PLEASE NOTE: The Paper Recycling Bins located at the rear of Hoeffer Hall continue to accept your newspaper, magazines, office paper, "junk" mail, and cereal type boxes smashed flat. Please no plastic; take your paper out of the plastic bags before you throw it in the bin. Thanks for your help!

**DID YOU KNOW?** We have wheelchairs, potty chairs, shower chairs, canes, crutches, and walkers to loan out to anyone who might need one for a time. Please call the church office (610-856-7242) to make arrangements for pick -up of items.

For those over 60: The **Berks County Area Agency on Aging** is available to help you over the phone. Please call their office at 610-478-6500.

#### Happy Birthday to:

Elaine Gordon—Nov. 4 Buddie Bannon—Nov. 10 Mary Muhlenberg—Nov. 17 Marie Brooks—Nov. 28 Peggy Haag—Nov. 30 Bob Rivers—Dec. 1 Naomi Smith—Jan. 7 Jerry Hoffert—Jan. 12 Sonja Gottshall—Jan. 27



Did we miss anyone? If you are a "Senior" Member over age 55 and wish to be included on the birthday list, please call the church office at 610-856-7242.

#### **PARISH REGISTER:**

Loss of Members:

10/28/20—Robert and Barbara Strough—transferred to St. John's Lutheran, Gibraltar

10/28/20—Robin Werner Emmons—transferred to St. John's Lutheran, Gibraltar

11/12/20—John Babyak—moved to NY state; removed by request

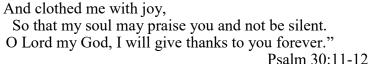
Vol. XXXXIX No. 7

#### Advent and Christmas 2020

## The Parish Digest

PASTORAL REFLECTION

"You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have taken off my sackcloth



This November feels different from prior years. Now, November generally is a month full of tensions. In the church, we remember those who died, ringing a bell for them on All Saints Sunday. And many of us may feel the sting of grief as these names ring in our ears. Yet, November is also the month of Thanksgiving, ringing in the Holiday season with much different noises, as families come together and celebrate. A beloved Thanksgiving tradition is to share around the Thanksgiving table what each family member is thankful for. Then we eat.

But this year, there is the Corona Virus. And everything is different. Is November the month that will drive home our losses? So many losses more than the deaths we grieve? How can we be thankful amid this pandemic?

Yes, indeed, we have lost a lot this year, and our reality has drastically shifted in unpredicted ways. How can we name this? Is lamentation the only way? The month of November can certainly make room for this tension between thanksgiving and lamentation.

If you need to get it off your chest, go for it.

If you need to shed some tears, do so!

If you feel like punching a pillow – or better – a punching bag, clench your fist and let it fly, anger and all.

We are confronted with a reality that leaves us frustrated, grieving, feeling helpless and overwhelmed.

However, for this Thanksgiving, (continued on page 4)

During Covid 19 please call or email staff members.

#### Rev. Michael Ware, Pastor

Home: 610-875-0015 Office: 610-856-7242

Email address: revmikeware@gmail.com

Louise Wilson, Minister of Music—Phone: 610-273-3911

Email address: weeziecow2@yahoo.com

Becka Malanios, DCE

Phone- 610- 507- 3657 Email: becka.malanios@gmail.com

**Debbie DeMarco**, Parish Secretary

Home: 610-856-7386 Office: 610-856-7242 Email address: ddemarco@dejazzd.com Linell McCormick, Office Assistant

Home: 610-775-2571 Email: lmrm52@aol.com

Julia Bond, Preschool Manager— Phone: 610-856-7613;

Email: preschool610@dejazzd.com

#### Council Officers:

Mike Wisniewski, President Wayne Kercher, Vice President Jessica Shepherd, Secretary

\*Dorothy Martin, Treasurer

\*Kay Good, Treasurer Special Funds

\*Lori Sifford, Financial Secretary

\*do not actually serve on council

Other Council Members:

Bill Beam Ed Haag

Julia Bond Walt Hamilton

Mary Karpa Rex Miller

Emelia Haupert (youth)

<u>REMINDERS:</u> Donations such as tapes and empty cartridges etc. can be placed in the plastic container outside in the corner near the new foyer/office entrance.

