From the Pastor…

**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- June 2020

699 Stambaugh Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146

Phone: 724.347.3620 Little People Pre-School: 724.347.3620 (option 4)

E-mail: church@saintspeterandpaul.net [www.saintspeterandpaul.net](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net)

“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

**Death from Despair: A True Pandemic**

It will come as no surprise that the pandemic has changed our lives and not for the better. The list of examples seems to be endless. Children’s voices no longer yell with laughter from playgrounds and classrooms. Husbands and wives joke about how close they are to killing one another. Men and women are brought to tears over the loss of employment, their only means of caring for their children. Nursing homes have locked their doors to residents’ families, pastors, and visitors. Some have even eliminated the innovative window chats and kept their residents confined to their rooms for months. Churches were emptied of the blessed Sacraments and the Word. The stained glass windows have become silent and have forgotten what it was like to echo the joyful hymns of gathered saints. We have not yet truly begun to assess the cost of this pandemic. How many lives will be claimed because of despair? I’ve become greatly concerned as a pastor that people have begun to believe that their “new normal” will always be depression and anxiety. We need to bring to light the struggles of mental, spiritual, and emotional health during this pandemic.

People don’t typically see themselves as depressed right away. It slowly sneaks up on them. As each day becomes more tedious than the last, days and weeks go by and they forget who they were before “it” all began. Depression locks you down so that you cannot see any good in the future and the past has been washed out in black and white. As days go by, friends and family seem more distant, not because they are, but because depression needs them to be that way in order for it to remain your closest companion. Depression doesn’t have to make sense; it’s just a day on repeat, a broken record, a familiar dullness, a reliving of dreadful thoughts, a fog over your eyes, and mindless functioning with your feet locked in cement. What good has the talk of this being the “new normal” done for us? It may be this “talk” will be the sword that brings our society to its knees when we see the damage which has been done.

During this pandemic, there has been endless talk about peoples’ physical health, but the rest seems to have been forgotten or at least pushed aside. The sacrifices we have made for people's immediate physical health have had an uncalculated destruction of the mind and soul. The most vulnerable among us, our youth and elderly, have been brought to the brink of mental breakdowns as they’ve been forced to experience life apart from loved ones and friends. Yet, they are not the only ones. This seclusion from people has driven even physically-well and mentally-healthy adults to question “what’s the point anymore?” The physical challenges from contracting the virus are no joke, but they are short term by-in-large.  But the mental, spiritual, and emotional effects are only beginning to be seen and their lasting effects won’t be known for some time. We must pray that the world recognizes this before more people die from despair than from COVID- 19 itself.

Despair is not just the poison of unbelievers. Christians, with the hope of life with Christ and eternity with God, have long suffered under the weight of life’s sorrows. With each cross and tragedy bearing down, even the most praised Christians among men have fallen to their knees in sorrow despairing of life itself. Saint Paul the Apostle penned after his travels in Asia, 2 Cor. 1: 8-9:  *For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*

The prophet Jeremiah, who had been beaten, imprisoned, shamefully treated, mocked, and scorned for proclaiming the destruction of Jerusalem, expressed such fear and anger with what he was made to endure. So it came that while praising the Lord and asking for His help out of one side of his mouth, from the other he cursed the very day that he was born. Asking of the Lord, Jeremiah said, *“Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame”* (Jeremiah 20:18)? The Bible is the Word of Truth about true events and true people feeling the greatest of weight in this life. The Holy Spirit shares their lives with us so that we may see that our hope comes from the Lord.

The prophet Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul were afflicted in every way. You could see it and it wore on them mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, even as it took its toll physically. Neither of them ended his life, but had they thought it about? Clearly they thought about their deaths. This is a reality which we now must recognize among ourselves. We mustn't overlook the effects of our reactions to this pandemic whether you believe they are overreactions or moderate. All of them have had a cost; some are seen clearly, others lie just beneath the surface. Can we call death the greatest cost? The pandemic has caused the stresses of life to intensify and some have sadly ended their pain with the permanent fix to their troubles: death at their own hands. The suicide of a young Christian child was the reason this article was started in the first place. It was to me a moment of clarity about the seriousness of our present situation. If Christians are at the end of the cliff of despair, what are those who have no hope in Christ holding on to? To be clear, we confess that suicide is a sin. But, it is still a sin for which Christ died. In the atonement of Christ for all sins, grieving Christians will always find their hope in a merciful God. Still, in times when there are no warning signs and suddenly tragedy strikes, loved ones are left wondering, “what could we have done or said differently?” There is no answer to this question which can bring them back to life. But Christians do not grieve as those without hope. We know that Christ will raise them on the Day of the Resurrection. For us it has been given to cherish the words of God, ponder them in our hearts, and impress them on our families.

