
Proclaiming Liberty in Christ in the City

NEWSLETTER | EASTER 2021



From the Depths

by Rev Rob Kieselowsky
Executive Director

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Recently, I stumbled upon a viral video that documents a Nigerian sailor's rescue from a small air pocket far below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean.

It shows rescuers making first contact with the man as they lift him from a space in an upended tugboat where he had been trapped for days, slowly running out of oxygen.

Facing apparent death, the man recited Psalm 54:

*Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.
Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.
Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.
(Psalm 54:1-2, 4)*

He later reported that his wife had texted the words of the Psalm to him when he first realized that he was in trouble. With her text she reminded her husband of words to pray in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation.

Watching the video, I was reminded of the plea, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!" (Psalm 130:1) Truthfully, all of us should find such prayers of deliverance on our lips as well.

We have sunk to the depths of sin, and only Christ's work on our behalf can sustain and rescue us. Each of us should plead with God that he would protect and help us in every time of need.

Christ knows well how to pull us up from the depths, for He died, was buried, and descended into hell for us. And in our baptism, He includes us in His glorious resurrection from the deepest trench of sin and death:

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:4-6).

This is the message of **Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries** to the people we meet in the city: Christ knows your suffering and has done the work God demands to rescue you from sin, death, and the devil.

Spring is creeping across the city and places are beginning to open up again. Gradually, the city government has eased restrictions to allow patrons into restaurants, museums and libraries, to permit sports teams to practice, and to open schools so that lessons may continue.

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From the Depths (continued from page 1)

Thankfully, we have been gathering as a congregation to hear God’s word and receive his gifts, and we rejoice to welcome new members and visitors even amid uncertain times.

God has shown his great kindness through it all by preserving us body and soul, and we sing:

*I will praise your great compassion,
Faithful Father, God of grace,
That with all our fallen race
In our depth of degradation
You had mercy so that we
Might be saved eternally.*
(LSB 559)

Confirmation of New Member

After a number of years of reading theology, Sam (*below*) began attending services at Logos Lutheran and meeting with Pastor Kieselowsky to discuss Luther’s Catechism in depth.



Sam had come to Philadelphia to attend Temple University and now works as a civil engineer at a firm in the city. After weeks of study and conversation, Sam was confirmed in the faith.

We rejoice that God continues to call and sanctify the whole Christian church in the one true faith, even during

times when civil unrest and restrictions disrupt daily life. Christ sustains us by his gracious word and his work on our behalf.

First Snow

On February 2, a winter storm covered Philadelphia with six inches of snow.

That day, a Tuesday, our daughters were scheduled for lessons with their piano instructor who grew up in a tropical zone. Even after years at university here in Philadelphia, Miss Evelyn had never seen more than a dusting of snow.

So, my daughters had the distinct pleasure of introducing her to snow activities (and snow gear—thankfully, we had boots, snow pants and gloves that fit her).

Miss Evelyn had read about snow, so she wanted to make a perfect snowman first (*right*), followed by snowballs (*below*), snow angels, and, of course, sledding.



After three hours, she finally realized that we had exhausted her with all the snow activity, so we rounded

out the afternoon with traditional hot chocolate.

The winter season’s snow also afforded the Kieselowsky family a few days of skiing near the family farm in Northeast PA (*right*).



I Shall See God

By Vicar Anthony Mandile



Throughout Lent this year, the Wednesday night Bible study looked at the theology of the cross, particularly how we see God with eyes of faith in the midst of suffering.

The final passage we discussed in the series was the words of Job:

*For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!*
(Job 19:25-27)

These words of hope rest in the promise of God that just as Christ was raised from the dead we also will rise again and see God. That same promise forms the foundation for all the work that we do in the city—to serve our neighbors as we point them to Christ.

We would ask you to pray for one saint who has been a part of Logos Lutheran from the beginning.

Pastor met Tim sitting on the steps of the church and worked to get to know Tim over the course of that year, inviting him in for services and for food and water. Then, in 2018 Timothy was confirmed in the faith—previous vicars met with Timothy to study the Catechism and to instruct him in the faith and to check on his wellbeing.

We praise God for Tim’s faith and his regular attendance on Wednesday nights and Sundays.

My predecessor, Christian, helped Tim complete all the steps necessary to get disability payments to allow him some financial stability.

Logos Lutheran gathers to watch the Super Bowl (right)

Unfortunately, many struggles still exist. Simply preventing other people from stealing personal items, such as Tim’s phone and shoes is a daily challenge. This is particularly difficult the nights Tim spends in city shelters.

As Tim’s eyesight has deteriorated, his life on the street has become more difficult and dangerous. One day last summer, Pastor Kieselowsky went to check on Tim and found him sitting on the steps of a nearby building. As the two sat and talked, a woman approached them and after a brief interaction punched Tim in the face and broke his glasses. It was sudden and illustrated again just how tenuous Tim’s life is some days.

Vicars will continue to help Tim navigate social services and government bureaucracy to get what he needs. His most pressing physical need is safe, affordable housing. Many people like Tim will wait for years on a list for apartments, but we recently learned of a list for the disabled and elderly that is much shorter (perhaps a year).

Please pray for Tim’s physical wellbeing and that he would be able to find a safe room to rent. Pray that God would strengthen his faith in the midst of trials and suffering—that he would confess with Job that “I shall see God.”



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NEWSLETTER | REFORMATION 2021



Baptismal Flood

by Rev Rob Kieselowsky
Executive Director

During the first days of September, I received a number of concerned messages after national news coverage showed images of a flooded highway that cuts directly through downtown Philadelphia. Water nearly reached the overhead signs when pumps failed along the Schuylkill River during Hurricane Ida.



