



"FOR PETE'S SAKE"

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Zurich, ON

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July/August 2026 Newsletter

Pastoral Ponderings

"While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread...." Mark 14: 22

I am sure that some of you are wondering why I am only leading worship on Sundays with Holy Communion. NO, it's not a financial issue for the congregation.

As Lutherans, we are a people of Word and Sacrament. Our chief time of gathering is in worship. When you look at the Evangelical Worship Book (the red book) you will notice that the first 10 liturgies are all entitled Holy Communion. Only then comes the Service of the Word Liturgy (which was created for non-Sunday worship and on Sundays when a Pastor was not available)

Since the beginning of Lutheranism, the chief liturgy of the week was on Sunday, and it was a liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion. Luther believed that Holy Communion should be celebrated every day. Given that was not possible, having it every Sunday and on other non-Sunday festivals was the norm for the developing Lutheran denomination.

This practice, of course, was based on Scripture. In the night Jesus is betrayed, he gathers with his disciples (all of them), sits at table and initiates the practice of Holy Communion. He tells his disciples to do this in remembrance of me. It is the word remembrance that is crucial. The Greek word is anamnesis can mean to make a past memory present. It is not a passive act, it is making the memory active in the present, which is why Holy Communion is to be celebrated every Sunday.

One of the things I have discovered over the years is how the history of immigration from Germany specifically influenced our worship practice. I need to note that there are lots of twists and turns in this history, but this is what I have learned over the years. People have assumed that immigrants coming from Germany and came to the Lutheran church were Lutherans. In fact, that was not always the case. They often came to the Lutheran church because Lutherans spoke German (I realize Lutherans spoke many other languages, but German was one of the significant ones). They often belonged to one of the German churches that were closer to practices of the Presbyterian or United churches in Canada. As you know, those Protestant denominations did not celebrate Holy Communion regularly but was usually done once in a while.

As a result, liturgical practice was affected by the non-Lutheran experiences of these immigrants. Add to this a lack of clergy in the early 20th Century, Holy Communion became something “special” rather than a weekly practice. An additional piece to this—for some weekly Holy Communion was seen as a Roman Catholic thing and the idea “we are not Catholics” became the norm in understanding worship. It is unfortunate that our historical worship practices in Canada came as a result of prejudice and a deep distrust/hatred of another Christian denomination.

At one of the Council meetings, as I was talking about worship options, a Council member was very clear that they did not want to have what it means to be Lutheran watered down. I could not agree more.

I have clearly told Council that if having me do another Sunday each month, having Holy Communion is a requirement for me, based on my training and understanding of what it means to be Lutheran. I believe strongly that having Holy Communion on Sunday is a critical way we encounter God, a critical way we make Jesus’s calls to love present in the here and now, and a critical way we connect worship to our everyday life. I often hear that it makes it less special. With respect, by that logic we would only eat once in a while because eating would then be less special. In fact, we eat regularly because we need to be fed for our bodies, minds and souls to grow. So it is with Holy Communion.

I offer this explanation for you to consider and to ponder as you move forward and as you consider a new call. More and more congregations in our Synod and ELCIC practice Holy Communion as part of their regular Sunday worship and I know that many pastors look for that. I have told Council that I am happy to have that conversation with the congregation should that be needed.

Pastor Stephen

A P.S.

It has been raised with me a concern about the use of real bread in relation to disease transmission. This has also been an issue raised related to the common cup (for that discussion I refer you to an article from the January/February 2026 Article from Bishop Ali Tote in the Canada Lutheran). I will have Laurie make some copies for people to take home and also post it on the board outside the church offices).

In fact, the only person that handles the bread on Sunday morning is myself and I do cleanse my hands before placing the bread on the altar and before distributing.

With the wafers, they are handled more that the real bread (please note I know the altar guild cleanses their hands as well so this is not a criticism of them). They need to be taken out of the package, placed on the plate and then I handle it as well. In addition, the usual practice of most congregation is to keep the unused wafers for the next Holy Communion and then handled again. With the bread, anything leftover is fed to the birds. So, from a sanitary perspective the bread is much less risky.

