

Dear Members of the Body of Christ,

During the month of May we continue to celebrate the season of Easter. Yes, we will hear Easter hymns of victory over death and joy and hope and love. But then such good news is often included in the hymns we sing. This question often helps me filter issues of compassion and justice in our nation and throughout the world. *“How does God’s love aide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?”* [1 John 3.17]

We live in a nation that promotes democracy and strives to abide by the U.S. Constitution. That is reassuring as I hear of civil strife throughout the world. But any man made institution has limits, the church on earth, congregations in Zelenople and our state and federal government. Congregations who proclaim Christ’s victory over death and forgiveness of sins struggle to be in the world but not of the world.

As we continue to be bombarded with news, one question that is not usually on the agenda is, *“Who is my neighbor?”* [Luke 10:29] We don’t ask this question to justify ourselves as did the lawyer standing before Jesus, but to search our hearts to see how we can respond to those in need as did the Good Samaritan. Houses burn down, people confront life and death questions, we see our neighbors near and on TV suffer. Our congregation, the ELCA and all Christians continue to search and research to find workable solutions for feeding the hungry, providing jobs with just wages and benefits, offering educational opportunities, being brave enough to reach out to strangers. We constantly ask ourselves, “What would Jesus have us do?”

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us. [1 John 3.23-24]

The love we have for one another is experienced as we greet one another at worship or in the grocery store. The love we have for one another abounds at the food pantry at Zion Lutheran the 3rd Tuesday of each month as hundreds in our community receive food. The love abides in us when we reach out with a phone call or letter to someone. The love of Christ is evident to those who see the world through eyes of faith.

This May is the month of Easter Sundays for us. By the death of Jesus we have our sins forgiven so that we are free to serve one another and the unknown other. Some of us will be at our synod’s stewardship training. May 6th to enhance our stewardship skills so that we can serve others. On May 13th we hope our families with youth will join us at Camp Lutherlyn for **CampBlast** to experience the many activities offered to campers each summer. First time campers qualify for \$100 discount and our Willing Workers are willing to provide camp scholarships to assist campers.

Preparations are already underway for Pentecost on June 4th when Luke and Sydney will be confirmed. We look forward to seeing you at our Pentecost celebration. Oh, and of course the women of our congregation will be remembered on Sunday, May 14th when our nation celebrates Mother’s day.

Christ has been raised from the dead. Christ has forgiven our sins. Christ is alive to the world as we at St. Paul are the church on earth.

Alleluia, Christ is alive.

Jesus lives.

Amen, amen, amen.

Pastor Bev