



Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation

Creative ministries bring people together

by Marcia Hahn

“Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” Those lyrics from a John Lennon song have never been truer than now.

Plans in Iowa abruptly changed in mid-March when Gov. Kim Reynolds limited social gatherings to no more than 10 people due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With Holy Week approaching, congregational leaders quickly embraced new ways to carry on the life of the church, to build relationships, and to be there for one another — even when apart.

Here is a look at some of the ways that pastors, deacons and congregations of the Northeastern Iowa Synod have reached out beyond the church walls and into the homes and hearts of their people.

TECHNOLOGY DELIVERS

When it became apparent that congregations could no longer gather, pastors and ministry leaders quickly brushed up on their technology skills and brainstormed new ways to connect with their congregations. Online worship, devotions, Bible study, coffee hour, passing of the peace, meditations, special music, confirmation classes, Sunday school, children’s stories and more have been coming into homes via Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, Instagram, and other digital platforms.

Many pastors began delivering sermons in front of a camera for the first time, while others expanded the digital ministries they already had in place. They tapped the tal-

“I am inspired by the new and creative ways that the roster and congregations have been proclaiming the Gospel.”

— Bishop Steven Ullestad

ents of their family members and parishioners to come up with virtual ways to share the Good News of Christ’s resurrection.

With help from her tech-savvy husband, Charlie, Pastor Kristen Corr Rod of American Lutheran, Jesup, began giving sermons that were out of this world — or so it appeared. Rod has been preaching from her home in front of a green backdrop that can display different background images so that Rod looks like she is preaching from remote

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Pastor Kristen Corr Rod of American Lutheran, Jesup, uses a green screen to project different background images for her worship services. Here she greets viewers from the bridge of Star Trek’s USS Starship Enterprise for her March 25 Lenten service on YouTube.

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locations, including the bridge of Star Trek's USS Starship Enterprise.

"My hope is that this brings some lightheartedness and emphasizes that God is with us wherever we are," Rod said. "God has never been confined to a church building."

Pastor Lynn Banderob, who serves Peace, Ryan, and St. John, Dundee, had already been sharing live Sunday sermons on Facebook, but when Augsburg Fortress and One License granted congregations free copyright licensing of music, she expanded the broadcasts to include the full service.



Familiar names greeted Pastor Lynn Banderob when she went to St. John, Dundee, to record a worship service. St. John congregation members couldn't be there, so they placed placards with their names in the pews in spots where they would normally be sitting.

"Trying to preach a sermon to an empty sanctuary is crazy," Banderob said. "You have to come in with energy, and imagine that everyone is there and hope they laugh when you say something funny."

Banderob recorded worship services at both Ryan and Dundee during Holy Week so that parishioners could see the inside of their own sanctuaries. Some St. John congregation members surprised Banderob by placing pink and blue placards in the pews with the names of congregation members who would normally be sitting in those spots. At Peace, members placed 94 quilts on the pews for a Palm Sunday quilt blessing and displayed on the balcony a picture of Banderob hanging from a tightrope with the message, "Hang on, we'll get through it."

Normally, Banderob's sermons were taped using a cell phone, but with the sanctuary now empty, Banderob's husband, Rollin, records the services with a digital video camera and full-size boom mic. Lector readings by congregation members are

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MINISTRY ONLINE

- Hope United Parish, Manly, Sunday school children shared Palm Sunday video messages via Facebook.
- Youth from Holy Trinity, Dubuque, proclaimed the Good News on Palm Sunday by acting in an online play written by Sara McCaw, Holy Trinity's Youth and Family Ministry leader.
- American, La Porte City, asked families to download, print and color palm branch pictures and share videos of them waving the palms to include in the Palm Sunday worship.
- Pastor Adam Starrett and members of Zion, West Union, created a documentary-style Easter worship service that included youth acting out the Easter story, images of "Easter in our current reality," an acoustic performance of "Jesus Lifted Me" and family photos of congregants.
- Congregations found virtual ways to carry on their traditions. Bethlehem Lutheran, Cedar Falls, invited people to make a favorite potluck dish and post photos to keep their monthly potluck

going. Trinity Lutheran, Mason City, asked members to make chili for their annual Chili Cook-Off and share photos and recipes online.

- St. Paul, Mason City, invited families to send video greetings of them passing the peace of Christ or saying hello to include in the Easter worship service.
- Caitlin Retz, director of Youth and Family Ministry for Zion St. John, Sheffield, read children's books and created a devotional for each story for families to download and complete together. She also used Zoom to lead youth in a scavenger hunt.
- Wartburg Theological Seminary and ELCA congregations from Dubuque worked in partnership to deliver Sunday worship services through Zoom.
- Pastor Greg DeBoer of Immanuel, Independence, preaches from home with help from his entire family. The virtual "Coffee and Conversation" replaces weekly get-togethers that had taken place at the local coffee shop. DeBoer's wife, Gina, who serves as youth director, leads "Kahoot



Puppet show at St. John, Charles City

Family Trivia" sessions and hosted a "Mom-Mazing Morning" for moms to connect via Zoom.