Just a reminder that while our building is closed we will not be able to schedule any events for building use by church groups, community groups, or individuals. Thanks for your understanding.

We are continuing to collect **Redners receipts**; you can mail them to the church or drop them safely in a container outdoors next to the church office. This month we received a check for \$190.86. **Don't forget to use your Redner's card or put in your phone number linked to the card or we will not receive credit for your receipt.** Thank you to everyone who continues to save their tapes and to Diane Morlock for processing and submitting them!

THE LITTLE LIBRARY located next to the church and parsonage, continues to provide books for young and old. We are happy to provide reading material during the pandemic but want to remind everyone to sanitize your hands before and after using the little library. Stay safe!

#### RECYCLING OPPORTUNITIES:

THE HOPE RESCUE MISSION has a **collection container** on our back lot. "We accept men's, women's, and children's clothing and shoes, and pretty much any household goods that are sellable condition (toys, kitchen wares, home decor, etc.). Sellable condition for us means no rips, stains, broken or missing pieces, and generally working the way it is intended to work. We have a few more guidelines on our website - <a href="www.hopeoutlet.org">www.hopeoutlet.org</a>." Please bring your donations to the little blue bin on our back parking lot. They will be appreciated and used to clothe the guests at the mission or sold at their stores to provide finances for the Mission.

HELP YOUR CHURCH: Please bring in your used ink cartridges (any kind) and we will recycle them at Staples earning \$2 each for the church. These are very much needed in order to get our \$40 worth of free supplies each month.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT:

#### OCTOBER:

 Balance Forward:
 \$24,562.25

 October Receipts:
 \$13,846.88

 October Expenses:
 \$12,047.61

 Net Income:
 \$1,799.27

 Balance 10/31/20
 \$26,361.52

#### Unpaid bills:

Synod Benevolence—\$4,000.00 (March –October)

In/Out Accounts balance: \$655.00

-Dorothy Martin, Treasurer

#### SPECIAL FUNDS REPORT:

Income:

Donations to Capital Campaign Fund \$ 575.00 Anniversary Book \$ 30.00 History Book \$ 345.00

Outflow:

Air conditioner loan (balance \$23,802) \$ 520.50

Checking Account balance 10/31/20 \$48,633.22

-Kay Good, Treas. Spec. Funds

#### THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE SIGNED UP FOR

E-GIVING. E-giving is an ongoing service offered here at Robeson Lutheran. In addition to your regular giving you can now give to the Endowment Fund as well. You can continue to access the new site through our website, www.robesonlutheranchurch.org and look for the "Donate Now" button. Thank you for considering this giving opportunity that allows you to be good stewards of God's gifts especially during this time when we are not able to attend services in person.



# Although our church building is closed, we worship virtually every Sunday.

Connect with Us via Zoom
Sunday Worship, 10:30 am
Wednesday Evening Bible Study, 7:30 pm

<u>Contact the church office or Pastor Michael for more information to join us on Zooom!</u>

Church office (610-856-7242); ddemarco@dejazzd.com Pastor Michael (610-875-0015); revmikeware@gmail.com

Did you know that if you miss the Zoom worship services you can watch them anytime by using the link on our facebook page?

there is also another idea that may inspire us in new ways, one that connects our lamentations and our thanksgiving: It is called "Upside Down Gratitude", I found the idea in an article in the Christian Century Magazine from about a year ago. The idea is inspired by Job, who gives thanks to God even in suffering, and by Jesus, who in the night of the last supper still gives thanks to God – in the face of suffering and death. No, this is not a masochistic kind of gratitude. It is a gratitude born out of faith, one that claims a God, who turns "our ashes into beauty, our mourning to gladness, our despair to praise". It is a thanksgiving that looks close at our losses and finds glimpses of the good in the bad:

I miss going out to eat, - yet I rejoice in the many new and delicious recipes I cooked at home.

I feel lonely, I miss the physical presence of my friends and my community, but I rejoice in the letters I have written, words on paper, exchanged between beating hearts. I feel my concern for my health and the health of those I care for, but I rejoice in our shared creativity, focusing on keeping each other safe, while connecting in different ways, even singing out loud in our Zoom worship services.

