

Lord of Life

JANUARY 2022 | THE LIFE LINE

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From Pastor Paul

"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?" - Psalm 13

I have thought about this Psalm numerous times over the past nearly two years now. I wonder how many of us have thought about where God is in this pandemic? When will it end?! At the time of this writing, the first case of the omicron variant has been announced in Dubuque County. It will be the first of many, I'm sure. How long, indeed.



I'm tired of wearing a mask. I'm tired of all the precautions and constantly having to think about what the pandemic will throw at us next. I'm exhausted by the unending need to make so many phone calls instead of seeing people in person and by the inability to walk into a hospital to pray with someone before surgery due to ever-changing restrictions. How long, indeed.

It's not just me. We are all tired in a variety of ways. I spoke with nurses at both of our local hospitals who expressed their exhaustion and frustrations over mis-information and the ways that people in our community refuse to do what needs to be done to stop the spread of the virus. How long, indeed.

Can you think of your own experience over the past many months? Are there ways in which you are ready to cry out to God? To wonder at why the pandemic continues or what will come next? How long, indeed.

An interesting thing happens in Psalm 13, the first verse of which I shared above and which is often cited by folks who wonder at where God might be or even if God might be. The middle verses of this Psalm become more of a prayer for understanding, and by the end of the Psalm we get this:

But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Ah, yes. A return to what the people know to be true about God's love. Steadfast. Worthy of rejoicing (even in the midst of a pandemic). And then, God's grace for the psalmist, for us, because God has dealt bountifully with us. God's love has been evident throughout the pandemic the ways that we have cared for each other, in the minds and hands of scientists, doctors, nurses, and so many more. I've been witness to many ways that God presence has been evident in the world around us. As we move into the rhythm of our faith away from Christmas and toward Lent and the cross of Good Friday, we do well to remember that God knows our suffering and that God cares for us. We will soon see the evidence. May God bless you and keep you and watch over you as we enter a new year.

Message from Intern Lucy

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! It was so good to journey through advent with you. I don't know about you, but I loved our worship and sermon series of "Close to Home." I didn't realize when we started the series that I needed time to remember as well as dream and listen for what is to come.

Advent gave me time to feel homesick, search for home, seek and find sanctuary, remember the foundation God has given me, and rediscover real joy. I needed to hear the invitations to look up and see hope, to be cradled in God's arms and hear "you are enough and in you I find joy." I needed to be reminded that nothing, absolutely nothing, is beyond God's redemption, and that I'm never far from home because Christ is always inviting those he loves to "Come on Home." What surprised you this advent? Did you realize you were missing something? Where did you find hope, peace, joy, and love?

I found all of those in spending time with you, the Lord of Life congregation. I found peace in studying the bible together, joy in learning together with the confirmation students, hope in conversation, and love in hospitality. Thank you for listening to God's call to serve the community and world by being a learning congregation, where students are welcomed and encouraged. Thank you for opening your hearts and trusting me with stories and experiences of pain, heartache, wonder, grief, love, and joy. You have played an important role in my formation as a leader, and I know you will continue to help form leaders for years to come.

Although I will no longer hold the position of 'Intern', I look forward to seeing you around. My family and I will continue to worship at Lord of Life as long as we call the Wartburg Seminary campus home. We look forward in celebrating and serving with you as we are able.

It is my sincere hope and wish that you were able to find moments of hope, peace, joy, and love this Christmas season. I pray that as the new year begins you feel close to the home you have in Christ as we work together to make this earth a home where everyone can feel God's wondrous love. Thank you again, for all of your love.

Christ's Peace,

Intern Lucy Hardie

*We offered a blessing and sending for Intern Lucy during our worship service on Sunday, December 26th. We give thanks for her ministry among us and hope for all the best in her future as a leader in the ELCA.

Stories of Faith In Daily Life | Debbie Thomas



As a part of our recent series on discipleship, we are doing some interviews with Lord of Life members. In this month's "Stories of Faith in Daily Life," Pastor Paul interviews Deb Thomas. We think you will enjoy learning more about Deb and maybe even find inspiration in her answers.

Next month we will feature another Lord of Life member. We hope that his project will help us all to feel more connected with each other.

Tell us something about yourself. Where are you from? How long have you lived in Dubuque? How long have you been at Lord of Life?

I grew up on a farm in southern Minnesota, the youngest of four children. My great grandparents were charter members of the Lutheran country church a mile from our home, which was the center of our faith and social life. My husband Galen and I moved to Dubuque with our son Andy about twenty two years ago from Burlington, Iowa, when Galen took a job with John Deere. We've been "Lifers" for about twenty one of these years.

What brought you to Lord of Life? Did someone invite you? Did you happen to visit and decided to stay?

Soon after settling in Dubuque I began to look for congregations we might visit. The Lord of Life website listed an address near our home, so it seemed a great place to start our search. We were warmly welcomed on our first visit, felt a comfortable informality and heard a meaningful message from Pastor Tom Mundahl. After a few more visits, we became clearly aware of the real sense of community and cooperation at Lord of Life and soon decided that this was the church home for us!

