

# News & Events

## at Petersburg Lutheran Church

*“To Know Christ, to Grow in Christ, and to Show the Love of Christ”*



*October 2022*



### Council Highlights

The Church Council met on Wednesday, September 21st and discussed the following:

- Thank you to the crew who installed the rest of the insulation on the parsonage basement ceiling.
- Thanks to everyone for their hard work on September 11 – “God’s Work, Our Hands” – many projects around the church and grounds were completed!
- Thanks to those who have made directed donations to support the updates to the parsonage!
- PLC has received a generous bequest from the Estate of Bill Newman, and the Council is soliciting ideas from the congregation about how best to use these funds, such as matching donations dollar-for-dollar.
- Council will be voting to set the recipients of our monthly 3% benevolence for 2023 at the November Council meeting. See the article below for more information.
- Council voted unanimously and joyously to accept the four newly baptized members as well as the seven adults who completed Pastor Zach’s New Member Class.
- The Budget Committee submitted the first draft of the 2023 budget for the Council to consider.
- The Council is considering nicer name tags – smaller, engraved plastic with a magnet back or clip. Comments from the Congregation are encouraged.
- Bishop Shelley is reviewing the draft Profile that the Transition and Call Committees have been working on. The Council will review it next, and then it will be presented to the Congregation for comment.
- The Sunday School children will be singing at worship on October 23.
- Good Beginnings will be at our worship service on October 30. Carissa Biggers has been hired as Assistant Teacher for Good Beginnings.

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

President – [Bev Siercks](#)  
(907-772-4330)

Vice President – [Bill Moulton](#) (907-518-1485)

Treasurer – [Robin Roberts](#)  
(907-518-0052)

Secretary – [Ginger Evens](#) (907-772-4392)

[Nancy Berg](#) (907-518-1098)

[Desi Burrell](#) (907-772-3665)

[John Small](#) (907-772-2718)

[Chris van Ettinger](#)

[Bridgett Wittstock](#)  
(907-518-1413)

*Newsletter Editor:*  
[Robin Roberts](#)

**Next Church Council Meeting: Wednesday, October 19th at 6:30pm.  
Meetings are open to all Congregation members.**



## Welcome New Members!

In September, Pastor Zach baptized four new (young) members: Greyson Hankins, Brett Smith, Wren Swanson, and Beckett Thain. In addition, seven new adult members were approved by the Council after attending Pastor Zach's excellent New Member Class. A reception will be held following worship on Sunday, October 2 to welcome the new members: Veronica Carter, Knut Frostad, Randal Holmgrain, Sarah Holmgrain, Alex Holmgrain, Arya Holmgrain, and Michael Israelson.

If you are interested in joining our church or becoming a voting member, *Please let the church office know!*

## Call Committee Update: *Mark Your Calendar for October 5!*

Our Call Committee has been hard at work, refining and completing a draft of the *Mission Site Profile* – the document that describes our congregation and community that will eventually be posted to the ELCA web site for Pastors seeking a new post. Bishop Shelley has approved the draft, and the Council has submitted a few additional comments to the Call Committee. The final step is to have a conversation with the Congregation, to finalize the document. *We will have a Soup-and-Bread pot luck supper at 5:30 on Wednesday, October 5 to share fellowship and to review and discuss this important document for our Call process.*



## October 2<sup>nd</sup> Service for Blessing of the Animals



The first Sunday in October is the closest to the Feast of Saint Francis. It has therefore been a traditional time to bless some of the most constant members of our families. Those pets who seem to be precious right along with the rest of our family deserve a bit of recognition. Since St. Francis is the patron saint of animals, this is the day we will gather out back by the picnic table for a short service to bless all our furry little friends. From dogs and cats to hermit crabs, if they are your special pet, you are invited to bring them at 1 pm for a special blessing. After all God created all living things, not just us humans!



## Memorial Services During October

October 9<sup>th</sup>—Richard Burrell at 3 pm at the Cemetery

October 10<sup>th</sup>—Scott Hurtt at 1 pm in Holy Cross Hall

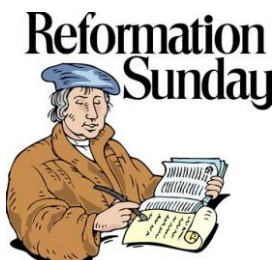
October 22<sup>nd</sup>—Sandy Reid at 11 am in the Sanctuary

**Above all, love each other deeply, because  
love covers over a multitude of sins.**

**- 1 Peter 4:8**

## Western Alaska Disaster Relief

If you wish to make a donation for the western Alaska communities that were severely impacted by the typhoon, Bishop Shelley recommends that you send money in lieu of supplies or materials. They can direct funds to purchase the appropriate needs for each community. Donations can be made through the synod office (to support congregational ministry to and with those impacted) via check or credit card over the phone, the Alaska Community Foundation's Western Alaska Disaster Recovery Fund, 3201 C Street, Suite 110, Anchorage 99503 (<https://alaskacf.org/>), or by clicking the link on the [Alaska Synod](#) main web page.