What do you see, as you look closer at your losses and lamentations? What upside-down gratitude shimmers in the ashes? Claim it, lift it up, for we know a God, who turns mourning into dancing, death into life, and ashes into joy.

Blessings and Peace to you,

Pastors Bill, Burl, Michael, Rob, and Sonja <><

(Article by Pastor Sonja)



#### FINANCES:

We would like to offer a word of thanks to all of you for your faithful and generous stewardship towards the ministries of Robeson. Such gracious support provides further opportunities for ministry to our congregation and community in these very challenging times.

If you are one of the many millions who shop on <u>Amazon Smile</u> (which makes a donation to your favorite charity for every purchase that you make), you can make Robeson Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mohnton PA your charity of choice and have an extra opportunity to support the ministry of our church as you do your online shopping. Charity Link: <a href="https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2029412">https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2029412</a>

Our local <u>food banks</u> are always in need of donations. Since our building is closed we are asking members to remember those in need of food during the upcoming holiday seasons by making a cash donation designated to the food bank. Checks can be made out to and mailed to the church but marked food bank in the memo line. **Your donation, no matter what size, will be greatly appreciated.** 

Our thanks to those who continue to designate

Thrivent Choice dollars to Robeson. Last month we received \$417 thanks to the following who chose Robeson:

Ruth and William Kennedy

John Lauer



Although still in the planning stages, we would like to do an **Angel Tree** again this year for at least one family who we have been supporting for several years. This family lost their mother in January of this year and

recently lost their father as well. These children will most certainly appreciate knowing that we care about them. Please watch future bulletin mailings for further details about how you can help, or feel free to contact Debbie at the office.

# Robeson Evangelical Lutheran Church 1770-2020

Celebrating 250 Pears!

"Keep the Light Shining"
Capital Campaign & Anniversary Celebration
Update

As you are aware, church council decided to postpone our 250th Anniversary Celebrations until next year. Due to the fact that our building continues to be closed, the financial strain on members and area businesses, and the inability of members to see the anniversary book first hand, it was felt that we should provide more time to allow our members to participate in the anniversary book.

With this in mind, we are also extending the opportunity to support our "Keep the Light Shining" Endowment Anniversary Campaign through October 2021. It is with great gratitude that we celebrate all that has been given in support of this campaign up to this point. Because of you we are able to strengthen the congregational endowment that supports the future needs of our church. Each generous and loving gift will sustain the wonderful ministry that this congregation does in the local community, and indeed to the world. All gifts are important and will be greatly appreciated and received with thanksgiving to the glory of God.

Clarification regarding our 250th Anniversary Book

Lucille Freeman who works with Reick's Printing, is the person in charge of the 250th Anniversary book containing your personal pages and those of area businesses in addition to a brief history of our church. Work continues on this book and the deadline has been extended until sometime in 2021. She is still working with members who would like to purchase and create their own page / advertisement with pictures or a caption for the anniversary book. Please contact Lucille if interested: 610-856-7349 or 484-219-0596; Email: lfreeman@riecksprinting.com
All active members will receive a copy of this book free of charge as part of our anniversary celebration next year.

#### **DISCERNMENT TEAM & COUNCIL NOTES:**

The Discernment Team met and made a recommendation to all five church councils to remain online through the end of April.

Our council discussed and agreed to this. There was discussion about parking lot services when the weather gets warmer.

Robeson Lutheran Preschool would like to do a slow opening in mid-January if the Covid numbers are low enough. Determination will be made prior to January.

#### **WEEKLY UPDATES:**

Pastor Michael continues to send a bulletin containing readings and a sermon to be enjoyed at home, the zoom bulletin, and weekly updates to all those who have provided email addresses. Debbie also sends out hard copies to those requesting them. If you do not receive a weekly mailing and wish to do so, please call Debbie at the church office (610-856-7242) and we will be happy to add your name to the list. Included in the mailing is a hard copy of the zoom bulletin for the season which in December will include the Advent and Christmas Eve bulletin, readings, and hymns, as well as the Songs of the Season bulletin. You do not need a computer to join the zoom service, you can listen to the service by telephone. If you need help setting this up please call the church office and someone will get back to you to set up a time to do this. We are trying hard to give you the best worship experience possible during these trying times. Thanks for you patience and understanding.

