



## WE ARE NEVER ALONE

The room was spare and dimly lit. We sat on folding chairs in a circle—young Honduran women and some of us from the ELCA. We had come to Honduras to observe the work of [AMMPARO](#) (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). This is the ELCA's strategy to help youth who have been forced to flee their home countries because of violence, abuse, extortion by gangs and extreme poverty. *Amparo* is the Spanish word for shelter or refuge.

In this case, [AMMPARO](#) partnered with the [Lutheran World Federation](#) and the Mennonites to resettle returned migrants—those who had tried to seek asylum in the United States but had failed or had been denied and deported back to Honduras.

One by one they told us their stories of fear and desperation. Not a one undertook the long and dangerous trek north on a whim. They told us about the abuse they had suffered, about family members who had been killed by gangs, about the inability to make a living because of the extortion by organized crime. They talked about the bitter sadness of leaving home and family, and the uncertainty of the future.

I remember one young woman in particular. She was pregnant when she tried to migrate to the United States. She had the baby somewhere along the way. She was far from home, mostly alone and desperately wanted her mother to be with her. None of this is what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new and strange existence. She and her baby were now back in Honduras—but not at home. Home was too dangerous.

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Remember last Christmas? Remember all of the preparations, the travel to be with family? Remember the holy beauty of the Christmas Eve liturgy and receiving Christ's grace and forgiveness at his table? The shopping and Christmas caroling? The in-person gatherings? All that has changed.

The pandemic hasn't forced us from our homes but into our homes, sheltering in place, isolated. Not together, but physically distanced. Not gathered with family and friends, but forced apart because of the threat of infection. Forced by circumstances beyond our control into this strange existence. Oh, there will be Christmas carols piped into grocery stores and other essential services, but they will be painful reminders of how life used to be.

We are reminded of the experience of the exiles in Babylon: "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For

there our captives asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’ How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land” (Psalm 137)?

I told the young Honduran woman about another young woman who was forced to leave home because of a government decree. She, too, was pregnant and made a long and difficult journey. She, too, was far from home and without her mother when the baby came. She had to find shelter wherever she could. This wasn’t what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new existence.

That young woman was Mary and the child was Jesus. Precisely in our distress, in our dislocation, the Lord shows up. Emmanuel—God with us—makes his home in the very places we find foreign or isolating. The young Honduran woman, and all of us, can find hope because of the birth of Mary’s child. There is no God-forsaken place and we are never alone—not in hospital rooms, or sheltering in place, or Zoom calls or on dangerous roads.

Many of us will not be physically home for Christmas, but we are truly home in Christ.

December 4, 2020 Monthly Message from the Living Lutheran by Elizabeth A. Eaton, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her email address is [bishop@elca.org](mailto:bishop@elca.org).



As we say “Goodbye” to 2020 and welcome the new year, I am excited to introduce you to our own Kathleen Smith! You may already know her as a wonderful addition to our children’s ministries such as Vacation Bible School and Children’s Church. Kathleen also serves on our Saddleback Children’s Center preschool board. She’s such a joyful presence in all that she does at Community Lutheran. But did you know that she is also an important addition to the RSM Food Pantry? Community Lutheran is able to help in many ways thanks to Kathleen! She first came to CLC 16 years ago when her daughter was 3 years old and attending the preschool. Kathleen had interviewed a few schools in the area and really liked the vision at Saddleback Children’s Center. Soon she was connected at

church and her daughter was baptized here!

Kathleen got involved at the RSM Food Pantry over 5 years ago with a few other members. She has seen the food pantry grow under the leadership of Chris O’Connor and now they have a foundation, RSM Cares. Their new location in the parking lot of Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church is fantastic. The pantry is open the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month and you will find Kathleen there to assist. She loves her fellow volunteers and finds this service a joy that she is happy to do.

