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Newsletter of Martin Luther
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Why Covid-19, God?

This is a questions, we as believers might ask. I read an article in “The Magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada” dealing with this question and I’d like to share it with you. This article was written by: Dr. Tim Hegedus:

For over a year, we have been living under the Covid 19 pandemic. It has not been easy. Millions of people have become ill. Many have died. It has especially affected seniors and those whose health is precarious. We have learned to live in our separate “bubbles” apart from family members and loved ones. Naturally, some people are asking, “Why did God allow this?”

It’s a new version of the old question of theodicy (from the Greek words for God, *theos*, and justice, *dike*). The question of theodicy asks, **“If God is loving and powerful than how can God be just since God allows bad things to happen?”**

One of the standard answers to this question is that God allows bad things to happen in order to teach us a lesson. Just as a child who has a temper tantrum may receive a “time out” from their parent, according to this argument. God also allows human beings to suffer when we

have done wrong. The theological term for doing wrong is “sin”. Thus, the reason that bad things happen is because of our sin?

In the Bible, the question of theodicy is central to the book of Job. The main character, Job, is consistently described as righteous. He was blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil (Job 1,1).

Nevertheless, God allows Job to experience great suffering: he loses his wealth, his children are killed, and he himself is afflicted with terrible boils. Then, in the central portion of the book, we read numerous dialogues between Job and three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

Throughout their speeches, these so called friends keep reminding Job that the reason he has suffered so much is because he has sinned. His suffering is his own fault.

However, at the end of the book we discover that God disagrees with the verdict of Job’s three friends. God says that Job’s friends have not spoken of me what is right (Job 42,7). Instead, God continues to regards Job as righteous and Job receives back everything that had been taken from him.

The message of the book of Job is that ultimately the reason why bad

things happen to us is a mystery. When God appears to Job out of a whirlwind Job says: “Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know... therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Far too often Christians come across as people who love to criticize and blame others as “sinners”. But the most important message in the Bible is not about blame or condemnation; rather, it is grace.

The central message in the Bible is that when bad things happen, God shows us love and comes to be with us. God does not sit up in heaven judging and condemning us.

Instead, in Jesus, God comes to us and shares in our suffering with us – even in the extent of dying on the cross.

During this pandemic, we need to remember that God is with us. God is especially with those who are sick and dying of Covid-19. God is also with the doctors and medical workers who are caring for people who have the disease. God is with those who grieve the loss of loved ones. God is with “long haulers” who recover from Covid 19 but still have symptoms that continue for month thereafter. God is with all of us who are afraid of the disease.

The God we know in Jesus Christ comes to us and stays with us in all our pain, suffering and loss because this God has suffered as we do. And God will bring us through this pandemic and lead us to be with God and with all our loved ones in the new creation waiting ahead for us.

Dr. Tim Hegedus, Waterloo ON



PRESIDENTS

REPORT

Fellow Parishioners

The Covid pandemic continues and regretfully our church is closed so there is little to report.

Taking advantage of the closure, we will have the floors of the Narthex and Sanctuary covered with a new protective coating. This will involve removing: first all the pews, moving the electric organ and the piano on the elevated platform, second, the cleaning and coating the floor and third, putting benches, piano and organ back into their place.

The Soffits on the side door leading to the basements have been replaced as a squirrel got in there. Once repaired the inventive squirrel bit through a piece of old wood and got in again. Olaf has kindly closed the whole with metal sheet (after verifying the squirrel was outside) and so hopefully this will not be an issue further.

The parents for the Kindergarten have agreed to pay a surcharge for the coming term, and as there are enough children registered to cover the costs, the council has renewed the lease with St. Stephens and the Kindergarten will continue in the fall.

We are still enquiring about the possibility of being allowed to build a small bell tower on top of the roof (see attached photo) but it is proving difficult to get a definite answer out of city hall. Due to Covid, everyone is working on line from home and finding the responsible person to get a definite answer is far from easy.



We have bought a portable sound booster, just like the one we rented for the last two outdoor services. This means if the weather is good and regulations permit we can hold many summer services outside. This way we may be able to overcome future limits on indoor services.

Klaus Moritz rewired the back of the altar and the feed going to the pastor's office. Everything is now up to code (which it certainly was not before) and works fine. Many thanks Klaus

That is about all we can report.

Have a great summer, get vaccinated and hopefully we will be able to meet in regular fashion soon

Konrad and Sonny

What do our confirmation students do?

Since last September, we have been meeting online once a week.