One more option: As Lutherans we believe that Holy Communion is valid in only one kind. What that means is taking either the Bread or Wine makes communion valid. I know people who cannot consume alcohol and only take the bread.

Hope that is helpful information.

Upcoming Worship Service Dates and Locations – JULY & AUGUST

July 5 - Rick Deichert - Sanctuary - Service of the Word - Food Bank Sunday

July 12 - Pastor Stephen - Sanctuary - Communion

July 19 - Pastor Stephen - Parish Hall - Communion - Coffee Hour to Celebrate Pastor Stephen's 40th Anniversary of his Ordination (Hosted by Council)

July 26 - Tracy Lather - Sanctuary - Service of the Word

August 2 - Laurie Erb - Sanctuary - Service of the Word - Favourite Hymn Sunday - Food Bank Donations

August 9 - Pastor Stephen - Sanctuary - Communion

August 16 - Ross Cordell - Sanctuary - Service of the Word

August 23 - Pastor Stephen - Parish Hall - Communion

August 30 - Mark Heimrich - Sanctuary - Service of the Word

Upcoming Events:

Monday, June 29 - Call Committee and Council meet with Pastor Christie Morrow-Wolfe from Synod

Sunday, July 12 - *Short meeting after worship - A congregational vote is required to allow council to proceed with parsonage renovations as funds become available. Please plan to attend.*

July 13-17 - Vacation Bible School

Tuesday, July 14 - Council meeting

Sunday, July 19 - *Council is hosting a Coffee Hour in honour of Pastor Stephen's 40th Anniversary of his Ordination.*

Tuesday, August 11 - Council meeting

Coffee Hour

No one will be assigned to coffee hour for the summer months, except July 19 when council will host coffee hour to celebrate Pastor Stephen's 40th Anniversary of his Ordination. If people wish to gather after church on Sundays in July and August, there will be juice in the fridge and cookies in the kitchen which can be put out by anyone who wants to act as a host on any particular Sunday.

A Note From the Property Committee

The property committee is anxious to begin renovations at the parsonage. There is still some physical labour to organize so anything that is remaining in the house or in the yard can be removed. After that, it will be time for contractors to start their work; however, we won't be able to begin the first phase (filling holes, repairing drywall, painting ceilings and priming the repaired walls) until there is enough money in the church account to pay for the entire first phase. Please prayerfully consider how you can help with this project.

Cheques can be written to the church or e-transfers can be sent to forpetestreasurer@gmail.com to help us get this project started.



St. Peter's Buzz



We would like to start a new section to be included regularly in our newsletters so people can keep up with various activities in the lives of our members. This will be a place to announce special milestones, sports activities of our children and youth etc. Please let a council member know if you have something to contribute. If you see an event you are able to attend, please support our members as you are able (especially the young ones) to help us continue to make connections with each other and build stronger relationships within our church community. **We will be looking for a member of the congregation to take over this section by collecting information to include in each monthly newsletter.**

June 20 - Pastor Stephen reached the milestone of 40 years in the Ministry! We will celebrate this anniversary with him on July 19 during Coffee Hour.

Best wishes to **Brad & Vanessa Holmes & family** and **Grandma Marg Deichert** on the arrival of their daughter/granddaughter Lilah Josephine on May 20th.

Danica Jeffrey (Parents: Kelly and Jordan Jeffrey) plays baseball in Zurich on the U15 Girls team, usually on **Wednesdays, at 8:15 pm.**

Blaire Jeffrey (Parents: Kelly and Jordan) plays on the Exeter Extremes U13 Girls team (diamond farthest behind the arena) usually on **Tuesdays at 6:45 pm.** If you wish to attend a game for either of the girls, it's a good idea to touch base with Kelly on FB Messenger to confirm it's a game and not just practice.

All three Jeffrey kids, **Bryce, Danica and Blaire**, are involved in Tug of War at the local and international levels. They will be travelling to Switzerland to compete in the GENSB competition this summer.

