



Encounter Christ Grow in faith Love as Christ loved Tell the Story

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Remember to bring cookies for Matt Talbot prior to the second Monday of the month.



September Helpers

- Lector—Annie Mumgaard
- Communion Assistant—
- Cleaners Week 1/2—Dave and Vicki Nielsen
- Usher—Jeff Brown
- Altar—Tonya Brown

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Nebraska Floods: a Journey With a Dollar

Baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we live inside the best story ever - God’s story - a story of renewal, healing, and new life for all the world. In turn, we have stories to tell about our part in God’s story. One that stands out right now is the story of the ELCA’s Lutheran Disaster Response and the Nebraska Synod Disaster Fund and how we as the Church are bringing healing and new life to flooded communities in Nebraska through those ministries.

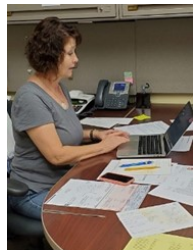
Last spring, a disastrous combination of a “bomb cyclone” winter storm followed by rapid melting on still-frozen ground led to epic flooding along five of Nebraska’s major rivers. Both Zion and Bethlehem responded by donating to the Nebraska Synod Disaster Fund. In the past, we have donated to Lutheran Disaster Response when other calamities have struck elsewhere. But how do those branches of the Church’s ministry work? How does the money get to the people who need it?

Nebraska Synod Disaster Fund

Let’s go on a little trip with a dollar. What happens when you send off a check, or click that donate button?



The first stop for our dollar is the office of Stephanie Lucieski. Stephanie manages the Nebraska Synod Disaster Fund account. The Nebraska Synod has a disaster relief team which was activated with the flood. The team reached out to pastors of churches in the communities affected. The pastors were invited to apply for up to \$2500 in grant money from the Synod Fund for use in their communities.



From Stephanie’s office, our dollar was on the move again.



Checks were made out and as of my visit, \$48,000 had been distributed to churches in 11 communities and to the United Way in Fremont.

I spoke to two pastors in affected communities. People pride themselves in self-sufficiency and are reluctant to admit they need help. Out of respect for that sentiment, I’ll leave the pastors’ names and towns anonymous but tell their stories.

One of the pastors serves two churches in affected communities. She had an elderly woman in her congregation who was getting her house ready to sell to supplement her social security income. A flooded basement sidelined that plan. Her pastor requested Synod Disaster Relief money. She said the process was very easy and within a few weeks she had the money. It enabled the elderly woman to get her basement cleaned up and fixed so she could move ahead with her plan.

(cont. pg 2)

Another pastor in a different community requested \$2500. He identified two families in the community whose basements had caved in and were struggling to find ways to get them fixed. He split the money and sent two equal checks to the bank to be sent anonymously to the families.

This pastor elaborated a bit on why he chose to do it anonymously. He said for the first few weeks after a disaster everyone pulls together to help each other out. Then, for a lot of people things kind of get back to normal and life goes on. But some are still suffering, and are ashamed to ask for help. The anonymous gifts helped people in those situations.

Lutheran Disaster Response

On a lovely August afternoon I rode the Chicago Transit Authority blue line train from the Loop to the ELCA Churchwide offices on Higgins Road. There I met with Sharei Green, Lutheran Disaster Response Program Communicator, and Joseph Chu, Associate Program Director for Domestic Disasters.



Joseph Chu



Sharei Green

As part of the ELCA, both Sharei and Joe emphasized on behalf of LDR, “We ARE the church.” They serve in Christ’s name in some of the most difficult things people face. Lutheran Disaster Response is led by a small staff that is part of the ELCA Churchwide staff.

Their mission has two aims – financial relief in the form of grants, and accompaniment. They are the stewards of resources and they help make connections. Actual implementation happens at the level of local congregations, the synod and social ministries in the affected area.

Immediately after the floods in Nebraska there was a flurry of conference calls between Nebraska Synod staff and Lutheran Disaster Response staff. In the beginning the conference calls happened nearly weekly, connecting people in Nebraska with others who had experience and resources.

Lutheran Disaster Response puts out pastoral and congregational resources to help people cope with what’s happened. But they also provide financial resources. Our dollar is on the move again.

Lisa Kramme, who is on Nebraska Synod Staff and coordinates the Synod disaster response team, applied for and received a \$17,000 grant from Lutheran Disaster Response. This came in the form of Hy Vee and Visa gift cards sent to the Synod to be distributed in affected areas.

