



“Sing to God a new song, for God has done marvelous things.
Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy.”
+ Psalm 98

Monday, December 06, 2021

Dear Member of St. Michael’s Lutheran Church,

“Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy.” + Psalm 98:8

“Together.” We used to think we knew just what that word meant, didn't we? We never used to wonder, most of us, how the definition might be stretched, how important togetherness might become or how clever we'd need to become in order to make it happen.

But my oh my, haven't these past two years changed and challenged things? Amid a sea of confusion, fear, and discord, we suddenly became desperate for some kind of joy, precisely when it became impossible to get together for joy in most of the ways we knew; going out to eat, meeting over a cup of coffee, hosting gatherings, attending sporting events, plays, concerts, holding choir rehearsals (other than the bell choir), attending Sunday morning worship and passing the peace while actually touching a fellow human, having in-person mid-week Bible study, having fellowship in the Narthex before and after church, and of course the annual Corn Roast.

So, we all stretched, hard. Flexed more than we thought we could. Groaned and reached and complained and expanded and swore (only a little!), wept (sometimes a lot!), and gave thanks for God's grace (all the time). Shout Out to what has kept us going:

- Kept St. Michael's functioning as a congregation through the dedicated efforts of Pastor Chris, Mark Dishong, Kelly Mosley, and the Congregation Council
- Maintained key church committees: Property Committee, Christian Education, Martha's Circle, Altar Guild, and Youth Group
- Upgraded the sanctuary's audio and video to deliver a better online experience; church in pajamas (it wasn't all bad)
- Confirmation classes are underway and shared with Holy Trinity
- Planning for the 2022 ELCA Youth Gathering is ongoing where the theme is Boundless: God beyond measure
- We provided unwavering support to the food pantry in Camden and stuffed as many bags as ever with
- festive meal supplies for Easter and Thanksgiving
- We supported the IHOC Mall Walk so that vital social ministry has a chance to weather through the pandemic

And in the end, we were together, weren't we? When we logged on for Zoom meetings, streamed worship services, delivered worship packages to everyone's home for Advent, Easter, and now Advent again, gathered our youth together for activities virtual and together outside and with new friends from St. Matthew in Moorestown, we were together in joy, weren't we?

And now that the world is beginning to open back up again, it's safe to say that we may never appreciate the gift of in-person church more than we do now: the beauty of worship, the power of music, the sweetness of sacraments, the dignity of service — always together for joy in community with God, whose love covers every distance and heals every heart.

With this letter you should receive an estimated giving card and a prayer. | hope you will join me in praying the prayer regularly as we discern together our giving for the coming year. So much is different; so many circumstances have changed. But here's what I know: with God's help, the music we create, in person and in spirit, will be well worth the rejoicing!

See you on December 19th for Giving Sunday,
Your St. Michael’s Stewardship Team