Anikah Strike-Sapp (Parents: Vanessa Strike and Stephen Sapp) was involved with ringette, singing and swimming during the school year. She is working toward lifeguarding. Anikah received an award at school for being a creative and reflective thinker.

Mikah Strike-Sapp (Parents: Vanessa and Stephen) also played ringette and is dedicated to her training in order to dive competitively. She qualified for the Junior Nationals and will compete this summer in Regina. Much of her summer will be spent in London training for diving.

Both **Anikah and Mikah** are looking forward to spending some time at Camp Menesetung this summer.

Correspondence from Council

Summary of Service/Congregational Meeting on June 7

A great deal of information was shared with the congregation on June 7, giving us all a time to reflect on the past and think about our future. Here is a summary of some of the information that was shared. There are some extra copies of the financial information and parsonage renovations suggested by the property committee on the table inside the door of the parish hall if you'd like to look at them.

- Membership Numbers

-Council has been looking at "membership" not only as previously Confirmed members, but to be more realistic and accurate, as the people who have made donations within the last few years, participate in the life of the church, and/or attend services, at least sometimes. This number is about 80 members.

-of these approximately 80 people - 33% are 80+

- 28% are 70-79

- 22% are 60-69

- 13% are 50-59

- 4% are 40-49

-At this point in time, there are next to no members who have donated and/or attend regularly in their teens, twenties or thirties.

-This data begs the question - How will we pay the bills in 5 or 10 years if over half of our most active members are over 70 years of age now? We can't ignore this information and we must plan for it wisely.

- Finances

-When you compare our income and expenses over the last 8 years, most years our income was higher than our expenses

-On the donation breakdown for 2025, 18 of 81 people or 22% of those considered the most active members, did not make any financial donations to St. Peter's. In 2024 16% of the 81 did not make any donations. These figures are higher than previous years and are a problem if this is going to be a trend moving forward.

-As Rick shares every year at the AGM, when we need money, it shows up, but we can't plan for the future by counting on a large bequest or

memorial donation every few years. For accounting purposes and budgeting, we must look at donations (plate offerings, PAR, e-transfer donations). When our donation base shrinks, we get concerned since that is the money required to pay for a pastor, organist, custodian, snow removal, grass cutting, contribute to benevolence to support the work of the wider church, as well as maintain our properties and repair them as required.

- **Parsonage Repairs** (*These figures are estimates only and Phil believes they are on the high side to account for any unforeseen "surprises" once renovations would begin. Contractors have said they will treat the church as fairly as possible. We need to keep in mind that these prices were provided in early June and will not hold indefinitely.*)

-Dumpster - \$500

-Brad Holmes - (filing holes, repairing drywall, painting ceilings and priming the repaired walls) - \$7,750

-Dave Heimrich - (painting all walls, trim, doors, closets in entire house - 2 coats) - \$11,390

-Dale Miller Plumbing & Electrical - \$14,500

- 1 pedestal sink, 2 bathroom sinks, 3 exhaust fans, 3 bathroom taps

- 3 bathroom toilets, 1 thermostat, 4 smoke/CO detectors

- 9 double switch plates, 2 triple switch plates, 15 pot lights

- 1 shower head & wall trim, 4 surface mount fixtures

- 4 ceiling fans with lights, valance lights

- 40-50 receptacle/switch plates

- 1 shower door (may no longer be available)

- double kitchen sink (?)

-Flooring - Vinyl plank main floor (kitchen, small bathroom, entrance, sunroom) - \$4,800

-Flooring - Vinyl plank - 4 upstairs bedrooms & 2 bathrooms - \$7,312

-Carpet - Stairs & Upstairs hall - \$2,700

-Duct Cleaning - \$500

-Appliances (washer, dryer, dishwasher, stove, microwave) - \$4,275

TOTAL - \$52,161

-There are other items on the list that have not been priced yet such as repairs to porch railing, screen doors, weather-stripping, replacing broken window screens, deck repairs etc.

-Since the meeting on June 7, council has inquired about the property value of the parsonage as is, or after fixing up. Pat O'Rourke said we could probably get between \$425,000 and \$450,000 for the parsonage in its present condition.

