



July/August 2021

the
SPIRIT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

Summertime and the livin' is....what?

Happy Summertime! Technically summer begins the 3rd week of June and ends the 3rd week of September, so today marks the first day of the 2 full months of summer. For teachers and students, of course, these months are traditionally known as summer vacation. Even among those who work in other jobs, many take a week or more of actual vacation time. And for most of us, summer means at least some change of pace in our yearly routine.

Here at Salem we are taking the summer off. Well, not completely, of course. We're still going to gather to worship, we're still going to gather to pray, and we're still going to gather to study God's Word. But the Sustainability Task Force is taking time off until September, Council is not meeting until the 4th Monday in August, and committees are not meeting.

Taking the summer off is not entirely a new idea for Salem. Traditionally many things scaled down in the summer. But this year we really, really, really need to take some time off. The past year has been challenging not only in the actual physical work that we did, but in the psychological, emotional and spiritual strain of both surviving a pandemic and at the same time facing the fact that we were going to sell Salem and then finding out that we were not. After the challenges of this past year, we need time to rest.

We need time to rest and catch our breath. Think about that for a minute. We need to "catch our breath" - to catch the Spirit of God that was breathed into us when God created us. We need to catch the energy that makes every cell in our bodies dance with life. We need to feel that wind of the Spirit blowing within us and moving us forward.

So how do we catch our breath? How do we catch the Spirit? How do we find the abundant life that Jesus promises?

This summer I encourage you to do 3 NEW things:

1. Deepen your spirit. Join us for noontime prayer on Wednesdays on zoom. Or join another prayer group. Or start your own. Find a prayer partner. Or call me and I'll pray with you. Don't just pray alone. The power of prayer increases exponentially when you pray together. No matter what you are doing in your prayer life now, I urge you to step it up a level. Do something more or

something different than you are doing now.

2. Open your mind. Entertain the possibility that you may not be right in everything you believe and God may still have something to teach you. Come to the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport's anti-racism series that begins TONIGHT. Don't feel you need to come? Don't think it's important? Don't have any desire to attend? Well, if you answered yes to any of those questions, then that's exactly why you should attend! Or if you can't attend that event, commit to reading a challenging book like Dear Church: a Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US by Lenny Duncan, or The Color of Compromise by Jemar Tisby, or Caste by Isabel Wilkerson, or The Sum of Us by Heather McGhee.

3. Expand your relationships. Get to know the people at Genesis Gospel Café. Or look for opportunities to build relationships with the new Pentecostal congregation who will be sharing space with us starting July 11th - Pastor Errol Johnson and Christ Home for Unity, Restoration, Charity and Hope (or CHURCH, for short). Or build relationships with the people of Christ Presbyterian Church by joining them for worship this summer. Or find someone else in your life who is of a different race, culture, denomination, etc., and get to know them better.

The way we catch our breath, the way we catch the Spirit, the way we come alive is by doing something different than we are already doing. So deepen your spirit, open your mind, and expand your relationships. I PROMISE YOU, that if you do even one of these things, God will show up in ways that will simply astound you.

I wish you rest this summer. But more than that, I pray that God would deepen your spirit, open your mind, and expand your relationships. Because as God does that, I know that amazing things are going to happen. Thanks be to God!

Abundant blessings be yours!

Pastor Marjo

Pastor Marjo Anderson

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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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

Sunday 9:30am In Person Worship

Salem's Staff

The Rev. Marjo Anderson, Pastor
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Pablo, Cruz, Sexton
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LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

COUNCIL

Marjo Anderson, Pastor
Ray Anderson, President
Tom Larson, Vice-President
Nancy Headford, Secretary
Rich Kenyon, Treasurer
Liz Bales
Sandra Brown
John Bryk
Frank Dukenski
Steve Kuczo
Rich Lansing
Judi Nielsen
Diane Tomasko

We Are Grateful



Food Assistance

Duffner Family Fund

Outreach

Richard & Mary Ann Kenyon

World Hunger

Sandra Brown

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

Next deadline date is **August 15th** for the
September issue!