I have to admire the young people for taking the time every week to sit down in front of the computer and do confirmation classes in addition to school, which unfortunately is also taking place online very often at the moment.

We shared our fears and hopes about the pandemic and it is frightening to see that our children and young people are growing up with the fear of family members dying at such a time. Maybe the children's fears are a bit lost at the moment, but they are existential fears for the kids. They hear in the media that this virus is deadly, that it can hit anyone. The kids have been living with this for over a year now,

and there is seldom any change for them. Let's hope and pray that it will end soon and that happier times will come again.

So how do we deal with these fears?

We asked the young people to express their fears, but also their gratitude, to God in a prayer. I want to print one of the prayers here, I think it is very well done and shows exemplarily how the children (and also us) are feeling right now:

Dear God,

I have been anxious lately about school and everything that is happening in the world right now, it seems as if nothing is going right.

But thank you for giving me hope and a reason to smile everyday by seeing my best friend at school and being around loving and caring family. Thank you for all the good things that have come with the bad things.

Amen

NEW CONFIRMANDS WANTED

Do you have children or grandchildren who are of confirmation age (12-14 years)? Then we would be happy if they would like to join us or look in. After the summer is the best opportunity to do so!

The course is in English and we do it together with Faith Lutheran Church Ottawa. The course last 2 years. It's more fun when there are more youth together. We hope to be able to meet in person - and not just online - starting in September. We also want to go on trips together.

We learn about faith, the Bible, Jesus Christ, but also where faith itself affects us. We can pray, that can relieve us. We learn about the church holidays and their meaning, we think about what gives us hope, or why and how the world was created.

There are no prerequisites for this class, no prior knowledge is necessary.

Please feel free to contact Pastor Kierschke (Martin Luther Church) or Pastor Malina (Faith Lutheran).

We look forward to seeing new faces



THE WEDDING IN KANA, WATER BECOMES WINE?

By: Gunter Bauer

The story of the Wedding in Kana appears only in John's Gospel (John 2: 1-12). It is probably the narrative in the bible that has the most interpretations. Bishop Spong of the Episcopal Church suggested in his book, *Born of a Woman*, the wedding was between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The "Church of the Latter-Day Saints", goes one step further. They believe that the wedding is between Jesus, Mary Magdalene, as well the two sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany. Thomas Aquinas assumed that the Evangelist John himself is the bridegroom, since neither the groom nor the bride have been mentioned by name. This cannot be possible, since Jesus and John lived in different time periods. There are also various symbolic interpretations. Since the wedding occurred on the third day, according to the Jewish custom, the wedding is a prophecy that Jesus will rise on the third day after his crucifixion. There are many more

interpretations, but most of them make only any sense having the knowledge we have today.

We should keep in mind, that John has written the Gospel in the cosmopolitan city of Ephesus (a city in present-day Turkey) at the end of the first century, about sixty years after the wedding had taken place. John portrayed Jesus as the Son of God, who could do miracles. The gospel was written mostly for Diaspora-Jews and Greek people. The image of Jesus as Son of God had to compete with the popular Hellenic God Dionysus, the God of wine and festivities. The town of Kana, or Khirbet Kana, as it was known then, is located about seven kilometers north of Nazareth in Galilee. Excavations by archaeologists in 1998 have revealed that Kana was a well-connected village in the Hellenistic and Roman period (323 BC – 324 AD). Discovery of the foundations of a synagogue, several Jewish ritual bath houses and MacCabean coins, have indicated, that Kana was a vibrant Jewish village. Weddings at that time were major festivities with music, dancing, plenty of food and wine. The marriage ceremony was hardly what we would call today a religious ceremony. Jesus mother and her sons were also invited to the wedding. It could have been, that Mary was related to the bride or

groom, since she became quite concerned what happened. When Jesus arrived with some of his disciples, everyone was well fed and probably a bit tipsy. Jesus embraced his mother and his brothers. This was his land and these were his people. The people knew who he was and they greeted him warmly. The men kissed Jesus on his lips to make him feel welcomed. It was then that the party ran out of wine and Mary said to Jesus: *"They do not have wine"*. Jesus replied, what seemed to be a bit harsh, to his mother: *"Woman, I have nothing for you". My hour has not come yet"*. John (2:1-12) tells us that Jesus had the six stone jars filled with fresh water and had given them to the master of the festivity. He tasted the content and found it to be good wine. Much later in the text (John 4:46), the Gospel refers to what Jesus had done was a "miracle", Jesus "made" WATER to WINE. What Jesus really did, was much greater than the water-to-wine miracle. In order to understand it, one has to go back to the time when Jesus was with John the Baptist when they were baptizing pilgrims in the Jordan River. Jesus insisted that baptizing pilgrims by immersing them in the Jordan River, was not sufficient to be clean before God, one also had to be purified in the inside by imbibing water. Jesus made this concept of purification a popular

