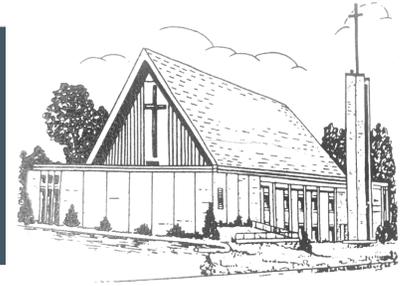


FALL 2021

THE MESSENGER

Summary of What's Happening At Elim Lutheran Church



WHO ARE YOU?

"I have called you by name. You are mine."

(Isaiah 43:1)

The pandemic has changed a lot of things for us. The world will not be the same. From masks to social distancing to hand sanitizer, we have learned a new normal. Even if we dodge the Delta variant threat, it will be years before the whole world is vaccinated, and more variants are likely to develop. Dr. Michael Osterholm of the University of Minnesota recently said that we have learned over the past year how to die from Covid. Now we need to learn how to live with Covid, because it will be with us for many years to come.

The pandemic exposed many weaknesses in our systems. Health care systems, certainly, but also the church. Elim relied heavily on fund-raisers to meet its budget each year. The pandemic brought those revenue-streams to a halt. Elim has valued having a dedicated staff member to work with children, youth, and families. Elim has valued quality musicians, a part time custodian, and a full time pastor. Yet, our income is not meeting expenses.

Interims are usually a time to carefully and thoughtfully assess where the congregation has been, where it is now, and where it would like to go. Unfortunately, our financial bottom line is making that careful assessment difficult. We are going to need to turn things around very quickly indeed, or face serious staff cuts. At present, I am not called to serve as pastor full time, but at .8. Our Children, Youth, and Family worker, Deb Westerberg, is full time, splitting her work approximately .7 as

Children, Youth, and Family Director and .3 as acting office secretary. We have a custodian who works 20 hours per week, and an organist/choir director. Very soon, the Elim Church Council will need to make the hard decision of which of these staff members needs to be cut and by how much. Cutting or reducing any of these positions will negatively affect the mission and ministry of the Elim.

So, what is the answer?

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. . . you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you. . .

⁵Do not fear, for I am with you. . . (Isaiah 43:1-5)

We are passing through the deep waters, and they seem like they are overwhelming us. We simply can not know what the future will bring. We do not know what kind of changes this pandemic will continue to inflict on us. We do not know if churches will be able to come back from this interruption in our usual way of doing things. We do not know if we can adapt to the world that is coming. And that is scary.

But change is always a part of life, and everything changes. Even in death, organic matter is broken down, decays, and feeds the soil for the next generation. The Church must also change. As disciples of Jesus, baptized with the Holy Spirit, we are the ones who are called to lean into change, to see where God's hand is leading us, where God's Presence is guiding us. Because we know we are named, loved, and precious, we can move into the future without fear, because God has promised we do not go alone. God promises to be there with us, holding us, helping us, encouraging us, leading us.

The old saying goes – "We do not know what the future holds, but we know the One who holds the future."

This is the prayer of interims, but also a prayer for these fraught times. I invite you to memorize it and pray it every day –

***O Lord God,
who has called us your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see the
ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
and through perils unknown:
Give us faith to go out with good
courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us. AMEN***

In Christ,
Pastor Judy
Interim Pastor



THE REALITIES OF NOW

As we are aware after living in a pandemic for the past 18+ months, plans change. What we think works today, may not be safe tomorrow. As we put this newsletter together we realize that things will shift. We plan with hope and optimism, while also being rooted in the reality we find ourselves in. As soon as this newsletter is dropped off at the post office, most likely something has already changed. The draft was put together and things had altered greatly. At some point we have to hit print and get it in the mail. Your understanding and support is appreciated as we adapt, react, and care for our neighbor through event modifications, mitigations and protective behaviors for many months to come. As much as we long for a different truth, the pandemic is far from over.

Updates to worship, programming, and protocols will be shared in worship, on Facebook, through email, and on Elim's website. If you are not able to access these forms of communication, please reach out to someone who does. Or, if you know of someone that needs assistance, please reach out and keep them in the loop. It takes all of us working together.