Some of those gift cards made their way to one of the pastors I talked to. He received 20 Hy Vee gift cards and 20 Visa gift cards. He identified nine families in the community who were especially struggling and, again, anonymously through the bank, sent two Hy Vee and two Visa gift cards to each family.

After the initial response, then what?

Full recovery is estimated to be a three to five year process. The Nebraska Synod Disaster Relief Fund still has money to help with the recovery process, and the Synod as well as individual congregations are making plans and heading to affected areas to work. The need for funds to buy supplies, tools, and so on will continue. Stephanie said that in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, money pours in, then after six months it tends to slow to a trickle. But the need doesn’t stop just because the floods have fallen off the news cycle.

Lutheran Disaster Response coordinates with other disaster relief organizations that become increasingly vital in the long term recovery. One is the Center for Disaster Philanthropy and another is a coalition called National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. Often the long-term recovery work happens through social ministries in the affected areas, in our case Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska.

Lutheran Family Services has asked Lutheran Disaster Response to match funds from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy to staff three positions to begin a culturally focused approach to disaster recovery. The worst toll in disasters is often on those already vulnerable...especially some of the immigrant communities in Nebraska. LFS plans to provide interpretation services, help with the mental health fallout, and a cultural planner to help communities develop their own disaster plan.

Our church has done and continues to do good work towards long term recovery. Giving money can sometimes seem a little removed from the action. But this little journey with a dollar is a good reminder that it is a vitally important act of love, and will continue to be so.

Christ’s peace,

Pastor Kris

September Calendar

September 1 10:30 am—Worship—Pr. Kris gone, no communion

Pastor Kris will be on vacation August 30 – September 6. Pastor Bob Hayden from Bethlehem in Wahoo will cover. During weekdays he can be reached at the church – 402-443-3160. After hours number is 402-672-1345

September 8 10:30 am—Guitar Worship; Back to School Blessing
Ice Cream following worship

September 15 10:30– am—Worship with Holy Communion

September 22 10:30 am—Worship
Youth group after worship—lunch; activity tbd

September 28 Prep for Potato Bake

September 29 10:30 am—Worship with Holy Communion
5:00 pm—Potato Bake

Looking ahead—October 16-19 Nebraska Bound synod mission trip to Lynch, NE for flood recovery work. Talk to Pastor Kris if you are interested.

Faith Formation 2019—2020

Adults

With no confirmation or Sunday school this year, I have some time to think more about adult faith formation and come up with a plan that will hopefully carry us into future years. Teaching is the thing I like best—really all ages, but especially adults. Toward the end of last year I had people give me some feedback on topics they'd like to study. Here are the results, in order:

1. Current Events and faith (also includes intersection of faith and politics.) I also have some suggested topics from people
2. Discernment
3. Bible Study—New Testament letters
4. Tie—Health/health decision-making and Vocation

Other topics with several positive responses included parenting, Bible history/historical Jesus, marriage, and spirituality.

I've decided to start with a Bible study of the New Testament letters, not because it got the most votes but because it can be a helpful foundation for some of the other studies, especially faith and current events.

October 6 we will begin with an introduction to the New Testament letters and Paul, who wrote or inspired most of them. Then from October 13th through Nov. 17 we will delve into his letter to the Romans. (Nov. 10 is nursing home worship so we will skip that week)

Beginning January 12 we will start our conversation about Faith and Current Events. I don't know yet how long that will go.

Discernment needs to be woven into the Faith and Current Events topic as well as several of the others. At this point I don't have details on the rest of the year.

We will meet immediately after worship for an hour to an hour and a quarter. I don't anticipate needing to organize lunch, but people are welcome to bring their own lunch or snacks.

Youth

Youth group started off with a great campout at Branched Oak.

One Sunday per month, worship will have a little bit more focus on youth and the faith concerns of young people. Some of the services may be a little more interactive, but not all. This will also be the Sunday that we'll try to get the kids more involved in the service itself—they are welcome to be involved in any service, but this will push us to be more intentional.

Following worship, the kids will have lunch and then go on to their activity. Some will be at the church—a few will be outings. Details are yet to be determined but here are the dates for the fall semester:

September 22

October 20

November 17

December 15 (tentative)

Children—For our younger children, I will make available some resources and aids to equip parents to help their kids grow in faith. Our “youth Sundays” will also offer a more involved children's message.