*"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies"* (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

Whatever be the tragedy (pandemic, suicide, sickness, or death) that enters the life of a believer in Christ, the Christian must turn immediately to God and His Word.  For only in the eternal love of God can understanding,  comfort, and strength be found. In our tragedies, sorrows, and the unknowns of life, we turn to the sureness we have in the victory of Christ on the cross over sin and the victory over the grave in the resurrection. Jesus said, “*...the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God*” (John 16:27b).  Because of these truths, we know that the Father loves us forever; and from this fountain of love comes every blessing. He, and He alone, is able to provide the patience, comfort, strength, and peace we so desperately need.

The devil constantly seeks your life, but God sought it first and claimed you as His own in Baptism. He is not going to abandon you in the midst of your troubles. You died with Christ in those Holy Waters so that God could raise you again with Christ to live a new life. In this life, you will have troubles. The devil will continue wreaking havoc and afflicting your body and mind so that you will despair of life. He is a liar and a murderer who is hell- bent on your destruction. But, take heart.  Christ overcame the world so that in Him you may find peace in your troubled waters. When Prophet Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul despaired of life, Christ did not abandon them. He had mercy on them and ensured their victories. Even when it seems that only the devil surrounds us, Christ is there. He is there when we suffer, when we feel there is no hope, and even when we think that the end is near.  Christ is there through all the pain and loneliness.  Although it may not always be understood by us, the words of this hymn make it simple and plain:

What God ordains is always good:

Though I the cup am drinking

Which savors now of bitterness,

I take it without shrinking.

 For after grief

 God gives relief,

My heart with comfort filling

And all my sorrow stilling.

You can bear the burden of this troubling time and help your brothers and sisters in Christ do the same if only you remember God’s Word: *“according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Pet. 1:3). You are alive in Christ and are living a new life which is surrounded by His peace. Jesus spoke these words for us to cling to tightly, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”* (John 14:27).

As we head into June, three months have gone by since this pandemic became real to us. Some of you have suffered far more than others, not just at the hands of the virus, but with the deep wounds that pierce mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. You have been the subject of my prayers. I have prayed that, by the Lord’s grace, you may be relieved of your burdens by the living hope of Christ’s resurrection. With powerful words the Psalmist wrote: *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling”* (Psalm 46:1-3). He was looking forward to the hope which you now also possess in Christ. To you it has been given an even greater testimony since, by the Words of the New Testament, you have heard that Christ has triumphed. If Christ has triumphed, then you, too, shall triumph over all things.

Your new birth in Baptism does not fade with time; it is a birth to a life of hope because it unites you with Jesus Christ who rose from the dead. That is why Peter wrote, *“He has caused us to be born again to a living hope.”* That hope transcends earth and time; it fills all eternity with a joyful song of glory. That hope is what will pierce through the shadow over your life and it is the very light which penetrates the darkness of our world today. Who was it that always helped Christians make it through the terrible sufferings and sorrows of this life? It has been and always will be God, our faithful God. He brings to all believers a song of praise in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death so that they may glorify him who has given the transcendent hope by faith in Christ Jesus. Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia.

I share with Saint Paul a blessed hope for you. As he said, *“our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort”* (2 Cor. 1:7). My hope for you is unshaken because, though you will suffer and have suffered in this life, Christ has secured for you a blessed end to all life’s troubles. This life is not all that we Christians have, for we possess within our bodies the life of Christ who rose from the dead. Neither are you alone as you go through this world. You are members of one body. *“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together”* (1 Cor. 12:26). Since we share in one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, my hope for you is unshaken.  I know as we walk together in the faith, you will continue to be a partaker in the comfort of Christ. He will lead you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Christ, through the power of His Word, will bring you from despair to hope, from death to life.

God’s blessings,

Pastor Jacob Deal

****

**Word of Hope: 1-888-217-8679**

The only 24/7 CONFIDENTIAL Hotline that is distinctly Lutheran, bringing healing found in Christ, to those whose hearts have been broken by abortion.

****

**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

**Membership Information needed!**

Many thanks go out to those who have returned their **Membership Information Form** mailed to each household last month. Even if your form had no corrections, it would be appreciated if you would return it to the church office so it can be checked off the list of outstanding forms. Over the years, numerous files have been formed with pieces of information here and there. This form is an effort for us to not only double check the accuracy of the information, but to assemble it in one easily-accessible file.