What kind of work do you do? How does your faith go to work with you as you make decisions or live into your Christian vocation through serving others?

Last winter I retired from my part time work at Creative Touch Gallery. For twenty one years I had prepped art for our customers. From mounting snakeskins and military medals to sewing baptismal and wedding gowns to matting for framing, I had the pleasure of working with items precious to these customers. While I did not meet the majority of these people, and I may not have thought of my work strictly as a form of ministry, I and my co-workers appreciated that we were entrusted with items precious to others. We felt good about doing work that brought pleasure, and sometimes, true joy to others!

Is there any particular faith practice that is more meaningful than another for you?

After years of not regularly reading scripture or fitting in a time of meditation during my day, several years ago I finally "discovered" the right time in my day was during the time I spent over my coffee and breakfast in the morning. I really appreciate the "Taking Faith Home" resource. And reading the daily scripture and going through my prayer list at that time allows me to feel ready for the day.

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What are some ways you care for our congregation? Our community? Our world?

I've enjoyed baking communion bread for worship, I serve as Reader for worship service, and have found Stephen Ministry very rewarding. Recently, I helped pick up trash with the Lord of Life team. As someone who complains about roadside trash, I'm resolved to pick up trash more often! In August I helped pack school supplies through Apples for Students. Recently, Sandy Heer reminded us of the opportunity to help relieve world hunger through the ELCA. An opportunity that I like to make use of is the ELCA Good Gifts catalog. I enjoy picking out seeds, chickens or school supplies to share with others around the world, in memory of loved ones each year at Christmas.

What would you say to someone who might be thinking about taking a next step in their own faith journey today?

For me, that daily meditation/devotional time has been an important faith building tool. Volunteering in some way can be a great opportunity; start by choosing something that feels personally doable, rewarding or enjoyable, as incentive to continue.

One Congregation, Two Expressions



That screen is a familiar view for many of us. For some of us, a return to in-person services has meant seeing this screen on one of the TVs in the worship space, but for many, this is the way worship looks from home. I hear from people every week who express their gratitude for our approach to one congregation with two expressions (though they don't know that language, necessarily). Our council affirmed the ongoing goal of inclusion for our ministries both online and in-person early in the pandemic. We have made investments in equipment and software that have allowed us to continually improve. I want to share a recent communication we received as a comment on our YouTube channel. I think it will help us all understand how vital this outreach and evangelism through media and livestream can be. "I've enjoyed watching your services since October. Thank you for being there for me. Peace and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year." - Donna Jo

This is an exciting time to be the church! Donna Jo confirms our efforts matter! Thanks to all of our tech ministers and worship team for your ministry and to you, Lord of Life members, for catching the vision. -Pastor Paul

From Our Council President

As we move into the new year, your church council has been preparing for an essential event in the life of our congregation, the annual meeting. Perhaps you're not anxiously counting the days, but decisions made at the annual meeting lay the groundwork for how we carry out Lord of Life's ministry. I encourage you to participate in the annual meeting on **January 30, between worship services.**



Important decisions are before us. We will adopt a 2022 budget which provides the resources necessary to do God's work. We'll welcome new council members and thank those ending their terms. No organization can function without dedicated council members who carefully consider decisions. We'll begin the process of revising our constitution and bylaws, which provides a formal framework for how we carry out our mission. (A copy of changes is available on Sunday mornings or by request through the church office.) We will welcome Maria Troftgruben to the Faith Formation position, a long-awaited first step towards coordinating faith development in our congregation.

This year will most certainly be exciting! I look forward to the new opportunities and, yes even the challenges, the new year will bring.

Susan Hansen

Financial Update

<u>November YTD</u>	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2021 Budget	2021 Total Budget
Member General Giving	220,782	220,904	238,337	260,000
Hunger	1,038	1,706	1,375	1,500
Lent/Advent	913	525	1,000	1,300
**Other Giving/Income	742	25,330	1,863	2,000
Total Income	223,476	248,464	242,575	264,800
Benevolence	17,540	18,124	19,062	21,000
Evangelism	0	105	1,573	1,700
Stewardship	909	950	1,155	1,250
Music & Worship	20,738	20,378	20,163	22,000
Faith Formation	299	335	15,125	16,700
Ministry/Pastoral	107,251	112,337	108,486	118,114
Church Home	32,528	34,115	40,899	44,000
Administration	30,242	33,455	32,087	34,997
Mortgage	0	4,583	4,587	5,000
Total Expenses	209,506	224,384	243,137	264,761
Net Gain (loss)	13,969	24,081	-562	39

Mortgage - Non-Operating 69,276 66,961 66,957 73,048

**Payroll Protection Loan of \$24,900 from 2020 was forgiven in June 2021

Faith Formation Update

Many of you have heard that I will be taking on the official role of Coordinator of Faith Formation at Lord of Life. I look forward to being a part of helping the congregation grow in faith and keeping our current ministries going. I also want to improve and build upon these ministries. I will be looking to recruit more members to a Faith Formation Team and establish regular meetings. If you value helping the congregation grow in faith, especially our children and youth, please consider being a part of this.

