

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

JANUARY 2022



Message from Pastor Kristi

Greetings, Fir-Conway Lutheran family!

I am so pleased to be celebrating the beginning of my 6th month as your Pastor. Discovering the many stories, passions, and beginning to envision with you where we see Fir-Conway Lutheran Church in the next 3 years. Through the month of February, the Mutual Ministry team and I will be sending out Survey's to hear your voice on this vision. It will be available each Sunday in the bulletin, online, and mailed out. You can remain anonymous, and we would love to hear your thoughts. Without you, and the richness of gifts you bring, we are not living into the Community God has knitted together.

During Epiphany we are discovering how "God's Glory to us is revealed". Taking this theme, I've been working through the second readings of Epiphany, mainly 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and building on the idea of renewal of Community. Uncovering each Sunday, the Spiritual gifts we have been given, both individually and as a body of believers, placed together for the enrichment of FCLC. Remembering that one gift is not elevated above the other, we each are uniquely wonderful made, and equipped with Spiritual gifts that feed into the life of the body. When one rejoices, we rejoice together, when one mourns, we mourn together, and when one suffers, we suffer together. Looking at the overall gifts that God has given, each equally important to the health and growth of this community we have been placed in. Taking root and growing where we are, and reblooming into a vibrant flower.

This is made possible because of God's love for us, poured out by the Spirit. Love as a verb, *that waits patiently, acts kindly, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. that is all consuming, never ending, far greater than we can possibly imagine, and given to all of us.* 1 Cor. 13:7 Love that consumes us into action, sharing our gifts with all those we interact with. God's love equips us to do acts of service, looking beyond ourselves and to those within our community of believers, and to those beyond our doors.

Pondering together what are the gifts we bring to this community and how they can be used to enrich. Noting that it doesn't have to be a grand expression but a heartfelt one. Finding ways to serve one another, whether it be through the gift of language, through cards, prayers, phone calls, emails. Serving on Council, or any of the Committees, or even through the giving of tithes and offerings. However, God is calling you to use your gifts.

I look forward to the revealing of God's love and glory, as we look into the reforming of the community in Corinth and the envisioning of this community of FCLC.

Blessings,

Pastor Kristi

The Spirit is a publication of the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA. It is intended for synod members, congregations & organizations.
They are encouraged to reproduce these articles in their own monthly organizational publications.



I remember a significant birthday ten years ago that I celebrated. It was very low-key birthday. My parents and my family were there. We had some sort of food that I don't remember and a cake that was probably chocolate. That was it. But I was so thankful to be celebrating it. You see, in the summer of 2011 I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. I underwent chemotherapy, a bilateral mastectomy, and radiation. In February of 2012 I had finished chemo and surgery and was just beginning radiation. (I am perfectly healthy now.)

This is what I wrote on my blog on www.mylifeline.org exactly ten years ago:

The other day I was complaining to some friends that it is hard for me to get motivated. I said, "I am not a depressed person but it is so hard to do things right now." My friend Laura said to me, "Maybe it's because you are battling cancer and have had months of toxic drugs, major surgery, forced work leave, a little too much mortality staring you in the face and no hair or eyelashes. Personally I think that's enough reason to feel what you are feeling." ...

Today I re-read what my friend Laura said and her words hold true for me and for so many of us right now. For many it is hard to be motivated and do things right now. We have had months – years! – of a pandemic, political divide, anxiety, forced separation, and, for some, physical and emotional difficulties as well. It makes sense that we are weary. And we can give ourselves and others compassion during this time.

And ... at the same time ... we also know that this is not the end.

We place our trust in God that this is only a season in our lives and in our world. A season that eventually we will look back on, be amazed how we survived and thrived, and be thankful for the place we are called to next.

Here is how I ended my reflection from ten years ago:

As I close this blog post, I am reminded of the passing of seasons and the amazing presence of God. When I began treatment, summer was in full bloom. We have gone through the falling of leaves, the dormancy of winter, and are now on the cusp of spring. This is where I feel my body is, too. I am ready to live a new life of health and wholeness, hope and gratitude. Psalm 30:11-12 says it so well: You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you for ever.