movement in Galilee. At the wedding in Kana, as the wine ran out, Jesus invited the people to imbibe water. He possibly could have said these words: "Repent, imbibe and cleanse yourselves from your sins, so you will be pure and be blessed by God." Jesus followed the same popular procedure of purification throughout Galilee, also when he and his disciples were invited for a meal. The first century Jews, Jesus among them, believed strongly in the prophecy of Zechariah (14:9,) that when all Israelites are purified, God himself would descend upon Jerusalem and living waters would burst upward from the ground to purify "all nations" of the world and reclaim them as part of the divine Kingdom.



HUMOR AS A GLIMPSE OF THE TRANSCENDENT

By: Andreas Buß

Neither in the Bible nor in older or modern theological scriptures are any signs of humor, or at least hardly any. In some monastic orders laughter is said to have been forbidden, and that Jesus ever laughed is not handed down. Therefore, it cannot be the intention here to look for humor in the ecclesiastical faith, but I will try to show that at any rate certain kinds of humor imply a religious longing, that there is something supra-ordinary, transcendent, which shines now and then in a moment of a joke, in the few hours of a comedy or operetta, and in the institution of foolishness.

We all live in the same everyday world that we consider real. This is the seriousness of life, as we say. But there are also other areas of experience that stand out from the everyday world. Dreams, of course, but also the theater (the lights go out, another reality opens up), musical experience (there is a recording of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, conducted by Furtwängler in World War II, in which distant cannon shots can also be heard: the orchestra was in another world and did not flee to a bunker), then the game (it may be 6 p.m. in the everyday world, but

players and spectators are in the third minute of overtime of an important soccer match).

And finally the humor that Peter Berger, the Austrian-American sociologist, has presented in his book *Redeeming Laughter*: it relieves us of the banal everyday reality and creates, so to speak, a counterpoint to the banal melody that constricts us from all sides. It also brings relief by pushing aside the rules of everyday life and the limits of our humanity. Another world opens up, and whoever finds himself in it can say with Herman Hesse's *Goethe*: seriousness, my boy, is a matter of time, it arises from an overestimation of time. We immortals do not like to take things seriously, we like to joke

The joke as humor exists perhaps only in the Western culture. We perceive a fundamental inconsistency, things do not fit together, they are, seen together, absurd. Jokes usually show that things are not as they seem, there is a second level, there are the facades, and there is what is behind them. We laugh at the philosopher who looks at the stars and thinks he knows what holds the world together at its core but then trips over a rock and falls into a ditch. Certain groups of people may irritate us, but joking about them, such as the parsimonious Puritan sects, relieves us: have you heard the story about Ramsey, someone asked. He was scalped by the Indians. Poor fellow. Just two

days after he spent 50 cents on a haircut.

Or maybe the story before Lady Astor, the first woman to hold a seat in the British Parliament. She once said to Churchill, whom she did not yet like...

: If I were your wife, I would put poison in your coffee, And Churchill: if I were your husband, I would drink it.

Whether something is perceived as funny depends on the worldview or social milieu in which the jokes are told. One cannot laugh if one does not know the context or milieu of the joke. We do not understand many allusions of the Greek comedy poet Aristophanes, and our best jokes are incomprehensible in China. For example Two business friends are on safari. Suddenly drums in the distance. The local guide shouts: a lion is approaching! - and promptly makes off. One of the two business friends puts on athletic shoes. What are you doing, says the other; you can't run away from the lions. I don't have to, says the first, I just have to be faster than you. That's only funny in an individualistic elbow society, where everyone competes with everyone else. Elsewhere, it wouldn't get anywhere at all.

This is where the majority of the Jewish joke belongs, born out of the necessity of survival. Prosperity, like political power, is hostile to jokes. Humor is often gallows humor, and jokes relieve our suffering.

A traveler comes to a shtetl in the middle of winter. There in front of the synagogue sits an old man, shivering from the cold. What are you doing here, the traveler asks. I am waiting for the coming of the Messiah. This is very important, says the traveler, I suppose the community pays you a good salary for it. Not at all, says the old man, they don't pay anything, they just let me sit here, and now and then someone brings something to eat. But, says the traveler, surely they respect you because of your job? Neither, people think I am crazy. I don't understand, says the traveler, they don't pay you, they don't respect you, and you sit here in the cold and shiver. What kind of job is it? It's a steady job!

