

**SIERRA EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER**  
**SPECIAL PANDEMIC WEEKLY EDITION**

***A Message from Pastor Perry:***

This is the first of eight weekly “newsletters” we’ll be sending out to keep SELC members and friends in touch and informed. I say “eight” because now the CDC and our Bishop asks that we plan on keeping these protocols for at least that many weeks.

As Lutheran theologian Dr. Timothy Wengert says in his piece, *Holy Communion Under Quarantine*, “Unless one is over 100 years old, none of us has lived through such a serious world-wide pandemic.” So, we continually ask God’s help to make our way through this unprecedented reality. As we do so, I invite us to hear words I heard this past Sunday from one of our wise SELC elders, Shirley Gast, “Our country has been through times like this before. We’ll get through this. While I *respect* this virus, I don’t *fear* it.” Preach it, sister! To this, hear also Intern Pastor Paul’s words, “There is a place where courage and caution meet.” Preach it, brother! (Oh, right... you did!).

As we navigate this storm, we also remember Jesus’ words to his disciples when, as their boat was being battered by the winds on the Galilean lake, Jesus came walking to them on the water and said, “**Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.**” Look for how Jesus comes to you walking on the water of this storm to say the same thing. Share with one another and all of us how you see and hear that. And know that we’re in this boat together to comfort, strengthen and encourage one another. God is with us! We are with each other! Even when we can’t physically be present together, we live and walk in His love and our love for one another.

Read on for ways in which we are living this out now:

**LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICES ONLINE**

Lenten Midweek and Sunday worship services are offered online. Your Pastor, Intern Pastor, musicians and other worship leaders (no more than 10 total!) will gather to celebrate Lenten worship online with you from the sanctuary at 11:00 am on Wednesdays, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and April 1<sup>st</sup>. Sunday worship, including a sermon and communion with those present and at home, will be celebrated at 10:00 am each week. We will also celebrate Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter worship in this way. (Just to be clear: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, no one other than a few worship leaders will be permitted to join us in the sanctuary at these times).

To watch and worship with us online, just go to our website, [www.selcaz.org](http://www.selcaz.org), scroll down to the bottom of the page, look for the “Watch Services” ‘button,’ click on it, then click on the worship service to the right that you want to watch. You can do this on your desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smart phone, if you have internet services. These will remain available to watch for 90 days. We’re working on a Youtube link as well; watch for info to come on that. We are also working to offer DVD recordings of these services to those without internet.

We also invite you to respond and communicate even during worship times through texts to Pastor Perry’s cell phone, 520-226-6383, or to Intern Pastor Paul’s cell phone, (425) 740-4866. You can also go to our church Facebook page, at “Sierra Evangelical Lutheran Church” to type a

message. We may very well share these texts and messages online as they may enhance and inspire our time together.

Bulletins for services are on our website so you can see what worship will look like and what Bible readings you can prepare for.

### **CARING FOR EACH OTHER IN CHALLENGING TIMES**

We hear a lot about the need for “social distancing” to keep free of possible infection. That *doesn't* mean, though, that we need to be totally socially isolated from each other. Pastor Perry and Intern Pastor Benz are, of course, always available to talk by phone, either at the office, 459-0444 or at other times on their cell phones (see above), or at our emails, [pastor@selcaz.org](mailto:pastor@selcaz.org), or [intern@selcaz.org](mailto:intern@selcaz.org). We'll be available to meet in our offices; just call to schedule a time or stop by to try us during normal business hours. We are also glad to visit you in person, including to share communion, if you're comfortable with that and as long as we stay healthy. Our SELC Visitation Team is also staying in touch by phone or in person (as appropriate) with their usual list of folks they visit as well as others who don't have internet. Let Visitation Team leader, Ellie Unruh, know if you'd like a visit or call from them. We also encourage you to reach out and stay in touch by phone, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email or other ways with your neighbors, friends and family. How encouraging a friendly voice can be when we're feeling lonely and afraid!

### **CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

The church office remains open for the time being from 8 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. You're welcome to call or stop by during those hours for any church business needs or to meet with the pastor or intern. We're also planning on having the church sanctuary open for prayer and meditation at scheduled times during the week. Watch for more info and updates in these weekly newsletters and on our website on when that will be available.

### **MINISTRY NEEDS AND OFFERINGS**

If, especially because of the way people are buying up groceries, you are in need of food, please call our church office and we have some volunteers who have offered to help get those for you. If you have other needs that can't be met in the usual way, please also contact the office. If you'd like to volunteer in these and other ways, also call or email the church office, [admin@selcaz.org](mailto:admin@selcaz.org).

In addition, our local foodbanks and other helping ministries will be needing that much more help and donations than ever before. Please consider God's call to you to help out in whatever makes sense. For St. Vincent de Paul, please give your food donations at 614 E. Bartow Drive from 12-4, Monday through Friday.

While we can't gather offerings in worship, we do offer an online option for giving by going to the church website: [www.selcaz.org](http://www.selcaz.org) and click on “giving” on the purple stripe at top of page. On the Giving page will be information and a place to click to give online. If you have questions call Sandy Stephenson, Financial Secretary at 378-4678. You may also mail your offering or bring it to the church office.