ELIM LUTHERAN CHURCH COVID RECOMMENDATIONS

As of August 18, 2021, the Duluth area had a vaccination rate of 57.2% and a new case rate of 14/100,000. Given the rapid increase in cases due to the Delta variant, the Elim Council voted to implement these changes -

- We recommend prioritizing life and health of the vulnerable as a Gospel witness.**
- Immediately reimpose masking requirements.
- Immediately halt coffee hour.
- For Wednesdays in Sept – no meal or worship; education time only, masked and podded by family units in Fellowship Hall. If Duluth schools move to virtual learning, we will also move to all virtual education.
- All groups meeting in the church must be masked and distanced at all times. No food to be served at these meeting.
- Sunday worship – shorten service; continue with communion in pews; masked for entire service; soft singing allowed; continue offering at entrance; resume sign in to enable contact tracing.
- If someone who was in worship tests positive for Covid, we will do contact tracing with all who were present and will contact those identified as close contacts. An announcement will be put on the Facebook page and the website to inform all attendees that they may have been exposed. Additional steps will be taken on a case by case situation if we determine it is necessary. **If members are notified by the Elim SMART team, the MDH or other agency, we request that they adhere to the guidelines sent forth by the MDH and the CDC and quarantine as appropriate.**
- Events such as Trunk or Treat may go ahead outdoors, maintaining social distancing.
- Once New Case number drop below 10/100,00, we will consider slowly reinstating looser restrictions.
- Plan on event modifications, mitigations and protective behaviors for many months to come.**
- As much as we long for a different truth, the pandemic is far from over.**

ALWAYS preserve the privacy of the positive individual.

2021 ANNUAL MEETING

The (belated) 2021 Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held on **Sunday, September 19th** following worship, about 11:15 am in the sanctuary.

All confirmed members who have communed and made a contribution of record in calendar year 2019 or 2020 are eligible to vote. Please – **we must have 50 voting members present for a quorum**, so please make a point of attending. We have business that we must, by Minnesota state law, conduct (election of council members, adopting a budget, etc). It should not be a lengthy meeting, but it is important. We will also have a first draft of an updated constitution for the congregation to vote on, which will be available prior to the meeting.

The annual meeting will also be available on Zoom if you are unable to present in person. To login: Use the Zoom app on your phone/tablet or go to www.zoom.us on your computer. Enter Meeting ID: 301 074 408

Or call in (312) 626-6799 (audio only; long distance rates apply)
Enter Meeting ID: 301 074 408

TRANSITION TEAM

Our next step in this interim is to form a transition team. This is NOT a call committee (that will come later). The job of the transition team is to elicit input from the congregation, getting a sense of what are the important ministries, where the congregation would like to see itself in the next 5-10 years, and how engaged the congregation is in carrying out its mission in the world.

We are looking for nominations of 6-8 people who are thoughtful, who are good listeners, and who would represent a good cross-section of the congregation (longtime members, newer members, younger people, older people, with and without school-age children, women, men.) If you would like to nominate someone (or yourself), please first get their permission before you nominate them. Then let Pastor Judy know. The church council will appoint a team this fall.

When we practice stewardship we are making the sign of the cross.



God makes the first vertical line **DOWN**; we follow by moving **IN** to the center and then **OUT** to our neighbors on either side, both near and far.

We form a cross with our lives and through our faith we are marked with the cross of Christ forever.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S LOVE

DOWN, IN, AND OUT: LOVING GOD AND LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

The practice of stewardship invites us to look in three different directions: DOWN, IN and OUT.

We begin by looking at how God has come down to us. We then look in to discover all that God has entrusted to our care. We end by looking out to understand the needs of our neighbors.

While these three actions may not always happen in this order, the practice of stewardship always invites all three.

DOWN

Stewardship begins at creation, where God first comes down to us. In the first chapter of Genesis, God forms humankind in God's own image and commands them: *"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"* (Genesis 1:28). **A steward is someone who cares for someone else's property.** From the beginning, humanity is not an owner, but a steward of what God has created. **We are first receivers, not givers!**

God's love comes down to us in Jesus Christ.

To quote John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."* God loved us so much that God sent Jesus to die for us to bring us salvation and new life. God also comes down to us in the sacrament of baptism. In baptism, we are claimed as children of God. **We belong to God and all that we have belongs to God.** We are bearers of God's love, grace and gospel. Stewardship begins with God coming down to us in love and sharing some of what is God's with us. We are a church that belongs to Christ, and there is a place for all here.

(Next time – We look "In.")