But next to this gallows humor, there is then also a very slight rebellion. Aron Kronengold meets Levi Sonnenblum. Aron: I heard that your son got baptized. What will you say when you stand before our God, and he will ask: Sonnenblum, he will ask, how could you let your son become a Christian? And Sonnenblum: Will I say to God : And what about you son?

Not only as a brief interruption of the everyday world, where one's thought process is observed from another point of view and thus a second level is flashed, but also for a few hours the comic sphere can raise before our eyes a world without pain and suffering

There is the figure of the clown. He may be beaten and trampled on in the circus, we (or the children) pretend that he is not suffering, and we laugh. They trust that the clown will get up again, and that all is well with the world. Tragedy deals with the suffering of the world, the suffering-free world of comedy represents a transcendent world from which all human misery has disappeared.

Carnival is the construction of a counter-world in which the everyday world is taken for a ride. And there is the operetta, such as 'The Merry Widow'. The action takes place in the Embassy of Pontevedro in Paris, where there is a reception and Hanna Glawari, a rich widow, sees again her former childhood friend, Count Danilo. The ambassador Zeto tries to do everything to make Danilo marry the millionaire many times over, because without her wealth the state would be bankrupt. The Frenchman Rosillon, on the other hand, tries hard to get Valencienne, the ambassador's wife, and Valencienne sings: I am a decent woman. It soon becomes clear that Count Danilo and the widow are interested in each other (which is what the ambassador had wanted for reasons of state), and a male chorus sings about the difficulty of knowing what women actually want. The Frenchman sings: come to the little pavilion, addressed to the ambassador's wife, who is suddenly no longer a decent woman. Lady's choice: the rich widow chooses the

count who announces that he wants to dance with the lady who is willing to pay 10000 francs. Nobody pays, but she sings: you terrible man, how beautifully you dance. And he: you do what you can. All this is thoughtless, superficial and with its own morality (marriage Parisian style), but with the beautiful music you are in a magic garden, sign of the transcendent, and free from daily worries.

On the other hand, there is the tragicomedy like Sholem Aleichem's Tevye the Milkman. It offers comfort when things go bad in the world. Hodl is Tevye's daughter, beautiful like Queen Esther and smart too, she can read and write in Yiddish and Russian. Tevye comes back from taking milk out, the sun is shining and the flies are biting. He lets a hitchhiker jump on his horse and cart, a student and revolutionary, and invites him to his home. He stays for some time and teaches the daughter.

Tevye hears from the matchmaker that a rich young man wants to marry his daughter, and he imagines how all the world will envy him, how he will give money to beggars and be a patron of Jews. Then he sees his daughter and the revolutionary coming out of the forest. They say they want to marry, indeed they are as good as married. The plans of marriage with the rich man go up in smoke. Tevye has to accept the marriage of his daughter with the

revolutionary. A funeral would be nicer, he says.

Then the revolutionary has to go away on a secret mission, and a few weeks later the news comes that he is in prison. Hodl decides to travel after him, and he tries to dissuade her. With a heavy heart, he tells a funny story about Alexander, who was

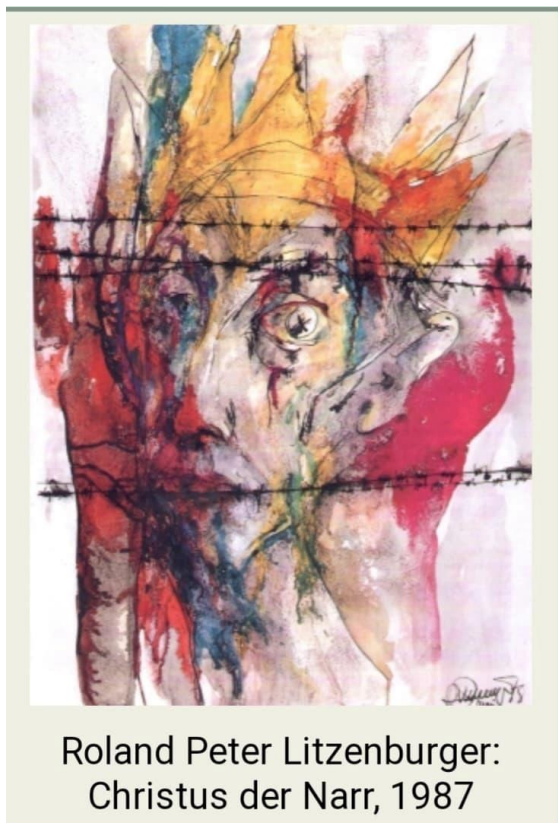
almost eaten by cannibals, and he lies to his wife: Hodl has to travel because of an inheritance, and then, with sublime irony, he covers up pain and suffering: Let's talk about something funny, Do you have any news about the cholera in Odessa?

