

THE BALSAM BRANCH

May 2021

Balsam Lutheran Church

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Pastor's Pen

Greetings!

For everyone born, a place at the table.... Yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace.

The refrain above, from a favorite hymn of mine, has been constantly on my lips and running through my mind these last few days. While a student at Wake Forest Divinity school in North Carolina, alongside the goal of becoming a theologically and biblically trained spiritual leader, the school lived into its mission statement of creating leaders who are "agents of justice, reconciliation, and compassion". Perhaps such a mission statement sheds light on why that particular hymn

is so beloved by myself and my classmates.

Creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace. This past week, our synod gathered online for our annual synod assembly. Just over 330 voting members from our 119 congregations were together over Zoom, in learning, in prayer, and in discernment as we gathered over our theme: Justice and Joy.

Throughout the assembly, we centered ourselves around a verse from Proverbs 21:15, "When justice is done, it is joy to the righteous", as well as the quote of the scholar, Dr. Cornel West, "Always remember, justice is what love looks like in public." Bishop Laurie reminded us again and again that justice is a deep and essential part of our Christian faith, from the examples of the Hebrew prophets, from Jesus' life and words,

and even within Martin Luther's Reformation-era teachings. Pursuing justice, which biblically understood has a sharper focus on reconciliation of relationships than punishment or false order, is at the core of our call as baptized children of God.

"Today I want us to remember our baptismal and confirmation promises. Working for Justice is at the very CORE of our Lutheran identity. This is nothing new. This is not political. It is central to our life of faith. This baptismal covenant promise to care for others, care for the world God created and work for peace and justice is not politically motivated, it is at the very heart of who we are as baptized children of God. Working for justice and peace, caring for creation, serving others is as BASIC as Baptism and as CENTRAL a confirmation to our Lutheran faith."

– Bishop Laurie

As a synod, we voted on and passed five justice resolutions, ranging from how we love our human neighbors to care of creation (see Bonnie's summary for more information). As the body of Christ here in northwest, we prayed together and responded to the call of the Holy Spirit to work towards God's reconciling justice here on earth.

One of the participants in the assembly raised a thought-provoking question that led to helpful dialogue: is this the time to talk about these justice resolutions? After the year we've had, now that we are finally seeing some semblance of "normal" on the horizon, is all of this

really what we should be focused on? Are these issues better suited for a more appropriate time?

After some reflection, I would answer these questions in this way: what "normal" are we striving for and is it worth it? What better way for the church to be right now, to come together after a hard difficult year that turned so much upside down, than by rethinking our mission, reevaluating our priorities, and responding to the call to be creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace.

Blessings,

Pastor Laurie

Synod Assembly

The theme of the Synod Assembly this year was Justice and Joy, based on Proverbs 21:5, "When justice is done it is a joy to the righteous." There are three different Hebrew words for justice that have slightly different emphases, but all 3 focus on relationships being right. There were four areas of justice focus: gender equality, equality for folks with gay/transgender, etc. identities, racial justice and creation care. The synod can provide training to congregations in each of these justice areas. Synod churches are encouraged to celebrate a four week Season of Creation in the fall, with preaching and worship resources provided by the synod.

An additional focus was on hunger, with all congregations encouraged to take time on a regular basis to call

awareness to hunger and collect a special offering for local hunger needs. Each congregation is also asked to set aside at least one Sunday a year to reflect on caring for those who are hungry, both in America and worldwide. The synod set a goal of raising \$1,000,000 for ELCA World Hunger in the next three years. This money can come through churches or through individual donations to ELCA World Hunger.

The resolutions, with the reasoning behind them, and all Assembly content, can be found here:

<http://nswi.org/2021-synod-assembly>.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie Corcoran

Balsam Lutheran Church

Approved Minutes of the Church Council

March 7, 2021

In Attendance: Betty Collins, Marlyn Bottolfson, Sue Fougner, Mike Judge, Steve Frederickson, Barb Friese, Dawn Costello, Bruce Hammer, Pastor Laurie and Michelle Stone.

Steve Fredrickson called the meeting to order, determining a quorum. Marlyn led in devotions.

Secretaries Report: Accepted as submitted.

Treasurers Report: Accepted as submitted.

Committee Reports:
No committee reports at this time.

Old Business:

- 1) Need at least 2 nominees for council.
- 2) We are still looking for sound and video help. Volunteers are much appreciated.
- 3) Annual reports are due to Bonnie ASAP.
- 4) Anniversary celebrations plans are still on hold at this time.
- 5) The re-opening of the inside worship services will be March 21st. We will still need to wear masks and social distance. There will be no coffee fellowship at this time if you wish to visit with each other please step outside. Services will be 30-40 minutes long with no singing but there will be some piano music. As the weather warms up we could possibly do some outdoor services with singing. Holy week schedule Palm Sunday Kinder Mass combined services Maundy Thursday at 7:00pm at Balsam with the celebration of First Communion, Good Friday at 3:00pm at Elim and each church will have their own Easter Sunday service.
- 6) Funeral limitations: With the opening of the Church we have adjusted the number of people that would be able to attend an indoor service from 15 people to up to 50 people. Families can opt for a kind of hybrid service where a portion of the service is done inside and Pastor can expand the outside portion of the service so more than 50 people would be able to attend. A motion was made and seconded to expand the number of people able to attend a funeral to up to 50 people for an indoor service. Motion passed.

