



A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR SCOTT

Anacortes Lutheran Church
April 2022 Newsletter

Dear Members and Friends of ALC,

Do you remember what happens at Easter? How about Holy Week? Can you believe that this is the first 'normal' Lent and Easter we have been able to experience in over two years? And even now, some things are not the same. One of the ones I miss the most is not gathering around the tables with a bowl of soup. My soup recipes have sat dormant these last two years and I think I can hear them trying to get out of the file.

But can you imagine the first Easter? We have the luxury of having nearly 2000 years of knowing not only about the Cross, but also about the empty Tomb. The disciples gathering in that upper room did not have the information that we have. They hid away from the powers that be because they thought their names may be on the list as well. They were collaborators. They were friends. They sat around the table in disbelief, grief, and wonder of what the future would hold for this new community that responded to the teachings of Jesus.

We too wonder as to the future of ALC and the wider Church in these days where we still have a foot stuck in the tomb of COVID. We wish to rejoice, but we still have lingering thoughts about what may come. We mourn for those who have died and grieve for those who may not return. We wonder if the rain, clouds, and darkness will continue forever.

And then we remember... Jesus is Risen! Jesus is risen, indeed!

Jesus' light still shines in the darkness, and the darkness still falls helpless at his feet. And in that light, we are made new. I have had conversations with many about what it is about ALC that keeps you engaged and wanting to return. And the answer is most often, "the fellowship, we love the people here and we know that they love us." This is what I believe Jesus wanted for us as people who follow him, that people will know we are Christians by the love we show to ourselves, those who gather, and the wider community in which we find ourselves.

As we go forward from this day, we may feel beset by the massive changes that have happened in our church and in the world, but we must always remember that it is love that has shown us what it is to be a follower of Jesus. Let us love generously, and with the gratitude of having been loved so dearly by God may we never tire of showing one another love.

Gathered in love,
Pastor Scott

Lenten Worship

with Holden Evening Prayers
Service - Wednesday, April 6 at 6:30 pm

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday

Service - April 10 at 10:00 am

All Children are invited to line up in the Fellowship Hall
before the service for the Palm Processional.

Maundy Thursday

Service - April 14 at 7:00 pm in sanctuary

Good Friday

Service - April 15 at 12 pm in ALC sanctuary

7pm - Skagit Isle Conference Joint Service
at Edison Lutheran Church - 14201 Church Rd

Easter Sunday

Service - April 17 at 10:00 am

WE WANT CANDY! - Donations

Donations of pre-wrapped candy and plastic eggs to
fill an Easter Pinata and plastic eggs for the Sunday
School Kids.

Please drop them at the office or
in the Narthex by April 10th



OUTSIDE EASTER FLOWER CROSS



On Easter morning please **bring any fresh cut spring flowers like daffodils, tulips etc.** from your yard or the store to put on the flowering cross outside the church. The free standing seven foot cross is covered with chicken wire so you may place your flowers on it as you come in for Easter worship.

And please take a photo in front of it and post them to our Facebook page. We'd love to see your beautiful faces.

EASTER FLOWER PLANTS

In memory or honor of loved ones



The Altar Guild will be purchasing flowering plants to adorn the sanctuary on Easter Sunday.

If you wish to purchase a plant in memory or in honor of someone, place your completed form with money in the attached envelope, in the offering plate on Sunday or bring it to the office no later than:

Sunday, April 10 / Each plant costs \$15.

*Forms & Envelopes are available at the
Welcome desk & Bulletin board by office*

CRISIS IN UKRAINE

**YOUR GIFT WILL PROVIDE FOOD,
SHELTER AND EMERGENCY FUNDS
FOR OUR NEIGHBORS IMPACTED
BY THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE.**

GIVE NOW AT [LWR.ORG/MATCH](https://lwr.org/match)



**LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF**

Our hearts are overwhelmed with your generosity. Because of your rapid response, the match has been met. Time is of the essence and your love is reaching neighbors immediately. Thank you so much.

Yet the needs of our neighbors in Ukraine and the number of refugees are growing every hour. Your continued love will get cash directly into the hands of refugees and support the incredible partners, including other Lutheran congregations, that are welcoming neighbors in with loving arms.