SYNOD JOURNEY TO THE ELCA YOUTH GATHERING: 8TH-12TH GRADERS



Elim's current 8th-12th graders have the opportunity to experience the Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering next summer, July 21-28, 2022. It is an amazing experience of being with other high school youth from our church, our part of Minnesota, and the rest of the United States. Together you will serve, grow in your faith, and create some amazing memories! While the Synod Journey to the Gathering is 11 months away, REGISTRATION IS DUE OCTOBER 15.

There is so much information to share and talk about in a normal year and then you throw in COVID..., well, it would take multiple pages in this newsletter to fill you in! To best share details, Elim's 8-12th grade families will be receiving an email with an overview of information. Please look over that email, and then attend an informational meeting on **Sunday, September 19th at 7pm on Zoom. Meeting ID: 89571457751** If you cannot make it and would like to learn more, be sure to reach out to Deb. (Also, if you don't receive an email, please let Deb know at debw@elimlc.com and one will get sent out to you.)

save the date



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24

watch for more details to come!

BIBLE SUNDAY
september 19 during worship

"GOD'S WORD IS OUR GREAT HERITAGE."

On Sunday, September 19th we will celebrate the Word of God as we gift our children and youth with Bibles, and remember how important the Bible is for disciples of ALL ages.

If you would like, bring your own personal Bible from home. We will do a special blessing of the Bibles, and take a "tour" through the written Word of God during the service. This is a fun day to commit ourselves once again to daily prayer and daily Bible reading, two marks of discipleship (together with weekly worship, regular giving, and service to others.)

Hope you can join us!

Youth PreK—9th Grade will be receiving NEW Bibles.

SEPTEMBER SUNDAY SCHOOL SERVICE PROJECT:

BIRTHDAY BAGS FOR CHUM FOOD SHELF



BRING A VARIETY OF BIRTHDAY GOODIES ALL MONTH:
CAKE MIX
CANNED FROSTING
SPRINKLES
BIRTHDAY CANDLES

IN EARLY OCTOBER, WE WILL ASSEMBLE INTO GIFT BAGS AND DELIVER TO CHUM FOOD SHELF.

MIDDLE SCHOOL GATHERING FOR 6TH-9TH GRADERS

Hey 6th-9th Graders! The Middle School Gathering (MSG) at Cragun's Resort is coming up on Saturday, November 20-Sunday, November 21. It's an awesome weekend of gathering with other middle schoolers from Northeastern Minnesota.

The cost is \$80 (based on at least 3-4 people per room)*. Your registration form plus a non-refundable deposit of \$40 are due October 13. Registration forms can be found on the bulletin board at the bottom of the stairs, outside the fellowship hall. They will also be emailed to those who are in our email database. If you have not received an emailed copy, please send a request to debw@elimlc.com.

Adult leaders (21+) are also needed. Adult leaders are there to transport the group to Brainerd, hang out with the youth, lead discussions, and be

present to experience the MSG together. Registration costs are waived for adult leaders. If you are interested, please talk to Deb Westerberg.

We have all learned this year how quickly things can change and how we need to adapt to an ever-changing virus. At this point, we are hopeful we can gather in-person for events youth have loved over the years.

Elim and Synod leadership will continue to monitor COVID-19 and the impact of variants, and follow local and CDC guidelines to make decisions and set protocols in the best interest of participants. Synod leadership will share event specific protocols two weeks prior to the event with Elim's registered Primary Adult Leaders. This information will be shared with youth and parents at that point. You can anticipate at a minimum a requirement for non-vaccinated participants to wear masks. Participants who are sick will be asked to not attend. Unfortunately, due to the expense the synod incurs when a registered participant cancels, we are not able to refund

deposits, even due to illness. This means deposits will be non-refundable at Elim as well.

As you consider participating in synod youth ministry events, it is important to be aware of the health risks inherent in a large gathering of people from wide and diverse geographic regions. We will manage protocols as best we can for the safety of participants, but it is important youth and parents understand that physical distancing is not practical for the types of events we hold. Participants are housed together, eat together and gather in large groups for worship and activities. Participants (adult and youth) are expected to follow COVID-19 protocols even if participant has been fully vaccinated, and the financial risk of non-refundable deposits if a participant gets sick.

**If you have specific housing needs that would be less than at least 3 people per room (whether for COVID concerns or other reasons), please contact Deb for your request. There may be an additional charge because rooms are based on occupancy numbers.*

RALLY SUNDAY ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH –GOD’S WORK OUR HANDS



Calling on Kids, Families, & Adults to come Play and Serve the Lord as we kick off the 2021 School Season on September 19 @ 9am!