 Membership information sheets can be dropped off at the church or returned by mail (Diane at Sts. Peter & Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, 699 Stambaugh Ave., Sharon, PA 16146). If your form has been misplaced and you need another copy, please leave Diane a message by phoning the church at 724-347-3620 (option 3).

****

**Sts. Peter & Paul’s Food Pantry is able to assist those in need of emergency food!**

If you or someone you know is in need of emergency food during this time, please contact John Dyll (724-734-7016). Anyone who is currently out of work due to COVID-19 and currently has NO income is eligible for SFPP (State Food Purchase Program) and TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program).

 Similarly, anyone who has lost hours, etc. because of COVID-19 and has a reduced income may be eligible for SFPP and TEFAP.

 As we anticipate an increase in demand on our local food pantry as the days go by, please consider making a financial donation to this important function of our church. Please note that we are unable to accept food donations at this time. Also, families will only be able to receive food once a month for the time being. If you are able to assist with either the packing or distribution of food items, please let the church office know.

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

**To listen to Pastor Deal’s sermons, phone 724-347-3620 and press Option 6.**

Remember the following in Prayer…

**~Those in mourning:** *The friends and families of* ***Barbara Vasconi****, wife of David Vasconi and mother to Nicole and Christopher,* ***Cheryl Jo Flaugher****, mother of Mike Flaugher (Marie), grandmother of Jennifer Russell (Josh), and great-grandmother of Connor Russell, and* ***Leo Beane****, son of the Rev. Larry Beane and wife, Gracie.*

 **~The Hurting and Healing:** *Vicki Bell, Sue BenderCA, Lois BortnerCA, Richard Brandes,Beverly Chlpka, Kim, George, Bradley Dirgo, Marjorie Dirgo, Tim Dudash, Henrietta (Hank) Holcroft, Donna Kennedy, Betty KnauffCA, Regis Knauff, Jess Lavoie, Virginia LehmanCA, Paul Lucas****CA****, Rhonda MoatsCA, Sandy Marshall, Tom MulliganCA, Richard ReuningCA, Marty Scott, Martin Weisenborn, and Angela WeserCA.*

**~The Homebound:**  *Helen Bender, Mary Chmielewski, Dan Davis, Edna Krajci, Mary Ann Krajci, Virginia Lehman, Robert Murchek, and Marion Roberts..*

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Clayton Drnek, Curtis Sinewe, and Joshua Solyan.*

**~Community & World Needs:**  *Those suffering from or affected by the coronavirus, victims of violence and terrorism; those suffering from loss and dislocation because weather disasters; those suffering from addiction and their families; Local, State, and National Government Leaders; Safety for all Police Officers, Firefighters, & First Responders; the unemployed; our Second Quarter Local Mission: Sts. Peter & Paul’s Annual Community Day.*

*\*CA represents cancer; number after other names represents weeks on the prayer list. Please submit prayer requests in writing to the church office.*



**Recently, we received notice that our church was the recipient of Thrivent Choice dollars. We are grateful to the following individual who directed his dollars to our church:**

* **David L. Williams**

During these times, please keep those members of our congregation who may be confined to their homes or other facilities in your prayers. Many of them may be feeling lonely or scared. Consider dropping them a note or a card in the mail or making a phone call to brighten their day.

 If you are in need of any addresses or phone numbers, please contact Diane at 724-347-3620 (option 3). Phone calls are being forwarded to her cell phone, so you should get a response in a reasonable amount of time. Please feel free to leave her a voice mail.

**Homebound Members & Friends**

***Please keep the following people in your prayers:***

Helen Bender

920 Pleasantview Dr.

New Castle, PA 16101



Mary Chmielewski

87 S. Neshannock Rd.

Hermitage, PA 16148



Dan Davis, Avalon Springs

745 Greenville Road

Mercer, PA 16137



Edna Krajci, **Vista Center at The Ridge**
3379 Main St
Mineral Ridge, Ohio 44440
330-652-9901



Mary Ann Krajci, John XXIII

2250 Shenango Valley Freeway

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-981-3200



Virginia Lehman

92 Wet Track Rd.

West Middlesex, PA 16159



Robert Murchek

394 Fisher Hill St.

Sharon, PA 16146-5801



Marion Roberts

The Lakes at Jefferson, Room 221

7271 W. Market St.

Mercer, PA 16137

717-798-5330

**CELEBRATING IN JUNE!**

**Birthdays:**

Gerald Krivosh Jr. 6-1

Ana Deal 6-2

June Thomas 6-2

Presley Sieg 6-4

Stacy Brandes 6-7

Jonathan Baisch 6-9

Lisa Jelinek 6-9

Isaiah Deal 6-11

Rudy Tomko 6-20

Sue Bender 6-21

John Dyll 6-23

Chris Nelson 6-28

Mark Gabriel 6-30

**Anniversaries:**

Tony & Tiffany Bale 6-2

Rev. Ed & Irene Kucera 6-9

Ed & Millie Zachar 6-12

Matt & Cathy Berent 6-23

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

**Scrip/Gift Card Program**

As life continues to return to normal, Sts. Peter & Paul’s will once again be offering members and friends the chance to participate in our Scrip/Gift Card Program.