The last level in the progression of humor, the comic, from a brief interruption of the everyday world and the seriousness of life is the construction of a counter-world, the world of holy fools, who are not fools or idiots, but who choose to play the fool. Sometimes it may be about innocent humor, but sometimes it may be about the grotesque inversion of all accepted norms. Saints and fools are often similar. Jesus repeated the request that we should be like children and the poor in spirit, and Paul wrote: We are fools for Christ's sake (1 Cor. 4:10) and: What is foolish in the sight of the world, God has chosen (1 Cor. 1:27). In Russia, holy fools were an important subject of national culture, and Dostoevsky wrote the book "The Idiot" about Prince Myshkin. There are many stories about wise fools, for example

this one: Somewhere in Russia lived three hermits, known as holy men, but without any knowledge of religious doctrine and rites. When the bishop in charge heard that they did not know a single prayer, he traveled to them and taught them the Lord's Prayer. They memorized it, thanked him, and the bishop traveled back home across a lake. When the ferry was halfway across, the bishop was amazed to see the hermits walking across the water in great haste to catch up with him. They said that they had forgotten one line of the prayer, and that the bishop should repeat it. The bishop replied in deep reverence that the prayer was not so important.

The most magnificent fool in world literature, against whom the empiricist and realist Sancho Panza, his companion, pales, is Don Quixote. Don Quixote rejects what may be called banal reality or common sense. The fool is wiser than the realist, reality is relativized. Don Quixote bases all his actions on what he has read in chivalric novels. Windmills are thought to be giants to be fought against, and as a puppet show depicts the persecution of fleeing Christians by Moors (Muslims), he, who feels himself to be a wandering knight and the representative of God, beats the figures and the stage to smithereens in a frenzied rage. This is Don Quixote's reaction against the iron cage of the empirical world and common sense.

Humor may be seen as a sign of the transcendent, a sign that banal reality can be left behind or relativized. Fanatics and tyrants who live only in the empirical everyday world have no humor and cannot laugh at themselves. Humor implies that our imprisonment in the world is not definitive; it makes life more bearable. For those who dare to take the Kierkegaardian leap, the leap into a faith, not only the ecclesiastical or Christian one, humor can be a sign of transcendence and future redemption.



“Christ the fool”

Discussion group



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

since it is still Corona time and we can't meet in groups, there is an online conversation zoom meeting since January every second week.

We have already talked about church buildings, the liturgy in the service, some biblical books and much more.

You are all welcome to join us. So far we are more of a small discussion group.

You can just drop in on a topic that might interest you. This is also a possibility to stay in contact and meet other church members, even if it is only online.

The invitation always comes by mail, if you do not get an invitation, please contact me and I will send you one.

I'm looking forward to perhaps seeing you at one of the upcoming discussion groups as well.

Here are the dates and topics for the coming weeks Thursdays at 6 pm:

-10.June : The Baptism

-17. Juni: John the Baptist

-1. July: The Book of Job

-15. July: Creation or Evolution?

-29. July: The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7

-12. August : Friedrich von Bodelschwingh and “Bethel“

-26. August: The Book of Daniel

CRAFT and CONVERSATION (M. Thornton)



At the start of the pandemic Becca Stanley and I were on the brink of a project to hand sew a bed quilt for my nephew Ken, who was planning his wedding. We had a few group sessions to start the hand sewing. Lori Lapointe and Donna Kennedy had joined in a session. You may appreciate that a quilt is not easy as a solo project.

When Covid hit we were no longer able to meet, so I needed to still work on the quilt on my own. For

company and inspiration, I invited a few friends to join me in a Zoom session. One did rug hooking and one knitted. Since then a few more people have joined and it's become a lot of fun. No major craft skills required. Some people crochet, knit, others colour, do a puzzle, whatever you'd like to do. After the quilt was finished, we found we were enjoying the online sessions so we decided to keep going.