#### **INCLUDED IN THIS MAILING:**

- Advent devotional
- Advent offering envelope
- List of members who might appreciate a Christmas card (shut-ins, seniors, those experiencing a recent illness or loss etc.)
- December calendar

## Wednesday, November 25, 7:00 pm Thanksgiving Eve Worship via Zoom



Traditionally on the eve of Thanksgiving, Robeson Lutheran has worshiped with our friends and neighbors at St. Benedict's R.C.C. Unfortunately due to

Covid19 our church building is closed and our worship service will be online this year. We are happy to share the service with the four pastors and churches in Reading as well as Father Phil of St. Benedict's. We hope that you are/were able to join us and give thanks for all that we have been given. Connect through Zoom like you do on Sunday mornings.

## Singers, Musicians, and Dancers



The Worship and Music Committee invites you to record a Christmas song or dance video that could be included in our Zoom Christmas Eve Service.

The recording should be no more than three minutes long.

Email the recording to Pastor Michael Ware at revmikeware@gmail.com. If it is too large to be sent by email, save it on a flash drive and give the drive to Pastor Michael or mail to Robeson Church, 3520 Plow Road, Mohnton, PA 19540.

Deadline to submit a recording: Thursday, December 10.

# Our Northeastern PA Synod Has Elected a New Bishop!



Through the hard work of a lot of people, the 2020 Northeastern PA Synod Assembly went virtual in October and over two weekends a new Bishop was elected. The first weekend brought the list of candidates down to seven, including three women and one man of color.

This highlighted the diversity that is God's people. Voting during the second weekend brought the number of candidates down to three and finally to two. No matter the final vote, the new Bishop of our synod would be leaving behind a church in Berks County, as the final two were Christopher deForest of Trinity Lutheran in Kutztown, and Ryan Hersch of Atonement Lutheran in Wyomissing.

Pastor Chris deForest won the last ballot, and will assume the duties of Bishop on January 1, 2021. Due to Covid19 his installation will be at a future date.



## ROBESON'S HISTORY BOOK compiled by Linell McCormick is now available!



Thank you to all who ordered copies of the book which is now ready for pick-up at the church office on Monday through Wednesday, 10-noon or by arrangement. Copies will be mailed or delivered to those who are not able to pick them up. Extra copies are available for purchase.

7



# **Discovering German Literature: ZOOM BOOK CLUB**

#### **Otfried Preussler**

"Krabat and the Sorcerer's Mill" German Title: "Krabat"

Saturday, November 21, 5-6 pm \*
"The First Year"

Saturday, December 5, 5-6 pm \*
"The Second Year"

Saturday, December 19, 5-6 pm \*
"The Third Year"

Read the book in German or English. The book discussion will be mainly in English.

New Year's has passed. Twelfth Night is almost here. Krabat, a fourteen-year-old beggar boy dressed up as one of the Three Kings, is traveling from village to village singing carols. One night he has a strange dream in which he is summoned by a faraway voice to go to a mysterious mill—and when he wakes he is irresistibly drawn there. At the mill he finds eleven other boys, all of them, like him, the apprentices of its Master, a powerful sorcerer, as Krabat soon discovers. One day, however, the sound of church bells and of a passing girl singing an Easter hymn penetrates the boys' prison: At last a plan is set in motion that will win them their freedom and put an end to the Master's dark designs.

This Book Club will be led by
Pastors Rob Argot & Sonja Ware.

If you need any help ordering the book, please contact
Deacon Kathy Yenser at
stjohnrdg@verizon.net or phone 610-301-2191.

If you missed the first session, it's not too late to join!
\* Connect via Zoom with the same meeting ID and password that we use for Sunday worship.



You are invited to Holiday Happy Hours with our congregations!

5:00 — 6:00 pm on

Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 26 Christmas Day, Friday, December 25 New Year's Day, Friday, January 1

To remain safe during the pandemic, this holiday season we are encouraged to stay at home with our immediate household and avoid other in-person gatherings. This will make for much smaller holiday celebrations than we are used to experiencing.

