

The Zion Flame

July 2021



Zion Lutheran Church
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Pastor Becky Langholz

Dear Church family,

I have a friend who is a sports psychologist. We were watching our sons by the pool recently and speaking about new research on holding your breath underwater. The researchers' argument is that holding your breath is a measure of resiliency with regards to life in general. I learned that there are two phases to holding your breath: the "composed" phase and the "struggle" phase. Perhaps you have experienced what this feels like. When you first go under water and hold your breath, you feel fine. You are looking around and enjoying the different perspective; it is as if you can handle any challenge without issue. But after some time, you start to feel stressed. Your chest tightens, and you feel the urge to escape and push above the surface. The "struggle" has begun. Physiologically, humans have the capacity to hold our breath underwater long past this struggle phase. In May of 2021, a 56-year-old man from Croatia held his breath under water for 24 minutes and 33 seconds, creating a new world record. Of course, most of us never make it nearly that long. What accounts for the gap between what we are capable of and how we end up performing? Can we learn to shorten this gap?

Resiliency is nothing new for many of you. You have seen and experienced much, and you have grown wise in the lessons you have learned along the way. You can handle a lot without losing your cool. This must be what growing up is all about. Challenging experiences, like the experience of this 16-month pandemic, are like holding our breath underwater, and they build our resiliency. When the "struggle" phase sets in, how do we react? Do we panic, lash out and try to escape? Or do we remember what we have already endured, how God sustains us and settle in to wait a little longer?

We did some of both over the past 16 months. When we consider our country and world, there was plenty of lashing out and escapism. Plenty of fear, panic, name-calling and blame. I confess to some of that on an individual level as well. But there was also plenty of creative, resilient and patient action. I witnessed it so often in our congregation. A willingness to totally change worship and church life to keep people safe. Learning new technology and skills. Efforts to widen vaccination access. Phone calls, cards, meals and gifts to care for one another and stay connected. Treating one another with respect and kindness, even when we disagreed. Considering not only our personal needs and preferences but the needs and preferences of the group as a whole. Generous giving. Adjusting, compromising and staying flexible all along the way. And we did it all while holding our breath underwater! I credit this feat to our faith and to the amazing grace of God that strengthens us and grants peace in surprising ways.

As pandemic restrictions are lifted in our state and church this month and many activities resume, we emerge more resilient people. We have shortened the gap between our capability and our performance. Sure, we can all still do better. We might especially want to reflect upon coping behaviors we have adopted during the pandemic and if they are helpful to us in the long-term. But I think we should also be proud of how we have made it through. Brushes with life's fragility remind us of how precious God's gifts to us are—gifts of time, resources, skills, relationships and beauty. As we emerge stronger people, might we grow wiser at cherishing and stewarding these great gifts. Thanks be to God.

See you on Sunday,

Pr. Becky Langholz

Pr. Becky is regularly in the office on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9am-12pm.
She can also be reached by cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or by email: pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org

The Church Council will not meet in July. If you have an urgent matter, please speak to President Norman Meyers (360) 332-8656 or Pr. Becky (360) 393-6630. **The Council's next meeting will be Wednesday, August 18th.**

Financial Information through May 2021:

General Congregational Funds: \$38,914.92

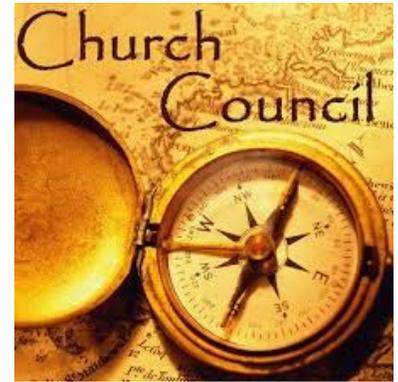
Special Funds: \$7,554.83

For the year:

Receipts: \$44,019.00

Expenses: \$29,179.42

Net: \$14,839.58



Pr. Becky is in the church office Mondays & Thursdays from 9am-12pm. She is also working from home and can be reached on her cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or via email at pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org Fridays are her day off; only emergency or prayer chain calls/texts on Fridays, please.