May we rest and may we breathe.

May we live and move and dance in the Spirit.

May we trust that through all things God is present with us – above us, beneath us, before us, and behind us.

May this year bring us resiliency and hope.

May we – together – be filled with Christ's love and compassion for one another and for ourselves.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

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From the VEEP

“Not only is asking for help totally fine in itself, we should also remember that asking our friends for help creates a space for THEM to ask us when they need help.” - Jorts the Cat

If you have missed the internet saga of Jorts the Cat, his feline friend Jean, and their human co-workers, suffice it to say that it is a tale of workplace dysfunction that is resolved by learning to treat everyone, even slightly dim orange cats, with dignity and kindness. Orange cat Jorts has since gone on to spread feline wisdom and acceptance on Twitter. He is especially poignant on the subject of helping one another because he relies on Jean's help a lot. For Jorts and Jean, needing help isn't a sign of weakness or of being less worthy, it is a caring act through which we show our love and respect for one another.

So, why is it still so hard for me to ask for and accept help? Why do I feel the need to do it all myself? Maybe it is that in most of my relationships, personal and professional, I am the Jean rather than the Jorts. I'm the one others turn to for help and it is hard to step out of that role. Maybe it goes back to that non-biblical, but very American, aphorism “God helps those who help themselves,” which resonates with our cultural ethos of independent self-reliance. But not only is this transactional way of thinking about giving and receiving help non-biblical, it is against what we believe as Lutheran Christians. We don't earn God's grace; it is a gift freely given. We are called to be in relationship with God and with one another. As we read in Ecclesiastes 4:10,

“It's better to have a partner than go it alone. Share the work, share the wealth. And if one falls down, the other helps.” (The Message)

We have been in this pandemic for almost two years now. Every time it looks like things are getting better, another wave hits. We are all tired. We can't do it all ourselves. Everyone needs a little help from their friends. As hard as it is for me, I'm going to practice asking for and accepting help more often. I will remind myself that not only is it fine to ask for help, but it is also a blessing to others to be able to give help in return. I leave you with one more Jorts quote:

“A lot of things are hard and sad sometimes so it’s extra nice when we can all love and celebrate each other’s brilliant contributions.”

I look forward to celebrating all the amazing ways we will help one another in 2022.

Here are a few things I or the Synod Council have been up to:

- Executive Committee met on January 13. Among other actions, we reviewed the process for officer elections and considered how we might administer a gift from Open Door Ministries to support our LGBTQIA+ siblings.
- Synod Council met on January 22. Among other business items, we heard an update from our Assembly Chair, Deacon Liz Colver, approved the assembly budget, and appointed a number of persons to the assembly planning team; we approved our Synod Authorized Worship Communities; and we reviewed the budget proposals that will be brought to Synod Assembly in June.
- The Synod Finance Committee has been meeting regularly and working on the proposed budgets for our upcoming fiscal years.

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Want an Easy Way to Donate to FCLC While Shopping?

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from customers' eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organizations they select. The minimum amount a charitable organization must accrue to receive a quarterly donation is \$5.00. The same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com are available on AmazonSmile. The difference is that

when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice.

On your first visit to smile.amazon.com, you need to select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Your selection will be remembered, and then every eligible purchase you make through **AmazonSmile** will result in a donation. You use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile.

Here's how to sign up for AmazonSmile

1. Visit smile.amazon.com
2. Sign in with your **Amazon**.com credentials
3. Choose a **charitable organization** to receive donations, or search for the charity of your choice
4. Select your charity: **Fir-Conway Lutheran Church**

Church Council Minutes

Treasurer Report:

- General fund balance was \$30,784.00 at the end of 2021
- For the year 2021 we spent \$105,000 for the year
- Dave reports that giving picked up in December (\$10,466.00 includes direct deposit)
- In annual report Dave will show 12 months' worth of giving
- Monthly goal for 2022 is \$11,500
- Discussion regarding high utilities bills for both parsonage and church – we need to investigate these totals more in-depth
- Kelly made a motion to review the church and parsonage utilities expenses before approving the Treasurer's Report. Seconded by Jon. Motion passed unanimously.