Our teams are on the ground meeting immediate needs and planning a longer-term response as families rebuild their lives after destruction. But we can't do it without you.

Please continue to give— and to inspire your congregation— to give generously.

You can give online at lwr.org/match

You can also give by **mailing a check** to:

Lutheran World Relief
PO Box 17061,
Baltimore, MD 21297-1061.

Please write "Ukraine match" in the memo line.



**LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF**

REFLECTION & HEALING - with Pastor Scott

BIBLE STUDY *(same study on both days)*

SUNDAY, APRIL 3 - 11:15 am &

THURSDAY, APRIL 7 - 12-noon

Pastor Scott would like to use these times to reflect on the realities at ALC over the last years and to perhaps work on some healing of the trauma that has been so evident in our lives.

We will let the scripture guide us into opening ourselves to God and the strength and comfort that God gives.

PRAYER GROUP

TUESDAYS AT 1:00 PM - in the Prayer Chapel

Join us any Tuesday to offer Prayers for comfort, thanksgiving, healing, strength, celebration, and blessings for our congregation.

Also bring your personal prayer requests and we will pray with You and for You.

OUTREACH MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 11 - 1:00 pm

in the Fellowship hall

Everyone (yes you) is invited to
Help with Easter Preparations.

OUTREACH - Caring and Sharing

We know you CARE
So please SHARE
the Good News by inviting someone
to join you at Palm Sunday
and Easter Sunday.



PROPERTY WORK DAY

SATURDAY, APRIL 2ND

Starting 9 am

1st Saturday of the month

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

SATURDAY, APRIL 9 - 11:30 am

At Village Pizza - 807 Commercial Ave.

All are Welcome!

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

EVERY THURSDAY at 7:00 am

In conference room #1

Led by Boyd Veer

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY CIRCLES

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

Ruth Circle at 10:00 am

In conference room #1

Hannah Circle at 10:00 am

In conference room #2

Anna Circle at 6:30 pm

In conference room #1

Led by: Nancy Loftis

ALC DIRECTORY UPDATES

We will be updated our pictorial Church Directory towards the end of April into May and June.

There will be membership forms for you to fill out with current addresses, phone #'s and emails.

Kathy Khile will be schedule photo sessions in the evening as well as Sundays after services.

More information to come later in April.

SPRING POOL PARTY - Was a splash!

The Education Committee held our first big social event in a long time on Sunday, March 13th. We invited the families at ALC and their friends and also sent invitations to the Anacortes Lutheran Preschool families. There were over 50 swimmers and we fed pizza to over 65 people.

Thank you to Dave White for providing a Thrivent Grant to help fund this event.

WELCA GENERAL MEETING

ALL WOMEN ARE INVITED! A CHANCE TO CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS!



Did you get to celebrate your birthday with friends last year? Come to the Women of the ELCA meeting and we will celebrate together. Birthday cake and friendly women.

TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 1:00 pm - Fellowship Hall

SEWING NEWS - All are Welcome!

Sewing Days - TUESDAY, APRIL 3 & 19

Starting at 9:00 am till 2:00 pm

in the Fellowship Hall

We take a break for lunch at 12 noon. So, bring your lunch & stay for the fellowship.

Everyone is welcome!

We are collecting bath & hand towels as well as bars of soap.

Serving in Christ, Julia Rogers 360-293-4232

YOUR DONATIONS ARE STILL NEEDED

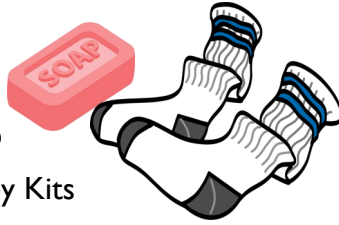
SOAP & SOX

WELCA is still collecting
REGULAR SIZE BATH SOAP

for LWR Health Kits & Baby Kits

These are the accepted soaps:

Ivory, Dove, Irish Spring, Dial and Palmolive



ALSO still collecting **ADULT WHITE SOCKS** for
Compass Housing Alliance in Seattle and men's
homeless shelters in our area.

Drop off donations in the Narthex.