Email submissions to
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net

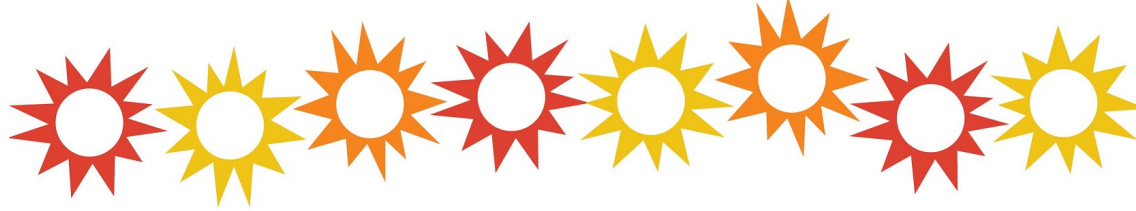


July 2021

Salem Lutheran Church



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU Jul 1	FRI 2	SAT 3
4 Pentecost 6 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Forward on the FIRST 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	5 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	6 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tea 12pm Book Club	7 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	8	9 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	10 8am The BREAKFAST Gathering!
11 Pentecost 7 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	12 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	13 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tea 6pm Stewardship Committee	14 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	15	16 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	17 9am Inner-View Chat n Chew TRUNK SALE
18 Pentecost 8 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	19 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	20 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tea	21 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	22	23 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	24
25 Pentecost 9 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 6pm Sunday Night Alive!	26 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	27 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tea	28 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	29	30 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	31 2:30pm CPC - Davis Goode wedding



August 2021

Salem Lutheran Church

SUN Aug 1	MON 2	TUE 3	WED 4	THU 5	FRI 6	SAT 7
Pentecost 10 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Forward on the FIRST 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tex 12pm Book Club	12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study		6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	
8 Pentecost 11 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tex 6pm Stewardship Committee	12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	12	6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	14 8am The BREAKFAST Gathering!
15 Pentecost 12 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 7:30pm Executive Committee Meeting	9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tex	12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	19	6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	21 11am Inner-View Chat n Chew
22 Pentecost 13 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church	4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti 7pm Council Meeting	9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tex	12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 5pm Pre-Marital Counseling 6:30pm Bible Study	26	6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center	28
29 Pentecost 14 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 6pm Sunday Night Alive!	4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on Anti	9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and Tex				

WEEKLY AND MONTHLY EVENTS

Mid-Week Wednesday Worship through Prayer! If ever we needed prayer, it's now! Agreed? While we can (and should!) pray on our own, scripture teaches us that there is power in group prayer. Jesus says, "I tell you truly that if two of you on the earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven." Author Frank Peretti writes that it is our prayers that empower the angels to fight the spiritual battles which are where the real battles are fought and won. If there is something you or your family or congregation needs, then the more people you have praying for it, the more power that prayer wields. You don't have to pray out loud, if you don't want to, but your presence with us will mean more than you know. So please, join us on **Wednesdays at noon** on zoom for a half-hour as we turn our worries and cares over to the Lord in prayer. The zoom link will be on the calendar on Salem's website at Salembridgeport.org under the Resources Tab. Or you can simply click on [this link](#).

"Forward on the FIRST" adult forum on zoom! Now that we are worshipping in-person, we needed to come up for a new plan for adult forum and specifically for our Forward discussions. We realized that not everyone is able or comfortable meeting in person. Plus, since we used to have trouble hearing at Council meetings even when we were sitting side by side(!), trying to hear in the lounge with every one spaced 6' apart isn't going to work. So we want to meet by zoom. Yet as wonderful as zoom technology is, it doesn't work when you have more than one person in a small space on zoom – there's too much sound feedback. So here's the plan: if you want to participate in adult forum, please bring your laptop or tablet or smart phone with you, and after worship, we can spread out into different rooms – lounge, music room, music office, workroom, church office, narthex – or you can sit outside or in your car. For those who prefer, you may stay in the sanctuary and have that be your shared zoom room. And of course for those who are worshipping via Facebook live, simply join from the comfort of your own home – or wherever you are. We are also moving our Forward discussions to the FIRST Sunday of the month, since that follows our Council meeting and will allow us to bring you the most timely information possible. As always, the zoom link will be on the calendar at SalemBridgeport.org/Resources/Calendar. PLEASE JOIN US! :D

Salem and Friends Prayer Gathering & Take-out Breakfast, sponsored by the Salem Men, is held on the **2nd Saturday of the month at 8:00 am**. Although this used to be a men's event, it's now open to everyone, and we are most grateful for the men who sponsor it. (Thank you, Bruce for ensuring that this important time for talking informally about our faith lives continues even in the midst of a pandemic!) It's been outdoors until this month when we met in the lounge. We're working on figuring out how to make the sound work so we can offer this important time on zoom as well.

