

Phase 2.0: In Person and Worship from a Distance

By Pastor Justin Vetrano

It has been a while since I have written an article for our LIFEline. In this ever changing environment, I hope we have done well to communicate through our weekly services, social media, email and perhaps even our nightly services.

I am excited to write to you because we have reached a phase in the church, and in our community, where infection rates have remained very low for a consistent period of time and we have found a way in which to worship safely and joyfully. For the past several months, we have welcomed 20 people into the sanctuary for our Compline and Sunday services. With people signing up in advance and spreading out the seating in the sanctuary, we have had a wonderful experience. Of course, it pales in comparison to the way it was over six months ago, but we are grateful that we can be together. Thank God for technology and the team of people who have made it possible for us to worship from a distance.

We plan to continue livestreaming services indefinitely, even when we welcome more and more people into our sanctuary. We will forever be a church that welcomes people "from a distance!"

It is with great joy that I let you know about our PHASE TWO reopening plans. We will continue to limit our sanctuary capacity to 20 people to maintain safe social distancing of twelve feet as laid out by the CDC guidelines for worship with singing.

We are adding a second Sunday worship service to accommodate more people on Sunday mornings, 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

We are altering our midweek service schedule as well. We will not have services on Mondays or Tuesdays. This will open the church schedule for Bible Studies and meetings that conflicted on those days. It also allows the ministry staff to have a breather, for which we are thankful.

early November when we are looking to welcome back our Sunday School classes and Confirmation students.

There is no question that the pandemic has truly altered what it means for us to be church. I am thankful that we have risen to the challenge of proclaiming the Good News even while the church has been online. We have many talented and dedicated people at the church who have


worked tirelessly to keep us connected. We have connected with people around the state and across the country.

I am excited to welcome people from a distance and look forward to hearing how people may want to join THE LIFE even from a distance!

Thank you all for your prayers, encouraging words and support for THE LIFE. The people of this community are so inspiring with your generosity of spirit and gifts. Thank you for sending in your offerings and for continuously filling our food collection bins!

What I miss most is seeing you all each week, with the handshakes, smiles and hugs after church. I truly look forward to the days we can share those moments again, but until then know that I am smiling widely and send you a hug "from a distance!"

May God continue to uphold you in His grace and may we keep proclaiming the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ from near or far!

Much love in Christ,
Pastor Vetrano 



JOIN US!
LIVE STREAM & PHASE 2 SEATING AVAILABLE

SUNDAY 9AM SUNDAY 10:30AM Worship & Communion	WED 7:15PM Compline & Communion	THUR 7:15PM Worship & Communion	FRI 7:15PM Evening Prayer & Communion
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On Wednesdays we will be praying the Compline liturgy; on Thursdays we will have a full service as in the past; and on Fridays we will pray the Evening Prayer liturgy. We welcome people to sign up for any of the services and we will celebrate communion at all services.

Additionally, we are making the fellowship hall available to anyone as an overflow for our services. If you would like to come to church, but our seats are filled in the sanctuary, we invite you to worship in the fellowship hall. We will broadcast our services on the TV's, and communion will be available to you as well.

PHASE 2.0 enables us to welcome more people back to church in a safe manner while also enabling our ministry staff to recharge. This schedule also positions the church to potentially enter PHASE 2.1 in

Getting to Know...Susan and Mike Rossi

Edited by Tanya Chesterfield

What do you do when there's a quarantine due to a pandemic, you're working from home all day and the couple you need to interview is also busy working and setting up a baby nursery for the arrival of their bundle of joy this coming summer? Well, you email! Thank you, Mike and Susan Rossi for letting us get to know you.

How They Met

Susan : Mike and I first met each other four years ago on Match.com, even though we soon found out that we lived only a few traffic lights apart (Mineola & Carle Place). The first in-person meet took place at a local restaurant. "Just drinks" turned into four hours of conversation. Mike continues to point out to everyone how after the most amazing first date of his life, it took around two months of persistence to finally land a second date (due to busy schedules).

Mike: After two years of dating and growing closer each day through multiple common interests, one of them being country music, I knew Susan was the one. I completely surprised her by pro-



Mike and Susan Olsen celebrate their unforgettable wedding ceremony.

posing on the beach in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Down on one knee in the sand, I proposed to her during the performance of what we considered "our song." Pastor Vetrano performed our wedding at RGNV Winery in Riverhead, Long Island, a short year and a half later, at an unforgettable ceremony.

