Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church,

We Miss You!

Ministry continues, thanks be to God! Please be certain to read your weekly eMemo, and check the Our Saviour’s website often for ministry and social opportunities for members of all ages.

www.oursaviours.org
Pete Warmanen, Lead Pastor

The world came to an abrupt halt in March, yet most of the ministries in our church continued (with some obvious modifications). Worship continued, though now it's offered online. There's also a phone-in option for people without internet access. Education and Fellowship opportunities continued, though, now they take place online. Committees have continued to work, though now meetings take place via Zoom. Thank you for your faithful and generous giving throughout these challenging days. So many church members have continued to send in financial gifts via mail, electronically and/or via text. I am so thankful for the incredible staff at Our Saviour's who have kept the ministries at Our Saviour's not just going, but literally growing throughout this pandemic! While you read the following pages, I hope that you will be inspired by the work of Our Saviour's Staff – I know I am!

Here is what I’ve been up to over the past few months. My primary responsibility has been communication: communicating with God through prayer; communicating with the staff and church leaders, so that our mission remains focused and united; communicating with the whole congregation, so that you all know what's happening in and around the church. I communicate with you all primarily via my weekly e-Memo, via social media and via our online weekly worship services. (Who could have ever guessed that my undergraduate Broadcasting and Cinematic Arts degree would be as helpful as it currently is in my life as a parish pastor?!)  

Along with ensuring that the day-to-day ministries at Our Saviour’s continue, my other major responsibility is visioning what the future of the church will look like – not just Our Saviour’s, but the whole church. I’ve attended virtual Continuing Education classes; I’m in constant communication with Synod Staff, and with other pastors who serve in large congregations; and I’m working with staff and volunteers at Our Saviour’s to prepare for an eventual return to in-person worship services.

We hope to return to in-person worship services soon, but there are many steps that need to take place before this can be done safely and responsibly. For the time being, we will continue to record our weekly worship services, and even when we do return to in-person worship services, we plan to live-stream our services to connect with our homebound members, with people who work on the weekends, and with people around the globe who have begun worshiping with us virtually over the past few months.

When I’ve found time to unplug from the computer, I’ve enjoyed family time, lots of movie watching, exercising and walks with my Prayer Puppy (we pray for you all while we walk together around the neighborhood). I miss you all, and I’m praying for you all! Email: pwarmanen@oursaviours.org

The Mission of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church

By the power of God’s love, we:

• Welcome all people into a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ and one another.
• Grow together in faith and understanding of God’s grace.
• Equip each other to Make Christ Known in the world.

Our Vision is to be a loving community where all people discover and grow an active faith in Jesus Christ that changes lives in the world.

Our Call is to Live Beyond Our Walls.

Our Saviour’s is a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, and a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
Hello, I’m Pastor Gail Heidtke - I’ve been reaching out to those sheltering at home, and encouraging other folks to share God’s care, with a listening ear and an open heart. I’ve written dozens of cards and notes. On Sundays, I make 30 to 40 phone calls to people I wish I were seeing in person in worship. Throughout the week I continue to make contacts, following up on needs expressed. Thanks be for our Stephen Ministers who are so faithful in reaching out and sharing a caring connection. I’m so impressed by our Women of the ELCA Circles who maintain a gracious connection with one another, and all those who have been sewing facemasks for others, including LSSI. Our Global Missions Team is learning more about our ministry partners around the world and particularly with Pastor Carrie Ballenger in Jerusalem.

What have I been doing during these quarantine days? I try to start each day with prayer and journaling, reflecting on a verse of Scripture, or hymn. I walk each day, lifting in prayer the concerns of our congregation and our world. Praying for fellow pastors and all our church staff.

I’ve been Zooming, texting, staring blankly out the window, talking to the birds, cooking creatively to use up the snowy frozen mystery items in my freezer, sorting through clutter and stored up memories, preparing for worship and videotaping. Appreciating my morning coffee. Reading - (Holy Envy by Barbara Brown Taylor, and Nanaville by Anna Quindlen), knitting prayer shawls and baby caps till my right hand cramped, maxing out on Netflix and that tiger guy. FaceTiming with my one-year-old granddaughter. Poring over the church picture directory because I miss faces of our church people. Trusting God – because when this is over – the church, the world and my life will never be the same. Knowing that God will continue to lead us. Together we Make Christ Known!

