

## From the Pastor for the May, 2021 Messenger:

As I am writing this month's reflection, I have absolutely no clue what the next 24-36 hours have in store for me. I have just received my second dose of the covid vaccine, and I've heard plenty of horror stories about the side effects the next day. Family and friends have shared with me their state of misery, the waves of symptoms, and just the general exhaustion that their bodies went through. And while the consensus seems to be that people my age have a tough time, I have also heard a few pleasant surprises. Some people reported only a mild headache and a few body aches, that they felt back to normal in no time at all.

So, I sit here assuming the worst while also hoping to be in the minority that doesn't end up terribly impacted by the shot. I'm hydrating, I'm doing circles with my arm, I have ibuprofen at the ready, and I've gotten enough work done to survive if tomorrow is a less than productive day, but I certainly wouldn't complain if I woke up tomorrow symptom free and ready to roll. Either way, there is comfort in knowing that this, too, shall pass. Even the worst symptoms won't be here forever and when its over, I know I'll be so glad to have taken this step that gets our world closer to hugs, handshakes, and not having to look for people's smiles in their eyes but to see them beaming from their mouths.

It is oddly fitting that each person's reaction to the vaccine can be so random and unpredictable. The uncertainty I feel about the next day or so feels a lot like the uncertainty we navigated through and continue to deal with. It is a question that rests in the back of our minds as we look ahead – how will covid impact what our church looks like in six months, in a year, or in five years? I feel it isn't being overly dramatic to say that this pandemic will make a permanent change to our church, but there is no way to know for certain what those changes will entail.

It will be important for us to remember that with or without covid, our church world was always changing. Maybe the pandemic just accelerated or forced those changes upon us when we'd much rather ignore them. When our lives were "normal," we knew the church was evolving and we had no doubt that we'd be walking with God wherever the changes took us. Much of our confidence came from the fact that we thought we were in charge of the change and could set our own pace. We weren't going to have to do too much before we felt we were ready. Now, change occurred without our permission, without a warning, and that makes our future, that was truthfully always unknown, look a little more intimidating. It is easy to feel unprepared, uncertain, and scared. My hope is that we lean on the certainty of our God. As we were inching toward change, we were confident that we could find God's presence in our work together. Now that we've been thrust into change rapidly, God's presence remains there for us to find.

For all of our question marks, for the ways that we are planning for the worst but hoping for the best, remember that God moves with us. We'll have moments that challenge us, we'll have moments that are a pleasant surprise, but if we pay attention to God's leading in our lives, we will be the church that God is asking us to be no matter what. I am excited to notice God in new ways as a church family as we move beyond this time of covid, and I hope you are, too. *Pastor James*

### Elders Meeting 4/13/21

Pastor James opened the meeting with a reading of the Daily Text. Chelsey, Sami, Jim, Alyssa, and James were in attendance.

We heard updates from Pastor James on pastoral care. We have several members of our congregation recovering from or anticipating medical procedures. We also lifted up the long and full life of our sister Bernice as she was called home to be with her Savior this week. Pastor James will be getting his second dose of the vaccine on 4/27 and is looking forward to having more opportunities to visit people safely in person.

Our worship services for Holy Week and Easter went well with attendance spread out across Zoom, YouTube, and in person. It is a joy to have people in the sanctuary again. Our ultimate goal is to get to the point where our 10am service is the service that gets offered online as well and we will be discussing how to make that possible in the highest quality we can.

Ryan Dombrowski and Pastor James have been meeting regularly to make plans for Youth Group. Ryan would like to start a youth group for kids aged 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up and Pastor James will continue to lead our traditional youth group when it is safe to start up again. We are hopeful to have some events in the summer before having a more "normal" schedule in the fall.

Pastor James will be leading program at Winmor from 7/25 – 7/31 at Mt. Morris.

Sami and Pastor James will be representing our church at Western District Synod next week. It will all be held online.

Our next meeting will be 5/11 at 5:30pm on Zoom.

## Joint Board Meeting April 13, 2021

Pastor James, Jim Muenster, Sami Petit, Rob Sprister, Alyssa Seitz, Norm Blohm, Shari Liesch, John Merkel, and Chelsey Thiel were in attendance on Zoom.

**Elders Update:** Pastor James gave a pastoral care update. Pastor James will be getting his second vaccine at the end of the month and is hopeful he can get back to more visits in person soon. We are still waiting for an update from the Moravian Music Ministry for more guidance on when we can resume singing.

**Trustees Update:** Thank you to Jim and Deb Bernetzke for planting some grass up front. The building has been getting used a little more with group meetings as well as a couple of memorial services. Spring cleanup for the church grounds is scheduled for April 24 at 8am.

### Joint Board

**Worship Update-**We discussed our current worship. Collectively we feel things are good where we are currently and will continue to take it slow and make adjustments as everyone is comfortable doing so. We have had a good amount of people back in church each Sunday but, still able to social distance without any issues.

**Church Council-May 16-**We are planning to have the meeting on Sunday May 16 immediately following worship. We will be voting on board/committee positions. Our quorum currently is 22 people. We will take votes from those in the sanctuary as well as the parking lot to meet quorum. The positions to be voted on include: One Elder, One Trustee, and Two CEC members. Anyone who would like to be nominated please let a Joint Board member or Pastor James know.

**“Welcome Back” Get Together-**We has some discussion about a possible event this summer for an opportunity to welcome everyone back and have a special worship opportunity. We will have more discussion on this next month as we see how things continue to progress.

