

October 2021

Wk	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
39						1	2
40	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
41	10	11 <small>Columbus Day</small>	12	13	14	15	16
42	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
43	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
44	31 <small>Halloween</small>						

First of the Month @ CLC

October 1, 2021

Dear Christ Lutheran Church,

A lot of people, when they think about the church, think about a place, a set of buildings, and probably specifically a sanctuary. All of that is completely understandable since we call places we drive by where people gather for worship “a church.” And they even have a sign out front saying it’s so: “Christ Lutheran Church.”

But I hope we all know that a building really isn’t The Church.

The earliest usage of the word “church” in the New Testament was from the Apostle Paul. In his day, there were no buildings designed specifically for Christian worship purposes. Instead, “church” referred to a gathered people, “called out” (the actual meaning of the Greek word for *church*) from secular living to sacred purposes. “Church,” for Paul and the other New Testament writers, was always people, specifically people of faith, living in relationship with one another.

We continue to struggle at being “church” together in these pandemic days. We just completed a vast phone call survey of our congregation. By a rough estimate, one quarter of our church does not feel comfortable in gathering on campus for worship because of COVID. I understand the fear, but it makes it hard to be in a relationship together when people are apart.

Recognizing the importance of keeping our worshippers connected for worship each week, the Church Board recently approved money to improve our live-stream and on-line presence. We soon will be adding a second camera to the viewing which will allow for smoother transitions between shots. You should also notice improved quality with following the words to the songs while watching the musicians/singers. We will be converting the old sound room to a video production room. We hope to get started on this project in the next couple of weeks.

I am impressed with the Bible studies and small groups that continue meeting on Zoom. It is refreshing to be able to connect with those unable to gather on campus, and also fascinating to have former members who have moved out of state reconnect.

Activity is high on campus. Both the 7th-8th grade and 9th grade confirmation classes are meeting regularly. Sunday school is happening. Worship choir is back in practice on Thursday. Until recently, a group had faithfully been making meals and serving them at Sequoia Lodge (on hold for a time now due to an outbreak there of COVID). A grief support group has started, and a care givers support group continues to meet. And two weeks ago we kicked off the fall session of small groups (all meeting on Sunday morning at 11:00 on campus).

And yet I worry about the gaps we are missing in keeping people connected to one another as “the church.”

In as much as we desire to be connected as “the church,” there are times when we are purposely disconnected; when a member passes away and joins the Church Triumphant. This past month we had Celebration of Life services for four of our wonderful members: Carolyn Meffert, George Allen, Dixie Hover, and Kellie Kusserow. Some lived a long life, and some passed away too early. But in all the church came together to honor their memories and to support their families.

When gathering for worship on the 26th we also honored the memory of many who have passed away and in whose names financial gifts had been given. Over the past year we updated the foyer and the sanctuary and dedicated that work in worship. But one of my greatest “slip ups” was forgetting the name of one in whose name significant sums were given – Chris Helgeson. Chris was a wonderful man of faith (some of you might even remember his father, Arnold, who was a member years ago). We lost Chris in 2015, but his memory lives on through the gracious support of his wife, Janice, who made it possible for many of the upgrades in the sanctuary. Thank you, Janice.

The month to come promises to offer many congregational highlights. On October 9 our church staff and Board will be spending the day in a leadership retreat. The purpose of the retreat is to rethink our church ministry structure in order to help us be effective. October 15-16 is the “Time Out” retreat; a chance to step away from the rush of life in order to hear the voice of God. October 17 and 24 will be a New Members’ class, which will also invite back the group who got aced out of their last class in March of 2020. CLIPArts is gearing up for a January start date, meaning registrations and hirings will be happening soon. And at the end of the month it is not only Reformation Sunday, but also the Harvest Festival; a much scaled down event promoting fun and safety, but heavy on the *fun* part.

The Music Minister Search Team is in their second round of advertising for the position. The deadline for resumes for this round is October 15. Please keep them in your prayers.

As we look to the future we are once again rather unclear how this pandemic will sort out. Will new variants cause further restrictions? Will vaccinations prove effective in reducing the spread? What seems to be clear is that there won’t all of a sudden be a day when everything will return to normal (that is, this process will be more like a light dimmer slowly coming on and not a light switch). That said, of the 25%

who are currently staying away due to the pandemic, it may be sometime before we are able to more fully gather in person as the church. And not all will come back at once.

Christ Lutheran Church meets in a building on a campus, and we are fortunate to have a great place to gather. And we meet on-line, and we are fortunate to have the technology to do so. But Christ Lutheran Church is people, with different stories, different experiences, different perspectives, and different gifts. But what unites us is a God who has revealed God's self in Jesus. And because of Jesus, we are learning to love like him, and thereby becoming a community transformed by grace. It is a noble pursuit to be the church, and one worth giving one's energy, time, and commitment to.

Thank you for letting me be your pastor.

Brian Malison