The Fellowship Hall will be filled with a variety of Stations:

- Service Station of “**Making Birthday Cards for Camp Noah**”
- **Prayer Stations** with a Walking Labyrinth, Bead Crafts for meditative prayer, Lord’s Prayer coloring bookmarks, etc.
- **Giant Floor Crossword** of God’s words on Service.
- **Art Painting Inspiration Rocks** for hide and seek inspiration for the congregation.

There will also be an Introduction to the new **Family & Youth Sunday School** curriculum for Elim’s youth and families on Sunday mornings at 9am.

Registration online at www.elimlc.com or on site at a Registration Table.

WEDNESDAYS AT ELIM: 3rd-9th GRADERS

Why? Our young people are exploring, wrestling with, and figuring out their faith and identity – of who they are and whose they are. Our young people look forward to building relationships within their church community, ask the questions of life and faith, to learn and grow as an individual as well as a community, and to explore one’s identity as a follower of Christ. Part of the baptismal promises made each time a person is baptized is for parent(s) to nurture them in faith and the congregation promises to support them in their life in Christ.

How? One way the congregation supports the baptismal promises is through education. Elim’s Faith Foundations for younger students and Elim’s Confirmation program for older students will allow for students to learn about the Holy Trinity (God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit), the Bible, the Christian faith, and the Church, and the Bible through the Lutheran lens of theology (theology = thinking about God). It is also a time to ask questions, build a resilient faith, be in community with one another, and build relational faith skills to live out their faith everywhere and in every relationship – faith is not just for church but for every aspect of life!

What? Here is what that looks like at Elim:

FAITH FOUNDATIONS (4TH-6TH GRADE)

Elim’s younger students will have the opportunity to work on the foundations of faith – how to use a bible, how the church year works, and talking about Holy Communion and prayer during special and fun events! The suggested age groups are below, but know if your student has missed a session from a previous year they are always welcome to join in – let Deb know they will be attending.

CONFIRMATION PROGRAM (7TH-9TH GRADE COMBINED)

Confirmation will be a time to focus on some different things. This year we will take a look at “Who is Jesus?” and the New Testament. There will also be time for Peer Ministry.

Peer Ministry – So what does this follow of Jesus thing look like when I’m at school, on the field, on the stage, with my friends, with my family? Peer Ministry is relational faith skills to be intentional in caring, welcoming, and affirming every day, everywhere, and in every relationship. It’s learning how to be observant of others, to reach out, to listen, ask questions that dig deeper.

RETREATS

Retreats are one of the best ways for our youth to connect with one another! The shared experiences and stories that come from the times at retreats cannot be replicated! We encourage all of our youth 3rd-12th grade to attend a retreat each year. (Some grades have the option to attend 2, if they’d like, or pick one or the other)

***WEDNESDAY SESSIONS WILL BEGIN AT 6:45PM and meet in the FELLOWSHIP HALL.**

Masks are required for all, no matter vaccination status. At this point we plan to meet in person only for classes but we will monitoring COVID numbers and adjusting accordingly (whether we add a meal and worship or move to Zoom, for example).

YEAR A: 2021-2022

WEDNESDAY FAITH FORMATION*

DATES FOR ALL AGES	WEDNESDAY FAITH FORMATION*		
	Parent Meeting	Wednesday, Sept 15	All parents of <u>students</u> 3 rd -9 th grade are encouraged to attend.
Bible Sunday	Sunday, Sept 19	During worship all PreK-9 th grade will receive an <u>age appropriate</u> bible	
GRADE SPECIFIC CLASS	3 rd & 4 th Grade	Wednesday, Sept 22	Bible
	5 th & 6 th Grade	Wednesday, Sept 29	Communion
		Sunday, October 3	Celebrate Communion during Worship
	7 th , 8 th & 9 th Grade	October 6, 13, 20, 27 November 3, 10, 17 December 1, 8, 15	Confirmation Classes
		9 th Grade	TBD
RETREATS	3 rd – 6 th Grade	End of February/Beginning of March	Camp Rejuve Retreat
	6 th -9 th Grade	November 20-21	Middle School Gathering at Cragun’s Resort
	9 th -12 th Grade	March 4-6	Cardia Deo Retreat at Big Sandy Camp

WORSHIP & MUSIC



MUSIC NOTES FROM SAM

Note: *The Elim Church Council is happy to announce that Sam Black has agreed to direct the choir this year, and to work with the Praise Band.*

*****As you may be aware, the Elim Council asked me to take over responsibility for leading the Elim Choir and for working with members of the Praise Band on their respective Sunday mornings. I will be playing the piano or organ, as appropriate, most Sunday mornings as

well. I responded positively to the Council's request.