What Brought Them to THE LIFE

S: I grew up Lutheran attending services at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Garden City. My passion toward my faith convinced Mike to start attending services at THE LIFE alongside me. Pastor Vetrano is such an inviting and genuine man. This, coupled with our relationship growing more serious by the day, turned into our commitment to each other and THE LIFE Church and congregation.

Milestones and Accomplishments

M: Susan has been an amazing teacher for over 13 years now. Currently, she teaches Middle School Special Education/ ELA in Whitestone, Queens. She has done this all while attaining three separate Masters degrees along the way.

S: Mike took a completely different career path. In college on a full lacrosse

scholarship and unable to focus on his studies, he left school in the middle of sophomore year to enter the professional world. That left him betting on himself at 22 years old, taking out a loan to buy a FedEx Ground delivery route as an independent contractor. Thirteen years later, he now owns eight trucks and has a team of employees.

M: We both are, and have been, hard-working professionals achieving a lot along the way. But, I think we both agree, that all past individual success feels insignificant now that we are expecting our first child in late July. Coincidentally, the baby is due on our one-year wedding anniversary, 7/27/20. This growing family is our greatest accomplishment.

Most Meaningful Part of THE LIFE

S & M: After the first few weeks attending services at THE LIFE a few years ago, it was hard not to notice the warmth and sense of community within the congregation. We truly feel like part of a big caring family. Pastor Vetrano makes this apparent in each, and every service.

How Faith in God Helped in Difficult Times

S & M: Our Faith in God has been essential in getting us through hard times. Whether it be the loss of a loved one, failed relationships, or professional setbacks, we rely on leaning on our faith to keep us moving forward through it all.

S & M: Feeling close to God is something we all are striving to accomplish. For us, we feel closest to God when we can fully relate to a passage from the Bible or a lesson within one of Pastor Vetrano's sermons. Knowing that we are following these teachings helps us connect.

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the LIFE

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& DAY SCHOOL

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This Was No Ordinary Ordination....

By Vicar Brian Crocitto

On Sunday, Dec. 1, 2019, we gathered at Calvary Lutheran Church in East Meadow to celebrate the ordination of one of our very own. Vicar Anthony Giordano was recognized by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod for completing his studies and was installed as Calvary's pastor. It was a day filled with joy as we witnessed our friend and former Vicar take on this new role.

Anyone who knows Anthony knows that he is a loving, caring, generous man who has a passion to spread the Good News and the message of Jesus. We recently sat down with Anthony to talk about when he first received his call, and the journey he and his family set out on together to pursue a life in ministry. Here's what he had to say:

Q: At what point in your life did you feel called to ministry?

A: I attended Catholic school from kindergarten through 12th grade. I remember being in the third grade and wanting to be a priest. My call to ministry was a "toothache of the heart." It waxed and waned over the years but never went away.

Q: What did your family and friends say when you told them about your decision?

A: I never shared my desire with anyone until later in life. I honestly didn't see how it would work out. It seemed that life always disrupted the dream. When I became a Vicar at THE LIFE, people were supportive. I think God's timing was very different from mine. I imagined becoming a pastor as a younger person, but He walked me through the process in a very unique way. As a "second career" pastor, I bring a different mentality and skillset to the role.

Q: What was something you learned about yourself along your journey that you found to be surprising?

A: When I enrolled in seminary, I had set my sights on becoming a hospital chaplain. Through a lot of prayer and reflection during those years, I found myself drawn to



Pastor Anthony Giordano (left) at his ordination with friend and mentor, Pastor Justin Vetrano.

parish ministry. That was quite the surprise.

The other thing that surprised me was how unworthy I felt. As a young man, I was confident I could be a pastor. Now, in my late 40s, I realize it's all about God's grace and mercy. I feel very inadequate to be a pastor but recognize that God has called me to be a channel of His grace.

Q: Was there a certain passage or parable that you found yourself coming back to during your studies?

A: Second Chronicles 16:9 has stuck with me since I was in college: "For the eyes of the Lord roam to and fro throughout the earth to strongly support those whose hearts are completely His."

Q: If you could sum up what you learned in a few sentences, what would you say?