Thank you for continuing to support the endeavors
of the Women of the ELCA.

LWR KNITTING NEWS

We are meeting in person again, at church!

Meeting Date - MONDAY, APRIL 18

1:00 - 3:00 pm -Conference Room #1

Yarn will be available ... sweater / hat counts.

Our final Spring 2022 total is:

Sweater/hat sets – 94

Sweaters – 0

Hats – 0

*Amazing total,
Thank you all!*

Our Fall count will be April-Sept.

Our church ships about 100-150 baby layette sets
every 6 months to Lutheran World Relief.

This year there will be ONE shipment in the Fall.

One sweater/hat set goes into each layette set.

We use a fun one piece sweater pattern. Beginners
are welcome and teaching is available.

~Linda Anderson 360-588-1730

ALC SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY **PRIME TIMERS** - Retirees gathering together for fun, food, and fellowship

GET-TOGETHER - SUNDAY OF STICKY BUNS **FRIDAY, APRIL 8 at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall.**

The theme is: *"Happy Easter"*

Please call, text, or email to sign up before Wednesday, April 6.
Don't forget to bring your drink.

Have a great month, stay safe, and be happy. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Paul & Julie Dusenbury



FAMILY SUNDAY - 1st Sunday of the month

APRIL 3RD

(There will be NO Sunday School or Confirmation)

The **first Sunday of the month will be Family Sunday** where families are invited to worship together and participate in the service.

A service involving the children and teens in the congregation, who will participate by volunteering to read lessons, usher, acolyte, play an instrument and sing.

Sign-up on the designated clipboards in the Narthex.

1ST COMMUNION - Sunday, April 3rd

Let's celebrate our youngsters as some of them experience one of the Holy sacraments,
1st Communion on Sunday, April 3rd.

We invite members to shower them with cards. The Education Committee will be providing dessert following service to celebrate with them and their families.

CONFIRMATION - Grades 6th - 8th

Sundays at 9:00 am in conference room #2

Led by Don Devine & Paul Dusenbury

Don't forget to bring your bible with you.

After class join the congregation for worship at 10 am.

Save the Date: Confirmation Sunday - June 5th

SUNDAY SCHOOL - K-5th grades

Meet at 10:00 am in sanctuary

Join us in Worship for the first 15 minutes in church and then be dismissed to Sunday school after the children's sermon.

1st Sunday of month is - Family Sunday
(No Sunday school)

YOUTH GROUPS ARE COMING BACK

Teens come with ideas on what you would like to see happen in youth group!

SUNDAY, APRIL 3 - 11:15 AM

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

In Youth room following service.

SUNDAY, APRIL 10 - 11:15 AM

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

In Youth room following service

Interested Volunteers are welcome to join us!



VBS - PLANNING MEETINGS

2nd VBS Planning Meeting

Wednesday, April 27 at 6 pm at ALC

If you haven't heard ALC has an Amazing Vacation Bible School. If you don't believe me just ask one of the 100 plus kids and adults who participated or helped out with it last year.

We can all use a little fun in our lives! Be a part of this year's Vacation Bible School by helping us plan the fun. Join us at the planning meeting.

Future VBS Planning meetings

Wednesday, April 27th at 6pm

Wednesday, May 25th at 6pm

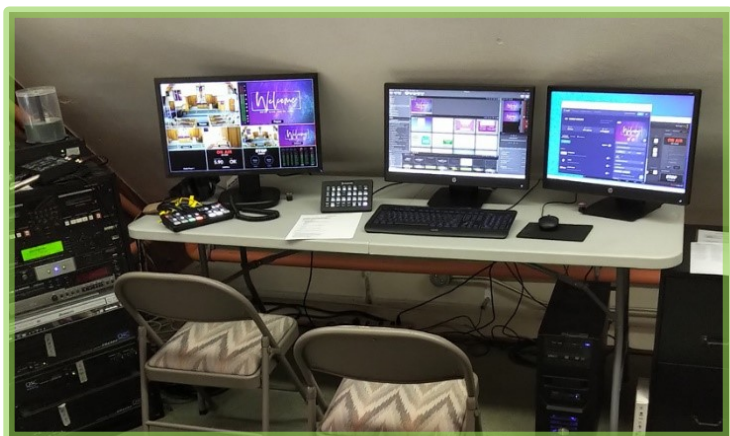
Tuesday, June 14th at 6pm

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL - Save the date!!!