It was through these Zoom sessions that we have helped each other in many separate activities, offering support to continue the projects, especially as some of them can be quite large and take a long time. We find the time goes by quickly with other people around. Since starting online we have met regularly on Monday afternoons.

If you would like to learn more, or if you would like to join our gathering for conversation and/or to advance your project, feel free to give Marianne or Lori a call. It's a great way to get to know people better!

Marianne Thornton 613-295-9543 or
Lori Lapointe 613-692-5506.



WHO OR WHAT IS THE CHURCH IN CORONA TIMES?

(A SNAPSHOT AND MANY QUESTIONS)

On Pentecost we celebrate the birthday of the Church. Biblically, we refer to the Pentecost story in Acts 2.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, his followers lost their leader. The question now is how to continue. The end of the actual fellowship with Jesus has come, but the beginning of a new time is at hand. 50 days after Easter, the Pentecost event concludes the Easter season.

On the day of Pentecost, originally a Jewish harvest festival, the apostles receive the Holy Spirit. The evangelist Luke vividly describes that a roar from heaven filled the whole house. Then, tongues as of fire appear and settle on each of the apostles.

The Holy Spirit gives the followers of Jesus a task: they are to tell people from different cultural backgrounds about Jesus. The apostles are given the ability to communicate God's message in different languages.

Suddenly they can speak in Arabic, Greek, Latin and many other languages. However, the listeners

are initially confused. They cannot explain the sudden linguistic abilities of the Galilean fishermen. Were the followers of Jesus drunk?

(The biblical text of Acts 2:1 - 13)



Thereupon Peter clarifies in his sermon that the behavior of the apostles is caused by the Holy Spirit, which the prophet Joel already announced in the Scriptures. Further, Peter proclaims the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

(The biblical text of Acts 2:14 - 36).

Peter preached so convincingly that 3000 listeners were baptized. The members of this first Christian community sell their possessions, share the proceeds and practice their faith together.

(The biblical text Acts 2:37 - 2:47)

Pentecost is also considered the "birthday of the Church" because so many people were baptized on that day and thus became members of the "Church".

Currently we find ourselves in a situation that does not seem

Pentecostal at all: The congregation can no longer gather personally in church. Churches are closed and services in churches are forbidden or restricted. How do we explain this theologically and how can we deal with it? What is the church anyway, do we need the church building and the fellowship in worship in the building for our faith?

What is church? A community, a building, the common faith, Jesus Christ. Actually, I thought that everything belongs together.

What if the church building is no longer available?

During the corona pandemic, churches, congregations and a wide variety of faiths experienced that they could no longer meet in their churches. What does this mean for lived and shared faith? What does it mean when we as a congregation can no longer gather on Sundays, can no longer have communion. Certainly there are other forms that have been tried and fit well for some congregations in times of this need, but what does it fundamentally mean for the church?

Most congregations have simply accepted it. No one in their right mind wants to put people in danger and possibly spread the virus in their own congregation.

The result was, church services were canceled and after they were allowed back in there were significant restrictions - for safety. Restrictions in the number of participants, restrictions in liturgical action. Thus, singing was not allowed and also the Lord's Supper was not allowed to be served "properly" (this is how I experienced it in Germany and Canada). Some of them were bans by the state, others were recommendations by the church leadership. Easter, Christmas, Pentecost ... canceled, other forms, many good things tried but on the whole not satisfactory for many.

A big question mark for me is when and who is allowed to cancel a service?

Both in Germany and Canada I have experienced that services in churches were canceled, forbidden by the state.

At the beginning of the pandemic in spring 2020 (around Easter), church services were banned in Germany during the 1st lockdown. The legal basis for this is the so-called Infection Protection Act, which replaced the Federal Law on Epidemics. Section 28, paragraph 1 of the Infection Protection Act permits protective measures. These protective measures include, under certain conditions, restricting or prohibiting

events or other "gatherings of a large number of people," as it literally states, in order to counteract the spread of the pathogen.

This is a serious infringement of the freedom of belief, which is actually under special protection. Protection of life and limb then naturally has priority. (German law)

The only argument which one can call now still juristically, would be the proportionality.

Also within the congregations there are different opinions and thoughts, above all two things were considered:

On the one hand, the argumentation that everyone - and especially the church - should be interested in saving human lives and preventing further infections. In order to do this, it would be necessary to suspend presence services and to celebrate services in other possible forms.

On the other side (increased from catholic side) that under safety conditions services can be celebrated absolutely in the large churches. And that it is necessary especially now and that if you want to take Christianity seriously, you cannot simply do it without a Sunday service.

