

The *intercom* In Church and Community



From the Senior Pastor The Question on Everyone's Mind



The longing we feel to be together is strong these days. Not a week passes without someone asking us, “When is the church going to reopen?” How we answer that question is a matter of how we define the word “church.”

It is true that we have limited the hours the building is unlocked during this time when we have been encouraged to remain physically separated or “socially distanced.” In this sense, I suppose it is technically accurate to say the church is closed more than it is open.

But if we remember that the church is not so much a building as it is the people whom God has called into mission for the sake of the world, then it is also accurate to say that, even during a pandemic, the church has never “closed.” The ministry to which we are called as God’s people has never ceased. It has merely adapted to the times in which we are living.

Maybe the most obvious example of this adaptation is the way we are gathering for worship these days. Rather than getting up, putting on our Sunday best, and making our way to 909 West 33rd Street for worship and fellowship with hundreds of other OSL members and friends, we’ve been gathering in our homes around screens of all sizes to worship at a distance so that we don’t put ourselves or our fellow worshipers at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19.

Those of us who have been in the building on a Sunday morning have become accustomed to empty, quiet spaces that are normally teeming with activity and alive with the savory smell of bacon. Pastors lead worship and preach to a mostly empty room. Musicians play and sing without immediate feedback from the assembly, and the TV ministry team struggles week after week to capture the action of worship without drawing too much attention to the vacancy of the room.

Even so, the worship ministry of Our Savior’s has continued, and based on the feedback we hear from both members as well as guests who are tuning in from across the region, what we are offering each week is speaking to people’s hearts with hope and encouragement at a time when it is easy to fall into despair.

Pr. Tim’s article in this edition of *The Intercom* draws attention to other faithful adaptations carried out by our Spiritual Care ministry team during these extraordinary days. The stories he tells suggest that there are other stories out there—your stories—that witness to the faithful ways all of you are living out your call to share the love of the risen Christ with your neighbor.

Remember, *you* are the church deployed in this world for that purpose. We look forward to that day when we will be able to gather in person here at OSL and enjoy the gifts of being community together. In the meantime, however, let’s not forget that the church isn’t closed; the mission God has given us to proclaim Christ and nurture faith that connects to everyday life continues to lead us ever forward even in these days when we cannot be together.

Be well and press on,
Pr. Randy Gehring

Ministry Spotlight – Caring Ministries

A Cause for Giving Thanks By Pr. Tim Lemme

*“Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
Matthew 5:16*

This familiar verse from Matthew’s gospel came to mind again recently as I reflected upon our ministry together (while apart) these past few months. They are words spoken over us in our baptism that remind us to bear witness to the grace and forgiveness we have received within this holy sacrament. As baptized Children of God, we are called to “be God’s light” in our world, so what exactly does this mean? Perhaps these past few months have given us pause to think about this question once again.

We here at Our Savior’s are a blessed community indeed! Together we play a vital role in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ within our community and the world. There is always something going on around our church. Each Core Ministry Team has so much to offer as we *let our light shine before others*, and *give glory to our Father in heaven*.

I personally give thanks for being part of the Spiritual Care Core Ministry Team and the many Spiritual Care ministry programs that are part of it. More than 135 volunteers make our ministry possible as together we go about the work God has called us to do—but what happens when we cannot be together? What happens when a pandemic like COVID-19 prohibits us from gathering together to quilt and sew, to make Faith Chests in the Woodshop, to prepare meals for Dinner to Your Door, and all the other things we’re accustomed to doing together here at OSL? That was the question

we had when social distancing rules first went into effect: Would our ministry be possible?

It didn’t take long for this concern to turn into a cause for giving thanks!

