

An Open Letter to the Church, and All Her Members— New and Old; Past, Present, and Yet to Come

by: The Rev. Chasity L. Wiener <a sermon, preached January 27, 2019>

To my dearest people of Holy Communion Lutheran Church:

Saint Paul often wrote letters to his congregation. These letters were to specific people in a specific church and conveyed what both plagued and occupied matters of Paul's heart.

So, taking a page from Saint Paul, I wanted to write you—the good people of Holy Communion—in this same fashion. I am beginning my 10th year of ministry with you; my 4th year as an officially called, and ordained minister of the church. You should know that this is also a big year for me personally. In less than two months, I am going to have one of those decade birthdays—you know, those birthdays ending with a “zero” that often sends one into an existential tizzy? I am going to turn 40! And, in turning 40, I realized that my nearly 10 years of ministry with you has made for some easy math and, therefore, an epiphany that I have not considered before: I have been blessed to spend 25% of my entire life with you! One-fourth of my life together with this beautiful, sacred, imperfect—and sometimes messy—church!

So, I wanted, in the spirit of Saint Paul, to write you in this letter...to write you, dear Church, the people who I have dedicated one-fourth of my life to, to say something that is long overdue <long, exaggerated pause>: You, my beloved people of Holy Communion, are...just...so...weird.

“Weird” in the sense that you are an anomaly. Through this gift of this thing called “church,” God has ordained you to meet people whom you would have never met before—we walk in different lives, we have different backgrounds, we have different political opinions and priorities, we might even believe different things, and yet, we *somehow* move as one. And this makes you very weird, people of God, because it means that you are being shaped, molded, and guided by things bigger than you: people who challenge you, and people who affirm you. People for whom God thought that you needed in your life to cross paths with, for either a blessing or a lesson. And this makes

you weird because I know far too many people who live like they are unmovable masters of their own universe.

Saint Paul writes, “For just as the body is one and has many members—and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” And, in all of this, I see you:

I see you, those who are the pillars of the church. The old adage that still is true today is that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. You are the people who understand the inner workings of our church the best: you are the people who are always here, ready to just jump in, unasked, to lend a helping hand because you understand that ministry is the work of ALL people; I see how you are generous with not only your time and talents, but also your money because—while bills are not the sexiest part of being church together—you know that the bills need to be paid in order for us to gather here. And, on behalf of those who are still yet on the periphery, we thank you. Forgive us when we leave this beautiful mission of the church as a burden for you to carry, because we have forgotten our own purpose or have been swept away in the false armor of busy-ness. We need to be a pillar, too.

And, I see you, dear people, who prefer to work in the shadows unnoticed. Who come in when no one is here, to secretly fold bulletins, who fill oil in our candles, who plans out committee meeting agendas, who start the coffee pots, position altar flowers, and who even come to scrub the toilets. And, let me say—on behalf of everyone else who do not know what it is to work in these hidden shadows—we are in awe of you. We arrive each Sunday and do not even

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...and so much more!

think twice about the very things that we take for granted in helping our worship experience and in enhancing community life. Please know that if you ever think your gifts are too small, we think otherwise...so much, that your gifts and contributions would be the first thing the we would notice if left undone. Forgive us, dear people who work in the shadows, when we open our mouths in judgment before opening our hands in helping.

And, then there are you, all those generations who have come before us: charter members and early builders of this community. It is because of your dreams made into a reality that we are here...doing the work of the church: baptizing, burying, marrying, communing, growing in faith...or just visiting and finding our way. You had the stamina and the creativity to make blueprint ink leap off the page to become something real; to capture our convictions and create our constitutions and by-laws that continue to guide us today. You, dear people of old, paved the way. And, on behalf of all those who came later, we give you our gratitude. Forgive us when we forget to honor the work that you have done.

And, yes, I even see you CEOs (that is an affectionate term I use to describe people who only come Christmas and Easter only—CEO). People who believe that HCLC is part of their sacred holiday rituals. Sure, there are Christmas gifts to wrap, and Easter eggs to find, but there is also a God to be worshipped...and, for you, you call HCLC home to do just that. Forgive us, when we are in our own self-righteous indignation, and we scoff how much you are the one missing out. The truth is, behind this scoff, we love how you fill in those empty spaces in our pews and we long to see more of you. The same can be said for you, those who haven't worshipped here in a while.

