing, help, guidance or comfort.

Joan B
Barbara B
Sam B
Erick D
Grace D
Hannah & Joseph
Bob H
Dennis H
Sylvitha
Jay
Mike R

Jane M
Jana B
William S
Daphne B
Peter K
Bobby W
Anna
Barbara
James S
Sarah R
Brooks A

Angie
Liz F.
Hazel P
Katherine P



COVID Vaccination Shots

If you are 65 years or older, your lifeboat has arrived. You can sign up for your Covid vaccine shots.

The state set the following vaccine eligibility schedule:

March 1: expands to age 55 to 64
March 22: expands to age 45 to 54
April 12: expands to age 35 to 44
May 3: expands to age 16 to 34

After your second shot, the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines give you 95% protection against the Covid virus including the rapidly spreading UK mutation.

As of Feb 19, 95% of eligible Salem members have received or are scheduled to receive their Covid vaccinations.

Please get vaccinated as soon as you can.

Just as you wear a mask to protect yourself and others, your vaccination will protect you and others around you.

You can book appointments through:

1. MyChart (Yale-New Haven Health) at www.ynhhs.org/covidvaccine or call 1-833-275-9644
2. MyChartPlus (Hartford Health) at www.mychartplus.org or call 1-833-621-0600
3. V.A.M.S. (Vaccine Administration Management System) at <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/covid-19%20vaccinations>
4. Calling (877) 918-2224 - open 7 days a week from 8 am to 8 pm.
5. Contact your local town health department. Bridgeport (203) 576-7993, Fairfield [\(203\) 256-3020](tel:2032563020)
6. Some pharmacies are now offering shots, such as CVS, Walgreens, Walmart. Scheduling is online only.

If you need help with getting scheduled, please contact Carol Lansing at (203) 520-3752.



Stress: Coping with Everyday Problems

Everyone has stress.. It is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about things like your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is ill or in crisis. In response to these strains, your body automatically increases blood pressure, heart rate, respirations, metabolism and blood flow to your muscles. This response is intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to a high pressure situation. When you are constantly reacting to stressful situations, without making adjustments, you will feel stress which can threaten your health and well-being. Nearly 70% of Americans experience physical and mental symptoms of stress, and 37% think they are doing well at managing stress. If you are feeling stress, there are steps to take better care of yourself. Learn to say NO! Eliminate activities which are not absolutely necessary

Pray - *Have a talk with God about your concerns.*

Meditate - *just 10-20 minutes of quiet reflection can bring relief from chronic stress. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things.*

Visualize - *Use your imagination to manage a stressful situation by visualizing how you would successfully accomplish it.*

Exercise - *Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. 25-30 minutes daily benefits both the body and mind.*

Hobbies - *Take a break from your worries by doing something pleasurable and enjoyable. Indulge your interests, such as gardening, fishing, painting, hiking, dancing, reading or whatever...*

Share your feelings - *If you are feeling overwhelmed, talk to a friend or family member. Stay in touch. Let them provide love, advice, support and guidance. Do not try to cope alone. If you know of either yourself or someone else who may be in crisis, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK or reach a 24 hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.*

Healthy Living Tips

"Best Advice from Top Docs", a article from the December 2016 AARP Bulletin, suggests everyday life style adjustments that are most important for greater health.

- Exercise regularly like taking a daily 30 minute walk.
- Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Be more social and happy by spending time each day with a friend or loved one and by reducing stress.
- Reduce consumption of junk food such as cookies, cakes, chips, soda, and fast foods.
- Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.
- Quit smoking and excessive drinking and taking too many pain killers.
- Do not ignore health problems or symptoms.

March is "National Nutrition Month." Make a point to read food labels. Low sodium is defined as 140 mg of sodium per serving. Cut back on the cholesterol and total fat that you eat. Avoid anything on a food label with "partially hydrogenated" fats or oils in them.

Congregations of the New England Synod,

Our pandemic winter continues. I, like you, feel the fatigue that is circling about our lives. The good news of vaccine distribution beginning is offset by concerns about variants of Covid19. While I remain hopeful for the longer term (next six to nine months), I remain vigilant and cautious in the near term.