 This program allows participants to order gift cards from major retailers. The participant receives the full value of the gift card ordered with the church receiving a percentage, which varies from retailer to retailer, of the amount.

 Order forms for this program may be found on the table in the narthex as well as along the windows in the main hallway. The next due date for ordering gift cards is Sunday, July 5th. Orders and payments (made out to Sts. Peter & Paul’s) are to be given directly to Matt Berent.

**Our Stewardship of Treasures for the Lord:** In order to do the Lord’s work, we need $2,487.81\* each week to meet our 2020 budget for general purposes and $39.62 for missions.

**Weekend of May 2 & 3, 2020:**

 General Offering: $3,585.00

 *Ahead for the week: +$1,097.19*

 SELC Missions: $165.00

 *Ahead for the week: +$125.38*

 Other Offerings: $86.00

**Weekend of May 9 & 10, 2020:**

 General Offering: $2,550.00

 *Ahead for the week: +$62.19*

 SELC Missions: $50.00

 *Ahead for the week: +$10.38*

 Other Offerings: $10.00

**Weekend of May 16 & 17, 2020:**

 General Offering: $2,440.00

 *Behind for the week: -$47.81*

 SELC Missions: $10.00

 *Behind for the week: -$29.62*

 Other Offerings: $240.00

**Ascension, May 21 and Weekend of May 23 & 24, 2020:**

 General Offering: $1,085.00

 *Behind for the week: -$1,417.81*

 SELC Missions: $0.00

 *Behind for the week: -$39.62*



We are sincerely grateful to all who have been faithfully submitting their church offerings during this time. If unable to give your offerings in person, you may mail them to the church office at 699 Stambaugh Ave., Sharon, PA 16146. Additionally, we now have an option for online giving using your checking or savings account. This can be setup as a one time or reoccurring transaction. Check out the church website https://[www.saintspeterandpaul.net/online-giving](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net/online-giving). This site is secure and payments have no transaction fees.

 Our worship together may have taken on a different look, but our “doors” are still open and there are expenses to be met. Your faithful contributions will help us to stay the course and meet the needs of our members.

****

**In Loving Memory of Barbara Vasconi:** *Anne Colt, Dolores Fee, Anson & Hank Holcroft, Diane Riefstahl, Joyce Solyan & Family, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Sulek*

**In Loving Memory of Cheryl Jo Flaugher:** *Diane Riefstahl*

**In Loving Memory of John Daris:** *Mr. & Ms. Joseph Chlpka (Food Pantry), Ernie & Ruth Meszaros (Major Repairs), Eleanor & Joe Voytik*

**In Loving Memory of father, Joseph Hoyney:** *Pat Voytik (Major Repairs).*

**Thanking the Lord for our 49th Wedding Anniversary, May 15th:** *Mr. & Mrs. Robert Sulek.*

**In Thanksgiving for continued good health for our daughter, Tina, and our families:** *Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Chlpka (Food Pantry)*

**Given in Memory of my Sister, Ruth Gartner, for the life we shared together:** *Pat Voytik*

****

**OUR SECOND QUARTER LOCAL MISSION: STS. PETER & PAUL’S**

**ANNUAL COMMUNITY DAY!**

Planning will soon be underway for our Fourth Annual Community Day celebration. Due to the unusual times we are living through, this year’s event will probably have a different “look”. As a mass gathering with our neighbors is doubtful, and we still want to keep our tradition going, it’s going to take some creative thinking.

 If you would like to be part of this year’s planning, please speak with Jessie Riffle or Pastor Deal ASAP.



 **“Stock the Food Pantry Sunday”**

**is June 14th!**

***Let us remember those in need!***

Your financial contributions will be greatly appreciated!

**A Change in Altar Flower Policy**

If you would like to provide altar flowers for a given Sunday, you are asked to do the following:

1. Sign the sign-up sheet in the narthex at least one week in advance.
2. Leave a note for the church secretary as to the dedication to be listed in the weekly bulletin.
3. Purchase flowers from a vendor *of your choice* and deliver the flowers to the church by 9:30 Sunday morning ready to be displayed.
4. Remove the flowers from the altar following the church service.