The founder, Chris, knows first-hand what it means to be hungry and worry about feeding your family. His experience led him to start the RSM Food Pantry. His motto is: “Come hungry and leave full!” Distribution begins at 1 and all are welcome so don’t be shy if you find yourself needing this assistance! Chris’ other motto is “Times, Treasures and Talents.” Thanks to Kathleen, Pastor Marty was able to connect the ELCA Matthew 25 fund which provides money to the food pantry and this last year Josiah found another grant to support them. The Church of Latter Day Saints and St. John’s Episcopal church are also very involved making it truly a community effort. If you have any questions about volunteering or anything else, ask Kathleen or Josiah or go to [www.belltowerfoundation.org](http://www.belltowerfoundation.org).

Thanks Kathleen!

**NOVEMBER 2020**

	2020 YTD <u>ACTUAL</u>	2020 YTD <u>BUDGET</u>
Receipts—Offerings	\$416,249	\$382,692
Net Receipts—Preschool	(79,373)	159,973
Payroll Protection Program Funds Used	151,527	0
Receipts—Other	<u>3,640</u>	<u>4,745</u>
Total Receipts	\$492,043	\$547,410
Total Operating Expenditures		
(Non-Preschool)	<u>(475,143)</u>	<u>(502,144)</u>
Excess Receipts over		
Expenditures (Net Operating Income)	<u>\$ 16,900</u>	<u>\$ 45,266</u>
Loss on Sale of Stock	(393)	(0)
Transfers to Dedicated Accounts	<u>( 22,000)</u>	<u>( 46,000)</u>
Total Net Revenue	<u>(\$ 5,493)</u>	<u>(\$ 734)</u>

Offerings	
Charitable Grants	\$ 0
Non-EFT Offerings	\$16,638
EFT Offerings	\$15,699
Total	\$32,337

**Payroll Protection Program** loan funds totaling \$151,527 were received 5/1/2020. These funds were applied to payroll costs (both church and preschool) and mortgage interest. We applied to have the loan forgiven and converted into a grant in November and are waiting for the bank to review all documentation. We anticipate full forgiveness.

**Liquid assets** available to meet expenses totaled \$42,686 on 11/30/2020 (excludes dedicated funds).

**Offering income** was \$6,698 less than budgeted for November. YTD offerings are \$33,557 more than budgeted. Higher offerings have helped to offset the loss of preschool income.

**Preschool net income** was \$14,263 less than budgeted for November. November's preschool net income was \$3,126 rather than the \$10,000 to \$15,000 normally contributed toward church bills and the long-term maintenance fund. Licensing and health officials continue to limit our enrollment. The preschool recently received a grant from Orange County. These funds will reduce the amount of support the church must supply during December.

**Other Receipts** included specified gifts of \$43 for the Long-Term Maintenance Fund, \$1,685 for the Food Bank, \$626 for Siloe, \$100 for ELCA Disaster Relief, \$100 for Quilting and \$25 for the Good Samaritan Fund.

**Non-Preschool Operating Expenses** were \$10,959 less than budgeted for November. All expense categories were less than budgeted for the month except Professional and Programs, which are well under budget year-to-date.

Detailed information is available upon request from Tracy Cantin ([treasurerclcrsm@gmail.com](mailto:treasurerclcrsm@gmail.com))

### How Can I continue Giving?

1. You can write a check and mail it to us (Community Lutheran Church, 30322 Via Con Dios, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688).
2. You can give online through the website, [clcrsm.org](http://clcrsm.org). There is a link at the top of the page that says, "Give Online". You can do a one-time donation or setup a recurring donation.
3. You can give with your phone using the Give Plus App. Just go to the App Store or Google Play and search for "Give+". The first time you login, you select your church. You will find us by searching the zip code, 92688. You can do a one-time donation or setup a recurring donation through the app.
4. You can text an offering donation to 855-949-0112. The first time you do this you will get a text back prompting you to enter your name and credit card number.

5. You can do a Zelle transfer through your online banking website. When adding the church as a payee, just enter our email address: [clcrsm@clcrsm.org](mailto:clcrsm@clcrsm.org)

If you need any help with your online giving, please contact Tracy at [treasurerclcrsm@gmail.com](mailto:treasurerclcrsm@gmail.com)

**Amazon Smile:** The church has registered on Amazon Smile. This is a great program where Amazon shoppers can designate any registered charity to receive .5% of their qualified purchases as a donation. To participate in this program, just go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) to sign up and choose Community Lutheran Church as your designated charity.