Property and Management:

- Fire Marshalls Report – we either need to turn off valve and cut gas line or have hood inspected (sticker says last inspection was 2019). We have a file in the office on who has done the inspection in the past and the cost. Pastor will check on this.
- Jon reported that there was a leaking facet in the bathroom that he shut off
- **Elevator:**
 - Dan Tunick from Olympic Elevator has sent us a bid/quote
 - Jon is getting clarification on the price is it \$35,545 or 37,545
 - 40% down payment–
 - 12 weeks until materials will be available show up
 - We will vote electronically once we have a firm quote
 - Olympic will be responsible to Drop car and counterweight
 - We need to do the demolition – upper and lower access door
 - We have to contact electrician for electrical work
 - Jon is meeting with another electrician for a quote on 1/20/22
 - Dahl Electric will be sending us a quote
 - Funds to replace the elevator will come out of restoration fund

Parsonage:

- Kelly has completed the rental agreement paperwork

- Kelly reported that Michael believes it will be rented quickly
- Windermere requires first and last month rent along with damage deposit and \$25.00 application fee
- The area around propane tank is currently underwater – we need to look into fixing this
- Matt found a push mower to have at the parsonage
- We need to set it up direct deposit for the rental payments

Norwegian Bible:

- Pastor was contacted by the Conservation Center in Boston. She took picture of the Bible and sent them to the Center. They will give us a bid on the cost on restoration.
- Mary Jo Wolden continues to contact the place in Bellingham that does restorations – but they are not working at the present time due to COVID. The bible is currently being repaired, the cost is approximately \$300.00, and will come out of the Memorial fund.

Salish Sea Early Music Festival:

- March 20th or April 20th or May 4th are the possible dates for the event
- Jon made a motion to accept the proposed dates for the music festival. Seconded by Judy. Motion passed unanimously.

Sanctuary Doors:

- Possible that the door was not closed due to settling of the building- but this is unlikely since the handle was unlocked
- Renee reported that she just opens the doors and latches them open each Sunday and does not unlock the door or use the allen wrench to unlock the doors.
- Kathy is trying to locate who has the key to the sanctuary door
- Dan reports no one should have a key to the sanctuary door (the whole building was rekeyed)
- When we leave the sanctuary, we need to make sure doors are firmly closed and that the handle is locked
- Pastor will check with preschool staff to see if they unlocked the door handle for the preschool Christmas Program

Calendar of Upcoming Events in February

2/2 Cemetery Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m.

2/6 Annual Meeting after Church

2/9 Council Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

2/21 Presidents Day, Office will be closed

2/27 Transfiguration Sunday

3/2 Ash Wednesday service

Tamales for Sale!

Our Mission Start, El Camino de Emaús Lutheran Church in Burlington is making FRESH TAMALES FOR SALE! Congregations are invited purchase batches of these delicious tamales - all proceeds will support their trip to Holden Village for Abriendo Caminos this August.

The tamales will be made fresh on Saturday, February 12 at Salem Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon. They will be making two kinds: chicken and vegetarian (veg has cheese and bell pepper). Orders will be ready for pick up later that afternoon. They will sold by the dozen - \$30 per dozen. (They would gratefully accept any additional gift towardtheir trip as well!)

To order, please email your congregation's order directly to Pastor Josh Stromberg-Wojcik here: el.camino.d.emaus@gmail.com by Saturday, February 5, so they have time to purchase the ingredients.

Please include:

- Name of congregation
- How many dozen of the chicken tamales
- How many dozen vegetarian tamales
- Name & contact info of person who will pick them up your congregation's order at Salem Lutheran on Saturday, February 12

Following placing the order - please pay by check to El Camino de Emaús OR online: <https://tithe.ly/give?c=3108998>, please make a note, "tamales."

Please contact Pr. Josh Stromberg-Wojcik with any questions, 503-780-2501, el.camino.d.emaus@gmail.com.

Thank you in advance for your support!