And I see you, very tired and caffeinated parents with bags under their eye so deep that they could "technically" be called luggage. I see you drag lifeless bodies into worship (either your own or your kids). Whoever said "easy like Sunday morning" never had to get kids to church. And in the screams and fights, in the morning bustle to get out of the house, you fight the temptation to stay at home because it would be easier. The truth is dear parents, it **WOULD** be easier, but you are the people who see that faith life is best nurtured in community. You hear your kids singing songs and praying prayers and this becomes your new resolve. You see the value in having your kid be part of something larger than video games, or sports, television, or whatever trendy idol is trying to captive their body, mind, and spirit. Forgive us when we judge from afar and know nothing about your circumstance, for we have forgotten how hard it is to raise tiny humans.

And, speaking of you—tiny humans—the youth of our church, you are like living hope of the future that is to come.

Because of you, we know that our little church has more energy and more playfulness. I love to see how your parents are embarrassed as you cut in front of people in the communion line and then unapologetically grab (snatch even!) the communion bread from my hand. The truth is, you have the best theology of us all, because if we (adults) truly took to heart that this is the true body and blood of Christ, we would also be pressing harder into the next person in the communion line in excited anticipation. And, don't worry; I see you older youth: I see how you are figuring out your place in this world and how you are trying to make sense of the times when what you learn in science might seem to be at odds with the spirit...and I love that you are trying to work through all that here. In your belief. And in your unbelief. Forgive us when we (adults) think we always know best and have forgotten that we can learn from you.

And last, but certainly not the least, to the visitors of this church, I see you too. I hope you know that you shape us even before you walk into those doors. We dream, in the very hope, that you will come and that we might be hospitable to you. We stretch our imaginations and creativity and (dare we say it) our comfort zones to reach out and welcome you. We set aside a budget in hopes that others like you, just might notice this small church, hidden behind the overgrown berm on 152. Heck, we even spent a few thousand dollars to clean our steeple (the only visible thing from Mountain Road behind the berm) because we didn't want the only impression that you have on us is to see is a cruddy steeple...first impressions do matter. We need you. We need you to come beside us and shape us with the ways in which we grow with you. But, not to sound too bold, you need us too. There are good people here. To help you grow. Heal. Love. Forgive. I hope you know that we get rather excited when you visit and forgive us when we do not know how to show our excitement: we either overwhelm you with hellos because we cannot contain ourselves, or we try to play it cool, in an attempt to restrain ourselves in valuing your personal space...because we know how hard it is to walk through a new church. Forgive us when we act in opposite of your preference. Give us a chance again.

Saint Paul writes, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed you in the work of the church." And, my dear church, because of this appointment, you are beautiful anomalies of weirdness. Because here's the thing: you were not called to be ordinary. You never were intended to be ordinary. You were set apart by God. Be the weird that you want to see today: loving the poor, reaching out in Christ's love without setting perimeters; growing in faith, and being the church, who comes to this place and shares your gifts...because we are better for you. It is my absolute joy and privilege to serve you. With love and admiration for you, your Pastor:

The Rev. Chasity L. Wiener

Atonement and Worship

by Pastor Bob Ridenour

It is God's will that all of us will be made one with God.

This is what "atonement" means—"to be at one with God."
"At-one-meant."

How atonement is accomplished has been a point of debate and friction within the church for over twenty centuries.

Of the many views on how atonement may come about, the one I think is most faithful is this: God is above all else, a god of love and mercy. God forgives us all our sins, and by God's own mercy makes us one with Christ, and therefore, one with God. Holy scripture tells us that this is our goal: to become like Christ and to live as the image of God. Luther himself said, "Be little Christs to one another."

God is always reaching out to us in mercy and love. We are called to accept this gift and to make it our own. We struggle mightily with this, but also work continually toward this goal, as the Holy Spirit works within us.