**October 30<sup>th</sup> is Reformation Sunday**

**Wear *Red*, the Color of the Day!**

## Good Beginnings Pre-School

We are off to a great start at Good Beginnings! Assistant teacher Karissa Biggers and I have been busy getting the school ready to welcome our class. We will have thirteen students enrolled in a mixed age class of 3-5 year olds. Our school year begins Monday, October 3rd, and we can't wait to dive right in. We will hit the ground running with a lot of fun activities to celebrate the fall season, including dissecting pumpkins, tie dyeing pumpkin shirts, and wearing costumes to school for a special Halloween party. On Tuesdays we will have time with Pastor Zach, and we plan to explore the sanctuary on our first visit and give our new students an introduction to our church. We begin the first week with a lesson from Luke 17:6, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." I can be reached at [goodbeginningspsg@gmail.com](mailto:goodbeginningspsg@gmail.com); please let me know if you would like to share any of your special talents with the students. We look forward to a great year and increasing the bond between our school and church.

Yours in Christ, Hayley Short, Good Beginnings Director



- Cameron Short is excited for Pre-school to begin!!



## Good Beginnings 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Along with the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of our beloved pre-school, we'll be raffling off a gorgeous quilt that was sewn by Sue Flint and quilted by Melissa Carraway. The quilt is on display in the Rexall window, and tickets are \$1, available from Lee's Clothing, Rexall, or from a GB Board Member. Drawing will be November 13, during the anniversary celebration.



## 3% Benevolence

Every month, 3% of our General Giving goes to a different outreach ministry, divided evenly among charities in our community, Alaska, and national/international. The Council votes on the final list of organizations at the November 16<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. **If you have suggestions for other ministries that we should consider, please give that information to a Council member as soon as possible, or please present your ideas at the October or November Council meetings.**

The current list of ministries for 2022 is:

January - Moringe Sokoine Secondary School, Monduli, Tanzania

February - Trinity Lutheran, Dillingham, AK

March - Glacier Bible Camp, Juneau, AK

April - Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA

May - Special Fund for Local Needs, Petersburg, AK

June - Good Beginnings Preschool, Petersburg, AK

July - Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA

August - Kuwaa Mission Project, Liberia

September - Prisoners for Christ, Woodinville, WA

October - Humanity in Progress, Petersburg, AK

November - “Crocheting Their Way” Ministry, Wildwood Women’s Prison, Kenai, AK

December - Lutheran World Relief, ELCA



## October 3%

The recipient of our 3% giving for October is [Humanity In Progress](#) here in Petersburg. HIP’s Mission is to provide connection of basic needs for people experiencing housing insecurity while educating the community on the importance of housing first and preventing homelessness in Petersburg. Their vision is a Petersburg in which each community member has stable housing.

Humanity in progress hosts a monthly food drive, the 3rd Sunday of each month. They are collecting non-perishable ready-to-eat foods and snacks, such as English muffins, bagels, fruit cups, apple sauce cups, pop-top lid canned foods, protein and granola bars, individual trail mix packs, fruit snacks meat sticks, etc. Please bring donations to: 208 Haugen Dr., from 11-1 pm on the 3rd Sunday of each month.

## Prayer Partner



October’s Prayer Partner is the [Lutheran Church of Hope](#) in Anchorage, AK, led by Pastor Liz Lowry.

## Financial Report

PLC continues this year “**in the red**,” – spending more than we receive in donations. Our expenses continue every month for salaries, utilities, and building maintenance, but giving to support the church has not been keeping up.

**Giving minus Expenses for the month of August were: -\$2,995**

**Giving minus Expenses for the year so far: -\$41,655**

Thank you for continuing to bring your offering to church or mailing it in. Electronic donations can be made using the [Online Giving button on the PLC web site](#), or on your mobile device by installing the [Vanco Mobile app](#) – just choose “Petersburg Lutheran Church” and make your donation.



## Pastor's Salaries and the Call Process

As our Congregation is getting closer to finding candidates for our new Pastor, I wanted to share some information that you might not be aware of regarding the salary that we pay our pastors. A pastor's compensation package is comprised of several elements which includes health insurance and a contribution towards their pension, salary, vacation, etc. Our Alaska Synod has published guidelines for pastor salaries, last updated in 2012 for a 10-year period (through 2022). We are anxiously awaiting the new salary guidelines, which should be available this fall. The guidelines are organized by the number of years since Ordination, with a small cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and small step increase per year. Pastors who are considering our congregation will look at these guidelines to get an idea of what their salary might be. As we prepare our budget for 2023 and beyond, we need to look to the Synod's guidelines, since that is about what potential pastors will expect.

Another important part of the pastor's compensation involves the parsonage – whether one is provided or not. The Alaska Synod compensation guidelines contains two tables with salary figures: one for congregations WITH a parsonage, and the other for congregations without. We don't “give” the pastor a parsonage to live in; it's calculated as part of their compensation. Using the Alaska Synod's guidelines for 2022, the *difference in salary* for a pastor ordained 10 years ago is a little more than \$17,000 for a congregation with a parsonage versus one without.