**Schwab Account:** The church has a Schwab brokerage account. This way members can donate shares of stock as an alternative to cash offerings. Not only can you help the church, you can avoid paying capital gains tax on appreciated stocks.



## Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 24th 11:15 AM

Please join us via ZOOM as we vote to approve our 2021 Annual Budget and incoming Council Members.

## December Council Meeting Highlights

December 15, 2020

- Thank you to everyone who contributed to the RSM Food Pantry for Thanksgiving. Over 349 families were served.
- Thank you to the congregation for your generous giving. We will be finishing the year strong with our budget.
- A big thank you to Alex Kiernan and Hannah McDaniel, Junior High students, who have been a tremendous helping Josiah run the Kids' Night Out program.
- The Annual Meeting will be held via Zoom on Sunday, January 24, 2021 at 11:15 am.

## **CLC Youth and Family Ministries**



Hello and welcome to our Youth and Family schedule for January! Currently in person youth and family activities will be taking place at church or online over Zoom. Parents and youth will be notified of changes in the schedule. If you do not currently receive email updates from Josiah about youth and family activities, or have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to Josiah at [Josiahclcrsm@gmail.com](mailto:Josiahclcrsm@gmail.com) to be added to the youth and family list, thank you!



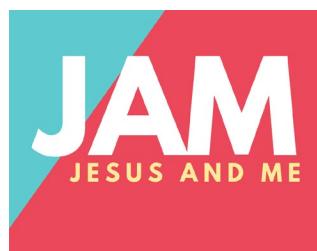
### **Sunday School (Preschool-5<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

We will continue to offer Sunday school during our in-person Sunday morning services. Depending on the weather, our in-person Sunday School will either take place in the sanctuary in the kids' corner or down on the preschool patio. We will also be offering a Sunday School Zoom on Sunday afternoons. More information will be sent out to the parents with the time and link.

### **Kids Night Out (Pre K and K)**

Saturday, January 23rd  
5:30 PM-7:30 PM

In January, KNO will be offered once on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. We will allow a maximum number of nine kids for each Kids Night Out session. More information will be sent out to parents about each Kids Night Out.



### **(1<sup>st</sup> Grade-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)**

Friday, January 22nd  
5:30 PM-7:30 PM

In January, JAM will be offered once on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. We will allow a maximum of 9 kids for each JAM. More information will be sent out to parents about each JAM.



### **(4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grades)**

Friday, January 15th  
5:30 PM-7:30 PM

In January, Fearless will be offered once on January 15<sup>th</sup>. We will be allowing a maximum of 9 kids for each Fearless. More information will be sent out to parents about each Fearless.



### **Confirmation**

#### **(6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades)**

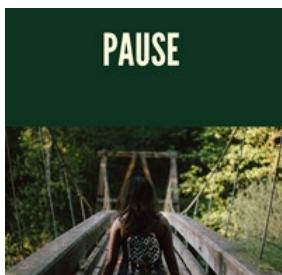
Tuesday, January 12th & 26<sup>th</sup>  
Friday, January 29th Game Night  
6:30-8:00 PM

Confirmation will resume on Tuesday January 12th. More information will be sent out to parents.

### **High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades)**

Wednesday, January 13th & 27th  
6:30-8:00 PM

HS youth group meets weekly on Wednesdays except for the 3rd Wednesday of the month. We meet from 6:30-8 pm.



### **Pause (Ages 18-23)**

Sunday, January 17th  
7:00-8:30 PM

This month, Pause will meet on the third Sunday of the month, January 17th.

### **Connect (Ages 24 and up)**

Saturday, January 23rd  
7:30-9:00 PM

This month, Connect will meet on January 23rd.





The Book Club is scheduled to meet on Monday, January 11th at 7:00 PM via Zoom. The Zoom meeting information will be forwarded to the members of the Book Club prior to the meeting.