- St. John, Charles City, Sunday school features puppets acting out Bible stories on Facebook. Pastor Russell Leeper and his wife, Susan, share weekly greetings that include birthday wishes, jokes, and prayers. They have invited families to join in an outdoor scavenger hunt, Lego challenge and carry on the congregation's tradition of singing "Every morning is Easter morning" by posting videos.

Know Jesus as Our Savior

Everyone that Jesus healed, died. Even the one he raised from the dead, Lazarus, is now dead.

What we have left, that are eternal, are stories of faith.

I pray for healing, not only for myself but for all who are injured and sick. My prayers are for all who are in need of healing who will someday die.

It is OK to have Jesus as a friend or a healer. What we really need is Jesus as our Savior.

And that is who he is.

— Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod



Creative ministries bring people together
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recorded ahead of time and edited into the final production.

“Sound quality is key,” Banderob said. “We make sure the heating system is turned off. The quilts on the pews have worked really well to dampen the sound.”

Staff from KCRG-TV noticed the worship services on Facebook and reached out to ask to broadcast the Easter morning service on channel 9.2. “It was a thrill to be able to do that,” Banderob said.

Pastor Lisa Dietrich of Fredsville, Cedar Falls, said the key in deciding what would work best for her congregation was understanding why people attend Fredsville, and then setting goals that would help members deepen their relationship with God and with each other. Dietrich and Intern Andy Graves brainstormed ways to reach people of different technological abilities and age groups.

Among their online offerings is an emoji game for people to guess the Bible story or hymn, and a new “Wine at 9” time for women in the congregation. “This is offered at a time after the children are in bed

so that the women can grab a cup of tea or glass of wine and check in with their sisters in spirit,” Dietrich explained. “Our first meeting was wonderful. We laughed, we cried, we checked in, we prayed, and we vowed that we would meet again.”

Graves said he had been wanting to step up his involvement in the ministries offered at Fredsville, but shifting the entire operation to the Internet was not what he had in mind. “It goes to show that people are more flexible and willing to adapt than I would have thought,” Graves said. “People who I’ve never met and whose names I do not even recognize are engaging the posts on our Facebook page.”

St. Peter, Dubuque, scored a win when they moved a family game night originally intended to be at the church to a Zoom event, instead. Pastor Matthew Agee thought that Bingo would translate well to Zoom, so with help from a veteran bingo player, they invited congregation members to join in for an evening of family fun online.

Twenty-six computers logged in for the free event with 58 players ranging in age from two weeks to



Nearly 60 people joined a family game night hosted on Zoom by St. Peter, Dubuque.

94. Congregation members who couldn’t return home from out of state joined in, and people without cellphones even figured out how to participate. Agee said that a lot of those who played online would not have come to a family night at the church because they would have thought it was just for kids.

“We wanted to try to make some normal ministry work, and people

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Synod Assembly Update

Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly
Saturday, Aug. 22, 2020
Nazareth Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls

The 2020 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly is set for Saturday, Aug. 22, at Nazareth Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls. Please note this change of location.

Due to the unknown duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, updated registration forms will be mailed to congregations on June 22. Registration forms will also be available on the synod website.

The Synod Council and staff will continue to monitor restrictions on large gatherings. If we need to cancel or postpone the Aug. 22 date, a decision will be made by July 15.

Read more about the synod assembly, registration, agenda and updates at www.neiasynod.org/synod-assembly-2020.

Synod staff to offer online worship service

The Northeastern Iowa Synod staff will record a worship service celebrating the Ascension of Our Lord, which will be made available to all congregations in the synod with the option to use it as a worship resource for the Seventh Sunday of Easter, the weekend of May 23 – 24.

The conference Deans and Chaplains suggested that the synod staff provide an online worship service for an upcoming weekend to give rostered ministers, musicians, worship planners, and media volunteers a week of respite and an opportunity to worship — rather than being responsible for worship. Bishop Steven Ullestad will preach the sermon. Synod staff and others will record parts of the service in their own spaces to comply with social distancing requirements.

Congregations that would rather continue with their own worship service that weekend may want to offer the synod service to their members as a celebration of the Ascension on Thursday, May 21, or use it to replace any service of their choosing.

Current plans are to provide a live stream of the recorded service on Sunday, May 24. Watch for further details to come through email and social media.

Portico Zoom Meeting

What to Pack When You're Not Going Anywhere
Thursday, May 7 • 1:30 p.m.

Ministry is being done a little — or a lot — differently these days. Dealing with that much change can be exhausting — mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

ELCA-Primary Health Plan members are invited to join Portico Regional Representative Jennifer Prinz on Thursday, May 7, for a 1:30 p.m. Zoom videoconference to learn creative ideas for how people can take care of themselves and their people in this unusual time. Prinz will also share important updates about benefits and resources that can be helpful in the era of COVID-19.