## From the Pastor:

### *Unconditional Love, Unconditional Grace: The Conditions for Lutheran Theology*

505 years ago, the course of church history took a major shift initiated by a then Roman Catholic priest, Martin Luther. The shift for the whole church was pushed by almost all the major forces of the time: economic, political, technological, sociological, etc. However, the push that moved Martin Luther (who primed the pump for all those major forces) was really quite simple and hushed, like the voice of God in the sheer silence that Elijah is said to have experienced in 1 Kings.

Like most major movements in history, it is not an earthshaking bang that began Luther's journey, it was a quiet moment of revelation, an inspired idea, and in fact a Word finally understood. That Word was the Word of God whose realization was actually an example of what Luther finally discerned. You see, 500 years ago, the Bible was inaccessible to almost everyone except the educated clergy because it had not been translated from the original Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) into the language of the people. Even the millennia-old Vulgate was in the Latin language, which was the academic language of the scholars. So for the most part, the common folks had to take the word of the clergy from the Pope down as to what the Bible said and subsequently what the Bible meant for ordinary folk.

The level of interpretation heavily leaned toward power and homage to the authorities of the papacy. That resulted in a misunderstanding of that one Word that Luther finally unraveled. In short, the logic went something like this. The final goal is to get to heaven. One can only get to heaven's perfection by removing one's sins. Sins are removed by one's perfect good works or by purchasing from the church an indulgence, which is simply put, a way of buying passage through Purgatory (that's the afterlife work camp where you work off your excess sins after death) therefore escaping Hell and entering the goal of heaven. In other words, you work hard enough at being good and you can get to heaven because you are born a sinner and have to get fixed up. And in this understanding, the Grace that comes through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is that you have the opportunity to even have a chance at heaven!

In this context, Luther was an exceptional priest. He went to confession every day to cleanse his sins. He went overboard with prescribed prayers. He was faithful to the highest degree in all that he had been told was expected in order to be allowed through heaven's door. But he never felt good enough, or perfect enough, or forgiven enough. He

did more than anyone else even his mentors. He was depressed, in despair to the point where those around him worried about his safety. But then he found that Word.

As clergy, he could read the Bible. His knowledge of Greek allowed him to rediscover the writings of Saint Paul whose works had not really been studied since the time of Augustine a millennia before. It was there he discovered the “Gospel,” which means “Good News.” St. Paul says again and again what has become the preeminent statement of belief for Lutherans: we are justified by grace through faith apart from works of the law. And the Good news that Paul states is that ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, with salvation only possible by Jesus’ sacrifice. There is nothing I can do to be saved. God in Jesus does it all. And that Good News takes the pressure off of me, because God has already done it!

Which brings us to an essential understanding to Lutheran theology the unconditional nature of God’s Grace and Love. There is nothing Luther nor me nor you can do to get to God. God is always the one taking the first action, and all we do is simply respond. Any statement which tries to explain the nature of God’s Grace or Love that begins with: “If you will first . . .” misses the point entirely. Unconditional means absolutely NO conditions. God reaches out to his children as a loving parent would with absolutely no requirements on our part.

This was revelatory for Luther’s time and changed the dynamic of the role of clergy, the church, and our works. The clergy should daily proclaim, that not only has Jesus paved the way for salvation and promised that salvation to you in the Word and Sacraments, but you yourself can do NOTHING to get saved. But as Paul quickly points out, that does not do away with good works, but precisely frames those good works in a way that makes them a joy rather than a duty. Good works that we do are our response to what God has already done and promised. What we do with our lives understood as redeemed already through God’s Grace is actually our “Thank You” note to God. Our actions are not to bring about God’s Love, Grace, and Promises, but are in response to what God has already done!

It is that understanding that what God does is unconditional which empowered Luther to try to straighten out the church’s understanding. And that attempt to course correct the central doctrine of the church effected all those changes in politics, the economy and society. It freed Luther and the reformers to proclaim that the children of God are not beholden to Popes nor priests nor institutions in matters of salvation. Rather the people of God are free to live in the joy of knowing that even when our best is not enough, God has infinite love and forgiveness, enough for all of us.



It is important to note that the theology within the Roman Catholic Church has not stayed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but has rather embraced much of Luther's theology over the past 505 years. Sadly, there are churches today that trace back to Luther's legacy, but who have forgotten this revelation of God's primacy, and have fallen back to some of the same "works righteous" tenants that Luther so vehemently opposed. However, it is my hope that just as 505 years ago Luther went back to the original message of what the Good News is, that this Reformation Sunday will also draw those who have lost that "Good News" to also rediscover God's Love and God's Grace to be unconditional.



## Large Print Worship Bulletins

If anyone needs large print Bulletins on Sundays, please let the church office know by Thursday each week so we know how many to print.

---

**Petersburg Lutheran Church**  
**406 Excel Street, PO Box 709, Petersburg, AK 99833**  
**Pastor Zachariah Harris III, 540-288-4337 [plcakpastor@gmail.com](mailto:plcakpastor@gmail.com)**  
**[www.petersburglutheran.com](http://www.petersburglutheran.com)**  
**Office: 907-772-3114 [plcakoffice@gmail.com](mailto:plcakoffice@gmail.com)**

---