Inner-View Chat'n'Chew meets the **3rd Saturday of the month at 11:00**, so mark your calendars for **June 19th**. It's a time of fun and fellowship that gives us a chance to celebrate the gift that God has given us in one another. The theme for Evites are sent out to those on the Genesis mailing list but you can also find the Zoom link on Salem's calendar.

There are many ways to find the zoom link for worship and all other Salem events. The most reliable way is to go to our website - www.salembridgeport.org, choose the Resource tab, and click on Calendar. Then on the calendar, go to the day, the event, and when you click on it, it will open up the zoom invitation. You can click on the link, or copy and paste it into your browser. To see how to do this, [click here](#):

We also include the zoom links in our weekly email blasts, and in this announcement section of our Sunday bulletin. You can find links to Sunday worship materials like the bulletin, sermon, and donate page at www.salembridgeport.org/live. Or to see how to get there, [click here](#):



Cary Andren.....	1
Katherine Horton.....	1
Miriam Llanos	3
Karl Kraft.....	4
Katherine Johnson.....	8
Teresa Roehrich	8
Dick Bellows	9
Jon Baronavski	9
Paul Baronavski, Jr.....	9
Annette Marquardt	13
Kimberly Sokoloski	13
Kevyn Jackman	16
JoAnn McMaster.....	16
Laurie Kulakowski.....	19
Anita Papp	20
Dolores Kuczo	22
Lisette Vazquez	22
Victor Ladue.....	23
Ryne Cotter.....	26
Corey DeWalt	30



Josephine Anderson	1
Gloriana Claus	1
Christine Larson	3
Janice Lansing	6
Morgan Danowski	8
Bryan DeWalt.....	8
Cindy Roberts	10
Kaitlyn Rosa	12
Diane Tomasko.....	13
Carl Roehrich	14
Richard Lansing, Jr.	16
Pauline Boyum.....	18
Mary Anne Caragol	18
Evan Lansing	18
Brenda Vazquez.....	21
David Schulz	23
Jean Larson	24
Frank Dukenski	25
Sharon Norberg	27
Hazel Pasqua.....	29
Eduardo Vazquez.....	30
Joan Crossman	31

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Bible Quiz

? ??

After Jesus healed 10 men at one time, how many returned to thank him? What had been their ailment?

- A. five; blindness
- B. all 10; deafness
- C. one; possession by demons
- D. one; leprosy

Answer: D (See Luke 17:11-19.)

ELCA WORLD HUNGER APPEAL

The ELCA World Hunger Appeal not only provides food for hungry people, it also works to alleviate the root causes of hunger and poverty. To participate in this effort, Salem received a request that is focused on specific projects in Malawi and Rwanda—including providing food, school supplies and mattresses for orphans and vulnerable children (at a cost of \$6. per child). Also included is training in welding, tailoring, entrepreneurship and cooperatives.

Pastor David and Doreen Rinas for the World Hunger Team will match the first \$100 that each congregation in the New England Synod contributes to the World Hunger Appeal this year.

Please consider making a contribution to the World Hunger Appeal. If you do this by check, make it payable to Salem and on the memo line note WH Rwanda & Malawi 2021. If you contribute to Salem online, use the ELCA World Hunger option. We are asking that contributions be made by July 31. Contributions will be sent on to Synod as a total amount from Salem.

Social Ministry Committee



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



Walk the Walk 2021

If you haven't already done so, check out all the details on Calumet's website:

www.calumet.org/giving/walkthewalk

1. It's the goal to have 1,500 people/dogs registered by June 30. Each registrant is \$25 (which is actually a donation from you to Calumet!).
2. "Walk the Walk 2021" will begin on July 1 and end on August 31.
3. Everyone will be on a TEAM (those who are connected to New England Synod congregations will, we hope, join their congregation TEAM). Be sure to enter the name of your team option below.
4. Four times during the 62-Day walk, each TEAM captain will gather mileage from every TEAM member and report the total miles to Calumet. Some will walk lots and lots. Some will walk just a few. Every mile, and portion there of, matters.
5. All together, we hope to reach 200,000 miles in the 62-Day period -- July & August!

