



# THE BT TIMES

We are Better Together  
Spring 2020

## From Our Church Council Vice President

### Online Offerings

#### Chair Yoga

Mondays 10:00 am  
by Conference Call

#### Compline

Wednesdays 7:30 pm  
by Zoom - Conference  
Call - with Bible Study

#### Bible Study

Thursdays 11:00 am  
with Pastor Don  
by Zoom or  
Conference Call

#### Weekly Worship

Whenever you like!  
We're posting worship  
videos on our Youtube  
and Facebook pages  
each Sunday morning!

#### Coffee Hour

Sundays at 10:30 am  
Through Zoom we'll  
check in and share a  
few moments of  
gratitude and prayer  
requests too.

That we live in strange, uncertain and troubling times goes without saying. No instruction manual exists to guide the Church Council – the governing body for our particular group of Christian Lutherpalians – on how to handle the many spiritual, financial and practical challenges we are now facing. Nevertheless, the Council has been working hard to ensure that the church continues as a vibrant, nurturing family of believers, taking care of our own while reaching out to care for the greater community:

- We have created a telephone call tree that has members checking in with each other every week to see how they're doing, whether they need anything and whether they have any special requests.
- We are taking care of the larger community by donating \$1,000 to replenish the shelves at GEDCO's CARES food pantry in Govans. The Council also established a Community Relief Fund to support charities and individuals who have been especially hard hit by the effects of the quarantine. You, our members, have generously donated over \$4,000!
- We are taking steps to prepare for the day when we can return as a church family to our beautiful facilities. Thanks to a special donation, the floors in Hart Hall have been refinished! We're also taking advantage of this down time to do some deep cleaning of the church sanctuary, dusting of rafters, washing of windows and waxing floors.

Finally, we have been closely tracking the church's finances. We commend our parishioners who have maintained their pledged giving, but we have seen a reduction in our overall revenues, especially from the contributions of tenants who use our space. The Front Porch Church has opted to move elsewhere so they can worship on Sunday mornings, and the Three-Ring Theatre group will end this summer when director Gloria Krutul retires.

The Council has approved adjustments to the 2020 operating budget to reflect this reduction in income and is looking at other steps that may need to be made to reflect the new economic realities in the coronavirus era. The Council also has approved seeking a loan under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief

and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act. That loan, if approved, can be converted into an outright grant if certain provisions are met.

Under that same economic stimulus law enacted in March, many of us have or should receive \$1,200 checks, regardless of our need. For those of you who have lost jobs or hours and need your stimulus check, use it! But, if you don't need it, please consider donating it to the Church or some other organization that helps people in need. The CARES Act even offers some special incentives to taxpayers for their charitable contributions (*contact your tax advisor*).

Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant an apple tree today." What did he mean? Well, I think he meant that, even in uncertain and difficult times, we should do those things that bring joy – not in expectation of some future outcome or reward, but rather in the reward that comes in our actions themselves. In short, there is no sense in postponing happiness; we should not just *strive* for happiness, but rather we should just *be happy*. Be like Martin and plant your own apple tree by giving all or a portion of your unneeded stimulus check to your Church! It's guaranteed to make you happy.

Jeff Valentine  
Vice President

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**That time  
I thought I could not  
go any closer to grief  
without dying**

**I went closer,  
and I did not die.  
Surely God  
had his hand in this,**

**as well as friends.  
Still, I was bent,  
and my laughter,  
as the poet said,**

**was nowhere to be found.  
Then said my friend Daniel,  
(brave even among lions),  
"It's not the weight you carry**

**but how you carry it –  
books, bricks, grief –  
it's all in the way  
you embrace it, balance it, carry it**

**when you cannot, and would not,  
put it down."  
So I went practicing.  
Have you noticed?**

**Have you heard  
the laughter  
that comes, now and again,  
out of my startled mouth?**

**How I linger  
to admire, admire, admire  
the things of this world  
that are kind, and maybe**

**also troubled –  
roses in the wind,  
the sea geese on the steep waves,  
a love  
to which there is no reply?**

— "Heavy" by Mary Oliver from *Thirst*.

# Notes from Jody

*Our Resident scientist & professor*

*Beekeeper*

*Baby chick nurturer*

*Wood chopper...*



Hard times bring out the best and worst in us. I expect the worst and brace for sorrow, loss, displays of ignorance, injustice, and photographs and stories that hit home and burden my heart. I contribute to the “worst” with my own stupidity, preconceived ideas, and insensitivity. Yet, the worst is counterbalanced with the best, and that happened to me yesterday. It was so unexpected that it literally caught my breath. I was teaching a class on how the flow of money affects the fates of pollinators.

I teach on Zoom, inviting my 25 students to join by links, and they show up! I have been worried about them. As the youngest of the “adults” (18+ yrs), they are expected to be self-reliant. They need parents right now but are captured in Baltimore, far from home. As young adults, they have developed no coping skills. They are lonely, angry, bored, and confused by an unpredictable world, and I care about them.

Since this virus arrived, I open and end every class to say how much I care about them and I want them to survive courageously. Yesterday, I was ending class, so I stated how much I cared about them, and one of them said “we love you” and another chimed in “I love you” so in the final seconds of class, I said “I love you too,” and the meeting ended. Never, never, have I seen this sort of break down in protocol of academic professionalism between students and their professor. I am still reeling from the “best” which entered my classroom, scrambled our hearts, and forged a new, deeper, rewarding avenue of communication in an arena that notoriously keeps places in the heart at bay. It only points to the power of God.

I see this plague as the plunge into the darkest hours before dawn, the Gethsemane before the great revelation of God's love. Those of us who will survive the pandemic will have the excuse of outliving an older order, one that is no longer useful, and the opportunity to create a new more loving order.

Although morgues will fill and grim realities will set in, also coming are the seeds for a renaissance. We are headed for glory days, and this time of sitting quietly, separately, and seriously is the hatching time for a new era of appreciation, joy in simple things, and priorities that are once again sustainable. Moving through an uncharted wilderness, beset with mortal dangers, and temptations never before encountered, I can only feel a closer alignment to Christ as He navigated His own wilderness and temptations.

We are living our Christianity more deeply. I think that is a good thing...the best thing. I embrace all of it - sorrow, fear, and loss along with creativity, connection, and compassion. I rely on the ever-revealing, profound, and ever-relevant examples of Christ's trials as my comfort. Thank God for Him. Thank God for

the nurses, techs, and  
ine every day, and in  
eep coming. They are  
rd as they can, trying  
ad trying to stay safe,  
when they get home,  
ything to be okay, but  
e soon. And then the

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without family. Any  
ur church family. But  
We know our friends



And a little child  
shall lead us...  
**Alleluia!**