Since this pandemic began, ministry at OSL has not ceased—it has grown, and though some doors have shut for a time, others have been opened to show new and exciting ways of doing ministry. Let me share just a few of these stories of Faith in Action with you:

- ♦ Stephen Ministers have not been able to meet with their Care Partners because of social distancing rules, but they have continued to provide Christian care through phone calls, prayer notes, texts, and emails. Not only has their ministry continued, it has grown, as Stephen ministers have also participated in OSL’s Phone Call Ministry Program, which reaches out to members age 80 and up who have been confined to their homes during this pandemic, keeping them connected with their church community. Volunteers have made regular phone calls to hundreds of members in these past few months.
- ♦ Our Caring Ministries Director, Deb Harlan, has been non-stop thinking of ways to reach out in support of our members—for example, making sure nonperishable meals and Dinner to Your Door meals are available; sewing facemasks for members (one can be mailed to you: contact the Church Office, 336-2942); and, with Maribeth Anderson and Deb Merxbauer, organizing and leading last month’s Honks = Hugs Caravan of Love, which drove to nursing homes and care facilities to honk and wave and share a greeting with OSL members living there. A fantastic time was enjoyed by all that day!

- ♦ Although OSL’s Visitation Team is not able to make in-person visits to our homebound members during this time, a special thank you goes out to Maribeth Anderson for her continued phone calls and support to over 140 elderly members. She has even dropped off several Dinner to Your Door meals to those who have needed a little extra support!
- ♦ Although the sewing machines have been quiet at the church since the quarantine began, the Peace by Piece Quilting Ministry continues to work hard providing much needed resources to hospitals, nursing homes, reservation ministries, and other recipients. Marilyn Quam had these words of encouragement to say to her quilting team members recently:



“Not doing our usual ministry of making quilts for those in need does not mean we are not continuing to be the hands of God. Many of you are busy at home: sewing face masks, writing notes of encouragement to those you may have haven’t heard from lately, making special phone calls to family members and friends, crocheting prayers shawls or baby caps, packing grocery bags for pandemic-bound Augie students, providing food to nursing home staff, making May baskets for senior friends, the list is endless! We continue to show our faithfulness to God by living in the example of caring for others!”



During this time of social distancing, the quilting team has made over 1,000 masks, and counting! (If anyone has any elastic to donate to them, they would appreciate it very much.)

- ♦ Our Faith Community Nurse, Michelle Anderson, always keeps in touch with members to check on their health and well-being, and even more so now during this pandemic. Through her contacts with the health systems in our community, she has been able to provide us with regular, critical information to help us navigate through this unprecedented time. We are so blessed to



have her on our Spiritual Care team at OSL as she continues to care for our congregation’s health, body, mind, and soul.

These are just a few examples of how our ministry continues to shine God’s love within and beyond the walls of OSL, and in doing so, continues to *give glory to our Father in heaven!* In no way has our mission to *proclaim Christ, and nurture faith that connects to everyday life* come to a halt because of this pandemic—in many ways, this has been one of OSL’s finest hours!

Praise be to God for the mission and ministry we continue to share! ♦

Thanks for the Ministry of Nancy Heesch

You may have noticed that we’re living in strange times, and so there was no way to hold a proper send-off for Nancy Heesch, who has served as OSL’s Nursery Coordinator since 2017.



Nancy’s last day as Nursery Coordinator was May 10. Our Savior’s has been blessed to have Nancy serving the youngest members of the OSL community and their families. Thank you, Nancy!

Photos: previous page, Honks = Hugs caravan; this page, cloth facemasks from Caring Ministries; prayer shawls and more from Peace by Piece Quilting volunteers.



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Worship Services

In-Person worship services are canceled through June 15.
See oslchurch.com for continuing updates.

Television and Internet

Celebrate: 9:00 A.M., KTTW (cable channel 9; channel 7.1)
Festive: 1:00 P.M., KSCB (cable channel 30; channel 53)
Facebook Live, 8:45 and 10:15 A.M.
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Faithful, Hopeful, Loving Generosity

Your support of OSL's mission to proclaim Christ and nurture faith that connects to everyday life is life-changing, both for you and for those whom our ministry reaches. Thank you! May God bless your faithful, hopeful, loving generosity.

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