****Participant Goals****

6. If 100 walkers sign up by May 27, Calumet will receive \$5,000 in matching money it won't otherwise receive.
7. If we can register 1,400 additional walkers after that -- totaling 1,500 registrants by June 30 -- a group of donors will donate \$27,500 (and counting). But we won't get those funds if we don't hit our 1,500 walker goal by June 30.

****Mileage Goal****

8. If we reach 200,000 miles walked, another hunk of dollars (amount not yet known) will come to Calumet by a group of Angel Donors.
9. During early August, each participant will have the chance -- if they wish -- to invite friends & family to support them with one-time gifts to Calumet in support of their "Walk the Walk 2021."
10. If everything works perfectly, Calumet will raise at least \$106,250 from "Walk the Walk 2021." How cool is that!

Who do you know who can join Calumet's "Walk the Walk 2021" this summer? A one-time gift of \$25 is the registration fee. Everyone gets an official Walk the Walk 2021 T Shirt. Dogs get an official Walk the Walk 2021 bandana!

Food Safety at the Farmer's Market

Shopping at a farmer's market is a great way to get locally-grown, fresh fruit, vegetables, and other foods for you and your family.

As these markets have grown more popular, there have been questions about the safety of the foods purchased there. There are some basic guidelines that you should follow to ensure that the farm-fresh food is safe.

Before and after preparing fresh produce, wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap. Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. We don't recommend washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes.

Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first. Any bacteria present on the outside of items like melons can be transferred to the inside when you cut or peel them. Be sure to refrigerate cut or peeled fruits and vegetables within two hours after preparation.



Poison Ivy Safety Tips

Recognize the poison ivy plant and avoid it. Unlike any other plant or vine, there are three leaves on each stem. The surface of the leaf looks oily. During most of the year, the leaves are dark green, but in the fall they turn reddish. You could also be allergic to poison sumac in CT. Never burn poisonous plants. The inhalation of the smoke could be deadly.

Contact with the sap of the poison ivy plant causes the skin to burn and itch if you are allergic. A rash, swelling, and possibly blisters may develop from 24 hours to as long as 7 days after contact. The sap on contaminated items like implements, gloves, or clothing can also affect you. Once skin and articles are washed, contamination is halted. Contact with the blisters does not spread the dermatitis.

If exposed, scrub the affected area thoroughly with soap and water. Wash clothes and implements that are contaminated. Cool wet compresses may help relieve itching. If your face especially around your eyes, the area between your legs, or a portion of your body is affected, call or see your doctor. He will decide if you need medications such as antihistamines or cortisone in ointment, pill, or shot form.

Remember: Leaves of 3 – Let them be.

It's Peak Tick Season!

Protect – Remove – Check – Know Symptoms

Ticks are external parasites living by feeding on the blood of mammals and birds. Ticks transmit infections including Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Ticks will attach themselves to their hosts within minutes but it takes about 36 hours for them to transmit the bacteria. Before going outside, safely **protect** yourself from getting ticks. If you get a tick, use proper techniques to **remove** the tick. After coming back inside, **check** your body. Know the early **symptoms** from tick bites

Protect

- Wear socks pulled over long pants
- Wear long sleeves, hat and closed shoes
- Use tick repellent on clothes

EPA recommends the following safety precautions when using insect repellents:

- Apply just enough repellent only to exposed skin and clothes. Heavy application does not give extra protection.
- Never apply repellents over cuts, wounds or irritated skin
- Never apply repellents to eyes, mouth and ears. Apply sparingly around ears.
- Do not allow children to spray
- After coming back inside, wash treated skin with soap and water.

Remove

- If you discover a tick on your skin, properly remove it as soon as possible.
- Use a fine-tipped tweezers. If not available, cover your hands with tissue paper and use your fingers.
- Grab tick close to its mouth (part that is stuck in your skin). The body will be above your skin.
- Do NOT grab the tick around its swollen body or you may push infected fluid into your body.
- Gently pull the tick straight out until its mouth lets go of your skin. Do NOT twist the tick.

Check

Inspect yourself, your children and your pets after being outdoors. Wash or bathe to remove repellent and to reexamine for ticks.

