



Pilgrims' Progress



The Monthly News of the People of Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Warwick, Rhode Island
September 2019

October's Progress Deadline is Sunday, September 15.

Please e-mail submissions to
parishasst@pilgrimlutheranri.org
or place in her mailbox in the church office.
Many thanks.

OUR STAFF

Intentional Interim Pastor

Pastor Maria Hammons

Minister of Music

Denis Brunelle

Treasurer

Laurie Linden

Financial Secretary

Cindy Cote

Parish Assistant

Laurie Connors

I think it started sometime in 1994 ... this feeling there was something else God wanted me to do with my life. The feeling was vague at first - a sense of being out of place. At the time I was an executive manager at the National Security Agency (NSA). I loved my job. But still... there was this feeling.

The feeling continued to grow. Then, in 1995, my husband Danny and I were offered positions in England. I thought to myself, "This is good. We'll go overseas for a few years and I'll figure out what God wants me to do." Well, four years later we moved back to the States and I still didn't have the answers I was looking for. I still didn't know what God wanted me to do, where God wanted me to go.

So I waited. I kept saying to God, "O.k., I know there's something else you want me to do. Just show me the job and I'll go." After all... we had a mortgage, a car payment, teenagers (you know how much they eat!), and a lifestyle we enjoyed. I couldn't just quit without another source of income. Or could I?

I talked with family, friends, and with my pastors - but they obviously couldn't give me answers. Until Danny - the one person who had been with me on this journey from the start, and who understood my "control issues" - reminded me that there are times when God calls people to *go* without telling them *where* they're being led. I didn't like that answer. I mean I'm all for spontaneity,



From the Pastor...

To Be Led Where You Did Not Intend to Go

As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea-for they were fishermen. And he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

As Jesus went on, he saw two other brothers, James and John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called to them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

(Matthew 4:18-22)

but please - let's be reasonable. So, I waited. But no job offer miraculously appeared and nothing happened to give me any clearer direction as to where God wanted me to go.

Until one Sunday in the Fall of 2000, when - after listening to a sermon on (you guessed it) God's call - we sang the hymn *Here I am, Lord* and it touched my heart in a very deep way. I went home feeling changed, and knew I needed to spend time alone in prayer. As I listened for that *still, small voice* - it wasn't long before I understood that if I really believed God had other plans for me, then I needed to give up trying to control God's plan. I needed to resign from my position, and trust that God's plan for my life would be revealed.

So I did. And so it was.

So let's see, that realization took me only - what? - about 6 years. So perhaps you can understand why, when I read Matthew 4:18-22 and hear that Peter, Andrew, James and John responded to Jesus' call IMMEDIATELY - no second guessing, no delays - I'm nothing less than blown away! These "average Joes" abandon the life they know - leave everything behind - and follow Jesus to who knows where! Unbelievable!

Unbelievable? Not really. My friends - This is the power of God's call!

While Peter, Andrew, James and John might have been the first to meet Jesus and experience the power of this call ... they were far from the last. There were the other apostles, Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, Martha, Mary, and hundreds of disciples who followed Jesus during his ministry on earth. And after Jesus' death, there were more -- Paul and his co-workers in the early church - Barnabas, Lydia, Timothy, Priscilla and

Aquila. And, through the ages, there have been still more - the reformers - Martin Luther, Philipp Melanchthon, John Wesley, John Calvin - and later - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Peter Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., C.S. Lewis, Mother Theresa, and still others. Finally leading all the way to me... and to you!

People of Pilgrim - we are on a faith journey; and, as part of that journey, we will be trying to discern God's call - as individuals and as a congregation. We will be listening for that "still, small voice" of the Spirit as we share our stories, hopes and dreams, fears and concerns. It will be a blessed journey, but not an easy one. There are risks involved. The road won't always be clear. As we go along, we'll be called out of our comfort zones. We won't always know where we're being led and we'll have lots of questions. And there may be times that our fears tempt us to doubt God's plan.

But I've learned it's o.k. to not have all the answers. Faith isn't about my wisdom or understanding, or about what seems reasonable or logical. It's about my trust in God! And once you embrace your call, God takes you on an incredible journey of twists and turns, surprises and blessings.

So it may take us a little longer than Peter, Andrew, James and John. We may not go "immediately." We may ask a lot of questions and take a few detours. But God is faithful; God doesn't give up on us. And one day, as we truly allow ourselves to be led - we will know the power of God's call ... and what once seemed "unbelievable" or "improbable" ... will just make faith-filled sense.

I want to share a quote with you – one that has been a very meaningful part of my faith journey. Some of you heard it in one of my August sermons. You will hear it often as I am hoping you can embrace it with your heart and your head so that it will strengthen our faith when the going gets rough.

“A sign of God is that you will be led where you did not intend to go.”

This “leading” is not only about where God may unexpectedly take us - like to serve as Interim Pastor of a congregation in Warwick, Rhode Island, where I was blessed to serve as an intern 15 years ago! It’s also about how God challenges our thinking and grows our faith in exciting ways. At least that’s been my experience...

So my brothers and sisters in Christ, let’s answer our call... following wherever God might lead us. Let’s try not to worry about the what or where or how or why... but just listen and pray and follow. We can do this, together, with God to help and guide us! All will be revealed in God’s time. I promise. More importantly ...God promises.