A link to log on to this program has been sent to all rostered ministers. If this event reaches 100 participants, a second presentation will be scheduled.

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Send news for the June 2020 issue to Marcia Hahn by May 11. We welcome story ideas related to the 2020 theme, "Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation."

Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated for use in synod congregations and organizations, with credit to the *Star* newsletter.

Please notify the synod office with name and address changes. To receive an electronic version of the *Star*, rather than paper, send your request to hahnmm@neiasynod.org.



www.neiasynod.org

Congregations can apply for PPP loans

The CARES Act, signed into law on March 27, 2020, makes significant assistance available to churches, religious organizations, and their employees. This legislation includes the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which offers low-interest loans to help small businesses and qualifying nonprofit organizations and churches stay afloat during mandated COVID-19 related closures so that they can retain their employees during this time.

The loans are intended to be used for most payroll costs (excluding non-cash benefits), mortgage interest and rent payments, utilities, and interest on debt that existed as of Feb. 15, 2020. If the program terms are carefully followed, the loan converts to a grant and repayment will

be forgiven, with the congregation incurring no continuing debt. The application window is open until at least June 30, but the pool of money is limited, so congregations are advised to apply soon.

Portico Benefits Services offers a summary page with more information about the program, frequently asked questions, and updates as new information becomes available at www.porticobenefits.org/campaign/resources/caresactfaqs.

The ELCA Public Health Resource page includes additional information about the PPP, along with other resources at <https://elca.org/publichealth>.

Portico Services Update

Portico Benefit Services has updated some of its benefits to support members through the impact of COVID-19.

Updates for ELCA-Primary Health Plan Members:

- The fee has been waived for Doctor on Demand telephone and virtual visits through June 14, 2020. This a reduction from the normal \$53 fee for medical visits.
- The 98point6 text-based telemedicine service is also available for no cost per visit.
- Members can conduct telehealth visits with their existing medical and mental health providers from home, subject to plan deductible and out-of-pocket provisions
- The plan will pay 100 percent of costs for FDA-approved COVID-19 testing and the related provider visit to order or administer the test, including an office visit, urgent care visit, or emergency room visit.
- All deductible and coinsurance costs for covered COVID-19-related treatment received through May 31, 2020, will be waived — the plan will pay 100% of costs.

ELCA Medicare-Primary members can receive similar benefits for non-emergency virtual care and COVID-19 testing.

Learn more about these and other updated services at <https://myportico.porticobenefits.org/campaign/resource-center>.

ELCA COVID-19 RESOURCES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ELCA churchwide organization is available to support its members, congregations, synods and partners.

Call 800-638-3522 and press #4 or email HereToServe@ELCA.org for prayer, support and answers to questions. Visit www.elca.org/publichealth.

Mission Investment Fund offers assistance

Mission Investment Fund and ELCA Federal Credit Union are offering special assistance and resources to help with financial hardship during this time.

MIF is providing no-penalty access to term deposits for customers who need emergency access to their funds at this time. For congregations and other ministries that need assistance with loans, MIF can offer such relief as deferral of loan payments, interest-only loan payments, loan modifications, lines of credit and new emergency loans. Contact MIF at 877-886-3522 or email mif.customerservice@elca.org or mif.loans@elca.org. The ELCA Federal Credit Union is offering similar assistance to its members and can be contacted at 877-715-1111 or info@elcacu.org. Learn more at www.mif.elca.org.

wanted to be part of it,” Agee said. “Half the fun was that people wanted to see each other’s faces and look for reasons to say ‘hi.’ Everyone left with a smile on their face.”

Deb Bachman, who serves as the synod’s Youth and Family coordinator and as director of Faith Formation for St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and School, Waverly, invited youth to join her in a daily LEGO challenge. Each day she posted a theme, and some 40 children and adults responded by posting their own creations on her Facebook page. Pastor Brian King of Nazareth, Cedar Falls, and Burr Oak and Hesper, Decorah, issued their own challenges for families to “enjoy some biblical stay-at-home fun” building LEGO creations based on Bible themes.

MUSIC, MEDITATION AND PRAYERS

Kathryn Thompson, organist for Big Canoe and Highland Lutheran Parish, Decorah, shared Facebook videos of her playing requested hymns on the piano to bring peace and comfort to others. Her soothing renditions of “Amazing Grace,” “Softly and Tenderly,” “The Old Rugged Cross” and “Jesus Loves Me” have drawn praise from viewers

who said her music brought comfort and inspiration, and a much-appreciated glimpse of the inside of the sanctuary.

Pastor Anne Edison-Albright, director of Luther College Ministries, said her team’s goal is to offer opportunities for renewal — breaks in the day and week that are different from online classes and meetings. Vicar Amalia Vagts offers two weekly sessions — open to everyone at luther.edu/events — designed to help people relax and energize: “Nap Chapel,” a guided 10-minute break for people to reflect and renew, and “Dance it Out,” a fast, fun dance party to start the day. In addition, online chapel is offered three times a week for music, prayer, and spiritual reflection.