Email: gheidtke@oursaviours.org

Hi, Our Saviour’s family, from Pastor Rhonda!
It seems like a great time to tell you that I really miss seeing your faces. I would love to hear what you all have been up to during this time away from each other.

ME? I have been keeping busy, praying for you all, and learning new ways of being in ministry. I still see you at worship (ok, more like you see me) and still interact with the staff. Mostly I am strengthening my prayer life and finding ways to stay busy.

God is doing some amazing things during this time. I have had opportunity to share your love with the broader community (WINGS donations) as well as share the mission of OSLC with other community leaders. I do a lot of Zoom meetings. When I’m not busy working on church activities, I am an emergency 4th grade teacher at home, a professional dog groomer, and I am in counseling for “shoe buying withdrawal syndrome”… pray for me! Can’t wait to see you all in person! Germ free virtual hugs and high fives from me to you!

Email: rpruitt@oursaviours.org
Greetings, People of Our Saviour’s, from Jim Valentine, COO!

Oh how I miss you! Those of you who know me well know that the bustle and noise and deluge of people of a typical Sunday morning totally overwhelms and exhausts an introvert like me. But I would give anything right now to see you all again crowded into the Gathering Space, swilling coffee, and chatting up a storm. To quote Joni Mitchell: “Ya don’t know what you got till it’s gone.”

But I am keeping busier than ever as your Congregational Operations Officer. Yes, I work from home most days to keep safe and flatten the curve. But since most of my job consists of sending and answering emails, working in Realm, and watching webinars on church safety - I still spend the better part of each day sitting in front of a computer. And the usual 6 to 10 meetings each week continue - only now they are online via zoom technology. And two or three times a week I get up to church to pick up and sort mail, help count and get money to the bank, work with custodians to deep clean the building in preparation for eventual re-opening, and deal with the ever present property issues that arise. Planning for “what comes next” occupies most of my waking, and sometimes sleeping, moments.

My hair isn’t quite long enough for a ponytail, yet. Char and I are staying healthy, walking a lot, missing the grandkids in Texas and our friends at Our Saviour’s. Life could be worse. We are lucky compared to so many over-worked essential workers, and the poor who have no access to health care and a safe home to isolate in. My prayer is that this world crisis might wake up many of us to be advocates for a world where all are loved, cared for, and honored as God’s beloved children. Peace! Email: jvalentine@oursaviours.org

When all of this began in mid-March, sadly, the bulk of my job was cancelling events and classes. Now that the dust has settled, I’ve been doing a lot of online research as to how to move forward with adult ministry. So many aspects of this ministry involve social interaction, it’s been challenging to envision what the future holds. This situation has definitely taken me to places I hadn’t expected. I never in a million years thought that I’d have a YouTube channel, but I do! I’ve been creating chair exercise videos, and even though I am not seeing these people in person, it’s helped me to stay connected to them. I’ve also been working with members of the staff to create “coffee hour” live zoom events to connect folks in “person.” Hopefully these can grow and continue to connect others on all kinds of topics. Technology has made this time easier for some, but also more difficult for others – finding ways to stay connected to everyone is important yet challenging. I’m looking forward to being able to see one another face to face again, even if it is 6 feet apart! – Lois Nelson, Adult Ministry Coordinator Email: lnelson@oursaviours.org
Hello Church from **Matt Haider**! What a joy it is for me to still lead the church in song during this time of virtual worship. Preparations each week include lining up singers, musicians, and arrangements for our worship services. In addition to our weekly worship services, I have started a new weekly YouTube show, Going God’s Way. On these episodes, I feature one of Our Saviours’ musicians and give a little history of the song we are performing.

