



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2021

A publication focused on the journey ahead for
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Woodstock, GA

THE INTERIM JOURNEY

This is the first of a series of articles designed to keep you up to date with what is going on with the interim time and the call process at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. If you have questions along the way, please feel free to ask.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the August picnic. We worshiped, ate, talked, and played together—that's fun and good for our relationships with each other and with God. You were asked to answer one question at the picnic. It turns out that Good Shepherd has a lot to celebrate.

No congregation is perfect, but it is clear that we recognize the good things about Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, including what we might say about it to neighbors and strangers. How can we build on our strengths, our history, and our present ministries to understand what God is calling us to do in the future? Once we have

some clarity about that vision, we will know better what kind of pastor we need to lead us there.

During the interim time, the Call Committee, Congregation Council, and I are going to be asking you, all the members of Good Shepherd, to tell us stories about your experiences at Good Shepherd and your hopes for its future. Your responses will help us create a preferred future for Good Shepherd and try out some ways to create that future.

This process focuses on what is positive and life-giving. It engages Scripture and weaves the biblical story with the congregation's story. It emphasizes what God has done and is doing in our lives, in the life of the congregation, and in the life of the world—and how we as a congregation respond to God's grace-filled activities.

The picnic survey was one of the first steps in the

process, a warm-up for what is to come. The members of the Call Committee will be named by the Congregation Council soon. We are going on a journey together into God's future for Good Shepherd. Get ready!

See page two for the responses to the questions Pastor Ruth asked members on the day of the church family picnic.



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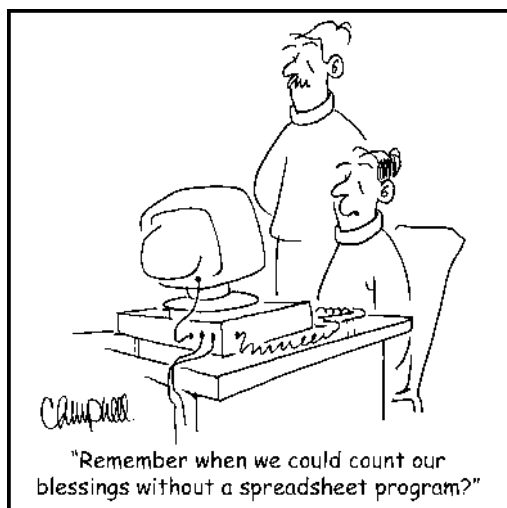
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Council Highlights

August, 2021

- Pastor Ruth led the council in a discussion of the call process. She particularly focused on using "Appreciative Inquiry" in talking with members of the congregation about what is going well at Good Shepherd and where we should be heading.
- After a discussion about COVID data, council approved a policy to require wearing masks when indoors on the GSLC campus.



QUESTION RESPONSES FROM CONGREGATION

Take a look at some of the heartfelt responses to the August survey:

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is at its best when we...

- Sing
- Pray
- Come together as a congregation
- Eat together
- Do outreach activities
- Worship together

I love Good Shepherd Lutheran Church because...

- It's my family and home
- I can serve my Christian faith with others
- The congregation is very welcoming
- Because over the years as members struggle to be Christ-like, I've seen the Holy Spirit moving in and through us.
- Of the friends, the music, the people, and the life lessons

Name one way that Good Shepherd Lutheran Church has changed you for the better.

- It was comforting to learn God actually loves me, and nothing can change that because of Jesus

- I've become more appreciative of the fellowship that binds us together
- Hearing the sermons each week helps me to "do unto others as I would want them to do unto me."
- My faith has grown in leaps and bounds
- It has given me a sense of community and a family I love. And a way to participate in leading worship and to sing joyfully to the Lord!

How would you describe Good Shepherd Lutheran Church to a neighbor?

- Welcoming
- Friendly
- Loving and caring
- Sincere
- Devout

What's the most important part of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church for you?

- Small groups
- Sunday School
- Community for myself and my children
- Serving our Lord in any way our gifts can be used
- Weekly worship



A note of thanks....

Accolades

- Many thanks to our dedicated Sunday School teachers and assistants this year.
- Many thanks to all the people that gave blood at our Red Cross Blood Drive on Saturday, August 14th.
- Thanks and praise for a beautiful day for our church family picnic and for all of those that participated, served and gave their time to make this day a success.