“We have found that offering consistent opportunities to connect with community, friends and the love and peace of God in these ways



Congregation members of Glenwood and Canoe Ridge, Decorah, form a caravan to the country to wish Pastor Stacey Nalean-Carlson happy birthday and let her know they miss seeing her.

has been a welcomed deep breath for a lot of people,” Edison-Albright said.

DRIVE-BY MINISTRY

Ministry can be a two-way street — literally. Congregation members from at least three communities hit the road to let their pastors know they appreciate their ministry and miss them.

MUSIC, MEDITATION & PRAYERS

- Robin Souhrada, director of faith formation for Bethlehem Lutheran, Cedar Falls, invited families to create a home altar to serve as a sacred place for prayer and share photos of the altar on Facebook. Altar items could include a candle, looking glass, labyrinth, chimes and purple cloth. “Home is church, too,” Souhrada wrote.
- Pastor Peter Kowitz of Decorah, Decorah, plays guitar and sings for weekly “Story and Songs” videos, and his helpers Maddie and Krista lead jumping, dancing and story time.



Peter Kowitz

- Pastor Susan Friedrich of Bethany, Elkader, and Emanuel, Strawberry Point, offers a meditative setting online with a lit candle for people to join in peaceful evening prayers each Wednesday evening.
- Pastor Derek Rosenstiel of Holy Trinity, Dubuque, led a special online Earth Day prayer from a park overlooking the Mississippi River. The service was a call to live in a “right relationship with all creation.”

A caravan of vehicles traveled down dusty Old Stage Road near Decorah to bring birthday greetings to Pastor Stacey Nalean-Carlson, who serves Glenwood and Canoe Ridge. "The dear people of Glenwood and Canoe Ridge got in their vehicles and paraded by the parsonage this morning, giving us the indescribable gift of their love, their prayers, their presence, and their encouragement," Stacey wrote on Facebook. "My dining room table is now covered with signs that will be strength for the journey ahead."

Pastor Beth Olson of St. Timothy, Hudson, and her husband were sitting in their living room in Waverly on a Saturday afternoon when they heard horns honking outside. A dozen or so vehicles were at the end of the driveway, and an Easter basket, lily and artwork were placed at their entryway. A mother from St. Timothy's Wednesday

youth education group coordinated the parade as an excuse to go for a drive and to let their pastor know she is appreciated. "As much as she is checking on others, we wanted our pastor to know we are thinking of her as well," the mother said.

On a quiet evening during Holy Week, more than 30 vehicles honked as they paraded past Pastor Lynn Noel's home in Postville where he serves St. Paul Lutheran Church. Some of the vehicles displayed banners thanking Noel, his family and the St. Paul staff for all they do. "They made my day in showing ways that we share our life together as God's people," Noel said.

MISSION AND SERVICE

Leaders from First, Clarion, made the conscious decision not to offer online Sunday worship services so

that they could instead focus on local ministry efforts. Parishioners are encouraged to engage in one of the many online worship services already available and to join their pastors for evening prayers on Facebook live.

Pastor Grant Woodley explained that one of the local ministries is the First Lutheran Clothing Closet and Food Pantry. By mid-April the pantry had served 277 shoppers while observing physical distance guidelines, compared to 138 shoppers for the month of March.

"There is always ministry to do," Woodley said. "We're not using the same methods of ministry, but God shows opportunity when we ask how we can love God and love our neighbor best right now."

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OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

- Families of First Lutheran, Northwood, downloaded "HOPE" coloring pages to decorate and display in their windows as a way to help spread hope throughout the church and community and uplift their neighbors and people who drive by.
- St. John, Cedar Falls, hung a "rainbow of hope" in their window with the message, "Thank you coronavirus helpers!" Congregation members showed their care for one another through an Easter card shower. Some 150 individuals and families received the greeting cards.
- Sunday school families from St. John, Nashua, picked up goodie bags with family activities they could share at home.
- Families from St. Peter, Greene, decorated pictures of eggs and displayed them in their front windows on Palm Sunday. During Holy Week, families traveled around to see how many Easter eggs they could spot. Those who posted pictures on the church Facebook page were entered in a drawing to win Easter baskets.
- Sunday school children from American, La Porte City, created greeting cards for congregation members who have been more isolated than others, and high school youth called them to say "hi" and check how they were doing.
- Pastor Josh Schunk of Zion, Oelwein, issued a challenge on Facebook for his parishioners to reach out to others. Schunk wrote, "Who can you call today? Who needs to share a prayer? The church is not closed! The church is deployed." He encouraged congregation members to call someone, offer a conversation and say a prayer while on the phone or afterward.
- Some congregations listen to broadcast worship services from the safety of their vehicles in the church parking lots. St. Peter, Eldorado, members gather in their cars at the church to listen to worship on radio station 99.5. Immanuel, Cresco, families listen to worship on radio station KCZQ. Following Palm Sunday worship they formed a procession and drove to two local nursing homes to wave their palms.