Our worship helps us with our side of this "atonement covenant." By singing God's praise; by confessing our sin; by doing the works of mercy, justice, and peace; by loving and serving all God's children; by rejecting hatred and greed. By all of this work with one another, and with the Holy Spirit, we move toward full atonement. Toward becoming walking, talking, loving images of God in Christ, as being people atoned

2018 Thrivent Choice Dollars to Expire Soon

Are you a benefit member of Thrivent Financial? If so, you may qualify to direct some of Thrivent's charitable funds. Check this out now because Choice Dollars from 2018 will expire if not directed by 3/31/19.

It's easy to find out if you qualify for this benefit. Call Thrivent at 800-847-4836 (say "Choice Dollars" when prompted as to how they may help you; have your Thrivent Account # handy) and ask whether you qualify; or log in to your account at thrivent.com and scroll down to "Choice Dollars." If you qualify to direct Choice Dollars, you may then choose Holy Communion Lutheran Church or another charity as the recipient of those funds. (Remember, this is Thrivent's money, but they are allowing you to choose who receives it!)

Last year our church received \$1,527 from Thrivent's Choice program. Imagine the considerable impact this could have on our mission if all qualified Thrivent members at HCLC would choose to give a portion or all of their Choice Dollars to our church!

If you have any questions, contact Bea Sherrill (410-557-7243) or Joanne Cross (443-845-6708).



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Updated Directory

We are currently working to get a new and improved church directory distributed to you. But before we can, we are asking for everyone's help in ensuring the office has the correct, up-to-date information before sending the directory to print. We are asking that EVERYONE check their information, make any necessary changes, and initial the top right hand corner of their page(s), giving the approval that the information is updated and correct. If you have not been able to complete your sheet after services on Sunday, please call Hailea at the church office (443-299-6134), and she will help to make arrangements to verify and update your information.

The following information is what we will need:

- * Baptism Date (try to be exact here; but if circumstances prevent you from reaching out to the congregation where you were baptized, a good guess would be acceptable)
- * First Communion Date (if known; otherwise a good guess would be acceptable)
- * The name of the congregation where you were confirmed (and city/state)
- * The name of the congregation where you were married (and city/state)
- * The approximate date that you joined HCLC (a good guess is acceptable)

We appreciate your help in moving this very important project along!

Member Spotlight

by: Candiss Dominick

What brought you to HCLC?

"I liked how the Pastors at this church speak to you in down to earth ways and relate the sermon to everyday life."

What do you see as your gifts to serve God, God's people, and the church?

"This is a hard one, I would say I like helping others and spreading God's love"

Favorite ice cream flavor?

"Chocolate peanut butter"

What is something people may be surprised to know about you?

"I qualified for the US Swimming Olympic Trials 1992"

What bible verse is meaningful to you?

"Romans 8:31 "So what are we going to say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?""

How do you serve at HCLC?

"I serve on Council at HCLC"



New Members Class

New Member's "Welcome Dinner/Class" is now forming. If you are interested in becoming a member of HCLC, please email the church office at office@holycommunionfallston.org or inform Pastor Chas.



Prescription Drugs in Your Home

by: Barb Huber

Take a look in your medicine cabinet and other locations where you and your family store medications. Check the expiration date, how many are expired? Are any of the medications ones that you started to take and then stopped? Should you keep these medications? Absolutely not.

The number one drug problem on America's streets today is misuse of prescription drugs. People abuse prescription medications to get high, stay alert, because of an addiction and *because they are easy to get*. Drug enforcement officers report that prescription medications are taken from medicine cabinets by family members and visiting friends. Even an Open House is an opportunity to secure prescription drugs.



Prescription medications should only be taken as directed by the physician, and by the patient the drug was prescribed for. Do not share your prescriptions. Always make sure your physician knows all medications that you are taking, including over the counter and supplements. Only take the medication as it has been prescribed.

Okay, so what happens to the drugs you found in your home that are unused and/or expired? Safe disposal of your medications can protect the environment and keep them out of the hands of abusers or dealers. Do not flush and/or pour your medications down a drain or toilet. Dispose of your drugs at a locally sponsored drug return program or dispose of them in your household trash. Place drugs in a sealable plastic bag, crush and dissolve in water. Add drugs to sawdust, kitty litter or coffee grounds. Seal the bag and place in trash. Make sure you destroy personal information on prescription bottles before recycling or throwing them away.