Pr. Becky will be on vacation July 12-25th. She will be away from worship on the 18th and 25th, returning to the office on Monday the 26th. Pr. Tom Wolbrecht will preach and preside for those two Sundays. Back up pastoral care coverage will also be provided in case of an emergency.

You can now give to the ministry of our congregation on our church website:

www.zionlutheranwhatcom.org. Click on the "Give" tab, and you will be directed to an online giving page managed by Vanco online giving. Vanco services thousands of other congregations across the country. Each donation is charged a small processing fee, and the donor can choose to cover this cost for the church. You can give to our general budget and to our special ministries. If you have any questions, please contact Pr. Becky.



From the Bishop July 2021

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

What does freedom mean to you? In this month that we in the United States celebrate Independence Day with fireworks and barbecues (yay for vaccines – we can have barbecues again!), what is freedom?

Well ... first let's consider what freedom is NOT. Freedom is NOT enormous sums of money, power, privilege, assets, stocks and bonds, cars, clothes, or degrees. Freedom is NOT being able to do anything you want without worrying how your actions might affect another. Freedom is NOT hedonism or casual cruelty. Freedom is NOT the ability to yell at someone either in person or online. Freedom is NOT to be taken lightly.

Unfortunately, we have conflated freedom with selfishness. We have decided freedom means we don't have to worry about our behavior or words. We have decided that we no longer need to be civil or caring or understanding of another's viewpoint or worldview or interest. In this synod, I am concerned at the rancor I am hearing, the level of uncivil discourse, and the inability to listen to people from different sides of different issues.

So ... what IS freedom?

Martin Luther writes in *The Freedom of a Christian* that through Christ, we are set free from sin into new life. He writes:

From faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a cheerful, willing, free spirit, disposed to serve our neighbor voluntarily, without taking any account of gratitude or ingratitude, praise or blame, gain or loss. Its object is not to lay [others] under obligations, nor does it distinguish between friends and enemies, or look to gratitude or ingratitude, but most freely and willingly spends itself and its goods, whether it loses them through ingratitude, or gains good will.

Freedom described in this way sounds amazing. But we know that it isn't that simple. We all know that even as baptized children of God, even as people assured that we are saved through Jesus Christ, even as people who revel in freedom – we know that we are not always cheerful and willing, disposed to serve our neighbor voluntarily. We know that the freedom we have been given through Jesus is sometimes squandered because of greed, racism, homophobia, sexism, nationalism, individualism, pride, and so much more. Quite simply, sin. We think that we are free and yet we are choosing death over abundant life.

And yet ... what a gift we have been given! For when we live fully into our baptisms, we are called into community with God and with one another. We are called into caring for one another. We are called to listen, love, and serve others – even those we might not particularly like. God calls us away from selfish behavior and into freedom to commit ourselves fully to each other. As Paul writes in Galatians 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." As baptized children of God and as the body of Christ in this world, we are called to the freedom of Christ. And this means we are called to a life not only for ourselves, but to die to ourselves and live truly in the freedom of bearing one another's burdens.

As a proud American, I love the Fourth of July. As a person following Jesus, I know that freedom means more than waving a flag or wearing the colors of red, white, and blue. As Martin Luther writes in his treatise *On Christian Freedom*, "A Christian is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone."

May freedom in Christ reign. May the love of Christ be with you and all that you encounter.

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee / bishop@lutheransnw.org





Your prayers make a difference! If you have a person or situation that needs prayer, please call Pr. Becky and let her know. She can alert Zion's prayer chain and/or add the item to our congregational list.