When I’m not working at the church, I feel like a college student again! Working from the comfort of my couch has given me the time to immerse myself in reading, masterclasses, and finding new music. Watching “The Joy of Music with Diane Bish”, hearing new repertoire and seeing some of the worlds most beautiful churches, has been truly inspiring. Over the last few weeks, I have been enrolled in online course through the Berklee School of Music called “Music For Wellness”. This class is focused on how music can help reduce stress and improve your health, and well-being. I also have recently started researching the published works of one of my former graduate school teachers. Her work focused around finding vocal artistry - something I hope to translate into church music ministry.

As Robert Lowry wrote in his hymn text, “No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that rock I’m clinging. Since Christ is Lord of Heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?” Keep on singing, as we all long for the day we can sing together again as a community. Email: **mhaider@oursaviours.org**

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Hello Our Saviour’s from **Tracy Katschke**! I am sending lots of love, prayers and smiles your way from Aurora! Youth Ministry has been keeping busy during this pandemic! Our Confirmation class has been staying connected via weekly Zoom Confirmation calls, where we spend an hour catching up, doing a Bible study and conclude by playing a trivia game. To say that our Confirmands are competitive is an understatement – lots of trash talking happens when bragging rights are at stake! The Confirmands and I have also been working on sending out “thinking of you” cards to the congregation – so make sure you check your mailbox! Our High School Youth Group is also staying connected through our weekly Virtual Youth Group via Zoom. We spend our time together chatting, laughing and just catching up on what’s been going on in each other’s lives. With our summer mission trip now cancelled, I have been working on finding local opportunities for our teens to serve within the community during this pandemic. I am also staying connected to the synod and helping prepare plans for both OSLC and the synod for next year’s Youth Gathering.

So, how am I seeing God in my ministry? The answer is in so many ways. I see God in the laughter that our teens have when they are sharing something funny or trash talking during a virtual game. I see God in the perspectives that each of our teens bring to the table – perspectives of hope in how they are seeing God at work in their lives, perspectives of wisdom on how we can keep moving forward. Most of all, though, I see God in their smiles. I see God in the smiles on our Confirmand’s faces when we say hello on Zoom and when we pray. My favorite smiles happen when I tell our teens that I love each and every one of them and that God loves them too. Our teens are what makes my ministry awesome – and I am thankful for them not just now, but every day!

Email: **tkatschke@oursaviours.org**
Hello from Cari Ann Petersen, Children’s Ministry Coordinator! The Children’s Ministry has kept busy during the quarantine and God is ever present! The children have been working on several service projects; donating food for the Backpack Buddies ministry, making fleece lap blankets for the veterans, and cards for the homebound. We have also gone virtual with some of our children’s programs.

The Sunday school teachers and I have worked hard on our online Sunday school lessons that are recorded and distributed every other week. I am currently collecting pictures of the children who are in Sunday school to make a wonderful video thanking our amazing Sunday school teachers for their amazing gifts and talents that they have shared with us this year. Many Zoom classes have already taken place with many more to come: Parent & Tot Music Time, Cooking with Cari Ann, Marvelous Munchies with Mrs. P! (a cooking class for kids), Story Time for our youngest congregation members, and a Moms’ Group Bible Study/Discussion time.

More exciting news is that Vacation Bible School will still happen this summer, but with some changes! Since we are unable to meet in person, we will be doing a virtual Rocky Railway VBS. This will be done over the course of five weeks with one video being released each week. Children will experience the fun of VBS in their own homes and on their own time. More details for our virtual VBS will be coming soon! Technology has never been one of my strengths, but my knowledge has grown so much since our sheltering in place has begun. I miss all of the children and families, but there have been so many blessings in the way that the Children’s Ministry has remained active. I feel a deep connection to the work that I am doing, and I know that it is because of God’s presence during these difficult times. I can’t wait to see all of you when we get back to life as we know it! God’s blessings to you! Email: cpetersen@oursaviours.org

God is present at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church! This I know. It’s not as snappy as “Jesus loves me, this I know”, but both are true! As the Director of Contemporary Music, my job has changed and remained the same. Both/And. I have taken on the role of videographer/camera-person/director/audio tech/mixer/graphic artist/video editor for our weekly worship videos, and am enjoying the challenge! As always working with our astounding worship team is a joy, but working in such close (yet distant) proximity with all of these worship leaders is invigorating. The response we have received has been that of gratefulness and love, and we cannot thank you enough. I very dearly miss our congregants and the 3N1 band, and cannot wait until we can safely gather once more in person. My prayers are with you all, and God bless. - T. Duncan Parker, Contemporary Music Director Email: dparker@oursaviours.org
Hello to the Congregation from Ann Wagner, Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church Communications Coordinator. How is everyone? I miss you all; I miss normalcy and worshiping together. I miss parking at Transitional Care on Sunday mornings and hiking up and down that hill from their lot to ours, in heels and a skirt. (I always felt proud that I did it – once again – without incident!)