SPORTS VBS 2022

June 27-30 at 6:00 pm

Please consider becoming a part of the FUN by volunteering and /or planning.



Maybe you have come up to the choir loft and have seen our collection of monitors and keyboards, and thought to yourself: “It looks like a mini TV studio!”. Well, not quite. And, once you sit down to help with moving slides, it looks much simpler.

What do we do up there? We have fun at times (at least I do), we get to react immediately to change the camera view when someone comes to the lectern during the *Announcements* (to make sure the livestream audience sees the person who is speaking), we get to look at each other with a **what?** when the script and the slides don’t match, or when we have volume

Issues or other distractions and get behind in progressing the slides (especially when I am up there alone), and we get to frantically try to fix some part of the system which stops working (fortunately, that doesn’t happen very often).

Each week, whatever parts of the Order of Worship are new, as created/amended by Pastor and Laurie, are copied for our use - usually the *Prayer of the Day*, the *readings from scripture*, the *Holy Gospel*, *Prayers of the People*, and the *songs*, unless it is a new church season (Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, or Christmas) then more parts of the service are new.

That is one of the things I do, to create a script from the Order of Worship which the operators of livestream (myself and usually another person) use to advance the service on Sunday morning.

The other thing I do is to set up the system on Sunday morning, which involves setting the “streams” that will transmit our service to *YouTube* and *Facebook*, setting up the projector for the slides that you see on the screen in church, setting up the big TV next to the clock which Pastor uses as cues as the service proceeds, turning on and setting up the three cameras which view and transmit images of the service, and programming the “stream deck” which I use to advance the parts of our church service (this device is like a small keyboard which is keyed to match the slides and the cameras to the script).

Since I inherited the position of livestream manager from Kevin, I usually push the keys on the stream deck, watch the parts of the service (live streams, projector, TV, cameras), and listen to and adjust the livestream volume as the service proceeds. The second person listens to the song/Pastor/reader and clicks a key to move forward from one slide to the next. Sometimes we are lucky enough to have a third person to move one of our cameras from the lectern to the altar, and to adjust lighting or focus, and at other times either I or the other operator does that.

The other member of our team is the person who creates the slides which you and the online audience see on Sunday morning, which is done through a piece of software called ProPresenter. At present, that person is Pastor Scott, in the past (from September 2020 until January 2022) it was Kendra Kennedy, who mastered the complex ProPresenter to match it to the needs of our Sunday services, not only creating slides but creating all the pieces to be sent to projector, TV, and the live streams.

Who created this system in the first place? It was Kevin Kennedy, who, along with Kendra, spent many hours and some of their own money in the process of turning a vision into a reality, envisioning what equipment would be needed and even building some of it. I was very keen to learn the system from the beginning, since it matched my career background.

You have to love it to get as involved as Kevin, Kendra, or I did, but there are parts of the system which, by themselves, are not that complicated—it just **looks** impressive! I welcome anyone who wants to know more about livestream, or who wants to help with moving slides or adjusting the cameras.

Worship with us near and afar

Join us for Worship on Sundays at 10:00 am In-person or Live-stream

Watch the livestream service from your home by going to our website at <https://www.anacorteslutheran.org> & click tab "Online Ministry"

This is what you can expect when coming to Worship in person.

- Enter through either the main church doors or by way of the handicap ramp.
- Communion is given with a prefilled all-in-one juice & wafer communion cup.
- Gluten free prefilled communion cups are now available

After Worship please join us for coffee hour in the Fellowship hall.

FAMILY SUNDAY - IS THE 1ST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

(there will be NO Sunday School or Confirmation)

Where families are invited to worship together and participate in the service.

A service involving the children and teens in the congregation, who will participate by volunteering to read lessons, usher, acolyte or play an instrument and sing.

Sign up at the Opportunity Desk in the Narthex *(next to the Fellowship hall)* or contact Rachel in the office.