We may be getting close to gathering in-person, but we are not there yet. Some of our states are beginning to relax their rules around some in-person gatherings, and this may, in some places such as Connecticut, include relaxation around gatherings for worship.

I would exercise extreme caution in moving too soon toward this practice!

Much of the reasoning behind state governments taking more relaxed positions in relation to houses of worship, versus other public spaces, is related to concerns around first amendment considerations. Earlier last year, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a synagogue that believed it had the legal standing to hold worship services, even when the Governor stated, out of health and safety concerns, that they should not meet. Since that ruling, most states have adopted a "request approach" toward houses of worship. For instance, in Rhode Island, the governor asked churches to not hold in-person worship during a recent outbreak.

My point in this letter is this:

Just because a state government may grant permission or shift its language around holding in-person worship does not mean your congregation should. As my grandmother used to say, "just because you can....doesn't mean you should."

This letter serves as encouragement to be thoughtful, careful and mindful of our role as servants.

The ELCA has released "Considerations for Returning to In-Person Worship." You may view the full document [here](#). Last year, I provided you with a letter offering suggestions on how to approach re-opening, which is copied below.

"As I review those documents, along with several news stories of churches that attempted to meet for worship and then had spread of this disease, I want to offer my own personal reflections. If I were serving as a pastor in a congregation, I would say the following to my church council:

"I see no upside to gathering in person for worship for the foreseeable future, and I think we should begin now to plan for many months without it. Let's put together teams of people that will work together on four areas.

Spiritual Life including Worship & Devotions - This group will plan worship and devotional opportunities for the congregation in ways that maximize engagement from as many in the congregation as possible.

Caregiving/Shepherding Ministry - Let's focus our energy on how we can connect our community via a shepherding group model.

Social Justice/Community Advocacy - Let's find ways to both serve our community and act on matters involving the most vulnerable in our communities and beyond.

Generosity Team – This team will work on ways to engage people on matters of Stewardship and Generosity. What can we do to help people see the value of increasing their giving during this time when our church is so important to so many people?

Let these four teams be the center of our energy. I as pastor will work with each of these teams, but I can't do it alone. I need you to step up and be involved. In many ways, by doing this, we are also setting the stage for a new way of being church that will be determined when we come through this time of change."

I still believe that is the best path forward.

It seems likely (though who can predict the future these days?) that we will be able to gather for in-person worship in 2021, certainly outdoors in warmer months. Therefore, let's be mindful of that coming opportunity and not rush too hastily into indoor worship.

I have great confidence in the patience and wise leadership so many of you are exercising. We are moving forward into a new day. I know it is hard, and I know the loss many have experienced during this pandemic is painful. Let us continue to exercise patience and wisdom!

Sincerely,

Bishop James Hazelwood

BETHESDA MUSIC SERIES PRESENTS

Bite-Sized Bach: *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*

in 6 Online Mini-Recitals —Sundays at 4PM
February 21–March 28

Stephen Gamboa-Diaz *harpsichord*

To Benefit Integrated Refugee and
Immigrant Services (IRIS)



Beginning Sunday, February 21 at 4pm the Bethesda Music Series presents our artistic director Stephen Gamboa-Diaz on harpsichord in six online mini-recitals traversing the first book of Johann Sebastian Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier.

These bite-sized Bach concerts are to raise funds for Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), a non-profit agency whose mission is to help refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, strengthen hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut's communities.

Tune in for the whole series, or just for your favorite keys!

All concerts will be streamed on Bethesda Lutheran Church's YouTube channel and Facebook page and will be available to watch after going live.

Sunday, February 21 – 4pm - C major, C minor, C-sharp minor, C-sharp major

Sunday, February 28 – 4pm - D major, D minor, D-sharp minor, E-flat major

Sunday, March 7 – 4pm - E major, E minor, F minor, F major

Sunday, March 14 – 4pm - F-sharp major, F-sharp minor, G minor, G major

Sunday, March 21 – 4pm - A-flat major, G-sharp minor, A major, A minor

Sunday, March 28 – 4pm - B-flat major, B-flat minor, B major, B minor

Donations to IRIS can be made through the Bethesda Lutheran Church giving page or by writing a check to the Bethesda Music Series with "IRIS" in the subject line.



