

## Welcome Back

By Pastor Justin Vetrano

It has certainly been a while since I have written a regular LIFELINE article. With so many shifts in the way we have been operating, we suspended publishing the newsletter, since we have been communicating on a semi-daily basis with the congregation via social media, emails or live streaming services.

For those who have stayed connected and engaged all these platforms have been a wonderful means of communication. At the same time, it is really nice to sit down in a comfy chair and read about the happenings at the church with an actual piece of paper in hand, and color photos to admire.

Throughout the summer, people have asked, "Pastor, how are things at the church?" I am thrilled to report that things at church are really good. We have so much for which to be thankful.

In the midst of many challenges we have been blessed with an incredible team of smart and talented people, who have enabled us to continue doing what we do best: Proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Reverently. Joyfully. Together. We have done so with myriad live-stream services and Bible studies, by striving to keep the Word of God relevant and in our lives even when we have been scattered.

We have kept an eye on the COVID numbers, always seeking to keep the congregation safe while still finding alternative ways to engage the Word of God.

It has been wonderful welcoming back so many people to the church this late spring and summer. We have met new people, and just welcomed a batch of thirty-four new members into the fold a few weeks ago.

School, with our new director, Lori Shaw, just wrapped up their summer programs and are setting their sights on the fall.

Confirmation classes have continued, and it has been a true joy to welcome the children back to Sunday School and their families back to church.

With the addition of our second Sunday service, we have adjusted our hospitality times for both services, and two weeks ago we even hosted one of our signature breakfasts in celebration of our new members, complete with candied bacon; it felt wonderful to gather together as we did in days past.

The amazing thing about THE LIFE is that with all our worship services and online engagement we have actually grown during the pandemic. We have been blessed to see our attendance increase even when the building was closed.

Since reopening the sanctuary fully, scattered over our three services each week, we are just about at pre-pandemic attendance. That doesn't include those people who join our services simultaneously from all over the country.

None of this has been easy. Learning and relearning ways to be church in this new day has taken a lot of energy to adapt, shift and adjust all while keeping our eyes focused on our mission. So many people of this church have been

### Join us for Worship and more!

Sundays      Worship & Communion, 9 & 10:30am\*  
Thursdays    Worship & Communion, 7:15pm\*  
Fridays (TBA) Movie Night, 7:15pm

Aug 18      Wednesday Bible Study, 7pm\*\*  
Sep 8        Men's Ministry, 7:30pm  
Sep 12      Ribfest, 12pm  
Sep 13      Women's Ministry, 7pm

\*Also live-streamed

\*\*Also via Zoom

Our Men's and Women's Ministries are still meeting monthly with terrific attendance. The work that so many have done in collecting food, baby items, school supplies and blood drives has been remarkable.

Our ESL program worked all the way up to the summer, engaging their students online. The Day

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# Getting to Know ... Paula and Joseph Baumgarn

By Joni Mazer

*Although I never had the pleasure of meeting Paula and Joseph in person, it was an honor to get to know them through the power of words. We communicated through email, and their responses to the questions I asked were written so eloquently, and the warmth of their personalities shines through.*

**Joni:** How long have you been worshipping at THE LIFE and what brought you here?

**J:** I have been going to THE LIFE for about 8 years. I got to know Pastor Vetrano at LuHi and appreciated when he spoke at our chapel services. I went on a couple of mission trips with him, Pastor Schoepflin and Jason Gudzik and enjoyed working and spending time with them. That made it easy to want to be a part of the community and mission of THE LIFE.

**P:** I have been going to THE LIFE for about 3 years. I was looking for a new church and met Pastor Vetrano through LuHi. We did VBS together in 2019 and really enjoyed it. That kept us coming back for events and services.



Paula Oyarce and Joseph Baumgarn on their wedding day at THE LIFE.

**Joni:** What do you like most about THE LIFE?

**P:** I love how welcoming the church has been to us.

**J:** It's amazing to witness the heart and outreach that so many individuals in the church have towards each other. We really enjoy Pastor Vetrano's messages, welcoming attitude and the talents that his wife and daughters share with the church.

**Joni:** Are you involved in any activities and/or ministries at THE LIFE?

**J:** Yes, we currently teach 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School and enjoy getting to know the younger members of the congregation. We are beginning to get involved with the Youth Group, and Paula has joined the Church Council as Youth Chair.

**Joni:** What do you do outside of church?

**P:** We are both teachers at LuHi. I teach high school Spanish.

**J:** I am an art teacher.

**Joni:** Do you have a favorite Bible verse?

**P:** Philippians 4:13 has been a verse I've liked since I was young and remember when I'm going through challenges. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." It is also the first verse I learned in Spanish as a song.

**J:** I have found strength in James 1:2-4, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

**Joni:** How has God worked in your life?

**P:** God has been the one who has made the plans for me throughout my life. It's tough to point out any specific time God has worked in my life because He has shaped and built a path for me. I can see

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the **LIFE**

LUTHERAN CHURCH  
& DAY SCHOOL

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## Welcome Back

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hard at work planning, meeting, re-planning and meeting some more to make things happen and continue to carry out our mission. It has been an awesome and humbling experience of which to be part.

With all this good news, challenges remain ahead of us. Someone asked me a few Sundays back, “Pastor, who are all these new people?” It truly has been wonderful to meet so many new people.