Know Symptoms

Early symptoms from tick bites include:

- Skin rash
- Stiff neck
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Fever
- Muscle and joint pain
- Swollen lymph nodes

There are effective antibiotics for Lyme Disease and other tick-borne diseases. They should be administered timely. See your doctor if you have any early symptoms.



Avoiding Stinging Insect Stings

The venomous insects are yellow jackets, honey bees, wasps, hornets, and fire ants (found only in the south). If you are stung by one of these, you may experience pain, swelling, and redness at the site of the sting for a few days. Only bees leave their stingers behind. The bee stinger should be scraped away. Watch the sting site for an infection.

If stung, disinfect the area, apply ice, and use an antihistamine ointment and/or corticosteroid cream. Oral antihistamines may also help.

If you have symptoms away from the site of the sting, it can be a serious allergic reaction. Call 911 if you experience any of the following symptoms: hives, tight chest, wheezing, swelling of the tongue, throat tightness, and dizziness. You may even become unconsciousness. The emergency room staff will treat you and send you home with an EpiPen (Epinephrine). Then see an allergist.

The following precautions may help you avoid an insect sting:

- Don't wear sandals or walk barefoot in the grass.
- Don't swat at a flying insect. Gently brush it aside or wait for it to leave.
- Don't drink from open beverage cans. Cover your cans or use bottles.
- If eating outdoors, keep food covered.
- Cover garbage cans that are outside with tight lids.
- Be careful when doing yard work and cutting the lawn.
- Keep window and door screens in good repair.
- Drive with the car windows closed.



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

MISSION SUPPORT 2020

[THANK YOU]

To the members of
Salem Lutheran Church
Bridgeport, Connecticut

from the

New England Synod

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
In grateful appreciation for giving

\$10,000.00

for Mission Support beyond the congregation for synod and
churchwide ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.


Synod Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America


Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

United through music during a pandemic

Cathy Elkiss unlocks the door to the Church of the Abiding Presence in Gettysburg, Pa., removes the cover from one of two organs and arranges her music on the stand. As music director for worship life at United Lutheran Seminary (ULS), she is not preparing to play for in-person worship.

Instead, Elkiss is getting ready to record music for a streamed Wednesday chapel worship, presented each week by ULS faculty on the seminary's YouTube channel. (Tuesday and Thursday worship are presented by students.)

The pews are empty except for a lone recording engineer who, along with Elkiss and one singer, is masked and socially distanced over the next hour.

Pandemic changes liturgy

Music is intrinsically linked to the Lutheran liturgy. As the ELCA resource "What Is the Role of Music in the Lutheran Liturgy?" explains: "Luther regarded music first and foremost as gift, one of the principles of music listed in Principles for Worship: 'God creates music as part of the whole creation and gives it to humankind to develop and shape.'"

Luther himself was a musician and composer who penned the iconic hymn "Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott" ("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God").

Before the pandemic, church musicians had the ability to develop and shape the role of music in weekly worship, but in spring 2020 the person-to-person interaction so crucial to musical performance, and worship itself, disappeared overnight.

In Philadelphia, Charles Leonard, ULS dean of worship life, knew of Elkiss' role as organist and choir director in Gettysburg. At the time, the Philadelphia campus didn't have a permanent music director, so students there would rotate serving as instrumentalists and singers.

While the seminary was well-positioned for remote teaching and learning before the pandemic, applying the same technology and approach to worship life on two campuses more than 200 miles apart, including a robust distance-learning community, was uncharted territory.

Given the distance, Elkiss said she and the worship life team "had to get to know each other" during initial discus-

sions on how she could fill the role of music director for the campuses. "The question was not only how do we bridge the geographical gap between the two campuses regarding worship music during the pandemic, but the cultural gap as well," she added.

One would never know that Elkiss had previously played exclusively in the Gettysburg chapel for Wednesday worship, in addition to other ULS projects, because transitioning to her new role as music director was seamless.

Growing up, Elkiss wanted to be a church musician. Her grandmother was a devout Lutheran and, while attending church with her as a young girl, Elkiss knew she "wanted to be the one playing the organ and directing the choir."