After the renovations that were discussed at the meeting, he believes we should be able to sell for somewhere between \$550,000 and \$575,000 and possibly as high as \$600,000. As a result of this information, council believes the correct path is to move forward with parsonage renovations since we would more than make up the costs of repairs should we decide to sell it in the future. This way the parsonage will be ready for the next pastor should he or she want to live there, and if not, that would be the time for the congregation to make a decision about whether to keep the parsonage or sell it. The members of St. Peter's in Zurich, not Synod, are the owners of both the parsonage and the church building.

-Council **will not** proceed with the various renovations until enough money has been collected for each one, so things will move forward in stages. For example, nothing will begin until we have enough money collected to pay Brad Holmes for his part of the project, and none of the main painting, by Dave Heimrich, would begin until money for that part of the project has been collected. The speed at which we can move will be dependent upon funds. This plan was discussed at our June 7 meeting; however, there was no official vote taken.

Please plan to attend a very short meeting after the service on July 12 so a motion can be made and voted upon giving council the authority to move forward with renovations.

***Answer to question asked on June 7 - Keep Parsonage vs. Paying a Housing Allowance**

-A question was asked about what the difference in dollars would be if we paid a housing allowance to the next pastor instead of providing them a parsonage in which to live. Rick provided the answer at our June 9 Council meeting.

-According to Synod guidelines, if the next pastor would choose to live somewhere other than the parsonage, it would cost St. Peter's approximately \$3,100 per month (rent plus utilities for a home similar to the parsonage) paid to them as a housing allowance. This would total approximately **\$37,200 per year**.

-If we continue to provide a parsonage to the next pastor, our annual costs for accommodations would be approximately **\$10,000** per year (hydro, gas, water, basic phone/internet and taxes).

-There is a considerable difference between the two scenarios.

4) Call Process

-At Pastor Stephen's recommendation, and our developing understanding of the call process, we are slowing down since we are not yet ready to answer some of the questions on the Congregational Mission Profile document, especially his question about what our 5- and 10-year plans look like for St. Peter's.

-Our Call Committee is complete with a chairperson, Tracy Lather, and a recording secretary, Kelly Jeffrey.

-The next meeting will be a joint Council and Call Committee meeting with Pastor Christie Morrow-Wolfe from Synod on June 29th

-Over the summer, there will be more work done on the Congregational Mission Profile document involving a sub-committee of council.

5) The Leader We Seek

-Thank you to everyone who completed the Survey Monkey question about the leader we seek.

-Visitation was #3 on the responses submitted by members.

-Pastor Stephen shared a true story about a gentleman who had been in the hospital for several weeks. He was asked by the council to visit the gentleman, which he did. The man proceeded to tell him that while he was happy to see Pastor Stephen, he was very disappointed that not one member of the congregation he's been a part of all his life had bothered to pay him a visit.

-After Council heard this story, we thought more about the implications for any faith community. We now believe that, other than occasional visits from the pastor which would include Communion, it is our members who should be doing the majority of the check-ins by phone or visiting in-person. While the relationship between pastor and members is important, pastors come and go. Building and maintaining relationships among members who are here to stay,

we have come to believe, is more important long term. With this in mind, and using your data from the survey, the top 5 Leadership Characteristics that have been chosen for our Congregational Mission Profile are:

- Worship Leadership/Preaching
- Transformation/Redevelopment to lead a declining congregation into hope and a new life
- Ministry for Children/Youth
- Community Work to build relationships beyond the walls of our church building
- Music and the Arts - someone who would be interested in using them to enhance worship

A few questions about which to ponder:

What do you see as important in a 5-year and 10-year plan?

Can we afford to hire a full-time pastor?

Are there any ways in which our church building could be used to generate more revenue?

Our conversations with you, our members, will continue over the next number of months. Please talk with members of Council about any questions you may have and/or any suggestions you have for us. Please do this by the end of July so your input can be considered as we work to complete the Congregational Mission Profile document. This is important work for ALL of us and our prayer is that with God's help, we will be able to make the best decisions for St. Peter's as we move into the future.

Peace and Blessings to You All,

Laurie