APRIL - Worship Readings & those servicing in Worship

April 3 5th Sunday in Lent Family Sunday	<i>Readings:</i> Isaiah 43:16-21 Philippians 3:4b-14 <i>Psalm:</i> Psalm 126 <i>Gospel:</i> John 12:1-8	<i>Reader:</i> Joseph Pestar <i>Coffee Host:</i> Becky Eggleston	<i>Acolytes:</i> Hunter & Violet Harrington <i>Ushers:</i>
April 10 Palm Sunday	<i>Readings:</i> Isaiah 50:4-9a Philippians 2:5-11 <i>Psalm:</i> Psalm 31:9-16 <i>Gospel:</i> Luke 22:14--23:56	<i>Reader:</i> Anita Holzemer <i>Coffee Host:</i> Paula Olson	<i>Acolytes:</i> <i>Ushers:</i>
April 17 Easter Sunday	<i>Readings:</i> Acts 10:34-43 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 <i>Psalm:</i> Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 <i>Gospel:</i> Luke 24:1-12	<i>Reader:</i> Anne Barry <i>Coffee Host:</i>	<i>Acolytes:</i> <i>Ushers:</i>
April 24	<i>Readings:</i> Acts 5:27-32 Revelation 1:4-8 <i>Psalm:</i> Psalm 118:14-29 <i>Gospel:</i> John 20:19-31	<i>Readers:</i> Lois Cassidy <i>Coffee Host:</i>	<i>Acolytes:</i> <i>Ushers:</i>

APRIL - Birthday Blessings to You!

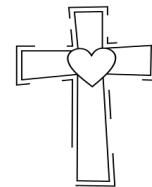
1	Breann Morgenthaler	14	Kyle Fosso
1	Egil Pedersen	15	Jordan Amspacher
2	Griffin Hrovat	17	George Rockwood
2	Kaleo Smith	18	Harlan Eggleston
3	Michael Painter	18	Inez Pedersen
3	Isabelle Thomas	19	Agnes Wicknick
4	Jennifer Elling	20	Malena Baker
4	Dale Geffe	20	Diane Berglund
5	Daniel Richards	22	David Verrall
7	Micah Spehar	24	Dorothy Engom
8	Ginny Connelly	24	Roselyn Payne
8	Klaus Schoebel	24	Scott Soes
8	Kaelan Tornga	25	Johanna Anderson
9	Joseph Faulkner	25	Alex Carroll
11	Rexanne Graham	25	Conor Powell
12	Esther Chang	25	Mahayla Thomas
13	Steve Anderson	26	Rachel Franulovich
13	Treva King	27	Lauren Long
13	Kevin Kennedy	29	Anna Berentson
13	Kathy Khile	29	Rachel Nelson
13	Riverlyn Wagner	29	Blake Tornga

MARCH - Worship Services

Date	Events	In Person	Live Stream
2	Ash Wednesday - 12 pm	27	—
	Ash Wednesday - 6:30 pm	49	36
6	1st Sunday in Lent	100	50
9	Wednesday – 6:30 pm	31	—
13	2nd Sunday in Lent	89	44
16	Wednesday – 6:30 pm	34	—
20	3rd Sunday in Lent	111	64
23	Wednesday – 6:30 pm		—
27	4th Sunday in Lent		
30	Wednesday – 6:30 pm		—

APRIL - Wedding Anniversaries!

2	Dave & Peggy White
6	Robert & Lorna Higgins
6	Al & Judy Littlefield
6	Egil & Inez Pederson
9	Dan & Kathy Khile
13	Jerry & Gail Bongard
17	Randy & Lynn Aredse
20	Tim & Anne Hofferth
23	Earl & Dianne Gibbons
24	Chris & Rachel Franulovich
27	Bob & Anne Barry
27	Tom & Yvonne Paul



SYMPATHIES

*Our heartfelt prayers for comfort and healing
in this time of grief to the family and friends of:*

Maxine Roose

May 6, 1923— February 27, 2022
Memorial service Saturday, April 2 at 1pm

Dorothy Bjornson

July 22, 1937—March 17, 2022
Memorial service Sunday, April 10 at 2pm



ALC COUNCIL MINUTES - MARCH 10, 2022

Attendees: John Parker, Dave Bjornsen, Lane Phelan, Anita Holzemer, Pr Scott, Jeaneen Brogan, Bill LeDuc, Peggy White, Jeanette Christensen, Heather Harrington, Kendra Kennedy, Anne Barry, Don Devine, Maggie Santos (guest)

The meeting was called to order and opened with prayer. February minutes were approved. MSP.