The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc.
Leveraging Hope, Transforming Communities
*Service * Dialogue * Collaboration*

The Rev. Marjo Anderson
Salem Lutheran Church
3160 Park Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06606

December 18, 2020

Dear Marjo,

Please extend my thanks to the whole congregation for Salem's generous donation of \$1,000.00 on December 10, 2020. On behalf of our Board, our staff, and especially our clients, we are grateful for your support, right when we need it most.

Although we are all encouraged by the news of the vaccines now becoming available, it's clear it will be a long, difficult winter, especially for those who are most vulnerable. Significant numbers of foreclosures and evictions are coming in late January, and we know that all too many people will be hungry and homeless.

Your gift to The Council helps us continue our work with at-risk youth, people who are hungry, and getting guns off the streets and out of the hands of those who suffer from mental illness and distress.

2020 marks our 75th anniversary year and as I think about what our community, our country and our world has endured over the generations, I'm confident that we will prevail throughout the coming winter and into the future. Thank you so much for being part of this ministry! I hope you're staying safe and healthy.

Merry Christmas!
Warmly,

Rev. Cass L. Shaw
President and Chief Executive Officer



Advocacy * Food Access * Ecumenical & Interfaith * Re-Entry * Youth in Crisis

1718 Capitol Avenue · Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604-1531
Tel: 203.334.1121 · Fax: 203.367.8113 · www.cccb.org



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Debra A. Greenwood

January 13, 2021

Rev. Marjo Anderson
Salem Lutheran Church
3160 Park Ave
Bridgeport, CT 06604-1103

Dear Rev. Anderson,

Thank you for your generous in-kind donation of **six scarf and hat sets and two afghans** received on **12/4/2020**. Your gift provides hope for individuals, children and families as they begin their search for a life without violence and turns victims into survivors.

For the last four decades of our 125-year history, The Center for Family Justice has dedicated itself to empowering victims of domestic and sexual violence. Your gift allows us to provide the services that give hope to our clients while helping them restore their lives.

CFJ serves approximately 5,000 clients annually, along with educating nearly 10,000 individuals residing in our six-town service area of Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull. Thank you for letting them know that Hope Starts Here.

Sincerely,

Debra A. Greenwood
President and CEO
dgreenwood@centerforfamilyjustice.org
www.centerforfamilyjustice.org

The Center for Family Justice, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization pursuant to Section 501(c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. No goods and services were provided in exchange for this gift.



Hope Starts Here

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

The soul-parched journey of Lent

By [Stephanie Lape](#)

I opened the door of the Catholic church where I had worshiped for the past several months, and when I habitually put my fingers in the small vessel that held holy water, I felt sand. I stared at my fingers, wondering what on earth was this. Every time I had attended mass, I enjoyed touching that water, remembering my baptismal identity and feeling refreshed. Now I felt dry, empty, thirsty—even a bit resentful.

I soon found out it was the congregation's Lenten practice to exchange the water for sand in every small vessel at the doors, and even from the larger baptismal font. Each week during Lent, I touched the sand; each week the sand bothered me; each week I missed the water and I realized how soul-parched I really was.

The ancient Israelites went down to Egypt during a famine and were graciously offered food, water and life. But soon enough, Israelites outnumbered Egyptians and were enslaved in a land that had once been so welcoming. Through sweat, toil and tears, they were beaten and broken under Pharaoh's lash. They were mistreated, shamed and casually murdered.

This all happened in the desert. Imagine how parched the people of God were there. Sand took the place of water; despair took the place of hope. They prayed that God would remember them, send them a reason to hope again and deliver them out of captivity into the promised land, a place of milk and honey (Exodus 3:8).

Many generations later, Jesus was baptized in the cool water of the Jordan River and then thrust into a wilderness of his own. There he stayed for 40 days—a number signifying great tests and tribulations throughout the Bible. The sand replaced the water; an empty stomach replaced the abundance; the taunts of the devil himself replaced the dove alighting on Jesus' head and God speaking words of love. Jesus must have remembered the ancient prayer of his forbears in Egypt: "Deliver me from captivity."

The "wilderness," the "desert," the "barren place" and the "pit" show up all over Scripture. They are the lost and lonely places, the dry and lifeless places, the places where all seems despairing and lost.