With this new role, I will also be using a new email address: faithformation@lordoflifedbq.org. I will continue to keep families of youth and children updated on what's going on, and you can always reach out to me with questions!



Maria Troftgruben

Upcoming events:

January 2nd - No Sunday School

January 2nd, 3:05 pm - Youth Saints game

January 9th - Cross Generational Sunday School: Jesus' Baptism

We also hope to do a sledding event in January or February depending on weather and snow conditions. Watch for more information in weekly emails about this.



Youth Sunday
Worship

Christmas
Pageant



Care in Our Congregation

In Our Prayers...

- Dennis and Marie Weeks following the death of Dennis' sister, LaVonne.
- Intern Lucy as she continues her studies with her final semester before graduation.
- In thanksgiving for administrative assistant Sadie Goes' recover and return to work.

Care in Our Community

Christmas Hams for the Dubuque Food Pantry

We received a letter from the Dubuque Food Pantry.

December 14, 2021

Lord of Life Lutheran Church,
Thank you for your donation of **72 pounds of hams**,
that you made to the Dubuque Food Pantry.

There are many in our community who are
faced with making the choice between food
and other necessities at this time of year. With
your help they will be able to feed their families.

May you be richly blessed for your generosity
this holiday season and the coming New Year!

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Caldwell, Manager

Thank you!

We'd like to say thank you to
those who thought of the church
staff over the holidays. Care in
our Congregation also looks like
this.

Christmas Carolers Singing and Inviting in Our Community



Maria and Troy Troftgruben led a merry band of carolers around our neighborhood at church! The carolers sang the joys songs of Christmas and passed out fliers inviting our neighbors to join us for worship.

After some caroling, what better way to wrap up the day than decorating some yummy cookies to take home and enjoy?

Thanks to all of our carolers and to Maria and Troy for leading the way for some Christmas evangelism and joy-spreading!

Care in Our World ELCA Good Gifts Program

Though we don't have any numbers to share, or any counting of sheep (or chickens, or mules, or cows) we'd like to thank everyone who took part in our Mission and Outreach Christmas ELCA Good Gifts Program.

Lord of Life members have been making a difference in our world for many years. The Good Gifts program is just one way we have supported outreach and care ministries around the world. We support ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission, ELCA missionaries and health care programs, and as we learned two years ago, people in our world need clean water (thanks, again, for supporting the digging of two wells!).

You can learn more about our partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by visiting their site at <https://elca.org/Our-Work> today!



**ELCA
GOOD
GIFTS**

Preparing to Update Constitution & Bylaws

THIS INFORMATION PROVIDED AGAIN AS WE PREPARE TO ADOPT CHANGES TO OUR CONSTITUTION.

As I've stated in previous newsletters, the council is working on updating our constitution and bylaws. The last update was in 2006. Since then, there have been many changes to the ELCA's Model Constitution for Congregations, a document which provides guidelines for our constitution. The council is reviewing language in preparation for the annual meeting.

Background

ELCA church constitutions contain two types of language, required language and flexible language. Changes are voted on at Synod Assemblies. Required language changes are to be amended in a congregation's constitution without alteration. Many of the proposed amendments to our constitution are changes to required language.

The Model Constitution also provides suggestions for flexible language. The council is reviewing these sections and will make recommendations to be addressed at the annual meeting. In addition to the constitution, changes to our bylaws are needed to either align with language in the constitution or to remove duplicated language.

Process for change

At the annual meeting, we will vote on required language changes. Once adopted, those changes go into effect without a 2nd vote. Council's recommendations will be sent to membership no less than 30 days before a congregation meeting. You can expect to receive recommendations in December.

We will also vote on changes to the flexible language provisions. If those changes are accepted, a ratification vote will occur at another congregation meeting (date to be determined.) Since many of the revisions to our bylaws relate to changes in the constitution, bylaws will be amended at a later date.

Communicating Recommendations

Because there are numerous changes, a document with all changes, both required and flexible, will be available in the church office.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns. I'm always open to conversation!

Susan Hansen

Christmas Eve 2021



Christmas Eve was beautiful, as always, with the singing of Silent Night by candlelight.



Thanks, Intern Lucy, for your ministry with us in the Fall. Thanks, also, to our amazing Worship and Music Team for all your hard work!



Coming Events

January 2 - Hockey Game Outing

January 30 - Annual Meeting between worship services



Ministry Opportunities

God blesses each of us with our time and the talents we have. We believe that an important part of being a Christ follower is our service to others. Pick up the materials at church or find them on our website:

www.lordoflife.online/serve.html



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