- Pastor Charlie Underwood, and his wife, Lana, of St. John, Clarksville, held up signs with Easter blessings on a street corner in Clarksville and outside the nursing home to remind people that they are missed and Jesus loves them.



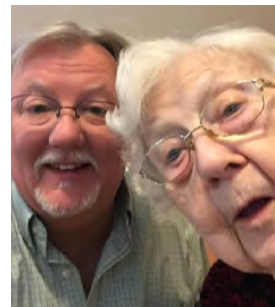
Charlie and Lana Underwood

Grateful to Give During the Pandemic

My mother gets by on what's commonly called a "fixed income." What a blessing to live on a fixed income during a pandemic and economic downturn! It means she won't have her hours cut, be furloughed, laid off or fired. Her income is guaranteed, and since she can't have guests or get her hair done, her weekly expenses will actually go down. So when her stimulus check arrives she wants not to hoard the windfall, but to find ways to share it with those who are in need.

My wife and I are in a similar situation, so we will be sharing our stimulus with our congregation, synod and food bank. For us, sharing is just a part of being grateful.

— *Pastor Mark A. Anderson*
Assistant to the Bishop



Mark Anderson and his mother, Ruth

Creative ministries bring people together
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The Almost Home men's shelter operated by St. John's, Dubuque, closed early this season due to COVID-19, but all the men were successfully housed elsewhere. The ministry shared its extra supplies where needed most, including providing gallons of hand sanitizer to the Dubuque Police Department at the onset of the virus.

The coordinator for the ministry's Open Closet has been supplying clothing by appointment for people in need who are referred from partner agencies. "They call ahead and one member of the family comes and enters through the back door, with all social distancing rules applied," said Gwen Kirchhof, executive director of Almost Home.

First, McGregor, helped kick-start a volunteer initiative to provide meals for anyone who needs assistance. A community meal site in nearby Prairie du Chien had temporarily quit serving meals, so congregation member Gary Brooks asked Pastor Gary Hatcher about serving meals, and they decided to run with it.

Local businesses have donated food, and volunteers hand out packaged meals curbside from Pocket City Pub or deliver them to people's homes. More than a thousand meals have been served since the program started on March 20.

OPEN DOORS TO RENEWED MINISTRY

When the church doors open again, worship may be different, such as no handshakes and increased distance in seating — and someone may even have to sit up front. What is likely to shine through, however, is the strengthened relationships, compassion for one another, and love of God that ministers and congregation leaders helped nurture during this unprecedented time apart. Even without their buildings, congregations have shown that they are a crucial part of their members' lives and of the larger community.

"I am inspired by the new and creative ways that the roster and congregations have been proclaiming the Gospel," said Bishop Steven Ullestad. "Thank you for your commitment."

MISSION & SERVICE

- Local food pantries have adapted to meet increased demand. The Mobile Food Pantry at Trinity, Belmond, has waived income guidelines during this time, and Our Savior's Food Pantry in Leland switched to a drive-through service to hand out prepackaged bags.
- Volunteers from Lord of Life, Dubuque, continue each day to fill their Little Food Pantry, which is often empty in the mornings. Volunteers also offer to shop for those who can't.
- The Servant-Hearted Response Team from Nazareth, Cedar Falls, has been delivering groceries, making masks and working with local missions partners.
- American, Grundy Center, set out a basket of donated material for people to use for sewing face masks.



MAY EVENTS

- 1 Meeting, Candidacy Committee, 4-7 p.m.,
Zoom
- 7 Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
9:30-11:30 a.m., *Zoom*
- 17 Meeting, WIYLDE Video Chat, 7-8 p.m.
- 25 Office Closed, Memorial Day

JUNE EVENTS

- 4 Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 4 Meeting, Youth Ministry Network, St. Paul's,
Waverly, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 14-17 Event, WIYLDE (Wholly Iowa Leadership
Discipling Event), Wartburg College, Waverly,
To Be Rescheduled – New Date TBA
- 19 Meeting, Synodical Women's Organization Board,
Phone/Video Meeting
- 20 Event, Northeastern Iowa Synodical Women's
Organization Convention, *Postponed – New
Date TBA*

JULY EVENTS

- 2 Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 3 Office Closed, Independence Day
- 20-23 Event, ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering,
Cancelled

AUGUST EVENTS

- 6 Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 14 Meeting, Candidacy Committee, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
- 22 Event, Synod Assembly, Nazareth Lutheran,
Cedar Falls (*Rescheduled from June*)

Comment on social message

ELCA members are invited to give feedback on the draft of a social message on government and civic engagement. The 2019 Churchwide Assembly asked for preparation of the social message, which will be considered for adoption at a June meeting of the council.

To read the draft "Social Message on Government and Civic Engagement: Discipleship in a Democracy" and take the feedback survey, visit <https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Government>. Comments can also be emailed to draftsocialmessage@elca.org. The comment period ends May 27.