So from 5:00 — 6:00 pm on each of the upcoming holidays, our pastors are inviting us to come together remotely for Holiday Happy Hours and enjoy fellowship with our church families!

Enjoy an hour with members and friends!

Sign in to Zoom with the same

Meeting ID and Password

that you use for worship on

Sunday mornings

Provide your own refreshments!

#### Pastoral Reflection for Advent: I'M STUMPED

Advent is like a stump. So, we are told by ancient authorities about seasonal emphases. The barrenness of the stump

delineates the flavor of the season for many reasons. Crops have been harvested and the fields are empty except for short stubbles of corn. Trees have shed their leaves and branches are bent easily by the winter winds. Brown is the predominant color suggesting that life has been squeezed from all nature.

Daylight savings time has shortened the days and reminded us that light is indeed at a premium during the fallow times of the year. Less light leads to feelings of hibernation when the morning alarm is telling us to get moving. Evening chores are curbed because of a rapid approaching dusk. As if all the above is insufficient, there is the pandemic. Anxiety for its advancing intrusion into our lifestyles and into our very lives. Distanced from friends, church, eateries, and health, the starkness of the stump continues to haunt us.

The stump of Jesse felt all these emotions as well. The people of Israel believed God had abandoned them. They were only stumps of their grand rise as a nation and as the declared children of God. But their Lord had a different view of that stump. It still had roots named Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary in readiness beneath the soil to renew life in a manner, not yet revealed. On that old stump was a new shoot about to sprout with a new message for those people who would bear the good news to the world.

As the new shoot, Jesus brought hope and new life to the people of God, eradicating their feelings of abandonment, and restoring their hope. God is appearing in this 2020 season of Advent with those same restorative powers to walk us through these barren times.

The stump is a sign of hope that the tree of life is with us. O Come, O Come Emmanuel.

Pastors Rob, Sonja, Bill, Michael and Burl

CARDS FOR HOPE, coordinated by Bonnie Lauer, Chairperson of Social Ministry:



Join Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in spreading hope to children and families in immigration detention this holiday season as they launch their 6th annual Hope for the Holidays campaign. The program collects cards and monetary donations for gifts for distribution at migrant detention centers across the country (including Berks County, PA!) and at shelters along the border, reminding individuals and families they are not forgotten during the holiday season.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!! Individuals and families can join together virtually with each other in making and sending cards. Together we can bring a bit of hope and light into the lives of many who desperately need some! HERE'S HOW -- Follow the directions below and/OR go online and visit the website for more information and details <a href="www.lirs.org/hope">www.lirs.org/hope</a> and after you enter your name and email go to Toolkit to download complete information.

- -Use premade greeting cards or make your own to write messages of hope and encouragement in English and Spanish. See Event Discussion for suggestions.
- -Sign your first name and city/state.
- -DO NOT put in individual envelopes, but place all in one large manila envelope or box.
- -Mail your cards to: First Evangelical Lutheran Church ATTN: Hope for the Holidays 3801 North Charles Street Baltimore, MD 21218

Pick up cards/supplies here at Robeson Lutheran Church on Tuesday, December 1, 10 a.m. to noon (or by special arrangement) and return cards to Robeson by Monday, December 7 (there is a plastic container outside near the glass door to the new foyer) and we will mail them to LIRS for you.

LIRS will ensure cards are received by our migrant friends! THAT'S IT! Together we can make a difference. Thank you so much!!

Or



### SONGS OF THE SEASON SERVICE

Sunday, December 27, 2020 10:30 a.m. via Zoom

Enjoy a special time of music and holiday celebration on Sunday,

December 27, as we learn the history behind some of our favorite Christmas songs. We will sing such holiday classics as Winter Wonderland, Silent Night, the Christmas Song, and more! Join us and together we will make a joyful holiday noise to the Lord!



# Zoom Tech Session Tuesday, December 15, 6-7 pm using the Worship Meeting ID and Phone Dial In Information on page 3.

- ▼ Are you currently unfamiliar with how to connect to our Worshiping Community on Zoom?
- ▼ Or have you been trying, but ran into frustrating obstacles?
- ♥ Or have you been connecting, but simply want to learn more details of the Zoom program?
- ♥ Or have you been connecting by phone, but are curious about upgrading to an internet connection?