**Summer Camp-Win-Mor-7/25-7/31-**Pastor James will be leading program at Mt. Morris.

**Synod-4/22-4/24-Virtual-**Pastor James and Sami Petit will be attending and will report back to us any updates.

Our next meetings will be May 11, 2021:

### Trustees

Rob, Norm, John, Shari, and Pastor James were present for this meeting.

Pastor James passed on a thank you from his family for opening up the church for a memorial service for his uncle.

We discussed the upcoming service for Jim and JoAnn Buelow (6/19) and considered the possibility of family members parking their trailers in the church parking lot. Pastor James will follow up with the family to get more information about what they might need to make that work.

We talked about our current setup for worship and are so grateful to Shari for her generosity in providing music while declining her pay until she is playing live on Sundays again.

We offered our thanks to Jim and Deb Bernetzke for their help in planting grass in front of the parsonage and we are ready to start mowing the lawn after Rob tuned up the mower.

Our date for the spring cleanup is 4/24 at 8am.

\*Since this meeting, our Trustees have helped navigate flooding in the parsonage basement and discovered the need to replace the parsonage roof during our spring cleanup.

You are invited to join us for our church council following our 10am worship on 5/16. You can join the meeting from the sanctuary (masked and socially distanced) or you can join from the parking lot by tuning to 96.5FM. This meeting will primarily be to hold elections for various boards and committees.

We anticipate needing to fill the following seats:

1 Board of Trustees

1 Board of Elders

2 Christian Education Committee

If you are interested in learning more about a particular group, please let Pastor James know and he'd be happy to answer your questions.

We also want to offer our continued gratitude for your patience as we “open up” the church. Small groups are welcome to gather again based on their comfort level and we have welcomed people back into the sanctuary for worship. The biggest remaining steps will be when we are able to stop wearing masks and when we can start singing together again. We continue to discuss our approach every month and will keep you updated as we learn more about when it is safe to make those changes. In terms of the entire timeline of Covid, we are nearly there, but the final stages to going back to “normal” may take some time.

Thank you for your understanding and for your patience. In All Things Love, Your Joint Board

## **MAY BIRTHDAYS**

5/2: Sue Muenster  
5/3: Lois Buelow  
5/11: Robbin Petit  
5/13: Norm Blohm  
5/15: Alison Brugger  
5/20: Jim Bernetzke  
Cassi Petit  
5/21: Michelle Remter  
5/24: Hannah Schultz  
5/25: Carol Jens

### **Buelow Memorial on June 19**

In January of this year, two former members of our congregation passed away within two days of each other. Jim and JoAnn Buelow were very active members for many years until their retirement when they relocated to be closer to their daughter. They served countless hours on boards and committees. Jim was an elder and trustee and JoAnn, also an elder, was a Sunday School teacher and an active member of the Friendly Service Circle. She was also in charge of some of our first rummage sales. However, the role they both spoke about the most, was their time spent as youth counselors. The youth group at that time was made up mostly of a large group of boys. They took on the challenge and many of those young men, now reaching retirement, still remember their firm, but loving guidance and leadership. On June 19th, Jim and JoAnn's cremains will be returning to Freedom Moravian for a memorial service at 1:00 in the afternoon. Their family is inviting the Freedom Moravian congregation, friends and family to attend this service. The Mary and Martha Circle is holding a time of food and fellowship following the service. Many of Jim and JoAnn's relatives, from all over the country, will be attending their celebration of life so hopefully many members of Freedom Moravian will be present to welcome them. It will be a great opportunity to share our memories and reconnect with their family. Please mark the date on your calendar.

**Mens Group in Social Hall at 8 am on May 1**

**Highway cleanup at 10:30 am on May 1**

Many of you know that I had shoulder surgery on February 11. It went very well and I am having therapy twice a week and that is going well also. I would like to thank everyone for the prayers, phone calls and texts, cards, and messages on Facebook. I still do not have permission to drive but I think it will be soon (I hope). Hopefully I will be able to drive to services soon and see many of you there. I truly miss everyone. Stay Safe.

**In Friendship , Judy Gonnering**

### **Mary Martha**

The Mary and Martha Circle met Wednesday, April 22nd at 1:00. We discussed ways we could honor our mothers on Mothers' Day, May 9th and decided we'd once again gift them carnations. We then discussed the Buelow Memorial Service to be held on Saturday, June 19th. We will host the luncheon that will follow the 1:00 p.m. service and invite all attendees to share in this time of food and fellowship. Just a reminder that plans for our annual rummage sale are moving forward. Jeannie Sprister is in charge of the event this year which will take place August 5th and 6th. As you clean your attics and garages this spring, please consider donating your treasures to this worthy cause. Our next meeting will be Wednesday, May 19th at 1:00 p.m. All ladies are welcome to attend .

## **MAY ANNIVERSARIES**

5/2: Rock & Robbin Petit  
5/4: Norm & Chris Blohm  
5/10: Ned & Sherri Schwalbach  
5/11: Doug & Beth Lillge  
5/21: Jordan & Caitlyn Forbes  
Jim & Ginger Muenster

**My thank you seems so small compared to all the prayers you all have said for me during the time I spent in the hospital. I had excellent care and great doctors. I'm still recuperating but am getting stronger. It's such a comfort to know we can count on each other through what ever life brings. May you all be blessed for the kindness you've shown me.**

**A Moravian and a Friend , Carol Jens**

**In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love.**



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FREEDOM MORAVIAN CHURCH

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