ORDAINING

Clark Baldwin, pending

INSTALLING

Rev. Peter Kowitz, Decorah, Decorah, May 10
 Rev. Brian Julin-McCleary, St. John, Cedar Falls,
 May 31
 Rev. Kristen Briner Wipperman, St. Matthew and
 Luther Manor, Dubuque, pending
 Rev. Katie Pals, Trinity, Belmond, pending

INTERVIEWING

Cresco, Immanuel, Rev. Charis Combs-Lay, interim
 Guttenberg, St. John's and St. Paul, Rev. Jim Harbaugh,
 interim
 Independence, Immanuel (staff)
 Nashua, St. John
 Northwood, First, Rev. Burton Everist, co-interim
 Tripoli, Grace, Rev. Dennis Niezwaag, contract interim
 Tripoli, St. John (Crane Creek)

SELF-STUDY

Calmar, Calmar and Decorah, Springfield
 Charles City, Messiah
 Chester, United
 Clear Lake, Galilean
 Clermont, West Clermont
 Decorah, Burr Oak and Hesper
 Dubuque, St. Peter (staff)
 Elma, St. Paul (Maple Leaf)
 Frederika, St. John, Rev. Megan Graves, interim
 Hawkeye, Trinity
 Luana, St. John and Farmersburg, St. John
 Mason City, St. Paul, Rev. Matthew Muters, contract
 Mitchell, Faith; Nora Springs, St. Luke; Osage, Rock
 Creek and St. John (Cross Roads Lutheran Parish),
 (staff)
 Ridgeway, Peace, Orleans and Madison (Ridgeway
 Parish), Rev. Jim Scaife, contract interim
 Story City, St. Petri, Rev. Scot McCluskey, interim
 Sumner, St. Peter (Richfield) and Waucoma, St. John
 (Stapleton)
 Waterloo, Our Savior's, Rev. Ruth Ann Shriver, contract
 interim
 Waterloo, St. Ansgar

MAY 2020						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders Rev. Paul J. Fohs, Deloit 1	Rev. Randall V. Baldwin, Lake Mills Rev. David Burling, Story City 2
Janice M. Kraabel, Decorah 3	First, Decorah 4	Eileen Delk, Welch, Minn. Rev. James M. Magelssen, Mason City Rev. Phillip E. Olson, Ossian 5	St. Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly 6	Rev. Edwin A. Schick, Dubuque Rev. Karla K. Wildberger, Dubuque 7	Rev. Dale A. Halverson, Northfield, Minn. 8	Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago 9
Rev. Deacon Marianne J. Beck, Waverly 10	Evelyn R. Fitzgerald, Charles City 11	Glenwood, Decorah 12	Rev. Kevin G. Frey, New Hampton 13	Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio 14	Good Shepherd, Decorah 15	Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque 16
Middle East Peace Hauge, Decorah 17	Hesper, Decorah 18	Haldis Kaasa, Decorah 19	Highland, Decorah 20	Marilyn Ingebretson, Carrollton, Texas 21	Rev. Laura Gentry, Waukon Rev. Dennis W. Hanson, Cedar Falls 22	Rev. Nicole L. Woodley, Clarion 23
Rev. Gary L. Johnson, Cedar Falls Leota Lenning, Greensboro, N.C. Rev. Timothy C. Miller, Williamsburg 24	Luther College Congregation, Decorah 25	Rev. Russell G. Leeper, Charles City Rev. Elizabeth Retz, Waterloo 26	Rev. Joel L. Guttormson, Lake Mills Rev. Edgar M. Krentz, Chicago, Ill. 27	St. John's, Decorah 28	Washington Prairie, Decorah 29	St. John (Maxfield), Denver 30
St. Peter, Denver 31						

Guidance offered for reopening churches

Gov. Kim Reynolds has begun the process of re-opening Iowa and has signed a proclamation allowing spiritual and religious gatherings in Iowa as of May 1, 2020. The Northeastern Iowa Synod Conference Deans and Chaplains sent a letter to rostered ministers of this synod to offer guidance. The letter includes this statement:

"We encourage the congregations of our synod to continue the powerful public witness we are offering by staying home and worshipping together through online worship until such time as public health officials and science assure us that it is safe for all."

An ecumenical statement signed by 21 faith leaders from Iowa, including the three ELCA bishops, was also sent to rostered ministers. In the spirit of ecumenism, the letter asks congregations and members across the state to "take faithful action by refraining from in-person religious gatherings, including worship."

To download these letters, visit www.neiasynod.org/event.

WIYLDE to be rescheduled

The 2020 Wholly Iowa Youth Leadership Discipling Event (WIYLDE) originally scheduled for June 14-17 has been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak. Current plans are to reschedule a shortened version of WIYLDE for later this summer. Watch for updates at www.neiasynod.org/wiylde and Facebook.

LSI COVID-19 HOTLINE

Lutheran Services in Iowa offers the Iowa COVID-19 Multilingual Hotline, 877-558-2609, to help answer questions and connect people to doctors and support services for any needs. Calls are free and confidential. Staff and interpreters are available during business hours, or leave a message to be called back.

