

Ministry Minutes

Health & Wellness Ministry Information & Updates

Spring 2020

Hang in there a little while longer....



Thank you for the extraordinary work you are doing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. At this most challenging of times, many health and wellness ministry volunteers are also health care professionals, serving on the front lines in our local hospitals, clinics, and care facilities.

In addition to those involved in direct health care, rostered ministers, lay leaders, and volunteers are pitching in as they are able. It is a time for everyone to find new ways to help others meet their basic physical needs, as well as to provide reassurances of God's unfailing presence and love.

We've created this edition of *Ministry Minutes* to offer you continued encouragement and inspiration during these difficult times.

Please practice self care throughout this stressful time. The best way to combat stress is through physical exercise and mental rest. Thankfully, many fitness and meditation companies have temporarily waived the fees for their online and mobile resources. (*See examples on Page 3 of this newsletter.*) As you take care of yourself, not only will you be better equipped to serve others, you will also become less susceptible to illness.

If you have not yet started a self-care practice, don't wait any longer. In addition to the structured workouts and meditations offered online, walking is an excellent technology-free option for self care. Take a brisk walk for at least 30 minutes every day for the best results.

Another technology-free way to practice self care is to perform breathing exercises three times each day. A simple breathing exercise is to breathe in slowly for 4 counts, hold your breath for 2 counts, and then exhale slowly for 6 counts. Repeat these 12-count breaths several times each session. As you breathe in, think of bringing joy and peace into your life; as you exhale, think about ridding yourself of negativity and stress.

It is worth repeating the tried-and-true ways to boost your immune system: consume at least 64 ounces of water throughout the day; get 7-9 hours of sleep per night; and eat a well-balanced, anti-inflammatory diet full of fruits and vegetables.

These practices will benefit you in crisis times, as well as in "normal" life. No matter what you are doing to take care of yourself, however, remember that your friends and neighbors are praying for you, and that we are all in this together. For more information on the importance and practice of self care, contact Health & Wellness Ministry Coordinator Patty Davidson at (412) 532-8460 or patricia.davidson@lutheranseniorlife.org.

The Health & Wellness Ministry is provided as a partnership between the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran SeniorLife.

It's "Sew" Creative!



As the global supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) continues to become more uncertain, Lutheran SeniorLife invites you to donate hand-sewn, cotton fabric masks. Face masks protect our staff from expelled droplets that could contain the COVID-19 virus and other germs.

Drop-off Points

Masks can be dropped off Monday through Friday between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm at the following Lutheran SeniorLife locations:

- **Lutheran SeniorLife Corporate Office**
191 Scharberry Ln. Mars, PA 16046
- **VNA, Western Pennsylvania**
154 Hindman Rd. Butler, PA 16001

For links to buy fabric, a sample pattern, and tutorials, visit Lutheran SeniorLife's website at: <https://www.lutheranseniorlife.org/news/support-our-staff-with-handmade-fabric-masks/>

Please call Deb Kaylor, director of customer relations at VNA, Western Pennsylvania, at (724) 431-3283 with any questions.

Conference Calls Scheduled

Lutheran SeniorLife is holding a series of conference calls to offer support to congregations during the challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each call will focus on a geographic area where Lutheran SeniorLife provides the majority of its services. However, participants can feel free to join any call that is better suited to their schedules.

These calls will replace the in-person gathering of Lutheran SeniorLife's Moral Owners Committee that had been scheduled for May 7. The Moral Owners Committee is an ad hoc committee of Lutheran SeniorLife's board of directors, which comes together twice annually to ensure that the organization is serving in a way that is consistent with the Lutheran faith.

Any rostered minister or lay leader in the synod is welcome to be a part of the Moral Owners Committee on an ongoing basis, or simply to participate in the conference calls.

Please RSVP to Debbie Grayburn at (724) 742-2221 or debbie.grayburn@lutheranseniorlife.org for call-in details.

Please join the call that best suits your interest and schedule

- **Wednesday, April 22 — 10:00 am to 11:00 am**
Focus: Armstrong County
- **Friday, April 24 — 10:00 am to 11:00 am**
Focus: Northern Allegheny County
- **Monday, April 27 — 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm**
Focus: Beaver and Lawrence Counties
- **Tuesday, April 28 — 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm**
Focus: Butler County

Feel free to participate in any or all of the calls.

To RSVP and for call-in information, please contact Debbie Grayburn at (724) 742-2221 or debbie.grayburn@lutheranseniorlife.org.

Please note these will be audio phone calls only; no Internet/video required.

Ministry in Action

Parish Nurse Encourages Virtual Wellness During COVID-19 Crisis

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Pittsburgh (Bower Hill Road), PA**



Sheryl Woodall (r.) and Pastor Alina Kanaski, working on My Life, Organized.

While Sheryl Woodall's paid position as an occupational health nurse keeps her very busy, she somehow finds the time to coordinate a variety of health and wellness ministry activities as the parish nurse for her congregation, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the South Hills. For example, Sheryl promotes healthful practices through newsletter articles. She also coordinates annual flu shot clinics and CPR/AED training.