 This change in policy has been made due to problems with delivery and quality from our current provider. The change will go into effect once regular worship services have been reinstated.

 If you have signed up to provide altar flowers in the future and no longer wish to do so, please contact the church office so that your name can be removed from the flower calendar.

 Artificial arrangements will adorn the altar on Sundays for which there is no donor.

 Anyone who would like to research other providers who are able to deliver flowers Sunday mornings and provide flowers at a reasonable cost, is welcome (and encouraged) to do so. Gathered information may be given to Diane in the church office.



We wish to sincerely thank Mrs. Catherine Carr who has been donating her talents as an organist during the videoing of the weekly Matins Services (found on YouTube) and for the special Ascension Day service. We are truly blessed to have her services.

 Currently, the church has an opening for an organist as our former organist is no longer employed by the church. If you know of someone whom you feel might be interested in the position, please let either Barry Nelson or Pastor Deal know.



**Ralph & Judie have moved!**

Ralph and Judie Dorman have left the Greenville area and have settled in Rock Creek, Ohio. We will miss having Ralph around, always with a story and a robust “hello”. Their new address is 3039 Logan Lane, Unit 20, Rock Creek, OH 44084.

 You will be missed!



Happy Anniversary to US! This month, our congregation celebrates its 103rd anniversary! We are grateful for this blessing!



**Thank You for Serving in June:**

**Assisting Elders:** Jonathan Baisch & Bob Sulek. **Ushers:** Hugh Owen, Cheryl Fedele, Jeff Brandes, Bob Sulek, & Jonathan Baisch (alternate). **Altarware:** Kati Laird & Ruth Meszaros.



**Festival of**

**Saints Peter and Paul**

**Divine Service**

Monday, June 29, 2018

at 5 pm.

*Please join us and invite a friend!*

****

Heartfelt sympathy is expressed to the friends and families of member, **Barbara Vasconi**, who passed away May 1, 2020, and **Cheryl Jo Flaugher,** mother of member Mike Flaugher, who passed May 12th. May those who mourn their passings find comfort in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

 Barbara’s obituary is printed below.



**Obituary for Barbara Vasconi**

Barbara Vasconi, 76, of Sharpsville, passed away Friday morning, May 1, 2020, in her home.

 Psalm 121: Father in heaven, you neither slumber nor sleep; in faith our eyes are lifted up to you to deliver us. Keep us from all evil, watch over our coming and going, and bring us into your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

 Mrs. Vasconi was born December 2, 1943, in Homestead, NY, a daughter of the late Robert and Katherine (Boeckmann) Holt. She was a graduate of Bellport High School in Long Island, NY.

 She was also an alumna of Wilfred Beauty Academy, Riverhead, NY, and later employed as the school’s administrator for several years.

 Barbara had a strong faith and was a member of Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sharon.

 She was a devoted homemaker who gave everything she could to her children. She was also an avid gardener and enjoyed tending to her flowers.

 She is survived by her husband, David Vasconi, whom she married August 24, 1983; a daughter, Nicole Vasconi, of Sharpsville; a son, Christopher Vasconi, of Pittsburgh; and many cousins, including, Charlie Boeckman and Kathy Jolin.

 Besides her parents, Barbara was preceded in death by her grandparents; and a cousin, Peter Boeckman.

 In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions be directed to St’s. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 699 Stambaugh Ave., Sharon, PA 16146.

 Due to the current health situation, a private service will be held. A memorial service will be held once circumstances permit public gatherings. Online condolences may be sent to the family at [www.McGonigleFuneralHomeandCrematory.com](http://www.mcgoniglefuneralhomeandcrematory.com).

Interment: America’s Cemetery, Hermitage.



Happy Father’s Day

to all the fathers

in our midst!



**As we transition back to normal, please note the following:**

* Beginning the first weekend in June, we will resume our regular worship times. Saturday Divine Worship in the chapel will begin at 5 pm; Sunday Divine Worship in the sanctuary will begin at 10 am.
* Sunday morning Bible Study will be held in the Fellowship Hall from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm.
* All those in attendance at worship or Bible Study are asked to enter the building using either the Clover St. entrance or the entrance off the parking lot.
* Attendees are asked to wear a clean, protective mask upon entering the building. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided.
* Temperatures will be taken of those in attendance.
* Attendees are asked to observe recommended social distancing. Please do not congregate in the hallways outside the sanctuary/chapel. Please leave promptly following the end of the service.
* Coffee & Donuts Fellowship and our “greeters” program are canceled until further notice.

 Please, only attend if in good health for your sake and that of others.

 If you have any concerns or questions about this, please speak directly with Pastor Deal.