# Then this session and our Zoom Tech Team are your opportunity to connect, learn, troubleshoot, and solve glitches.

Simply join the Zoom meeting on December 15, or call one of our Zoom Tech Team Members by phone at that time (or at your convenience). They will talk you through each step, answer your questions, and help you connect successfully. Pastors Michael and Rob will be waiting for you on Zoom, greeting you once you connect and answer any questions regarding the use of the program.

Zoom Tech Team: Joan Notter 610-779-2487

Mike O'Leary 610-370-5335

Howard Quaintance 610-779-4627

Pat Rogers 610-404-1475 Ken Wells 267-249-8183

#### **ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2020:**

Just as Easter and Thanksgiving 2020 were much different this year, Advent and Christmas will be different as well. We will not be hanging the greens and setting up the beautiful Christmas trees. Poinsettias will not adorn our chancel. There will be no Cantata sung by the choir and no caroling to our shut-ins. Many of us will not be celebrating with our extended families. Christmas will be much different this year. Some things will not change however. We will still be celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior and God will still be with us.

We will still worship...Our Christmas here at Robeson will include worship and communion together via Zoom on Christmas Eve. Those who do not have access to a computer or smart phone can call in and still be a part of our service.

We will still meditate and pray: The Advent devotional "God With Us" provided by Lutheran Hour Ministries is included with the mailing. It speaks to us during the pandemic and offers thoughtful questions for us to ponder. We hope that you will take time to read it as part of your Advent study time.

We will still be together in thoughts and spirit.

God bless you during this Advent and Christmas season.

The Staff of Robeson Lutheran



ADVENT OFFERING: As in prior years, a special envelope for your Advent giving has been included in this mailing. Please fill this and return it to the church anytime during the Advent season. This year you have the choice of how your offering will be

used. Simply circle the ministry of your choice listed on the envelope.

## Wednesdays in December



December 2 and 16, 6:00 —7:00 pm Youth and Young Adults Zoom Bible Study on the Gospel of Mark

(For 6th grade through College Level) Youth can join in anytime!

If you are interested in being part of this group, please email revmikeware@gmail.com for Zoom meeting information.

Adult Check In and Bible Study at 7:30 pm Light of the World — A Beginner's Guide to Advent

December 2 - "The Meaning of Memory" - Luke 1:5-25.57-79

December 9 - "The Promise of Potential" - Luke 1:26-56

December 16 - "The Journey to Joy" - Luke 2:1-40

December 23 - "The Gifts of the Gentiles" - Matthew 1:18-2:15

In this Bible Study, we will follow Jewish New Testament scholar and teacher Amy-Jill Levine as she traces the Christmas narrative through the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary, the journey to Bethlehem, and the visit from the Magi. These stories open conversations around connections of the Gospel stories to the Old Testament, the role of women in first-century Jewish culture, the importance of Mary's visitation and the revolutionary implications of Mary's Magnificat, the census and the stable, and the star of Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt.

Dr. Levine's Jewish Perspective on the Gospel of Jesus Christ provides new and exciting insights into the traditional texts from Luke and Matthew. Her graciousness, humor, and deep respect for these biblical writings make the wonderfilled stories of John's and Jesus' births come alive. Please notice: It is not necessary to purchase Dr. Levine's book for this study.

For further information, please contact Pastor Sonja at 610-875-0015 or at pastorsonjaware@gmail.com.

### **Christmas Eve Worship on Zoom**

Christmas Eve Together in Christ Thursday, December 24, 7:00 p.m.



Communion Kits and Glow Sticks will be supplied for this service; however, you are welcome to provide your own communion elements of juice and bread, and to use any type candle that you have in your home.

Would you like to join us online on Christmas Eve? Here is an opportunity for someone to walk you through the process so that you can worship with your church family and receive Holy Communion. Please see the information on page 12 or contact Pastor Michael or the church office for help.

PICK UP COMMUNION SUPPLIES AND GLOW STICKS AT ROBESON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 FROM 10-NOON AND 4-6 PM.

IF YOU CANNOT MAKE IT THEN CALL the CHURCH OFFICE AND WE WILL ARRANGE A TIME.