

"Separate but still together"

Christ's Evangelical Lutheran Church connects individuals to God, each other and the community.

Last year I wrote *"A note from a young family"* to help during a fall community event that I couldn't attend in person. I shared the reasons my family had chosen CLC as the church in which we would raise our boys. It simply came down to the mission – and not just what it said, but the way I observed it being lived.

Back then the examples included, of course, connections that were live gatherings in the church building. It was the women I sat next to in church who made me feel so welcome, from when I first joined five months pregnant, through when I came with two active toddlers (or alone to escape the whirlwind of being a working mom with two boys under the age of 3). It was also the Family Table parents who all worked together to provide our children a solid foundation of being kind, honest, and brave through the teachings of the Bible, and it was all the ways my children witnessed the work the church does to connect with our neighbors and to give back to those around us – such as giving a toy to another child being the way you got to sing with Mrs. Claus.

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1 Peter 4:10



*The Nydick Family
Diana and Robert, with sons Henry and William*

From that letter came the opportunity to be an even greater contributor to the church. Jerry Beil asked if I would consider taking a role on Council, the Stewardship role. The next thing I knew, I was on a ballot, and then February 2020 was my first Council meeting. The day after my second meeting, all the schools in Montgomery County were to be shut "for two weeks." Following that first shut down, I wouldn't see any church members for six months until drive-in church began. We had emergency Zoom meetings about whether or not to open. We had hard emotion-filled choices to make together every single month that we never could have expected (and I'm in awe of how much each council member puts into the discussions). And here we are, eight months later, kicking off a Stewardship campaign with a dichotomy: hopeful news of a vaccine and Covid-19 cases higher than ever. I'm not sure how many times I've said, "God has to have a reason I was on Council this year!" as I worry over whether or not I am truly qualified to be part of all the decision-making.

Page one of two – see reversed side

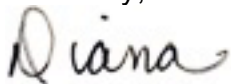
"Separate but still together"

What I want to share with you is that, while 2020 is like no year we've ever imagined, one thing that has stayed clear to me is the church's unwavering commitment to its mission – to *connect individuals to God, each other, and the community*. It doesn't mention in-person, or in the physical building. It's about the connection and what we can achieve in whatever ways we can. Here are some of what I've seen the church, and all of you, continue to do – and why I stayed both active in church and on the Council.

- Connecting to God: Pastor Bill, Elise, Council members, and congregation members have all written thoughtful, supportive, and thought-provoking Evening Meditations that we now are blessed to receive online daily. The Sunday Devotional brings a worship opportunity into our homes on Sunday morning with a message from Pastor Bill and special music from our congregational musicians.
- Connecting to each other: I have had the wonderful opportunity to connect with members on the phone – those who are older and may not always make it to service, and those whom I just haven't had the opportunity to meet yet. I've gotten to hear about the rich history of Oreland, the church, and also to learn about women's life journeys (Thank you Pastor Hy). I've seen Family Table continue to thrive with the children connecting with each other via Zoom, and have also seen the parents stay connected through the efforts of Elise through using a private Facebook group.
- I'll never forget the opportunity I had to help baptize my nephew in late October, and when we were done, the entire parking lot beeped their car horns for close to a minute in celebration. For those who were there -- I thank you for a moment I will remember as a wonderful one in 2020.
- Connecting to the community: The PB & Jesus program is highly successful in providing food to those in need, and the food drives and upcoming toy drive helps our community during these uncertain times. Will my children miss Mrs. Claus? Absolutely. But they will still get to be part of a Christmas tradition of giving to those less fortunate than we are, and for that I'm truly grateful.

In summary, I am grateful that I chose CLC for myself and my family. This past year has shown me the strength this church has to weather any storm and still connect all of us to God, each other, and the community, whatever the circumstances. I'm grateful that I can be both part of such a caring congregation, as well as to give what I can and learn from the amazing people I see monthly on Council. Whether those connections are virtual or in-person is, to me, inconsequential.

Sincerely,



Diana Nydick
Stewardship Chairperson