A letter from the Bishop

August 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

The writer of second Corinthians states: ¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁸ because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16, 18)

So, we do not lose heart! Here we are not a year and a half into this global pandemic of COVID-19. And I don't know about you, but it feels easier to lose heart than not. But we are a people who are reminded that God invites us not to lose heart. Even when all seems wasted away, hard, dark, or lonely.

I have been so incredibly proud of each of you and your resiliency, faith, and love for your neighbor throughout this pandemic. But I write to you now, asking that you do not lose heart. Asking that you keep it up now more than ever. We are not out of this pandemic.

The delta variant of the corona virus has rapidly become the dominant strain in the US and is causing the current fifth wave of cases. Unlike the alpha variant, this strain has been demonstrated to be able to be spread by fully immunized individuals who may not have any or just mild symptoms. Dr. Walensky, director of the CDC, acknowledged in her news conference on Tuesday, July 27, 2022 that she knows how weary and fatigued people are from this pandemic. During this news conference, she acknowledged the increased risks associated with the Delta Variant and the risk to unvaccinated individuals, including children not yet old enough to receive the vaccine.

Dr. Walensky's concerns about the Delta Variant were due to the transmission of COVID 19 from vaccinated individuals to unvaccinated individuals and the small percentage of vaccinated individuals experiencing breakthrough cases. In response to these new findings, the CDC was again recommending that all individuals (vaccinated and unvaccinated) practice social distancing, wash hands frequently, wear a mask when in an indoor public space and that all eligible individuals get vaccinated as soon as possible. She did not issue the recommendation lightly, but with great consideration of how the emotional well-being and mental health of Americans has been affected by the pandemic and with a full grasp of the science as scientists and medical professionals continue to grapple with understanding this virus and search for solutions.

If we can reduce spread with increased mask use in public, we can slow the mutation rate of the delta virus before it makes our current vaccines ineffective or significantly less effective.

As of now, out of an abundance of caution and concern for our communities, I have moved our August Candidacy Committee and Synod Council to zoom. The Interim Ministry Retreat and Staff Retreat for September at Lutheranch has been cancelled. The Convocation for October has been cancelled. And there will be no in person meetings at the synod office at this time. Staff will travel only if necessary. We will readdress this again at the end of October. I am also encouraging each of you for God's Work Our Hands Day on September 12th that you think of acts and ways of service that would offer aide to our neighbors without gatherings. One of the best ways we may think of this day of service is helping people find COVID testing, getting vaccinated, offering care baskets to those who work in the medical field, etc.

I now urge all congregations to wear masks indoors (whether vaccinated or not), and get vaccinated if you are eligible. Advocate for the science behind the vaccine and its importance. Do not make it about politics, for in doing so, people may choose not to seek to receive this lifesaving vaccine. Instead, follow the CDC guidelines, and think strongly about phasing back to mitigate the risk and spread of this virus within your community.

Hospitals in all four of our states in this synod are becoming overwhelmed again; just as they were at the start of this pandemic. We cannot afford to regress. We must all fight to mitigate all risks, fight this virus, and help to ensure all who are able get vaccinated.

Please seek guidance from our synod COVID page: <https://www.elca-ses.org/covid> We will continue to offer synod sermons weekly to give your pastors a break and those are translated into Spanish and made available through a 1-800 line. Please also look at this page for resources from our ecumenical consultation, the CDC, World Health Organization, videos from around our synod, and sites offering vaccines.

Let us pray. Facing the coronavirus, we pray for all who mourn their dead for the thousands who have contracted the virus for all who are quarantined for those who are stranded away from home for those who have lost their employment for those who fear the present and the future for children who cannot assemble for school for parents with needs for child care for physicians, nurses, and home health aides for hospitals and clinics for volunteers who are serving their communities for medical researchers for the Food shelters and relief organizations. . . for adequate and wise governmental policies. . . for all the other things we lift now in lament. . . and for those who work tirelessly for a cure.

Journeying Together with you, so we do not lose heart!

+The Reverend Kevin L. Strickland, Bishop



SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA



Bishop Kevin Strickland

CHURCH FAMILY PICNIC



[Click to see more pictures of the picnic here...](#)