However, we are missing some people from pre-pandemic times. There are some who haven’t found their way back to church for one reason or another. We miss you! We don’t feel whole. We still wrestle with the reality that we have lost people, and we hope we can be reunited and reconnected sometime soon.

I know we don’t have comfy recliners in the sanctuary to sit in, as someone commented to me in a half-joking manner. I also know that life has shifted in such a way that the routine of attending church has really changed for many people, and it’s challenging to shift back. I know that for many we have just been out of touch for such a long time.

I also know that for some there is still a lot of loss and fear with the thought of being back in a crowd. I get it. Just know that you are missed by me and so many people here at THE LIFE.

Our hearts and lives are forever connected through the work of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. God is forever with you and loves you, we just miss seeing you and feasting together with you on all God has to offer in His Word and Sacraments.

I don’t know what the Fall will bring for us as a church and community; for now we are safely open. We are planning to have our annual Ribfest after church on Sunday, September 12, and we have more outdoor movie nights planned as we head toward the end of summer.


I am truly thankful to God that His Good News sustains us and enables us to continue to be church in Old Westbury. May God continue to bless us!

I hope to see you around church,

Pastor Vetrano 



## New Women’s Bible Study Starts Sept. 15

THE LIFE Women’s Ministry is offering a new Bible study on **Ten Women of The Bible**, by best-selling author Max Lucado. Sessions will meet via Zoom starting Wednesday, Sept. 15, at 7pm. Watch emails from THE LIFE for further details. Contact Roxanne Oellrich for more information and to order the Study Guide. [Roxanne@thelifeny.org](mailto:Roxanne@thelifeny.org). 

## Getting to Know ... Paula Oyarce and Joseph Baumgarn

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that God has always been by my side, and I am here because of Him.

J: When I look back at times of doubt or confusion, I can see God stitching a pathway together in my life according to a plan that He specifically had for me. One of the biggest ways I saw this is with Paula and I meeting from such different walks of life and getting married. I see God using the gifts that He finds in us whether we are aware or not,

and guiding us towards using them for His glory.

Joni: How has your faith in God helped you through a difficult time?

P: In difficult times, I have to remind myself that God is in control and He is the one who provides the strength and comfort when I am in need. Easier said than done, but I’ve learned to trust His plan for my life.

J: This goes along with my favorite verse. When going through a difficult time, because of my faith, I have the patience to realize that God is creating character in me and often times, allows me to be broken down in order to trust in Him and not myself. We can’t expect life to be simple and complain when there are challenges—these challenging times are part of God’s plan to develop our maturity. 



# A Letter from Our New Day School Director

By Lori Shaw, Day School Director

**A**s the new Director of THE LIFE Day School, I look forward to getting to know and work with the staff, children, and families.

I began my teaching career as an early childhood educator 25 years ago at the Day School (formerly known as Redeemer back then).

I have taught children ages 18 months through 18 years of age and have spent the last 14 years as a Director of Education. In addition to my early childhood background, I have been a dance educator, movement specialist, and owner of a local dance studio.

I have always had a passion for teaching and active learning and have enjoyed



Lori Shaw

my various roles working with young children. I am a parent of four grown children, Brittany, Christopher, Daniel and Patrick, and a grandmother to

three beautiful granddaughters, Arianna, Sophia, and Siena.

As an educator and director, I see young children as unique individuals who are creative, knowledgeable, and competent. I look forward to working with the staff to create and provide engaging early-learning experiences for the children at the Day School.

Our goal is to allow each child to develop a positive self-image as a unique child of God in a safe and nurturing environment where they can grow and learn. I value the school-home partnership and the important role parents play in their child's education, and I look forward to working with the Day School families. **L**

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## Devotion: Going for Gold

By Vicar Brian Crocitto

**T**he 2020 Summer Olympics Games are wrapping up in Tokyo, Japan. Although the global pandemic caused the games to be delayed a year and spectators were not permitted in the arenas, this international festival of sports and world peace did not disappoint.

We watched as Australia's swimming star, Ariarne Titmus upset Team USA's Katie Ledecky by two-thirds of a second. We cheered when 18-year-old Suni Lee took the all-around-gold in Gymnastics. And our hearts stirred when high jumpers from Italy and Qatar emotionally agreed to share the gold medal instead of having a jump off.

As onlookers, we have witnessed these tremendous athletes pursue their dreams and go for gold. They have trained for years for this one moment. Many of them leave their homes and

families for months at a time to focus on their training. There are so many sacrifices made by these incredible individuals, but most of them do not return as champions.

Although we may not be Olympians like these men and women, I think we can relate to what it feels like to fall short in life. How many times have the ways of this broken world made us feel undervalued, unworthy, and simply not good enough? No matter how hard we may try, or how deeply we may want our outcomes to be different, things don't go the way we plan.

And yet, in the midst of our circumstances, there's always Good News for us—as baptized children of God, our race has already been run for us. Because of the work of Jesus Christ done on our behalf, we have been justified and receive God's Grace, Mercy, and

Peace. Not by our own efforts. Not by what we do or achieve in our own lives, but because of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who went to the cross and died for us, so that we may truly live.

In John 6:47-48, we hear Jesus say, "Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life." These are words of hope, strength, and encouragement.

Jesus, the bread of life, continues to nourish us with his body in Holy Communion. No matter what happens in our life, Jesus will always love us.

This unconditional love offered to us by our Heavenly Father is more precious and more valuable than any gold medal in all the world. Jesus is our champion, and, thanks be to God, through Him we have been saved. **L**