There were a lot of found and celebrated alternatives in the Corona pandemic:

Even before the corona pandemic, there were initial attempts to offer church services online as well. And not only church services, also pastors on Instagram, Youtube, Facebook everywhere in social media. Attempts were made here to be present as a church on the Internet as well. For some a huge step forward, for the local congregations rather irrelevant.

Now the pandemic: suddenly all Pastors had to rethink. Many created worship services online without prior knowledge. Youtube channels, podcast broadcasts, audio worship services, all out of nowhere.

Somehow, people wanted to worship together. On the Internet, 2 currents in particular have formed. On one side pre-recorded Youtube worship services and on the other side live streamed and shared Zoom worship services.

I have heard from some colleagues what a great opportunity this is. You can finally reach church members who live farther away. It's great to see each other on Sundays via Zoom, the click-through numbers for Youtubed services are much higher than regular Sunday service attendees.

But to be honest, you can't reach all church members via the Internet

with these services, and I realize I'm not reaching the people who go to church every Sunday. Many older people now also use the Internet, but there are also church members who don't have a computer, can't log into Zoom or Youtube services. They now have no access to the Sunday virtual worship service.

And even if you meet and see each other online at the same time through Zoom worship services - it's different. It's missing the building. It's missing the church. It lacks the personal encounter. It lacks singing together, being together in one place. A community without a church?

There we are again with the question - what is the church?

We know church is more than the building, but is church also church without building?

The church, according to the Confessio Augustana (1530) CA 7.

: a confession of the one holy Christian Church, which will always remain. The church is defined as an assembly of the saints, in which pure doctrine is taught and the sacraments are administered according to the institution of Christ. Pure doctrine and administration of the sacraments according to the institution are the characteristics of the Church. These are then also the

criteria for the true unity of the Church. It is enough that unity is achieved in doctrine and administration of the sacraments. Traditions, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, on the other hand, do not necessarily have to be unified.

The Church is the place of administration of the sacraments (i.e., baptism and the Lord's Supper).

Is The Lord's supper also considered full if it is shared via Zoom/ online?

For me, this is a tough question.

The Lord's Supper has been very controversial in theological circles and between different denominations for 2000 years. It is not an easy topic. Theology of the Lord's Supper is probably among the most convoluted and divisive theological realities of all.

In the last decades there have been great discussions up to real theological fights about the Lord's Supper with children and the possibility to use grape juice instead of wine.

And till today catholic and protestant churches are not able to celebrate communion together.

It was all the more astonishing that in 2020 and 2021 communion was suddenly celebrated online without much theological discussion

beforehand or waiting to see if the EKD or ELCIC would announce anything about it.

It was simply done. Both in Germany and here in Canada.

There are different opinions about it, but actually every church can do it the way they think it is right at the moment. Communion online?

One could say in exceptional situations there are exceptional rules and there is nothing against it. Is that the case?



Midterm in May 2021:

What we have: Online services, solo singing, contact with church members via phone and Zoom meetings and letters.

What we lack: Services in the church. Celebrating, and coming together as a congregation. We miss the fixed time (Sunday morning) as worship time. We miss singing together, praising to God's glory.

Perhaps worship/church without a building is like a long distance relationship. For some, it may work.

Others try hard and want to maintain the relationship, but so much is missing.

I see the danger that if the church is missing as a place of personal, bodily encounter of believers with each other, and with God, then it harms the faith and the believer. Where do I belong as a Christian, in which parish, in which community am I at home? Where is my base?

Sure, I am welcome in every Christian community worldwide, but where do I stand out if I am missing? If I'm not sitting in my seat?

If this pandemic has shown me one thing in relation to the church, it is this: what a gift it is that we can and are allowed to worship as a gathered community in churches or worship spaces, with singing and communion, loudly and quietly, laughing and crying.

In the Bible we find again and again situations that are similar to ours and we read how people dealt with them at that time.

Israel had been captured by the Babylonians a good 600 years before Christ and taken to Babylon. They, too, could no longer worship in the temple in Jerusalem. In the Bible, more precisely in the Psalms, we find prayers of lamentation about this, for example in the 137 Psalm:

Psalm 137

¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept

when we remembered Zion.

² There on the poplars we hung our harps,

³ for there our captors asked us for songs,

our tormentors demanded songs of joy;

they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD

while in a foreign land?

⁵ If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.