Vine Street Expressway flooded from Broad St to the Schuylkill River after torrential rain from the remnants of Hurricane Ida. (Emma Lee/WHYY)

As worried as Hurricane Ida had people—and understandably, as our local grocery store has only just reopened six weeks later due to water damage—the city only needed some extra pumps to clear the highways.

In many ways, engineers have learned to mitigate the ravages of water in everyday life with pumps, levees, drains and sandbags. Yet this may lull many into forgetting that humans are at the mercy of nature's watery anger. Real water devastation looks much more violent than many of us have seen.

I recently visited a national historical site in Johnstown, PA that commemorates a flood that decimated a city of 30,000 people when a dam broke after nine inches of rain fell in one day. People did not heed the warnings that were sent because they had grown complacent. They were taken by surprise when water rushed their city with a weight and force equivalent to Niagara Falls, accumulating logs and stones as the waters churned. The debris eventually hit a bridge, burst into flames, and burned for three days.

Are we any less complacent about the dangers of sin? People want a nice God who accepts us for who we are—but what about a God who destroys you to recreate you?

Our rich theology of baptism includes some rather violent flood language to explain how God's Word overwhelms our old sinful nature in order to bring about new life in Christ. This prayer in the baptismal rite captures this truth vividly:

Almighty eternal God,

who according to Your righteous judgment condemned the unbelieving world through the flood and in Your great mercy saved Noah and his family,

and who drowned hardhearted Pharaoh with all his army in the Red Sea and led Your people Israel through the same sea on dry ground, thereby prefiguring this washing of Holy Baptism,

and who through the Baptism of Your dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has consecrated and set apart the Jordan and all water to be a saving flood and a rich and full washing away of sins:

We ask through Your Son Your boundless mercy, that You would graciously behold [name] and bless her with true faith in the Spirit

so that by means of this *saving flood* all that has been born in her from Adam and which she herself has added thereto may be drowned in her and engulfed,

Grant that she be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of Christendom and that she may be separated from the number of the unbelieving, saved dry and secure in the holy ark of Christendom, serve Your Name at all times fervent in spirit and joyful in hope, so that with all believers she may be worthy to attain eternal life, according to Your promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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Welcome, Vicar Warner



Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries (PLM) welcomes its sixth vicar, Daniel Warner, who will serve for one year as a student preparing for the ministry at Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne, IN).

The year-long vicarage program in Philadelphia exists to train future pastors in many different facets of ministry, from preaching and teaching, to outreach and to the tasks of organizing services and printing bulletins.

Vicar Warner was born and raised in Tell City, IN. He spent his youth working on his grandfather's cattle farm and was heavily involved in Boy Scouts and the local high school marching band.

He attended and later served as staff for eight years at Purdue University as a lab manager in wood science, the same program where he earned his bachelor's degree. After continuing work in the wood products industry for five years as a supervisor, machine specialist, and engineer, he went full-time with his brother as owner of a machine shop and millwork/woodwork business.

In 2019 he enrolled and began his studies at Concordia Theological Seminary.

At the end of August, Daniel and his wife Sarah were married. Sarah serves as the secretary for the PLM Board and has attended services at Logos Lutheran in Center City for several years since moving to the city.



An group from Logos Lutheran was able to travel to Manheim, PA, to attend the wedding (*right*) and celebrate with Daniel and Sarah.

Daniel enjoys woodworking, forestry and logging, antique machinery, history, travel, and mountain climbing. Vicar has already begun to preach, and lead Scripture study and Wednesday night Vespers.

He will continue to assist Pastor Kieselowsky as he continues to bring the Word and Sacrament ministry of Jesus Christ to the city of Philadelphia.



(left) Rev Kieselowsky and his family attend the Hill-Warner wedding in August.



Members of Logos Lutheran at the Hill-Warner wedding reception. This picture shows three couples that have been married or engaged during their time at Logos Lutheran.

Baptismal Flood (continued from page 1)

It sometimes shocks people to hear this prayer. Is all that talk about condemnation and drowning really necessary during a beautiful baptism? The answer, of course, is yes. We need the reminder that only drastic action will save us from our sin.

St Peter makes this connection for us: *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit . . . God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* (I Peter 3: 18, 20-21)

St Paul explains it this way: “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

The baptismal rite is a driving off of the devil and making way for the Holy Spirit. The prominent denomination in the city is the Baptist tradition which, ironically, speaks very little about what a gift baptism is in everyday life. In particular, Baptist theology emphasizes that the water of baptism serves as a symbol of a person’s faith and obedience rather than an action by God. In fact, without flood language, the water of baptism makes little sense. Why use water at all? Few people have learned that the judgment God flooded onto Christ also floods and kills our sinful nature—God kills to make alive.

Rev Kieselowsky (right) attends the ordination service of a previous vicar, Zachariah Burgdorf, in Fort Wayne, IN. The Burgdorfs welcomed a second son recently; we rejoice in his baptism into Christ.

The city needs more baptism from death into life. Rich baptismal theology pervades daily life because it teaches that the flood continues. The work is not done.

As Luther reminds us, “[T]he Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires.” Our work in the city teaches people to understand and continue to receive the gifts they were given in baptism.

I encourage the newly catechized to begin the day with the sign of the cross and the invocation of our baptism: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” It may appear to be a benign nicety to begin the day this way, but it recalls the fact that our sinful nature has been drowned in the water of baptism and that regenerative water should still flow through us daily, drowning the old sinful nature.

It invokes a new identity, directly contrary to human ambition. It’s the humble recognition that we belong to Christ.

