

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I signed off from an online Zoom meeting tonight and had to laugh at myself. It was a confirmation class which I am teaching on Zoom right now. To say I was unprepared for this at the beginning would be an extreme understatement! The kids have been great as I trudged through teaching about the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's creed and what Luther has to say about them. Each week, I try to prepare in advance. I did this week too. I had a video clip from You Tube, an explanation from the small catechism on another platform called "canvas", a video from Luther's house of study, and a word document to use as an example. If none of these terms mean anything to you, don't feel alone. I would have recognized very few before the pandemic and known how to use even less.

I started up the class in zoom and as the kids were signing on our electricity flickered. This shut off the internet router and the zoom class. So, I was forced to message the students and begin again. Once online, we all did our regular routine of greetings and sharing "goods and bads" from their week. I talked about the third article of the Apostle's creed and then tried to go to the You tube video clip. I shared it, everyone said they could see it, and played a 10 minute clip. Only to find that no one could hear the whole thing! It took several tries of start and stop before I asked if any of the students had any idea what was wrong. One student kindly told me what I might have missed in sharing and then it worked. (You have such great and resilient kids at Hope who are patient and kind to me.) This was just a part of the messed up class that left me feeling like a technology idiot no matter how much I prepared. By the end, I accomplished about half of what I wanted. The kids were watching me kindly and we all rejoiced that this would end soon so we could have class in person.

This mistake ridden Zoom class reminded me of the way life has felt for the last year. No one got to take classes to prepare for being the church in a pandemic. There was no one more experienced we could call for advice. Anyone who was an adult in the last 1918 pandemic has passed away. So, we forged on into the unknown and had to learn to adapt.

It kind of seemed every time we felt we knew what we were doing, the rules changed this year. Last winter into spring, everything closed to "flatten the curve" and we were told to stay home. We struggled to find a way to worship separated from each other. Facebook live and rural internet problems, learning how to run service online, finding a way to lead singing online... the learning edges were endless. People with children learned about Zoom school and the rest of us had to adapt to Zoom meetings and skyping our loved ones. It felt as if the pandemic was far away when we had less than 100 cases in the state and very few deaths.

Summer brought us an opportunity to worship together again using our "car worship" format. It was a blessing to see people's faces and speak through car windows in fellowship. We learned another new way of worship and even a safe way to do communion in our cars. Michael, Suzy and I learned about outdoor speakers, soundboards, and FM station transmitters. It felt so good to be able to gather outside in small groups again. Even if we had to keep a social distance, life felt a little more normal.

Every seasonal change and technology need taught us how to adapt in new ways. Sometimes we failed. Sometimes we passed through the challenge and learned new skills. But, we have been reminded over and over that our God is bigger than the four walls and roof of our church.

The pandemic year was horrible in so many ways. It cost the congregation in grief, separation and even financially. Most of you have felt the same impact on your personal lives. Yet, it has made us learn and grow in ways we never would have without being forced into it.

We thank our God for helping us to see him outside the walls of our church. We thank him helping us to meet the challenges the world threw at us. We thank God for all those who inconvenienced themselves to keep their neighbors safe. We thank God for holding those we have lost in his arms and helping our hurting hearts.

We will be returning to indoor worship in March. Though we can never know what new challenges this pandemic will throw at us, we hope we are coming to an end of some of the fear and grief our congregation's most vulnerable have experienced. We will always remember our pandemic year and the things it taught us about ourselves, our neighbors and our ever present God.

Blessings to you today- Pastor Janet Miller

Council Zoom-January 31, 2021

Members present: Tim Gapp, Cody Sumner, Dustin Holt, Elsie Seffrood, Jorja Whempner, Nicole Pays, Becky Pies, Sarah Smith, Ps. Janet

Others: Anne Seffrood, Dawn Wright

Absent: James Arten

Pastor opened with a prayer.

Elections for council president and vice president held.

Sarah nominated Dustin Holt, Tim 2nd. Motion passed to elect Dustin as Council President.

Sarah nominated Tim Gapp, Elsie 2nd. Motion passed to elect Tim as Council Vice-President

Ps. Proposed a potential date to reopen in house Worship for March 7. Restrictions will be in effect, such as, Masks and social distancing. She will check CDC requirements as we near the date. She also plans to have confirmation and youth group meet again in house, but Sunday school will remain online due to the small sizes of our classrooms. Motion Jorja, 2nd Dustin to accept. Motion passed.

Janet plans to send out items for everyone to have for Ash Wednesday. Anne also asked the council to think of creative ways to increase offerings as our budget continues to see shortfalls. The position of cemetery sexton was talked about too. Anne is willing to handle the checkbook, but would like someone to handle to actual cemetery part. Pastor said her husband, Michael would be willing to help with updating the map of the cemetery, but would like someone else to help too. If anyone is interested, let Pastor know.

Next meeting- February 28 at 7:00 pm.

Annual meeting-January 31, 2021

Pastor Janet to run meeting as she had the microphone. Motion to continue without a quorum. Motion passed.

Reading and approval of 2020 annual meeting minutes. No changes. Motion to approve, passed.