Since this will definitely be a year of constant change, we might as well include the Elim musical scene. We were fortunate to acquire 80 copies of the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnbook at a very good price from another ELCA congregation. I hope you choose to contribute to this super opportunity for obtaining these used hymnbooks. The contribution forms are still on the table with these red hymnals.

Please share any thoughts you might have. Do you want to be part of the Praise Band? Do you want to sing in the choir?

Would you be interested in learning to ring handbells? Would you like to be part of a Music & Worship Committee? I have lots of Elim ideas to learn, and we can be flexible as we move through this first year with Pastor Judy as our Interim Advisor.

Leave me notes in my mail slot. Cooltune7@gmail.com is my own email address, and my cell-phone is 218 - 830 - 0876. Make sure you add this information to your Elim address list. I look forward to spending the next few years with our musical program here at Elim.

Sam Black
Elim Music Director

Tentative Music Schedule, September, 2021

After church on Sunday, August 15, I met with several Elim musicians and we created the following start-up plan. As we all know, Covid variants are still in motion, so program changes might happen without much warning. Stay in touch with all your Elim connections. Here is our PLAN A:

Sunday, 12 September, morning worship will return to 10:15am with an upbeat service from the piano.

Wednesday, 15 September, Our **first choir practice will start just before 7 pm in the sanctuary**, while youth have programming time together in the Fellowship Hall.

Sunday, 19 September will be a Communion Sunday with organ, followed by the **Elim Annual Meeting**. Please boost our required quorum of 50 by joining us for this important congregational voting and discussion.

Wednesday, 22 September, choir rehearsal and youth programming at 6:45

Sunday, 26 September we plan to convene the **Praise Team at 9am**, rehearse for the morning worship, then lead it with musical enthusiasm.

Wednesday, 29 September continues choir rehearsal and youth programming at 6:45

Sunday, 03 October, World Wide Communion at worship with the choir making its first Sunday morning musical offering.

WORSHIP VIA ZOOM IS STILL AVAILABLE!

Would you prefer to worship from home? Are you away from home for the weekend? Would you like to invite friends and family outside the area to join Elim's worship? Worship will continue to be held on Zoom on Sunday Mornings! The live service will be shared via Zoom so you will be able to worship alongside those who are in-person.

To login: Use the Zoom app on your phone/tablet or go to www.zoom.us on your computer.
Enter Meeting ID: 301 074 408

Or call in (312) 626-6799 (audio only; long distance rates apply) Enter Meeting ID: 301 074 408

THANK YOU FROM PASTOR JIM

Dear Elim Family,

Thank you all for everything you have done to make our final few weeks so special. The worship service was a blessing and the party was a great time of celebration.

For the various gifts; the gift cards; forget-me-notes, golf membership and all the cards, expressions of memories and kindness—Thank you and I know that God has something special in store for Elim. God will guide you into it in God's timing.

May the peace of Christ, which passes all understanding. Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Live Victoriously! Pastor Jim

NEW HYMNAL



We had an opportunity to purchase 80 gently used copies of the newest ELCA hymn at a significantly reduced price. The ELW has most of the best-loved hymns from both the LBW and With One Voice, plus many lovely newer hymns. If you would like to contribute \$15 towards the purchase of one of these hymnals, you will be able to have your name on a bookplate. You may also contribute "In

Memory of" or "In Honor of" someone. Contribution forms are available in the church office or in the narthex. Or, you may order hymnals online at www.elimlc.com

ELIM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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**FALL WORSHIP
HOURS BEGIN
ON SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 12
10:15AM**
in person & on Zoom

**SUNDAY SCHOOL
WILL BEGIN
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19
@ 9AM**

WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS AT 9:30AM

(Fall Hours beginning September 12 at 10:15AM)

OFFICE HOURS

Both Pastor Judy and Deb are usually in the church office Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, from 9:30-noon, (and by appointment) unless they are tending to Elim's ministry elsewhere.

Contact Us

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