⁶ May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth

if I do not remember you,

if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

But we also hear that the joy will be all the greater when Israel is back in Jerusalem and can worship together in the temple, for example in Psalm 126:

Psalm 126

A song of ascents.

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of ^[a] Zion,

we were like those who dreamed. ^[b]

² Our mouths were filled with laughter,

our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,

³The LORD has done great things for us,

What is your opinion on this topic?

A photograph of a yellow brick building with a red door, partially obscured by tree branches in the foreground. A white signpost is visible near the entrance. The building has a gabled roof and a chimney. The foreground shows a grassy area with some fallen leaves and a bench. The background includes a paved area and other buildings.

How many windows does our church have?

- 2) How many entrances does our church have?
- 3) How many crosses can we find on the outside of our church?
- 4) What is written on the steele/artwork in the church garden?
- 5) How old is the Martin Luther Church, in which year was it built?
- 6) Guess how high is the Martin Luther Church?
- 7) How many steps lead into the Martin Luther Church at the entrance outside?

This is a particularly creative assignment:

- 8) Write a short article from our church's perspective on how the church is experiencing this pandemic season.

If you like, send the article to Pastor Kierschke and we will be happy to read a couple of these little stories in the next church newsletter!

Your Pastor Judith Kierschke

Worship Services in Martin Luther Church

All Services are celebrated under Corona Safety measures. If there is another Lockdown, there will be services online again.

Every 1. Sunday of the month we will celebrate a joined outdoor service during the summer. Please remember to bring sunscreen.

	English Service	Gottesdienste in Deutsch
06.06.21	11 am Joined outdoor service	11 am Gemeinsamer Gottesdienst vor der Kirche
13.06.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
20.06.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
27.06.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
04.07.21	11 am Joined Service Outside	11 am Gemeinsamer Gottesdienst vor der Kirche
11.07.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
18.07.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
25.07.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
01.08. 21	11 am Joined Service outside	11 am Gemeinsamer Gottesdienst vor der Kirche
08.08.21	9.30 am Sermon Series 1 Creed „I believe in God the Father”	11 am Predigtreihe 1 Glaubensbekenntnis „Ich glaube an Gott den Vater“
15.08.21	9.30 am Sermon Series 2 Creed „I believe in Christ the Son”	11 am Predigtreihe 2 Glaubensbekenntnis „und an Jesus Christus...”
22.08.21	9.30 am Sermon Series 3 Creed „I believe in the Holy Spirit”	11 am Predigtreihe 3 Glaubensbekenntnis „Ich glaube an den Heiligen Geist“
29.08.21	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst



Belong - become a member of our congregation!

We welcome you to join our congregation – even if you live in Ottawa only temporarily. Our church is and stays alive through those who belong to it and support it.

Yes, I want to belong to Martin Luther Church Ottawa:

Last name, first name:

Address:

Phone, Email:

Place and date of birth:

Place and date of baptism:

Place and date of confirmation (if applicable)

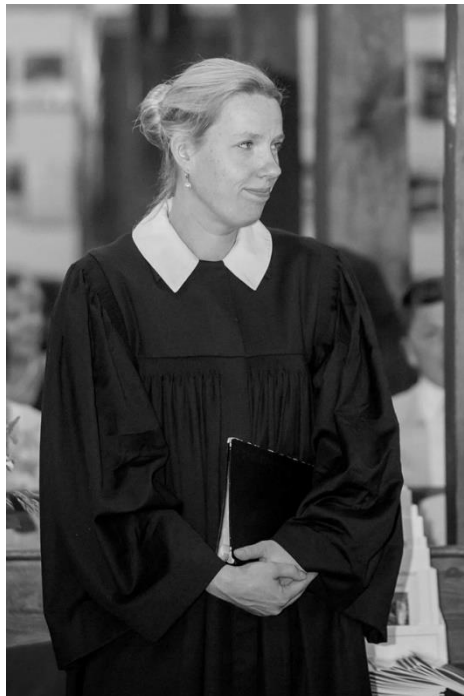
Date and signature:

We are here for you:

Contact: 933 Smyth Road, Ottawa ON K1G 1P5, (613) 733 5804 /
www.glco.org / Facebook: Martin Luther Gemeinde Ottawa



Pastor: Judith Kierschke, (613) 748-9745/ mobile: 613-552 9587
Confidential Email: [pastorkierschke\(AT\)gmail.com](mailto:pastorkierschke(AT)gmail.com),
Church office hours: Monday 3-5 pm and Thursday 10-12 am
Please call or send an Email if you would like a personal conversation.



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