

August 30, 2020

Greetings Good People of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church,

Much has happened since the stay at home order was issued in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We had to learn quickly how to live as Christ's body, the church, in some different ways. Since in-person worship was suspended we created some innovative ways for us to worship and be fed: sending printed materials to those who do not have electronic access to information and resources, special edition biweekly emails with musical selections, video messages and sermons, and gatherings on Zoom. These means of communication, support, and worship have been helpful for us to carry on our ministry of Jesus' love. This letter serves to update you on the following aspects of our life together: **our ministries, our financial position, what to expect in the fall, and our plan to return to in-person worship.**

Thank you for your amazing generosity, faithfulness and love you've shown with one another and the ministries here at Prince of Peace. We truly have been loving ourselves, loving our neighbors and therefore, loving God with all of our heart, strength, mind, and soul in very deliberate ways these past months.

Our **Food Pantry** has gone from serving thirty people a month to median of 110 people per week. Our Social Missions Feeding Ministry has affected this massive expansion through effective management of our volunteer base under a scrupulous tiered safety protocol and by cultivating deeper partnerships with other groups in Marlton to help support the pantry. Our chief community partners include Saint Joan of Arc Roman Catholic Church, Christ Presbyterian Church, Congregation Beth Tikvah, the Indian Cultural Center of South Jersey, Wiley Mission, as well as several local businesses: Rastelli's Market and Trader Joe's in Marlton, and ShopRite in Medford; plus, the hundreds of individuals from Prince of Peace and the community who have made gifts to the pantry through in-kind and /or cash donations. To date the pantry has received over \$35,000 in cash donations and we have spent about \$9,000 of that amount. We have made an educated guess that in-kind donations total approximately \$70,000 so far. The team has calculated that we can feed one person per week for about \$32. We anticipate that the volume will remain constant for the foreseeable future. In addition, we continue to send 10% of our in-kind donations to the pantry run by our ministry partner Bridge of Peace Lutheran Church in Camden.

This summer marked the third year of our **Summer Meals Program** where we provide breakfast and lunch Monday through Friday for children who normally received free and reduced meals from the government during the school year. This year's program will end next week having served approximately 7,600 meals to kids this summer; that's 2,600 more than last year. Thankfully we applied for and received a grant from the NJ Synod that supports the bulk of this project. Thank you to each of you who have also made special contributions to help support this important ministry.

This July we held **Vacation Bible School** completely online or as we like to call it V<sup>2</sup>BS (Virtual Vacation Bible School) for thirty young people and twelve staff. It was a smashing success. Thank you to all of the teachers, coordinators and college students who helped to make the technology and curriculum come together.

Our **graduating high school seniors** received Blessing Blankets from the congregation as usual but instead of receiving them at an in-person worship service I conducted private blessing services with each senior and their immediate family. The graduates also received celebratory garden flags from the congregation, which were hand delivered by some of the POP Council Members. The flags were sponsored by Action Team dollars from Thrivent Financial. Both the blankets and the flags were greatly appreciated by the graduates and their families.

The congregation continued to gather for study and fellowship through electronic means: Weekly and monthly Adult Bible studies, Confirmation, Discipleship Practice, Book Group, ministry meetings, and a summer Adult Forum series. During this time of COVID-19 we have had new people join us in Worship, Family Education and Social Missions Ministries. In addition, many have found the in-person physically distanced outdoor coffee hours we launched during the summer to be a time of refreshment and connection, sponsored by the Health & Addiction Ministry.

We are so thankful to share that the congregation is doing well **financially**. At the present we are in the black at about \$7,000. A position in which we often do not find ourselves in at the end of the summer months. **Thank you for your incredible generosity** which keeps Christ's ministry through us alive and thus gives life to others. The leadership of the congregation did apply for the Payroll Protection Program offered through the Cares Act from the government and we were awarded this grant. Our spending, as could be expected, is below normal for this time of year. However, we did need to make some non-budgeted expenditures (tents and a portable sound system) to enable us to meet for outdoor worship gatherings that will be forthcoming. If you would like to make donations to help defray the costs, it would be indeed a blessing. Mark such donations "**Worship Expenses.**"

Most of you know that we launched the **Sustained Campaign** in the fall of 2018 in effort to reduce some debt to ourselves as well as address various building improvements. Please see the attached flyer which gives a snapshot summary of our projects. There will be a comprehensive report from the committee in the weeks to come. Again, thank you so much for your continued generosity to make these projects come to reality. We still haven't reached our final goal, but we are close.

