



Southern Area Leadership Team

Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Newsletter – May 2020

Hello from the Southern Area Leadership Team:

Pastor Jeff Decelle, Leah Steiner, Dan Ethier, and Pastor Colin Millang

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Fall Area Gathering Update:

A group from our area gathered in October 2019 at Unity Lutheran in Medicine Hat.

Highlights:

- Worship
- Dwelling in the Word
- Great discussions
 - “Why do you go to that church?”
- Building on existing relationships
- Meeting new people
- Time to discern God’s Word
- Synod updates from Bishop Larry
- Potluck lunch
- Flourishing Congregations Institute
 - Dr. Joel Thiessen





Our team is still meeting via ZOOM to collaborate and discuss what's happening in our Southern area.

Note: Pastor Colin drinking his tea out of what looks like a laboratory beaker. 😊

What are churches are doing to stay connected???

With in-person church services cancelled, we wanted to know how people are staying connected during these tough times. We found that churches throughout our area are being very creative with Sunday services, keeping in touch, bible studies, etc.

Sunday services

- Sunday service is recorded and posted via our website as live a video on YouTube and as audio files.
- Members who don't use online sources are mailed paper copies of weekly bulletins and sermons.
- Podcast recorded services including music, scripture reading, prayers, and a message.
- Congregational members are volunteering to record themselves reading scripture, singing songs, and playing an instrument to be included in the Sunday service.
- With the online/digital platform, services are reaching 5 times more people than a regular Sunday service!

Meetings

- Council has their regular meeting via ZOOM
- Virtual Coffee Corner every Tuesday and Thursday @ 10:00am
- Worship team meetings via ZOOM to help plan the Sunday services

Prayer, Study, & Connection

- Sent out Bible study materials for use at home
- Daily prayers on Facebook
- Ringing of the bells: Every Wednesday @ 7pm, we ring the bells and acknowledge different people (posted in the weekly announcements and on Facebook). For example, we ring the bells for medical workers at our hospital, clinic and long-term care facilities. Every Sunday @ 11am as a call to worship... wherever you may be.
- Men's group is participating in S.O.S. (Semi Outrageous Stories) where we are emailed to post an interesting observation or recall of a situation which is shared in the group. First iteration of SOS was "What was your first car?"
- "Friendly Faces" – a project where everyone took a selfie and captioned it for use in the monthly newsletter.
- Community News – a daily email that may include: a prayer, a devotion, a short video message, pictures from congregational members, birthday/anniversary announcements, links to Coffee Corner, and maybe a funny cartoon.
- Phone Tree: for those who don't use email or technology get a weekly call from someone.
- Facebook Page: posting weekly prayers, readings, sermon messages (both video and transcribed).

Discussion Questions

We asked, "Why do you go to church?" at the May 2019 Spring Area Gathering in Tilley. So, our follow-up question at the Fall Area Gathering in October 2019 in Medicine Hat was "Why do you go to that church?" We wanted to know what drew people to attend their church, what keeps you going every week, did you shop around for a church to attend, etc. Here are some of the responses from our time together:

"Why do you go to that church?"

- Camaraderie – feeling welcome, comfortable
- Family church connections: core group, faith family, it's more about faith family than the building
- It has been part of my whole life story – a constant support through life transitions
- Variety of music, social gatherings (BBQs, potlucks, camp, outreach)
- Because I lost the church I had and found the church I needed
- I get a ride to church every Sunday
- Shared values and beliefs
- I can use and share my gifts and talents
- Lutheran theology
- Because I was asked...
- Sense of belonging
- The message.
- Family ties – my family has always gone to that church
- Gives me joy and a sense of worth
- God called me there
- It's a place where I can be myself
- Lutheran at heart
- Grace.



From Bethany Lutheran's (Tilley, AB) Facebook Page: The foundation is being replaced and the church will soon sit on a new, strong base. Bethany will celebrate 90 years this year. Looking great! If you look closely at the picture, you will see the piano that is still in the old basement. We didn't see anyone playing it while the machinery was there!