New Business:

- 1) Question if we want to advertise the church service for Balsam and Elim in the summer visitors guide. The cost is about \$150.00. After some discussion a motion was made and seconded to advertise the service for Balsam and

Elim in the summer visitors guide.
Motion passed

- 2) UMOS is planning on coming the third week of March, to begin getting things ready for the program to start, not sure on the date the kids will be here.
- 3) The offer to purchase a box of 500 individual celebration cup wafer and juice set was extended to us, from another church that had purchased too many. Motion was made and seconded to make the purchase. Motion passed.
- 4) Council reviewed the proposed budget for 2021. There were a few changes in the budget, there was an increase in worship supplies as the price increased on some things that pastor uses to prepare for worship, the miscellaneous line was increased to include the accounting fees, The supply pastor line decreased a little as we don't need one as often. Motion was made and seconded to approve the 2021 budget as proposed by the finance committee. Motion passed.
- 5) A reminder to make sure the list of committees is up to date and get them to Bonnie.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Passed.

We reviewed prayer concerns and closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Fougner

Financially Speaking

Thank you again for your continued financial support of Balsam Lutheran and our ministry. We remain financially healthy despite the challenges of this past year.

As of April 17, our General Fund balance is \$72,698.66 and our In/Out Account balance is \$10,344.27. Most of our monthly expenses have been paid and there are two more Sunday offerings to be entered.

You may wonder (as I did for quite some time) why we report a general fund balance and an in/out account balance. You may also want to know, just what does "in/out" mean. I will try to give you a brief explanation of these accounts. The money in both the general fund and in/out accounts is maintained in the church checking account. The general fund is used to pay our routine expenses including salaries, utilities, mortgage, insurance, benevolence, etc. The in/out accounts are in place to hold money given for a specific project or program until it is needed or remitted. These accounts include mission support, debt reduction, camperships, programs such as Lutheran World Relief, memorials and many more.

In Christ,
Gail Peterson, Treasurer

Congratulations

Congratulations to **Brady Kobernick, Krista Markee and Kaleigh Wilson** for receiving their First Communion during Maundy Thursday worship on April 1.

Congratulations to graduating seniors **Aricka Stream, Ashton Duden and Caleb Wilson**. They will be recognized during the worship service on May 16.

Rummage Sale

Social Ministry will sponsor a Rummage Sale on Thursday, May 6, 3:30 to 5:30 PM and Friday, May 7 from 8:00 to 3:00 PM. You can be bringing your donated items to the church conference room.

Please have your items at church by noon Wednesday, May 5.

Helpers will be needed for set-up on Wednesday morning from 10:00 AM until done and during the sale Thursday and Friday. Helpers for clean-up will also be needed, Saturday, May 8, from 9 AM until done. Trucks will be needed to transport the left-overs to Milltown.

Since all the proceeds go to help the needy in Polk County (none to the church), this is a project you and your friends and neighbors can all support.

Misc.

There is a new Polk County procedure for dealing w/ vomiting and diarrheal events, the procedure will be posted around the church for dealing w/these events.

Friberg Missionary Update

Dear mission partners and loyal friends,

Because of your generous support, we were able to continue working in Tanzania during 2020 with minimal disruption. This was a huge blessing. We know, however, that many of you were very restricted in work and activities. We have seen first-hand the worldwide economic impact of the pandemic. We know many of you

experienced financial shortfalls. We pray that the vaccinations will bring a rapid turnaround.

Tanzanians lost their president unexpectedly this month from illness. There was a smooth and peaceful transition of power when Vice President Samia Hassan assumed her new role as President. She is confronted by a second wave of COVID which is more serious than the first. The pandemic shut down Tanzania's biggest industry which is tourism. The recovery will be long.

We are in Minnesota for 3 months while renewing our Tanzania work permit. Lord willing, we will continue working in Tanzania two more years.

Steve greatly appreciates your prayers for his prostate cancer treatment. He is on hormone blockers and there has been no progression of his disease over the past two years. We will all encounter challenges in life which can only be faced with the help of Jesus.

Our daughter Shalai is in her second semester at the University of Minnesota. She is thankful to be in the dorm and have friends despite the restrictions. We are thankful Nyika and Zaka were employed throughout the pandemic. Zaka and Meagan bought a rural home and are settled near Somerset, WI. Nyika has big changes ahead, the best of which is marrying Becca in May!

Steve's Journey with The Cross is attached.

With our thanks, Steve and Bethany

Steve Friberg's Journey with The Cross

March 2021

ETII ENKAI! GOD IS!

John 14:6 – Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

We have the privilege of living and working with the Maasai people as your medical missionaries. With the coming of the seasonal rains and lush fresh grass for the livestock and wild animals, we frequently hear the expression, “ETII ENKAI!” “GOD IS!” This is such a natural and powerful affirmation of God’s being. It is an echo of Exodus 3:14, God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM! ...

I AM has sent you.”

In John 14:6, Jesus states and echoes, “I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.” In this statement Jesus is equating himself with God. Jesus goes on to say in verse 11, “Believe me when I say that I AM in the Father and the Father is in me.”

When I was a teenager, I was disturbed reading about Jesus’ suffering, crucifixion, and death. Why did Jesus have to die? How could the God of the universe be tortured and die? Gradually I learned that Jesus’ whole mission was to pay the penalty of our sins

and that his death on the cross was a victory over sin, death, and the devil. The resurrection showed that death could not overcome the Son of God.

Luther explains redemption this way, “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.” Luther’s Small Catechism, Second Article.

Prayer: Oh, GOD WHO IS, you are the source of rain and new life. Accept our humble love, worship, thanks, and obedience. Show us your kingdom. Amen

Steve Friberg, M.D. Ketumbeine, Tanzania

May “Birth” days

08 Kinsley Kobernick	18 Marisa Olson
11 Sue Bird	23 Allan Moltzer
13 Karen Ford	27 Dewey Peterson
17 Steve Frederickson	29 Taunya Kobernick
	30 Susan McElfresh