A: Ministry isn't about me. And being a pastor isn't something I "do." God called me to serve, and I do it to the best of my ability. But it's also who I am. I don't stop being a pastor when I leave the office. I am constantly reading, praying, thinking and

talking about church and how to best serve God and His people.

Q: What emotions were you feeling during your ordination?

A: I was overwhelmed. I don't like being the center of attention. It was a humbling experience. Many of my brother pastors participated. I cried a few times because they showed up to support me. I was very moved by serving Communion to the people that day. Two friends of mine from high school were there and were the last two people I gave Communion to. I was weeping when they came up. Tears of joy and deep love for them. They had helped me get through my divorce and were now participating in this amazing moment.

Q: How has life changed now that you have become a pastor?

A: I'm tired! Seriously, though, I feel very responsible for my congregation. And I feel a certain urgency to the call. I have 20-25 years of ministry ahead of me and feel like it's not much time. I have a lot of work to do at Calvary and for my parish.

Q: What message do you want to leave with people, given the pandemic we are facing today?

A: I contracted the Coronavirus and am still in quarantine. For me, there is such a profound sense of not being in control. For example, I can't just sit in my living room and watch TV, because my dad is there, and I don't want him to get sick. But being in control is an illusion. Most of our lives are beyond our control. That is something we don't reflect on because it's uncomfortable and even frightening. And in that space of being uncomfortable and frightened and sick and out of control is where Jesus is. Now, we see the illusion melt away and find ourselves beyond the limits of our understanding and control. So, Jesus is with us in the dark places where we don't want to go. He is in our sickness and our joy. He is even with us in the grave. So, this pandemic has taught us that no matter where we are or what we go through, He is with us. **L**

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom a Zoom

By Lisa Dannelly, Day School Director

The decision to close the Day School in March was not an easy decision, but it had to be done for the safety of the students, families and staff. As of now we are hoping to fill the classrooms with children in the very near future.

Over the past few weeks, the teachers have implemented some great activities for the parents to do at home. They've sent out weekly activities, worksheets and suggestions to keep the children busy.

The teachers have asked families to send in pictures of the children doing some of the activities. The pictures are adorable!! The parents are embracing their new role as substitute teachers. The teachers are also posting videos of themselves reading books, being silly and even introducing the children to

some of their family members.

The next two weeks the classes will be doing Zoom with the children. With Zoom the children will get to see their classmates and teachers through the computer and interact with real time conversations!

The teachers and I did a practice run and it was a blast. It was great to see each other!! The first time the teachers Zoom with their classes it will be so much fun to see the children react when they see their friends for the first time in weeks.

THE LIFE Lutheran Day School has been working very hard to give the parents and the children some form of nor-



Preschool teachers have fun with a practice run on Zoom.

malcy during a very unprecedented time.

I applaud the teachers for their dedication to their students, families and the school. We can't wait to get back to being in the classes, on the playground and singing in chapel! **L**

Devotion: Apart and Together

By Rev. George Baum

Dear Friends in Christ:

Though we are separated by the miles, I am with you in spirit and in hope, as together we await a great celebration in person. A celebration that will remind us of an even greater feast that is yet to come.

Out here in Ohio, I have been reminding my parishioners that—although it seems unthinkable to do so—our parish has indeed suspended services in the past. (Since the church was founded in 1836, and has kept good records, we can learn from the past in such situations as this.)

In 1877, we were not able to gather in person because of the smallpox epidemic, which sadly claimed the life of the priest at the time, Rev. Wallace Probasco.

And then again, in 1918, the church building was closed for four weeks due to the great influenza epidemic that fall. I'm sure people were frightened in those days, just as we are. But by remaining apart for that brief time, it ensured that they would one day be able to come back together again, to worship God together in our sacred spaces.

We are all going through a strange and difficult and dangerous time. It is hard to know what to believe and whom to trust. And all that fear and anxiety often reminds us to turn to the one in whom we always put our trust: Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

As we read in Psalm 31:

But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."

My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

May God give us the faith and patience to trust that we will get through this.

May God give us the grace and love to remember to look in on our neighbors, and to give to those in need.

May God give us the peace that is beyond all human understanding.

May God grant us a peaceful night, and a quiet end.

May God bless you in every good thing.

Rev. George Baum
From THE LIFE's Western Outpost **L**