For additional information check out the website smarxtdisposal.net

Wishing you a safe and blessed winter season!

Barb Huber RN PHN

Sunday School

by: Carrie Dorsey

As of this writing winter has not been too difficult for the adults (the less shoveling the better), but I know of at least two kids that have not been happy with only one snow storm. The snow is beautiful when it is falling. One of the most amazing things about snowflakes is that they are all unique and so small. But they can make a big impact on the world when they stick together. Our children are a lot like snowflakes. They are small and unique, but when they come together as the church they can accomplish great things. Think about this the next time the flakes start falling.

In the month of February we will be learning about Jeremiah, The Disciples, and the Beatitudes. In addition, we will be practicing the 10 Commandments. We are also looking forward to preparing a song for the congregation to enjoy on Famine Sunday.

Volunteers Needed!! Substitute teachers and youth helpers!! Please let us know if you are able to give some of your time for a Sunday a month or a Sunday a quarter.

For questions or to volunteer please send an e-mail to SundaySchool@HolyCommunionFallston.org.



The Sharing Table

It is our turn to host for The Sharing Table, a local soup kitchen for Harford County residents. On February 23rd we will serve anywhere from 75 to 125 people or more (approximate), and volunteers are needed to cook and serve (one or both) at The Sharing Table in Edgewood. The Sharing Table takes place at Prince of Peace Catholic Church on Willoughby Beach Road. As you might remember, or for the edification our new members, we all cook the same recipe (this is NOT a potluck) to serve. We make the recipe, fully cooked, in advance of February 23rd.

You can also deliver the fully cooked recipe to our church refrigerator the week of February 19th if you are only able to volunteer to cook (call Hailea Cole for availability). If you are helping to serve, then just report directly with the food to the Sharing Table at Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Edgewood (Willoughby Road).

We warm all casseroles on site.



Shop Amazon, Help HCLC

Do you know you can help HCLC earn money just by shopping on Amazon? Holy Communion Lutheran Church is now a valid charity on Smile.Amazon.com. Use the link below to find out more about this program: Simply go to smile.amazon.com Make sure you have logged into your account on this page. Then on the top left hand of the page where it says "amazon smile" find the word "Supporting" and use the drop-down arrow to select a charity. Search for "Holy Communion Lutheran Church". Then select the one for Fallston, MD. When you make purchases, you must use smile.amazon.com in order for your order to qualify for a donation. Happy shopping!



SHARING TABLE FUSILLI

- 1lb Fusilli (Little spindles, cork screw, spirals) cooked
- 2 Medium sized (28 oz) cans of tomatoes
- 2 Green peppers – chopped fine
- 3 Onions – chopped
- 2 Teaspoons of dry mustard
- 2 Teaspoons Worcestershire Sauce
- 1-1/2 lbs Grated Sharp Cheddar Cheese (Reserve some to sprinkle on top)
- 2 lbs Hamburger – COOKED

Mix all ingredients in a large pot, divide among two medium aluminum baking pans. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top. Casseroles will be warmed on site the day of service. If you are unable to serve, but would like to provide a casserole, please cook in advance and make arrangements to drop off at church and place in the church refrigerator (Hailea is in the office on Tuesdays, Wednesday, and Thursdays). Thank you for your help.

Youth News

by: Bridget Strama, Youth Director

Thirty Hour Famine

The 30 Hour Famine is right around the corner (February 22-February 24)! If you are 12 years old or older and would like to stand in solidarity and raise awareness for the 25,000 kids under the age of 5 who will die from preventable causes like hunger, poverty, and disease, please consider joining us for the 30 Hour Famine! We sleep over at the church, fast, and serve the hungry at our local soup kitchen. There are so many fun surprises and opportunities to grow in faith (and truly, it is loads of fun!). If you are interested in participating, please see Pastor Chasity and attend the Famine planning meeting on February 3, 2019 after the 2nd service.



Fundraiser!

Join us Tuesday, February 26th at the Texas Road House in Fallston for a fundraiser to support both the youth Gathering and the CARES Fund, which helps those in need. Come out and help our church raise money, while enjoying a delicious meal at the same time!

