

Greetings to you my dear people of Grace!

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

As the days lengthen and as the temperatures warm, I pray that the joy of the resurrection continues to resonate in your heart and being. I am writing at this time simply to touch base and bring you up to date on a few things of interest to you as a member or friend of our community of faith.

What a joy it was to gather together in the sanctuary for worship on Easter Sunday! And what a joy also to know that an untold number of others were joining us as we live-streamed. As you know, Council has decided that we will continue with two in-person services on Sunday mornings, subject, of course, to change as circumstances may urge.

This is one aspect of our beginning to take steps forward in resuming our more typical parish activities. Your Council has been meeting regularly over this time of pandemic and met most recently Tuesday evening. Some things were discussed and plans made that you will want to know about. One of the things that we have realized over this past year is that our congregational contact listing is out-of-date. Many phone numbers have been disconnected; email addresses not current; and even some US Mail addresses resulted in returned mail. Would you please take a few moments to complete the form that is enclosed and then return it to the office. We are making plans for a new directory to be prepared for distribution later this summer. And, if you are interested in helping compile the directory, please let me know.

As we resume regular Sunday worship, we also are in need of volunteers to assist with the many parts of our service. If you like meeting new people, perhaps you would like to try being a greeter. If you are an organizer, maybe ushering is more up your alley. Or, perhaps you would like to participate in leading worship by reading the Scriptures or assisting with the liturgy. If you enjoy setting a nice table for dinner with friends, please think about helping with setting the altar on Sunday morning for Holy Communion. These are among the things we need help with. Please be assured that trying something out or volunteering to do it a few times does not obligate you to do it *every* Sunday. Find a way that you can pitch in. My Aunt Yvonne used to say, “Many hands make light the work.”

Over the next several months we are looking to have several small gatherings in Fellowship Hall. We will observe safety precautions as we gather together to talk about how this past year has been for us, our hopes for the coming months, and maybe get caught up on happenings in each other’s lives. If you can help with any part of this – invitations, logistics, planning – please contact the office. At its retreat early this spring, Council spent some time doing this and found it so meaningful that we want to engage the whole congregation. Please think about how you can join in.

Last March, just as we were beginning to understand the magnitude of the problem of the “novel coronavirus,” several members of our congregation attended a workshop at Lamb of God Lutheran Church on “Vitality!” We spent the day learning about what a vital congregation is, what kinds of things a vital and dynamic congregation does, and how we can grow in our vitality as a community of faith. One of the important keys was a congregation and its members focusing not on getting to know more *about* God but instead on getting to know God *better*. Each

presenter highly recommended the use of a particular prayer practice called “centering prayer.” This may be a new term to you but it is not a new practice. In fact, it is an ancient prayer form that many are using today. We will have a presentation on Centering Prayer via Zoom on Tuesday, May 4th at 7:00pm. This will last 45-60 minutes and will be led by Rickey and Anna Cotton, who are good friends of our congregation. This will be followed by a gathering in Fellowship Hall on Saturday, May 8th at 10:30 to learn more and to experience this way of getting to know God better. Rickey and Anna are experienced teachers and practitioners of Centering Prayer and are eager to share this with us. Please mark your calendars for this interesting opportunity.

Whew! There’s a lot happening – updating the directory, volunteers for our Sunday morning worship, fellowship gatherings, centering prayer! It is my earnest hope that you prayerfully consider how you will join in as we continue taking steps forward.

I thank God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
Philippians 1:3-6

In Easter joy!

Pastor Pam Smith