As we move into September, we are grateful for people's compliance and patience in following the health recommendations of frequent handwashing, keeping physical distance, reducing movement, and wearing masks that cover mouth and nose. Thankfully the rate of transmission (rt) number is presently below 1. The virus, however, IS still among us and vigilance is key, especially as we move into the fall and the opening of schools.

We continue to be guided by the two greatest commands of our Lord Jesus, that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength by loving our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore, with this our guide we will continue to move forward with deliberate caution and care. The Congregation Council has established a Safety Team to help guide the Council with a plan to do ministry safely during this time period. At this time, in our *"Love One Another Plan"* we are in the 'gather outdoors with physical distance' phase. The majority of our ministries may be conducted out-of-doors while observing physical distance of six feet while wearing a mouth and nose mask. Some very small groups of individuals are able to gather inside the building with masks and distanced for very specific ministries activities that must take place inside the building. Hence, we will be gathering for a **test run of outdoor in-person worship Sunday, September 6, 2020 at 9:30 am under tents in our back lot behind the church building.** Afterward, the Council, Safety Team, Staff and Congregation will take some time to evaluate our outdoor worship as well as allow time for schools to settle into their new routine. Therefore, **September 13<sup>th</sup>** we will worship as we have been up until this time (online) with hopes that we can move to regular weekly in-person outdoor services starting **September 20<sup>th</sup>**. We are very conscious that for a portion of you worshipping in-person is not prudent therefore we will offer the following options:

**You will be able to engage in worship in the following ways.**

1. Receive a printed booklet in the mail that will help your worship 'at home'. Some have already been receiving this type of worship support. If you would like this resource, please contact the office.
2. Watch Pastor Brett's sermon link in Friday's Special Edition email online, listen to Mr. Kirk's weekly music suggestions and pray the prayers offered each week in the same Friday email.
3. Gather with others for an online worship service via zoom at the scheduled times, Saturdays at 5:30 pm
4. Come to the in-person outdoor worship service with Communion. These services will happen rain or shine. To attend these services, you must do the following: bring your own chair, wear a mask covering mouth and nose, remain six feet from those not in your immediate household, give your name and phone number as you enter. **Other things to expect for our outdoor worship:** joy, the presence of the Holy Spirit, being fed with the Word, Sacrament and Fellowship, beauty, music but not singing as this is a dangerous activity in regard to virus transmission, Communion with bread alone (there are too many difficulties in distributing the wine safely. I will bring the bread, in a covered container, around through the crowd to each person and place it on your open hand with a pair of tongs whereupon when I move to the next person you can lift your mask and commune.) Connection with God's creation and much more. I invite you to be sure to focus on the gifts of our being able to worship in this way rather than the differences.

**Internet Access.** If you do not have access to the internet and would like to do so that you can connect to our ministry more dynamically, we have an in-house program that will help set it up for you so that you may remain connected. Please let us know if this interests you.

**What about indoor worship?** Believe you me, I want to return to indoor worship but only when it is safe for us to do so. The Council and the Safety Team are creating plans based upon the recommendations of trusted health officials working closely with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America so that when we believe it is an act of love for all to open the building for worship we will.

**Learning Ministries for the fall:** Discipleship Practice, Confirmation, and Adult Learning. The leadership is working on an innovative plan for these ministries to gather **safely** outdoors. Please stay tuned for more to be revealed this month.

May the Lord Jesus continue to sustain us in Christ's ministry of love!

Peace and All Good!

Brother Brett, Pastor

## Sustain Campaign (July 2020)



Redo' Nursery Walls & Nursery Bathroom



The office and nursery have been freshened up with new paint (Laura Glatz) and window treatments (Jo Ann Cubberley).

Windows have been replaced. Rotted wood siding has been removed and replaced with stucco to match the front of the church.

Redo' Church Office



Outside Luther Hall (back parking lot)

Total Paid back to POP		
Payment 6		\$25,000
Payment 5		\$20,835
Payment 4		\$16,668
Payment 3		\$12,501
Payment 2		\$ 8,334
Payment 1		\$ 4,167

Property Projects	Status	Project cost
Luther Hall floor repair	Date TBD	\$ 2,500
Painting, Capping Trim and Gutters	Fall 2020	\$ 7,915
Siding replacement	Completed!	\$ 12,500
Window replacement	Completed!	\$ 21,039
Parking lot	Completed!	\$ 8,200
Sanctuary HVAC	Completed!	\$ 20,941
*Remaining funds needed to complete all projects and final deficit reduction		\$ 13,942