2020 Statistics and pastor report and all other reports-reviewed and approved. Pastor reviewed her report and added that with car worship, we average 35 people a Sunday and online viewership is averaging 385!

A new cemetery sexton is needed as Margie would like to step down. If you are interested, please let Pastor know.

Welca noted an error in their balance that was corrected after the annual report was printed. It was noted the correct balance was \$1,014. 56. It was also noted the backpack report was turned in but was not included in the report. Corrections to both have been made.

Welca also decided that they will no longer have regular monthly meetings as membership has decreased over the years. They will however continue to quilt.

Motion made and passed to accept all reports.

Treasurer report/2021 budget-Anne reviewed the budget. Motion made and passed to accept the 2021 budget.

Elections held for newly appointed council: Becky Pies, Tim Gapp, Sarah Smith, Kathy Brink, and Elsie Seffrood (youth rep). Motion passed to elect new council.

Pastor discussed the upcoming Prairie Coteau conference and Synod conference. Anyone interested in attending, let her know. Prairie Coteau is first Sunday in March and the Synod is first weekend in June. The Synod conference will be held via Zoom.

New business:

Michael had an amendment the Synod had sent out. It would allow a regular meeting to be held and if needed, to let people join via Zoom. Anne said the committee to update the constitution, will include this in it. It was proposed to allow this to be included. Motion passed.

Other business:

Pastor Janet discussed being approached about the possibility of combining with other congregations. This was not anything to be voted on, just something to think about for the future as our budget has seen shortfalls over the years. Pastor also thanked the council for all they did the past year with our exceptional year. She noted it would be brought to the council about a possible reopening date for the first of March, but with masks. She will also see what is recommended by the CDC at that time.

Meeting opened for questions. As there were none, a motion to adjourn was made. Meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Lent begins Feb. 17th. We will not be inside worshipping until the first weekend in March. We will be sending out special Ash Wed. packets with Lenten devotions and ashes for you to use as you watch the online worship that night. (These will be mailed out to local members and friends. If you need a packet and don't receive it, please contact us for one.) The worship will be posted both on Facebook and on our You tube channel "Hope's children". We will continue our online worships even after our opening to inside worship for all those who do not feel safe or cannot come to our worships. Special Wed. night Lenten worships will also be put online throughout the season of Lent.

Sunday School will continue online for the rest of our year. You can follow it on our Hope's Children You Tube channel. We hope to be able to have regular Vacation Bible School this year but are not picking a date quite yet. Look to next month's newsletter for more details.

Our WELCA group has decided not to have their monthly business meetings anymore. However, they will continue with their quilting mission and will return to working inside the church soon. They would welcome more help with this mission of love to our neighbors.

If you email Pastor Janet, please make sure you do it to her hlchurch@tnics.com email. Her itc email is not dependable anymore and it is not checked as much.

Pastor Janet will resume in home visitations in March for any family who is interested in having her visit their "shut in" loved ones. Families may feel it is not safe enough yet and that is just fine. Pastor Janet will give family members and "shut ins" calls to schedule communion visits before she comes. Hospitals do not call Pastor for visits at this time. The hospitals are discouraging pastoral visits for anything but emergencies right now. This will change as information changes and vaccinations happen during the pandemic time.

Indoor services begin on March 7th at 10:30am. Following the CDC guidelines, we will require masks for anyone 5 (or kindergarten level) and older. Children too young to attend school will not be required to mask. We will also be using social distancing so some pews will be blocked or moved into the side room with the folding doors open. Offering and communion will be done in a safe manner. (Communion will be served as we did in our car church.) We will plan on not singing in worship but this may change depending on the CDC guidelines. This has been discussed and decided on during our Feb. church council meeting. The council will continue to meet monthly and make decisions about worship and other church business.

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH
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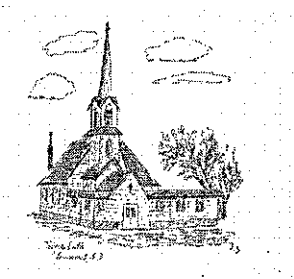
Church: hlchurch@tnics.com/Phone-(605)-398-6150

Pastor Janet Miller-cell #605-237-8005/home #605-947-4482

Secretary Dawn Wright -cell #605-881-4377

Find us on Facebook: Hope Lutheran Church and www.seesummitsd.com

Follow us on YouTube: Hope's Children



February 2021

"It is the mission of Hope Lutheran Church to help people grow in their faith; to be a leader in the community; to serve the needs of all people; and to teach/educate all people.

Anniversaries and Birthdays (please let me know if there is an error or omission) 

February

1-Beckham Rauen
3-Roger Wright
4-Simon Pies
8-Dash Ebsen
10-Dylan Zubke
11-Corey Amdahl
11-Gary Crandall
12-Kevin Kneeland
12-Jerod Carson
14-Toni Conners
15-Nicole Ebsen

16-Jonathan Ebsen
17-Jaelyn Zubke
17-Stacey Amdahl
20-Peyton Bourassa
22-Amber Anderson
22-Janet Miller
24-Shawn Ellingson
25-Donna Olson
25-Megan Gapp
28-Nolan Thuringer