Sheryl worked closely with Pastor Alina Kanaski on her most recent project, a booklet of planning worksheets that help individuals to organize and summarize the various day-to-day and long-term details of their lives. Aptly called *My Life, Organized*, the booklet references relevant Scripture and songs, and includes everything from a list of accounts and memberships to end-of-life wishes.

When the COVID-19 pandemic took away her ability to consult with parishioners in person, Sheryl began seeking out ways she could still promote health and wellness from afar. "Technology doesn't replace in-person interaction," Sheryl states, "but it certainly is helping us to experience some level of normalcy during this time of crisis."

With the mandated closings of gyms and fitness centers, Sheryl is encouraging people to keep up with their fitness routines at home. She forwarded the following list of resources from a colleague to help you stay healthy—in mind, body, and spirit. *Thank you, Sheryl!*

Don't Let Gym Closures Derail Your Fitness Regimen

- **YouTube** offers a variety of free videos for fitness training, yoga, and stress relief. Some channels to try include [YMCA 360](#) for 15 minute workouts, [Strong by ZUMBA](#), and [Yoga with Adriene](#) among many others.
- **Gold's Gym** is offering their personal workout app, [GOLDS AMP™](#), for free through May 31, if you register by April 30.
- **Fitness Blender** offers hundreds of free workout videos ranging in difficulty, length, and body focus.
- The personalized meditation app, **Balance**, is [free for one year](#), but you have to email access@balanceapp.com for instructions. (It usually costs \$11.99 per month or \$49.99 for a year.)
- **Calm** is a meditation app with a [web page](#) full of free meditations to help you through COVID-19 fears and anxieties. The app itself also has plenty of free content.
- **Headspace** is offering all US [health care professionals](#) and [educators](#) free access to *Headspace Plus* through the rest of 2020. The service has also [pooled together](#) some free meditation sessions for anyone to try.
- Fitness guru **Peloton** is offering a [90-day extended free trial](#) for its at-home fitness app, which includes sessions for yoga, meditation, strength, stretching, and bodyweight training.
- **Planet Fitness** is offering [free at-home workouts](#) for everyone at no cost once a day on Facebook and YouTube.
- **RGT Cycling's** [virtual cycling premium features](#) will be free for the "foreseeable future," due to COVID-19.
- **Down Dog** exercise apps are free for students, teachers, and health care workers until July 1 (others until May 1).
- **LES MILLS** is offering free classes [on its streaming platform](#), LES MILLS On Demand, until the coronavirus outbreak is over. The site has 95 video classes for Body Combat, Body Pump, Barre, cardio training, mindfulness, and more.

Changes to Anointing & Appreciation Event



We will miss seeing your smiling faces at this year's Anointing & Appreciation service.

We are no longer planning to gather in person for the annual Anointing & Appreciation prayer service. However, please continue to “save the date” of May 13, 2020.

Please set aside **one hour on May 13th** to join — in spirit — your fellow parish nurses, health ministers, congregational leaders, and health and wellness ministry volunteers for a time of prayer and self care.

More information on this hour of prayer will be sent to you in the coming weeks. Until then, remember to take care of yourself as you encounter the stresses of everyday life and the stresses specifically brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministering from Afar

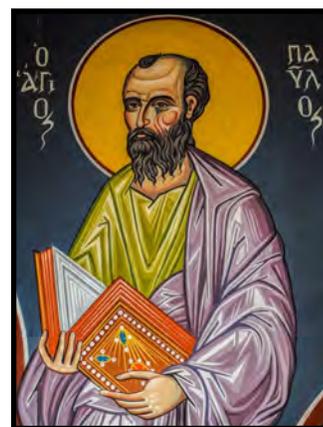
What happens to our ministry for the at-home members of our congregation when essentially *all of us* have become at-home members?

Face-to-face relationships are at the foundation of our work in health and wellness ministry. But just as the apostle Paul wrote letters to his fellow believers while he was physically separated from them, we must now rely on the available communication methods of our day to continue our ministry — phone calls, video conferences, text messaging, and, yes, traditional mail.

Think about how your ministry has been forced to stretch creatively and how it has grown to meet emerging needs. People are still hungry for the Word. (One congregation was able to reach more than three times its average in-person worship attendance by holding its Palm Sunday service on Facebook!)

If your congregation does not have its own worship opportunities online, please consider checking out the opportunities for prayers of the day, devotions, Bible studies, and worship that the synod has compiled at <https://www.swpasynod.org/synodnews/covid19>. (Click on *Current Congregations Status*.) Please urge your fellow believers to tune in to these opportunities as well, so that even though we have been physically separated, we may still join together in the Word and bear witness to others.

We are all looking forward to the day when we can resume our ministry in person. But as we await that time, let us focus on the good work God is doing despite this pandemic. And as we pray for the health and well-being of our congregation, our country, and our world, let us also seek further guidance on how we can best serve from afar.



In 1 Thessalonians 3:10 Paul writes: Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

How Are You?

We'd love to hear how you are keeping in touch with loved ones and congregation members from afar. Share your ideas with Patty Davidson via the information below.

(412) 532-8460 • patricia.davidson@lutheranseniorelife.org