When the Book Club meets on January 11<sup>th</sup>, we will be discussing **Uphill Both Ways** by Neta Jackson. Maggie Cooper had been planning retirement with her husband when he dies suddenly. Maggie discovers her husband had been planning a cross-country motorcycle trip visiting places of significance in their life. Defying the wishes of her family, Maggie sets out on the journey her husband had planned encountering unexpected surprises along the way.

Upcoming Books:

### Upcoming Books for 2021

January 11

February 8

March 8

April 12

May 10

June 14

**Uphill Both Ways**

**The Alice Network**

**Mornings with Rosemary**

**Queen Bee**

**This Tender Land**

**Hope on the Inside**

by Neta Jackson

by Kate Quinn

by Libby Page

by Dorothea Benton Frank

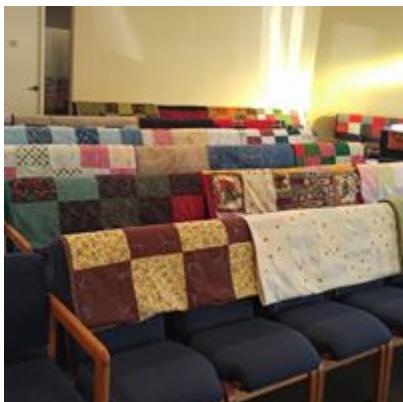
by William Kent Krueger

By Marie Boswick

We invite anyone who has read these books to join us for some lively conversation and fun. The CLC Book Club reads a wide variety of books and welcomes all readers along with book suggestions. Please contact Julie Draper or a member of the Book Club for more information.

### Prayer Requests

Please send your prayer requests to Pastor Marty by email. Pastor Marty's email is [pastormartyclcrsm@gmail.com](mailto:pastormartyclcrsm@gmail.com)



### Quilting for Lutheran World Relief

We started out 2020 gathering as a group to make quilts. Then things changed and we went to a "home-based" ministry. Thanks to all who donated fabric, cut quilt kits, sewed quilt tops, tied quilts, and bound them! We completed 40 quilts which were sent to LWR.

join me! Kathy Anderson [kathyquilter1217@gmail.com](mailto:kathyquilter1217@gmail.com)

We continue to cut fabric, sew quilt tops, sandwich them, tie and bind them. We have been working behind the scenes. If you would like to be a part of this ministry or just want more information, please call me. I often set up a workstation in the sanctuary and would be thrilled to have you



## WHAT IS STEPHEN MINISTRY ALL ABOUT?

Here's what people say about Stephen Ministry: "I had never been able to open up to someone before and had always kept my feelings to myself. My Stephen Minister helped me to talk about the painful things, which opened the door for God's healing." "All I can say is thank you. I was so overwhelmed I didn't know where to begin. My Stephen Minister helped me sort through my challenges and regain my faith in God." "I was able to tell my Stephen Minister things I could never have told a friend. She never judged me or looked down on me. She just listened and cared. It was just what I needed."

A Stephen Minister is a listening, caring, confidential person who can walk through tough times with you. Jesus calls us into community so we can worship together and also find strength from one another. We are commanded to love and care for each other as an extension of God's love for us. All you need to do to find this care and support is to contact Pastor Marty or one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders (Pat Weber, Gay Chessell, Kevin Peterson or Brent Anderson) To do so please call the church office at (949) 858-0307 or email us at [clcrsm@gmail.com](mailto:clcrsm@gmail.com).



Thank you all for your generous Christmas cards, gifts, and goodies that you provided this year! Your gifts give us significant evidence of your care for us and CLC. Blessings to each of you in 2020.

Sincerely,  
Pastor Marty, Josiah Canto, Linda Bullock, Julie Mortenson, Tracy Cantin, Grant Rohr.



## Big Thanks To All Who Were Caught Serving in December!

- Thank you to everyone who helped decorate the sanctuary and the church campus for Christmas.
- Thank you to everyone who volunteered and helped to make our Christmas Eve worship services possible.
- Thank you for everyone's generosity throughout the past year.