We are also looking for baked goods to sell at the restaurant during the fundraiser. Donations may be home made or store bought, but must be packaged in individual servings for sale purposes. Any donations can be dropped off at the church that week, or the day of.

We also need volunteers to “work” the bake sale table at Texas Roadhouse during the following hours:

- 5:00-6:00
- 6:00-7:00
- 7:00-8:00

If you are about to help out please contact Bridget at 410-688-3118, or Hailea at the church office at 443-299-6134.



Looking Ahead to VBS

Believe it or not, VBS planning has begun! In planning for VBS 2019, we would like your input! There are currently two weeks being considered. We need to know which works better for your family? Regardless of the week chosen, camp will be held during evening hours. The weeks being considered are:

- June 24-28
- July 15-19
- No preference, either will work for us

Please let the church office know your preference through email at office@holychommunionfallston.org. Thanks for your continued support of our youth!



Farewell

Dear Friends,

I am writing to share the news of my resignation.

Unfortunately, there are demands on my time that I must meet outside of my youth leader duties and I don't want my work in the Church to suffer as a result. For the good of the Church and my own peace of mind, my last day as youth leader will be February 28.

Thank you for opening your hearts and minds to me. My family and I have enjoyed our time with you all, and you will be seeing us in services and VBS in the future.

Peace to you all,
Bridget Strama

Lovin' Life Seniors

by Nancy Campbell

LOVIN' LIFE SENIORS

Our goal is to offer friendship and support to one another through social events. Please join us! Invite your friends! Our 2019 schedule and sign-up sheets for upcoming events are posted on the senior's bulletin board in the hallway. Please read the Sunday bulletins and Bread and Wine for any changes to the schedule below. All activities take place on 2nd Tuesdays of the month unless otherwise noted.

2019 CALENDAR

Tuesday, February 12 at noon

Mamie's Restaurant—Aberdeen

Tuesday, March 12 at noon

Fisherman's Catch—Forest Hill Bowling Lanes

Tuesday, April 9 at noon

Sunshine Grille—Fork Road

Tuesday, May 14 at noon

Della Rose's Restaurant—Fountain Green and Churchville Roads

Tuesday, June 11 at noon

Bayou Restaurant—Rte.40 Havre de Grace

Tuesday, July 9 at noon

Baldwin's Crab House—Rte.40 Joppa

Tuesday, August 13 at noon

Friendly Farm—Upperco

Tuesday, September 10 at noon

Crab Feast at church

We welcome new ideas as well as new members.

Contact Ellen Priebe 410-679-8655; Frances Gosnell

410-893-4622; Nancy Campbell 410-836-7688.

“Good Grief” Group

The Good Grief group meets, on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00pm. Their next meeting will be at the church on

February 19



February Birthdays



02/01 Christopher Vocke

02/03 Lisa Hickson

02/03 Philip Ghassemieh

02/03 Krystal O'Leary

02/04 Jean (Jeanie) Riggs

02/06 Nathaniel Hafner

02/06 Barbara Ridenour

02/06 Christopher Otten

02/08 Kim Thompson

02/09 Heather Rudolph

02/12 Catherine Zechmann

02/12 Jeffrey Hoffmann

02/14 Doug Mueller

02/15 Ronald (Ron) Mickley

02/16 Amanda Appel

02/20 Leonard Burrier

02/24 Bruce Amrein

02/25 Diane Romain

02/28 Dustin Kisner

02/28 Abigayle Taylor



Do you have a **February** birthday but do not see your name printed here? That means we do not have your complete information on file. Please contact Hailea in the church office to update your information.

Church Webcam

People get sick. People travel. We understand that and try to find new ways that you can still remain connected with our community. While you are away, join any service by watching our webcam at webcam.HolyCommunionFallston.org

This is an innovative way to connect the gifts of technology to practical faith. However, this gift of technology comes with its own limitations, in that, this webcam can never fully create the sense of community that one is part by actually being in the pews. The webcam is on for all services and only shows the front portion of the sanctuary. The webcam works on most devices (smartphones, tablets, PCs, iPhones®, and iPads®). It does not work on Amazon Kindle Fire® tablets.

Let us know if you are watching our services. Please send comments or issues relating to the broadcast to webcam@HolyCommunionFallston.org

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