



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 309 • 38 North High Street

Arendtsville, PA 17303

717 • 677 • 8921

pastorbensiebert@gmail.com

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Dear people of Trinity,

Blessings to you and to all this Eastertide. As we live in this liturgical season of Christ appearing in extraordinarily ordinary places, it is my prayer that Christ would be made known to you in the waters and tables of daily living.

It would be wrong for me to write much more without giving much more thanks than I have. Over the past month, we have received so many offerings and donations of support from you. Thank you, for making the work and ministry of God through Trinity a priority in this and every season. While our giving is expectantly less than when we are gathered together, and the bills certainly always continue, I am nonetheless so proud of the way you have responded to a different way of giving.

I am happy to also report that Trinity was approved in the second round of the Paycheck Protection Program offered by the federal government. This program allows the congregation 8 weeks to continue its regular payroll, including myself, through a loan that, dependent on its use, is eligible for forgiveness later on. I would like to thank Nancy Costella and Brad Hollabaugh, our Treasurer and Stewardship & Finance Chair respectively, along with our Council for their work on this front.

Along with this boon, bills beyond payroll continue for the congregation. In response to this, and in great thankfulness to your generosity, we have once again included an addressed envelope for your convenience. If you are able to continue this good work, please feel encouraged to do so. If you are in a place where this is not possible, please know that you are supported in that decision. No matter what, know that all you have done for Trinity is appreciated!

If you are like me, you may have found yourself dreaming of the day we are able to gather again. In this, I ask for your patience, and willingness to change practice when we are able to return. It is always important to make the wellbeing of our neighbors and the most vulnerable in our midst a priority, just as Jesus does. When Jesus saw money changing at the heart of the temple, he cleared the moneychangers out and replaced them with the blind, the lame, and the voices of children (Matthew 21:12-17). The center of our worship must always be Christ, and all those he places at the center of the temple.

Now entering May, we continue to look toward the Lower Susquehanna Synod and Pennsylvania state officials for guidance and safe practice. As we eagerly and patiently wait, Council and I recognize that *how* we worship in the future will be more complicated than we might first expect. Please take heart that, in response to PA and Synod guidance, Council and I are already thinking about issues for when we are able to gather once again, including how to sanitize the worship space after use, how the sacraments might be safely offered, whether to use hymnals, whether and when to sing (particles travel much farther when singing!), and many other factors. With the gathering limit set at 25 for PA's "Yellow Zone" (at the time of this letter, we are still in the "Red Zone"), it is also important to recognize that returning to worship may still be weeks away.

Included with this letter is “An Order for Home Worship” outline for the month of May. We include this not in anticipation of a specific return date, but in a proactive approach to our worship needs. As a reminder, weekday video daily devotionals, sermons on podcast, and other worship materials can all be found on our website, trinityarendtsville.org, under the “News & Online Content” tab. Should you or your neighbor be in need of any support, please do not hesitate to reach out to myself (pastorbensiebert@gmail.com, 419-953-8158) or the church office (office@trinityarendtsville.org, 717-677-8921).

The days may be strange and complicated, and the work of coming back from this may be arduous and unforgiving. Yet, we know that Christ walks with us on this and every road. Take heart, people of Trinity, for we do not go about our work alone.

Peace,

Pastor Ben Siebert