Learn more at www.refugeeallianceofcentraliowa.org/covid19-information.



Good News

May 2020
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Number 5

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.

From the President

Hello from the other side.... I hope by the time you read this we are on the other side. We find ourselves in a place we have never been before. How are you? I find myself isolated and alone. I am considered essential, so getting papers that state that. Which means, I don't get to stay home and do??? Facebook shows posts of new working-from-home arrangements and cute interactions with the new "co-workers" (could be kids or pets, or spouses). All those things we had planned are in limbo, wondering if and when "normal" returns. I am realizing I am not a stay-at-home person. I am surrounded by "projects" that I bemoan not having time to do in my normal busy schedule. But now meetings are by phone or video call instead of commuting to them. And although, currently, you can still shop for essentials, going shopping for the day is no longer a good or acceptable entertainment. And even though I do enjoy cooking and baking, doing it for one is not as fun as doing it for potlucks, family meals for the holiday, or even being spontaneous and grab items from the store then stop at friend's house on the way home to throw something together.

How are you coping? Are you like my mom, making progress on her basement of projects—nine more quilt tops for LWR, and calling and writing letters to family and friends? Are you a DIY person and getting a jump start on your summer project list? Are you an introvert and enjoying the peace and quiet of not having to show up at places and events that you feel expected to support? Or are you an extrovert who has no idea how to navigate the isolation? Me, I am napping, watching movies and creating my own personal concerts watching music videos on You Tube. Making plans for doing things when we are once again able to come and go at will—doing the road trips to check out the little towns around me that are filled with shops that look intriguing, and actually stopping to take time to shop; actually going to see the people in my life who are important to me; and not waiting for the perfect time. *Blessings and peace, Anna*

Discipleship Committee

In the book of Acts we are told of a woman whose name was Tabitha (or in Greek Dorcas). I remember my first time being introduced to circles at St. James (60 years ago) and one of the circles' name was Dorcas. At that time there were three circles at St. James and now we have just one and really don't have a specific name. We just call ourselves a Bible Study group. Things have really changed since Tabitha's time and our own time since 1958.

One thing that has not changed is Discipleship. Discipleship has stood the test of time and will continue to do so. As God has said, "My word will not return to me void."

There were many women who followed and worked for Christ. But Tabitha had one thing that made her stand out from all the others. She was the only woman specifically called a disciple. She being given this title takes nothing away from all the work the other women did for Christ. We are not told why she received this special title and it really doesn't matter. What matters is all the work she and so many others did for Christ and his ministry. *Submitted by Bonnie Dralle*

Justice Committee

What does Justice look like in a time of crisis? Is it helping your neighbor who is homebound due to age or health issues? Is it buying up all the supplies you can to ensure you and your family have everything you could possibly need for 10 times longer than the crisis is expected to last? The internet has been flooded with what to do or not do and who is to blame for this crisis. I want to focus on how we can all survive this together, learning the new social etiquette of social distancing and preparing for your needs, with regard for others, who may be at a higher risk and need those supplies also. Justice is faith in action, like having a Facebook page to enable needs and assistance to be met for your town/neighborhood; calling your neighbor or family member when you are making a trip to the store to see if they have a need you can pick up for them. Justice includes serving God in ways that bring healing and wholeness to the church, the society and the world—listening to the neighboring church's radio broadcast of their service; churches sharing their network time and

CALENDAR

Registration for the Triennial Gathering is now open

PLEASE NOTE: All spring LWR gatherings have been postponed. We will notify you when we are able to reschedule them.

May 1	Deadline for June <i>Good News</i>
May 2	Board Meeting @ Wartburg College 9am–12:30pm
June 19	Board Meeting at Wartburg College, 7–9pm
June 20	SWO Convention, 8:30am–4:00pm, Wartburg College
June 25	Deadline for July-August <i>Good News</i>
July 16–19	<i>Just Love</i> , Women of the ELCA Gathering, Phoenix, AZ
Aug. 1	Deadline for September <i>Good News</i>
Sep. 1	Deadline for October <i>Good News</i>
Sep. 19	Cluster G Living Waters Fall Gathering TBA
Oct. 1	Deadline for November <i>Good News</i>

technology so that other churches in their town can share their worship in this time of crisis; praying for all people to be healed and protected, not just the ones we know personally; sharing the extras we have with others in need. Let us not forget our pastors, who not only deal with the everyday things we deal with, but are now learning how to worship at a distance and ensure their congregation's faith is fed. How do they deal with the added stress of this crisis and continue to share God's Grace and Forgiveness for us all? *Submitted by Anna Jetson*

Stewardship Committee

As I begin to type this, I am 'sheltering-in'—only going for groceries, farm parts, vet medicine and fuel for pickup and car. My thoughts now go to missed Lenten services, Palm Sunday and then...Easter!!!