One might think that God either doesn't see or doesn't care. The Israelites were supposed to have been the

"chosen people," Jesus was supposed to have been the "beloved Son," we are supposed to be God's children—and yet, sometimes, we find ourselves feeling alone and empty in the desert, don't we?

I can't remember a time our nation has felt so much as if we are walking in a desert. In less than a year, we have lost more than 475,000 human lives to the insidious, invisible COVID-19. We will see the magnitude of the resulting grief only as more years pass. Never have I heard a people, a nation and a world so strongly pray, "Deliver us!" Never have I felt so much as if we are walking through miles of sand, living in a wilderness and feeling the soul-parched journey of Lent.

I am no longer Catholic but an ELCA Lutheran, and I live near an actual desert in Southern California. It is beautiful and (usually) hospitable to life. But the biblical symbolism stays with me.

Every Lent in the congregation where I serve, I empty the baptismal font of water and fill it with sand. I like watching people's reactions when they come forward to receive communion, reach out to touch the water and, as I once did, feel surprise and even thirst when they touch dry sand where water used to be. On our projection screens during Lent, I like to display images of sand and dry brush. The barren landscapes reflect the need in our souls for God, for life, for freedom from any kind of captivity. Desert imagery helps remind us to not take our Savior, Jesus Christ, for granted.

On Easter, we rejoice in the living water we have in Christ. But during Lent, we must remember why we need him in the first place. Encountering the sand is not just an intellectual exercise but a visceral reminder of our need for water, life and salvation. We think we are so powerful, yet we realize we cannot last long without water or the living God.

During Lent, we thirst, we long, we remember, we wait and we cry out, "Oh Lord, how long? Deliver us!"

Stephanie Lape is a rostered minister in the ELCA, serving Cross and Crown Lutheran Church in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. She writes and speaks on spirituality and interfaith dialogue, and is the author of *Beckoned: Hearing God's Call to Deeper Faith*.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

ELCA GLOBAL LINKS

Stay informed. Be inspired. Get involved.



As a district pastor for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC), the Rev. Bebe is responsible for 10 congregations in the northeast region of the church. (Photo: Mr. Duclavier)

International Workshop on Pastoral Ministry by Women in Context in Cameroon

Just before protection measures were put in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March, women leaders gathered in Yaoundé, Cameroon, for the International Workshop on Pastoral Ministry by Women in Context: Gender Justice and Women's Leadership, supported by the ELCA's Global Mission unit. These women serve as pastors or are studying to become pastors. Most were from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC), but a few came from member churches of the Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon.

The Rev. Dr. Jeannette Ada Maina, the first ordained woman in the ELCC, serves as executive secretary of its Department of Women and Social Affairs and is also vice president of the African region for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Her experience in the ELCC moved her to bring these women together so they might feel strengthened, encouraged and supported in their work and experience a community of women in ministry. Other Protestant churches in Cameroon have been ordaining women for longer, and the community

was enriched by these women sharing their experiences with the women of the ELCC.

Organizers had hoped to include women from churches in Ethiopia and Madagascar; the evolving pandemic made that impossible, but there was international participation from the ELCA through the Rev. Dr. Elisabeth Johnson, a professor at the ELCC seminary in Meiganga. The Rev. Dr. Joy Philip, of Martin Luther University College in Canada, happened to be in Cameroon doing sabbatical research and led a workshop and discussion. Dr. Colette Bouka-Coula, previously of the LWF, surveyed its work on poverty and gender justice.



Christians have become the remnant of the remnant in the Holy Land, but they remain faithful, from the youngest to the oldest. This picture was taken by former missionary Ben Gray at a confirmation service at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem.

Prayers for Christians in the Middle East

The Middle East and North Africa Desk asks the ELCA to pray for Christians in the Middle East who are suffering. Until recently, Christians in the Middle East were a robust minority community with long histories and deep interfaith relationships, but in some countries the wars of the 21st century have reduced the number of Christians to single percentages. Decades of conflict, the weakness of financial institutions and governments, and this year's repudiation of a "two-state" solution for Israel and Palestine have driven a mass exodus of Christians from the region. Church leaders in the Middle East are speaking of a Kairos moment, deeply concerned for the future of their churches and of Christian witness in the Middle East.