Treasurer's Report: Average weekly giving is going well. The monthly budget report was explained. We are currently in the positive. Request was made to the Legacy Endowment Fund to send \$2,000 to Lutheran Disaster Response Eastern European Crisis. MSP. The treasurer asked committee chairs to fill out a physical voucher sheet to account for purchases. This will help in tracking credit card purchases.

Pastor's Report: The National Lutheran Choir virtual concert will be held on May 1st at 2 pm. We will arrange a watch party and invite all interested. "Grace Grants" are available from the synod. Focus areas for the grants include Youth/Young Adult, Covid Ministry innovation, Equity and Justice issues. Applications are available on the NW Wa synod website and due May 1. Skagit County has grants as well.

A request for a wedding this summer has been submitted. Fee and usage structure should be revisited.

ACTION ITEM: Don volunteered to take charge of this project. WELCA will also be part of this conversation.

Becoming Young books were distributed. A book study will be done beginning next month during council round table. **ACTION ITEM:** Reach Chapter 1 and be prepared to discuss by April council meeting.

State of the Preschool: Maggie Santos came to the meeting to update us on the preschool. Decision was made to make masks optional in the preschool. If Covid numbers in the school or community rise, we may mandate masks again in the future. Registration for the fall will open on Monday. **ACTION ITEM:** Maggie will send a notice to Rachel for newsletter and bulletin announcements. Church members get priority registration. Numbers will be kept low for now. Request was made to remove a wall which is causing space limitations; however this wall has fire suppression piping in it making its removal difficult. It is also a weight bearing wall. Discussions will continue. Preschool teachers will be getting dyslexia training.

Old Business:

- Masking/Singing/Fellowship policy update: Worship Committee opinion was split. Some are ready to remove masks and some are hesitant. Choir members are split as well. Recommendation was made that masks are optional. Synod is leaving it up to individual congregations. After discussion it was decided that the wearing of masks will be optional within the church building for all members, visitors, and staff. With this new guidance, we will respect individual choices with the expectation that others' choices will be respected as well. MSP
- Some budget entries in QuickBooks were mislabeled. Corrections were done.
- Status of Social Media organization Report: Kendra collected data from the staff on time commitments spent on communication processes including bulletin, newsletter, live stream, and social media. We requested a breakdown of paid vs volunteer hours. Our goal is to streamline the process and look for duties that may be combined/things that are being missed. **ACTION ITEM:** Kendra will provide a written report for next meeting.
- Member Roster/Photo Board: Rachel and Kathy Khile are pursuing how this would work with our Church Windows software.
- Jeaneen is locating and updating current job descriptions for church staff. She will report back once finished. It is the goal to present staff with a current job description annually when they receive their new contract.

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New Business:

- We reviewed basic meeting practices/protocols. Tonight's focus was Pay Attention. Facial expressions and vocal stresses are important. Be aware of how you are coming across to others. Intimidation is never acceptable.
- The schedule for Easter services and events is not nailed down yet. It will be discussed at next month's Worship Committee meeting. Easter breakfast will be our first full fellowship function. An ecumenical Community Good Friday service is tentatively planned at Anacortes Christian Church.
- Bill provided council with a church property maintenance list. He's gathering a team of volunteers and is excited about accomplishing some of these tasks. New fans are proposed for the sanctuary. A discussion was held on the status of the parking lot across the street. Further discussion was tabled as we examine its usage in the coming months as attendance hopefully increases following the Covid lockdown.
- We discussed the possibility of hosting a Ukrainian refugee family. We would need to work with Lutheran Refugee Services. Right now, there is no demand. Our congregation is compassionate and ready to help when the time is right.
- Don't forget to contact Rachel and Becky for publicity needs – social media for pool party, nursery availability, quilt donations, to name just a few.