Our prayers as a congregation continue:

- ◆ For all experiencing sickness, difficulty or grief, especially Bethany, Mark, Nina, Donna, Julie and Kristi.
- ◆ For all experiencing cancer especially Tammy, Brayden, Maye and Kinsley.
- ◆ For these ministries: Lutino Adunu in Gulu, Uganda, Sol de Justicia church in Grecia, Costa Rica, Hogar Irekani in Michoacán, México, African S.M.I.L.E in Tanzania and Family Promise of Whatcom County.

July Birthdays

- 4 Cyndi Tennyson
Isaac Irvine
- 5 Carol Morehouse
- 8 Dale Kloes
- 28 Mollie Gandy



Blessed

“May the Lord bless and keep you
another year through!”





Sunday, July 4th begins another stage in our response to the pandemic. As the state of WA reopens, our church will ease its safety protocols. Mask-wearing and distancing will be optional (though recommended for unvaccinated folks, per CDC guidelines). We will no longer use individual communion packets. Communion will be a wafer and an individual cup of wine or juice served up the center aisle. Other worship elements will slowly be reincorporated. We will also resume in-person coffee hour after worship, for those who would like to attend. You all have been patient, accommodating and respectful throughout the course of this process. Thank you.

Resources for worship and reflection are available on our church [YouTube channel](#). We will also be live-streaming the worship service there each Sunday at 10am.

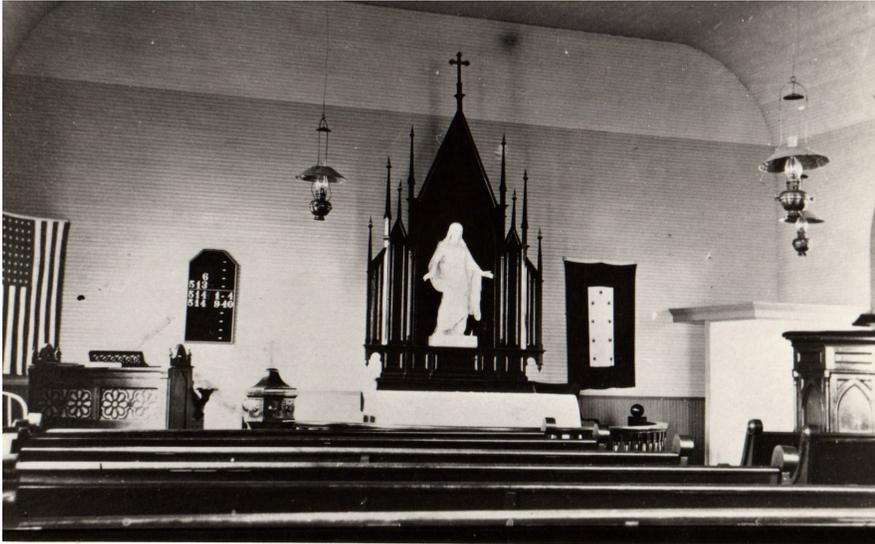
Save the date: Zion will host a class on “Grief, Death and Dying” with Craig Johnson and Pr. Becky. Craig brings experience as a firefighter, EMT and Whatcom Support Officer on the process of death and dying. Pr. Becky will offer a spiritual perspective from our faith tradition. We will also use resources from Thrivent Financial. Tuesday evenings at 6:30pm, August 3rd, 10th and 17th.



Zion will work with Christ Lutheran and United Church of Ferndale the week of July 19th to provide food for families experiencing homelessness through the Family Promise program. If you would like to be involved, speak to Pr. Becky.



From the Archives



This was the Zion sanctuary in 1925. The statue of Jesus in the altar area is now at the back of the current Zion Lutheran sanctuary.

This is the Bay Road looking east up the hill to Valley View Road in 1905.

Note the split rail fencing and the telephone lines.



Will Tarte ranch

It was haying time at the Will Tarte ranch in 1905. It looks like the ladies have arrived in their pretty dresses for a picnic!