



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

June 5th, 2020

Dear people of Trinity,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we enter June, I write to you in a sea of reports, regulations, conversations, and prayers for the direction of the wider church and our own congregation surrounding the reopening process and issues addressing Covid-19. All this is mixed with the increasing cries of our society that the issues of injustice to which our black and African American siblings have been subjected to be dealt with in the urgency such injustice deserves. I find it difficult to hear two people thinking the same things about these issues, and to have all of these things happening at once can be overwhelming and divisive. I have come to believe that this divisiveness is a byproduct of our own abilities to reason and think and learn mixed with, unfortunately, a distrust we have toward one another.

We strain to reconcile the fact that we do indeed tend to trust others less than ourselves and the fact that we have been tied together as a church and as a society by the God of heaven and earth. While our distrust may seem to push us away from one another, our whole societal experience, our whole life experience, requires us to interact with one another. We are in a position where we must figure out how to, at the very least, co-exist.

I believe the Christian calling is about *more* than co-existence. I believe the Christian calling is one of love for our neighbor, the stranger, the orphan, the alien, the widow, and the oppressed. I believe that throughout our scripture, we see God responding to the cries of those most in need and that, being joint-heirs with Jesus, we are called to carry on with that happy family tradition. Our actions are to be born out of love.

It is out of love that the Council, Task Force and myself continue to read and talk through the rapidly updated regulations and recommendations from the State of Pennsylvania, the Lower Susquehanna Synod, and the ELCA. We continue to work through the process for reopening, going through each detail of worship and use of the building with great care.

It is out of love that you have responded so very strongly to the continuing financial responsibilities and ministries of Trinity throughout this time. I am so deeply proud and impressed of the way you have kept this congregation as a priority in your lives, even as we are unable to meet face to face. Thank you for, by the Spirit, loving this congregation into existence.

It is out of love that we continue to push ourselves toward responding to the cries of our neighbor, whether in the issue of systemic injustice, a pandemic, or the daily struggles of living everyday life. Thank you for checking in with each other. Thank you for your prayers for the church and one another. Thank you for your love.

It is out of love that I continue to push us towards more than co-existence. As members in Christ's church, and we are to follow Christ wherever he would lead. With great consistency, Christ leads us into care for our neighbor and the stranger.

These are extraordinary times. Our calling of love remains the same.

In an effort to help rejuvenate us, I have developed An Order for Home Worship materials for June. These are included with this letter, and can also be found on our website (trinityarendtsville.org) under the "News & Online Materials" tab. Please share these with anyone you wish.

Additionally, the Stewardship & Finance Committee has done great work in making online offerings and giving available through our website and mobile app. For those interested, simply go to the church website and click on the "Give" tab, following the instructions. For those interested in the mobile app, simply go to your app store and look up the "Give Plus +" app. Simply look Trinity up by name or zip code, and follow the on-screen instructions from there. Right now, only Electronic Fund Transfers are possible for online and mobile giving, but we anticipate that Credit and Debit Card transactions will be available a few days from now. Understanding that our giving patterns are varied throughout the congregation, we have also included a self-addressed envelope if you would like to support the work and ministry of Trinity with a check. As always, if you find yourself in a financial position to support the congregation and its work or if find that you are not in a position to share financially, know that you are supported in whatever you discern to be right for you at this time. Each and every one of you are a valued piece of Trinity.

Even as our God calls us to more than co-existence and pushes us to be more loving than we were before, I am so thankful to have been a part of this congregation for six years, and cannot wait to see what the future has in store for us.

Peace,

Pastor Ben Siebert