



April, 2021

Hello, I am Anita Mahy, one of your Pastoral Care Elders. I have been asked if I would share with you what Pastoral Care has been up to.

Living Hope Pastoral Care has been continuing throughout Covid often behind the scenes - quietly, respectfully and confidentially - planting seeds of hope and healing. LH Church is very much alive and active because You and I are the Church, and God has blessed us all with gifts and resources that we may in turn, use to bless others. We are grateful for God's grace, His presence, protection, and guidance. We are aware that many of you are reaching out to others in various ways, showing simple and profound acts of genuine concern, kindness and compassion. These intentional connections make a great deal of difference in lives of those suffering.

As you may know, LH is blessed to have a Ministry of Stephen Ministers. Our Stephen Ministers have continued to be in regular contact with their Care Receivers, either by phone, email/text, zoom, or in person when appropriate. Stephen Ministers who are trained and supervised lay volunteers, demonstrate care by showing up, listening well, supporting, encouraging and praying with their Care Receivers, being trustworthy, and maintaining confidentiality in their caregiving. By the way, our Stephen Ministry leaders are currently recruiting members for our September 2021 training. We invite you to consider this training and become involved with Stephen Ministry.

In addition to Stephen Ministers, Pastoral Care has greatly increased the number of visitors who call and encourage and visit someone who may be dealing with any one of the issues that we hear about during Covid. Such as isolation and loneliness while living alone or not being part of a Connect Group or another LH group; being overwhelmed with family challenges, or financial stress, poor health, anxiety, or discouragement. As Elders and Deacons become aware of needs, we attempt to come alongside and to determine how we may best support in meaningful ways. Often we connect people with a caring visitor, who has been thoughtfully assigned to call/visit, encourage, and pray for and with them. We invite you to consider becoming involved in this way. Pastoral Care has also been actively working to reaffirm and support the ministry of Connect Groups. There are 13 active Connect Groups who have been meeting weekly or biweekly over zoom.

PLUS, there are many Ministry Groups who function as connect groups as well. They include: 5 Coffee Break Bible study groups for Women, a Men's Discipleship Journey Group, a Marriage Ministry Group, Youth Groups, a Group for Worship Teams, and other groups that are being developed. If you are not connected, we welcome you to ask us about joining a Connect Group. It is a wonderful way of developing friendships, studying God's word and praying together, being available and offering mutual encouragement/support.

Are you aware that during this long year of Covid, 29 Living Hope families have been grieving a loved one who has died? Our virtual bulletin often shares this information so that each of us may know, and respond in caring ways. Hospital visits often have not been possible, however, keeping in touch with these families has been possible. Having the opportunity of sharing about a loved one, and praying together, has been quite meaningful for family members, particularly during a time when funerals have not often taken place, where family and friends traditionally gather around to remember their loved one, and to support one another.

Despite the challenges of Covid, Pastoral Care has celebrated 1 baptism out of doors, and a LH 101 class has been completed. Further dedications, baptisms, professions or reaffirmations of faith, and memberships are being planned for the near future. Throughout Covid, many members and regular attendees have been contacted by phone, to check in and inquire about their well being, and to ask what their needs are.

Attempts to reach Inactive Attendees have also occurred by phone or mail, inquiring how they were managing throughout Covid. A member of Living Hope organized volunteers to prepare and provide meals weekly to individuals/families who were either not well connected, or were unwell, overburdened, or needing help. This amazing ministry of caring was offered and so appreciated over a number of months. Many of LH members continue to reach out to others in meaningful ways, including the providing of meals.

We all believe in human kindness, knowing that we are made better when we work together. We tend to think that kindness is easy. Soft. Nice. Real kindness and compassion is built with grace and grit. At times it requires something of us, slightly inconvenient. A large percentage of showing compassion, kindness, and generosity, is showing up and following through. We are all made in the image of God, a God who loves to Bless. God's mission is to bless, and our mission too is to bless others. Jesus says "Be compassionate as your Heavenly Father is compassionate". The literal meaning of compassion is "to suffer with". The joy that compassion brings to the giver, is one of the best kept secrets of humanity.

Life with Covid is not going quite as we had planned and we have a lot of "what ifs" that may at times contribute to our feeling anxious and overwhelmed and disconnected. Do you have a need? We are here for you! No one can take away your pain, or solve your problems, but we can come alongside as long, and as well, as we can. What does God say to us in His Word regarding our living in significantly difficult times? In John 14:27 Jesus said to his disciples: "The Advocate, the HS whom the father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" In Philippians 4:5-7 Paul the apostle writes "The Lord is near/intimately associated with you. Do not be anxious about anything, BUT in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds."

To reach us, you may contact Emmy Schmidt through LH phone or email, the Pastoral Care Elders who are: Anita Mahy, Andy Posthumus, Terri Lynn Johnston, Bob Tyne, as well as the Deacons, and the Council members. Our names are listed on the LH virtual bulletin, and contact information is in our LH directory. Submitted by Anita Mahy Pastoral Care Elder On behalf of Living Hope Pastoral Care.