Committee Reports:

Worship: Nothing new to add beyond what was discussed under new business.

Properties: Nothing new to add beyond what was discussed under new business.

WELCA: Their next big meeting will be held in April. Funeral and reception for Maxine Roose is scheduled for April 2nd.

Preschool: Nothing new to add beyond what was discussed under new business.

Personnel: We are changing our policy on nursery care. 12-year-olds can now volunteer to help paid staff in nursery.

Outreach: Visitor folders are going well. We need space, so will be expanding into some shelving in the church library. A nursing room is being created in the library. Thank you to Kathy Parker for donating a rocking chair for this purpose.

Education: Acolyte training is scheduled for March 20th. No confirmation will be held on Family Sundays. "Secret Sermon Words" was a big hit. First Communion will be held on the first Sunday in April. Pool party is scheduled for this Sunday. An Easter pinata will be done on Easter Sunday. Donations will be accepted for individually wrapped candy to stuff the pinata. VBS is scheduled for June 27-30 at Storvik Park. Planning meetings are scheduled. Confirmation scheduled for June 5.

Youth: Youth Dynamics (YD) is a Christian nondenominational group and will be hosting a fundraising gala. MSP to donate \$500 to support their work. A proposed Middle School event to be held every first Sunday beginning in April. Heather will meet with the high school youth to gather ideas of what they want to see happen for potential future youth events.

Our next meeting will be held April 21 at 6:30 PM.

The meeting closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Anita Holzemer, Council Secretary

One of the things I love about living in the Pacific Northwest is the abundance of life. In January, the grass is green. In February, plants are blooming. In March, little flowers are pushing through soil. In April, color bursts out everywhere. To me, these signs of life are miracles.

And don't we need some of these signs right now? I mean, there are so many places where it feels like ongoing winter - the discord and acrimony amongst families, churches, peoples, and nations. As I write this article Russia is invading Ukraine. Perhaps when you read this article, things will be different but at this moment there is bombing and shooting and fear and death. And entrenched crises continue: homelessness, racism, ableism, unjust governments, and so much more. Individually, many are experiencing physical and mental illness, fatigue, and exclusion. I remember a quote from C.S. Lewis' book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* where one of the characters says, "It is winter in Narnia, and has been for ever so long ... always winter, but never Christmas."

It has been a long winter ... perhaps even two years of winter. Pain and sorrow and death feel very close. There is grief, there is anger, there is exhaustion, and there is sadness. And yet ... And yet ... Gardens are full of seeds. Farmers are tilling the soil. Tulips are blooming. Rhododendrons are on their way. We see signs around us that winter is ending and the Bringer of Spring is coming.

As I travel through this synod, I see signs of new life and new hope. I see resolve and new partnerships. While there are challenges that we are all facing, while there is much work to do individually and together, I sense new possibilities.

When I meet with councils and other leaders in congregations, I am delighted that we are having good, strong, sometimes difficult conversations about things that matter. In our best moments, we are not as concerned about smaller difficulties but instead, as people of faith, we are leaning into what it means to love God and love neighbor in this time and in this place. I thank God for the opportunity for conversation, listening, and moving on the Breath of God's Spirit.

The truth is, alone - we cannot create life, alone - we cannot change systems, alone - we cannot move winter into spring. But through Christ, through the One who died for this world and who is raised into new life, we can. And so, as it is written in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

We do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 16-18

We are promised that through this time, through world events, through whatever is next, Jesus is with us. And even more than that, we are promised that there is something amazing beyond all measure - more than we can know or even imagine. It is difficult to sometimes comprehend this promise - especially when we look at the destruction and pain and devastation in this world - and yet... and yet... we cling to the promise. As people of faith, we pray and whisper and shout it out - that through Christ's death and resurrection all things that create death will be gone. Period. Full. Stop. And because of knowing and trusting this promise, we are then called, as beloved children of God, to see, appreciate, and tend to the small plants entrusted to us - knowing that we also are plants, also seeds, also soil, called to live into and share this new life with and for others.

May this Easter spring forth with new life for you. May you feel the hope given through Jesus. And may together we shout, "Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!"