With prayers for the journey!
Pastor Maria

Fall Festival

The Fall Festival is next month! Saturday, November 23rd. We are always looking for new ideas, volunteers, and items for our penny social raffle. If you have ideas to share, please

contact Laurie Linden at lalinden1@gmail.com.



TRANSITION TIMES

Dear Friends in Christ...

As we begin our transition journey together, I thought that it would be helpful to have a special “column” in the newsletter each month to keep you up-to-date on what is happening. Of course, it’s easier to relay information more completely in person where we can have some give and take, and I can answer your questions – but I will do my best to at least offer some highlights on what is going on and what the next steps will be in the newsletters. Then, we’ll follow up together on Sunday mornings, and at special congregational meetings, where we can have face-to-face time.

A special note for our homebound members...

We wish that you were able to be with us for these conversations. I hope this column helps you feel like you are “in the loop”. Please let us know if you have any questions about what is happening - and we will be sure to get back to you with some answers.

Here are some highlights to bring you up-to-date:

- **A special congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, September 22nd** after our Worship Service. **(Please note: we will have only one Service at 9:00 a.m.,**

followed by a pot luck brunch and our meeting). The main thing on the agenda will be the kick-off to Pilgrim's Transition time. I will explain how the process works and will share our timeline (*which will evolve as we move forward*). And - as we pray for God's guidance during our time of discernment - we'll begin to think about where *God might be calling the Pilgrim faith community next* - and ask ourselves - *What is our purpose? - and - What is our commitment?* You will also have a chance to confidentially share your feelings about ongoing hurts or conflicts at Pilgrim that we may need to work through as part of our transition time. I'll explain how that will work when we're together.

- We will have our next **special congregational meeting** on **Sunday, October 27**, after our 9:00 **a.m.** Worship Service. At this meeting we will begin discussions about what your hopes and dreams are for Pilgrim's future, as well as what fears and concerns you might have. These conversations are very important, and I promise you that it will be interesting for you to hear the dreams and concerns you all have. You may just be surprised!

Please note that we will be having a special congregational meeting each month as we go through the transition time - there is so much to talk about and a great deal of work for us to do together as you move forward. It is also very important that we have these conversations

and do this work **TOGETHER** - as the full Pilgrim faith community - to build relationships and an even greater sense of being a faith community together. That is why, on the Sundays that we have these congregational meetings each month, we will gather as a community in ***one Worship Service at 9:00 a.m., followed by a pot luck meal and fellowship***, as part of our meetings. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of having everyone involved in these discussions. Please make an effort to be present with your Pilgrim family for worship and these transition meetings. We want and need to hear your voice!

I know that this is a challenging and uncertain time, but it can also be a very exciting and Spirit-filled time. So be sure to mark your calendars and be involved in the process. And please know that I will do my best to be a faithful guide as we walk this journey together - trusting that God will lead us to a place of hope and promise!

With prayers for the journey!
Pastor Maria



**Choir Rehearsals resume on
Wednesday, September 4, at 7:00 p.m.**
New singers are always welcome.

**Handbell Rehearsals resume on
Tuesday, September 10, at 7:00 p.m.**

Please speak to Denis Brunelle, Minister of Music, or contact the church office should you have any questions.

I know not the way God leads me;
But well do I know my guide.

Martin Luther

Shut-In Communion Visits

If you are unable to attend church services and you'd like to receive communion at home, please contact us at 401-739-2937 or by email at parishasst@pilgrimlutheranri.org.

Jesus gave his followers the **Lord's Prayer**. He taught it to the people in the Aramaic language, the language Jesus spoke. The Aramaic words are full of meaning and were the subject of my sermon in July. A number of people responded to the idea of studying and praying the Aramaic versions as presented by Neil Douglas-Klotz in his commentary and translation in "Prayers of the Cosmos."

There will be two (or more?) prayer/study circles. We will meet following worship on Sunday, September 15th, to set up the times and frequency for the circles, receive the books provided to participants, and decide upon the "assignment" structure.

Anyone interested can speak to me about questions, interest or willingness to participate. Please call me at 783-2316, email at dnld2020@gmail.com, see me at Pilgrim, or just come on September 15th to see if you would like to participate or go solo. Peace.

~ Donald Williams

Pastor Maria's Schedule and Contact Information

In addition to being with us on most Sundays, Pastor Maria will generally be in the office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (and Council meeting Thursdays) - though meetings, hospital visits, and other ministry needs may take her out of the office on those days. Pastor Maria will work from home on Mondays, and Friday is her day off. If you would like to meet with the Pastor, please call or email to be sure she will be available.

To contact Pastor Maria, please call the Pilgrim Church Office at 401-739-2937, or email her at pastormhammons@gmail.com. In case of a *Pastoral Care Emergency*, Pastor Hammons can be reached at: 860-440-7366.

Altar Flower Dedications

PLEASE consider supporting the altar flowers. There is no minimum donation, and the dedication can be in memory of someone or in honor of a birthday, wedding anniversary or another special accomplishment. Envelopes are available in the narthex. If you have any questions about flower dedication, please contact Pat Frazier at 941-7656.

What Does Martin Say?

God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars.

Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.

Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.

You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say.

The dog is the most faithful of animals and would be much esteemed were it not so common. Our Lord God has made His greatest gifts the commonest.

If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write.