Here’s what I’ve been up to since mid-March: Pastor Pete writes the eMemo, and I design and distribute it for him. We’ve been doing a lot of eMemos lately. We now have a new format for the eMemo which is on my To-Do List: learn how to work with the new format. I keep the website updated, posting the Our Saviour’s amazing Worship Videos every week plus any other important bits of news that require posting. Matt Haider and I worked together on the Easter butterfly decorating project. We’ve got another participatory project coming up: Pentecost flames! We have to take down the butterflies, then cut out and somehow artfully display the flames. Sounds tedious, but it’s actually quite wonderful to witness it come together. I designed additional signage for our church building: Soon we will have signs that will direct new members and guests to the Fellowship Hall and Rooms 109 & 110. I’ve been working on designing a logo and a postcard for the P.O.W.E.R. (Policy beyond Our Walls: Education & Response) team to “Get Out the Vote” this November.

Everyone, please stay safe and be smart out there in this new world. We will endure and emerge stronger for having been through this together with God’s love and care. Email: awagner@oursaviours.org

“Good Morning. Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, this is Jane. How can I help you?” Well, I haven’t been saying this too much in recent weeks, but believe me when I say that I can’t wait until our church is able to resume it’s robust activities and I can start saying it again! As a member of office staff, when the office is closed, there are a great many things that aren’t called for, so my activities have been limited and redirected to various projects. I’m in the office every Wednesday, and when able, work from home on Fridays to accomplish other tasks. And, too, as co-lead and member of Altar Care, we’re taking a little hiatus from preparing communion, but not to worry, we’re itching to go when the times are safe! In the meantime, we’re keeping the candles ready to burn, the linens clean and displayed appropriately, and the wafers waiting for their blessing and distribution! Stay safe, pray often, and know that you are loved and being prayed for!

- Jane Larson, Office Administrator
Email: jlarson@oursaviours.org
Hello from Heather Rehm. Through the Welcome Ministry, I have been checking in on many of our newer members and keeping in contact with the Welcome Team which is made up of nearly 100 members of Our Saviour’s. I have been working on plans for how we will continue to stay welcoming during these unprecedented times and have been doing research on how we can welcome everyone back to the church when the time comes. I continue to work on creating a welcoming online social media presence for all of you as well.

I see God at work in the Welcome Ministry as I continue to contact our members and hear back words of strength, positive stories, and words of encouragement. Email: heatherrehm@oursaviours.org

As director of the Chancel Choir at Our Saviours, my #1 priority since mid-March is keeping the choir connected through emails, phone calls and Zoom Meetings. We share a special fellowship and miss the magic of singing together praising God’s name. I am also reading through choral journals and lots of new choral anthems, attending webinars, online classes, and discovering other resources to help me grow as a choral conductor and leader. God has been guiding me throughout this journey, deepening my faith by allowing me time to reflect on my role at church and beyond. In my down time, I am getting dirty in the garden and cleaning out the closets! – Lucia Sexton, Chancel Choir Director, Email: lsexton@oursaviours.org

My name is Laura Swanson, and I have been the bookkeeper at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church for 3 ½ years. During the pandemic I have been dividing my time between my dining room table and the church office. I have continued to handle the finances of the church which include paying bills, processing payroll, implementing text giving, entering contributions, preparing finance documents and aiding in the application of the Payroll Protection loan. In addition, as co-chair of the Fair Trade ministry, I have been handling the ordering and curbside delivery of Fair Trade products. I see God’s work through the continued financial support of our congregation, and the purchase of Fair Trade products. Email: lswanson@oursaviours.org