God called us to serve and love our neighbors, but how can we do that during this crisis? Usually during a crisis, we surround each other with love and support, but now we are to keep six feet away. I hope we all learn from this crisis, that we **can** serve and love our neighbors in new ways. I recently heard about a doctor who was sharing his gift of singing. Hearing his wonderful voice took me away from thinking about the virus. Think of what you have

done or can do to help others during times of crisis.

How can we bring that ray of hope to others? I hear every day of new ways people are stepping up and helping others: volunteering to give rides, to sew masks, to help at food pantries, to prepare food, and to call elderly people who are alone. Electronic media is filled with ways people are helping others during this time. Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, electronic church services and blogs are sharing stories of everyday people helping to make this crisis a little easier to deal with. Delivering food or contacting members of your church or neighborhood may not seem like much, but your communication with others helps keep our Christian family united.

I pray that by the time this is published, we will have been able to start attending church services again and that we continue to grow in our faith, thus continuing to serve and love our neighbors as God called us to do.

Submitted by JoAnn Brunsvold

Just Love

Women of the ELCA's churchwide president, Lisa Plorin, and its executive director, Linda Post Bushkofsky, are closely monitoring the COVID-19 virus and its implications for the upcoming convention (July 14–16) and Gathering (July 16–19).

"To be honest, the virus is preoccupying my thoughts these days," Bushkofsky said. "With circumstances changing rapidly and with attendant uncertainties, the considerations are many. Of course, the health and safety of our participants is a priority."

At this time, Plorin and Bushkofsky agree that the best approach is "to proceed with both events, to engage vendors and service providers in conversations about the 'what ifs' and to consider alternate plans, should they become necessary." The churchwide executive board will discuss the issue when it meets via Zoom April 25. (Downloaded from <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/news/triennial-convention-2020/leadership-closely-monitoring-covid-19-virus-and-implications>)

In the meantime, if you need assistance in planning, please contact Diane Wills, 641-425-8628, wills.dianes@gmail.com

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Good News

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Articles are due the 1st of the month for the next month's newsletter (e.g. April 1 for May issue). Please put WELCA in your subject line. (You can also send paper copies by "snail" mail.)

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neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA

Living Faith @

Dear Faith Shapers,

We are in the month of May and the weather seems like spring. Birds are nesting & flowers are blooming ... signs everywhere point to the beginning of outdoor activities: graduation parties, family reunions, and plans for summer vacations. EXCEPT — This year is quite different, as all the events and activities are postponed, canceled, or are being done differently than usual – including church services not in the church buildings. As we experience this social distancing within our family units, the journey is different for each one of us. Some enjoy being away from the crowds and relish the opportunity to stay at home, while others are longing for the time to be back among people.

The year 2020 will definitely be a year to remember! But even with all these differences, there are still some “normal” happenings. Congregations are still able to worship — whether online, by watching TV, or by reading the messages sent to them in the mail. Just as Christ still rose on Easter, there will be messages on Thursday, May 21st for Ascension Day, the celebration of Pentecost will happen on May 31st, and cemeteries will show the signs of remembrance, even without public observances.

Yes, this is a strange time. When we get on the other side of this pandemic, we will need to find many “new normals” in our lives.

Blessings to you all on your journey!

Student Pastor Sue Cira,
TEEM Candidate

Pentecost

The day of Pentecost falls on Sunday, May 31st this year. On the day of Pentecost we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. Here are some ways to explore the themes of Pentecost.

Make your favorite paper airplanes and fly them. Reflect on how the different styles and flight paths of the airplanes can be like the diversity of the spiritual gifts we possess and ways the Holy Spirit works through them.



RED Look for red items in your house or yard. Red is the color to remind us of the fire of the Holy Spirit.



*This information is prepared for you by the **Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network** for use by families and local congregations. Like our page on Facebook and our posted resources will appear in your newsfeed. Our page is **Northeastern Iowa Synod Home Life Network ELCA***



Find us on
Facebook

How to talk to Kids during this time & helping them find a new normal

If you're like many parents, you're trying to handle meals, figure out school, and manage your kids' boredom - all while worrying about your job and your future, your children's future, and the world around you. No matter their age, your children likely have a lot of questions about what's happening. All the daily routines changed. The life they knew disappeared. Here are a few ways you can help them establish a new "normal".

1. Pray together-out loud. Allow enough time for hard conversations. Include children in talking about the fears of social distancing and being away from others in the family.
2. Ask what they're thinking about. Listen to their answers. They need to have a safe space to talk and the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings.
3. Be the example you want to see in your house. Take care of yourself spiritually during this time, so that you'll be able to give your kids the emotional support they need.
4. Define a schedule to follow for the days of the week. Your kids have been used to a schedule - certain activities on certain days - the days may start blurring together with everyone home everyday. Giving each day of the week its own theme can help your family build a sense of structure. Examples: Taco Tuesday - even sandwiches folded over, taco style; Wacky Wednesday - wear socks that don't match, pull random ingredients from the cupboard & refrigerator and put them together in a dish; Special Sunday - watch a church service online and have a special treat (like ice cream).



Use sidewalk chalk for outdoor - painters tape for indoor activity course