She studied piano at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and went on to earn a master's degree and a doctorate in music from the school's flagship campus in College Park. She has been a working musician since age 17 and is also organist and choirmaster at Memorial (Episcopal) Church of the Prince of Peace in Gettysburg.

Becoming united

The collaboration between Elkiss and ULS worship team was a natural evolution. "There was never a discussion of not having music," she said. "I feel as though some walls came down when we collaborated on how to program and present music for Wednesday chapel worship in a way that wasn't defined by a physical space."

Music is so easily accessible these days. One can grab it off almost any digital platform, and virtual choirs and orchestras, for which musicians record their parts on cell-phones, have become commonplace. Yet they are unnatural. "None of us thought the pandemic would go on this long," Elkiss said. "Music in the Lutheran church is not a solitary venture. It's one of the many ways we become united through our faith."

It's hard to imagine what worship and musical performances will look like when COVID-19 is no longer part of our daily lexicon. Yet, as Elkiss notes, "music and Lutheranism belong together. It's our job to be sure music doesn't get lost, so seminary students can continue the legacy of these traditions and can carry them forward to their own congregations in the future."



COVID, Christ and the Church: Finding Christ in Public Spheres Amidst the Pandemic

A reflection by Chandran Paul Martin, regional representative

In my ministry in South Asia as regional representative, I have been constantly challenged to find Christ in the suffering of communities after disasters. I have served in disasters like earthquakes, floods, cyclones and even a tsunami. One of the most common and popular questions from this angst is: "Where is God in all this?" Through all my travels and hospitality offered by communities, in the immediate response and also continuing in the restoration of livelihood (or rehabilitation), I have discerned the presence of the public Christ, even without preaching, through these ministries.

We have indeed witnessed to this public presence of Christ. Someone said, "Christ in the marketplace," and this is my faithful discernment. That is where Christ belonged, and this is where Christ needs to be returned to. The theology, identity and ecclesiological efficacy of the church is relevant, and becomes more credible only when we have restored Christ to God's original place. In order for us to even have a glimpse of what God is doing in this world, the church is pushed into a search, a process of discernment.

Hence the Church, through its ministries, like the Bodo Evangelical Lutheran Church, Manipur Evangelical Lutheran Church or even the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, has been seen in public spaces engaged in sharing life. They have been able re-capture this public presence and identity of a servant-Christ, a new identity of God's serving presence in a deeply fragmented, distorted and a broken world, now a suffering world in the context of the pandemic. Recently the churches in India lost two great leaders — the Rev. Kunja Daniel, president of the Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church (GSELC), and Bishop Emmanuel Panchoo of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh (ELCMP) — both of whom demonstrated the love of Christ through their public presence.

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, who has served as a consultant to the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, quips that we cannot know with certainty what God is doing in the world, saying, "Amidst the complexity and moral ambiguity of life, how are we to discern what God is doing in any given situation and how might we give social form to God's work?" Jesus spent most of his time with people who we may not want to even relate to. In the disaster response of our companions in the context of the pandemic, this has been my personal discernment. I have witnessed church workers, including diaconal

(development) workers, youth, women's groups, bishops, council members out there in the public spheres distributing relief materials, health educational materials, etc.

In one of my earlier engagements as aid worker in the south Asia Tsunami (2004) relief and livelihood restoration work, also supported by the ELCA, one Government Administrative officer was the chief guest at the handing over of the "restoration of livelihood" ceremony. In his opening words he admonished the earlier speakers for praising, thanking and speaking highly of the churches for their 'support'. That made me nervous, as he also openly wore symbols that represented his faith. He added candidly that this "is the identity and work of the Church, an extension of the work of Jesus Christ, and so why should we be surprised?"

I was more than surprised at his pointing to a 'public Christ,' even as he practiced his own faith. He almost implied that he would have been disappointed if the church weren't present in the broken and suffering lives of the people! I have also been deeply inspired by ELCA Pastor Nadia Boltz-Weber's theology and practice of a public church. This is what the Gospel did to the Dalits, a broken and excluded people, providing a place in the Imago Dei.

The church briefly returned Christ to where Christ belonged. This is a truth about what "God is doing to the extent that we allow ourselves to be present in profound solidarity, compassion and in action where people and the creation suffer the most," as Cynthia Moe-Lobeda wrote. In this pandemic, when the Church goes public, it restores the 'Christ-identity' to where it belongs!

