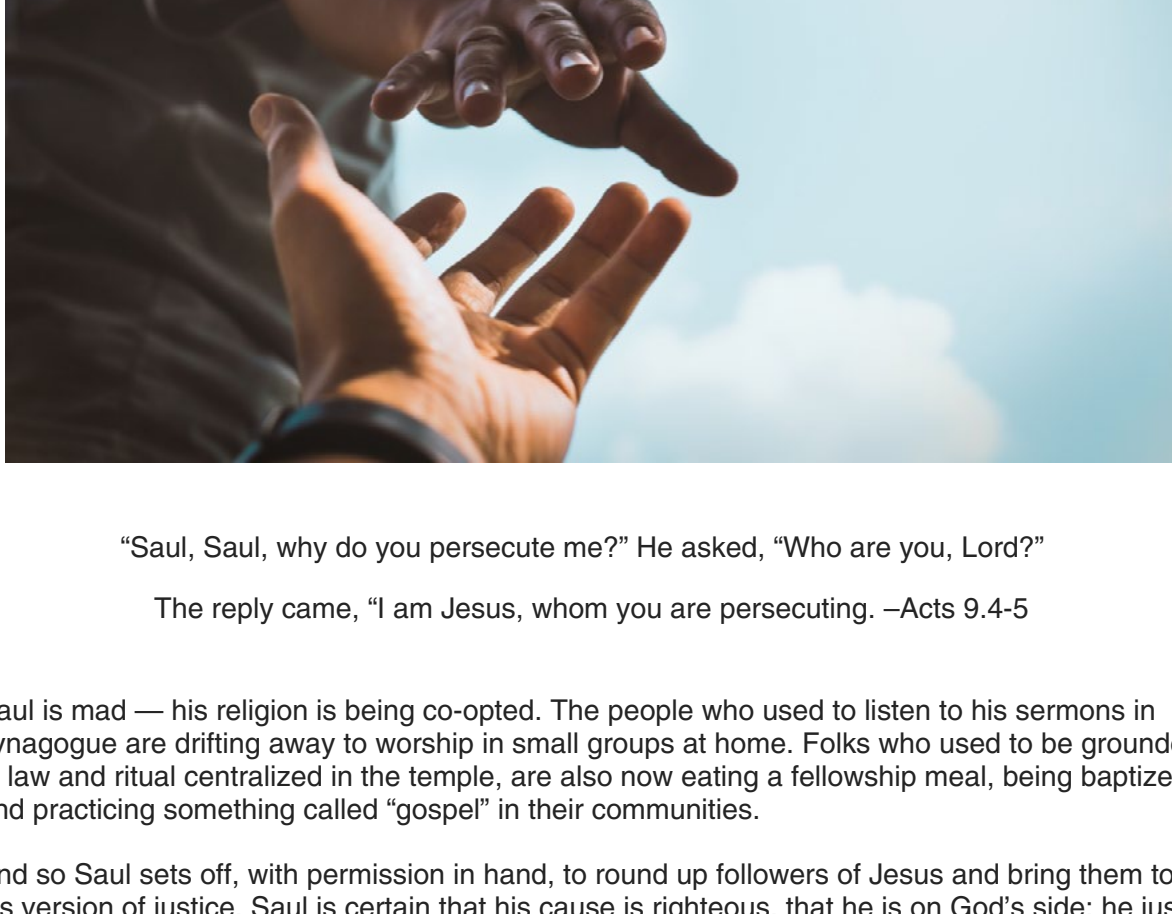


May 23, 2025

Bishop's Letter

The Rev. William (Bill) Gohl, Jr., Bishop
Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA



"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. –Acts 9.4-5

Saul is mad — his religion is being co-opted. The people who used to listen to his sermons in synagogue are drifting away to worship in small groups at home. Folks who used to be grounded in law and ritual centralized in the temple, are also now eating a fellowship meal, being baptized, and practicing something called "gospel" in their communities.

And so Saul sets off, with permission in hand, to round up followers of Jesus and bring them to his version of justice. Saul is certain that his cause is righteous, that he is on God's side; he just wants to do something to make it better, to put the world right again. In short, Saul is dangerous — the worst kind of dangerous. No sense of responsibility to anything more than that which is between his own ears, surrounded by others who are willing to look the other way while Saul "gets things done," damn the law or any sense of accountability.

It is against the backdrop of fear and powerlessness, of power and scheming, of mistrust, anger and sadness that a small detail in today's gospel encounter between Jesus and Peter falls with fresh understanding on the heart and spirit.

Three times Peter denied Jesus on the journey to the cross; and in this post-resurrection encounter Jesus questions Peter, "do you love me?"

Online last week, a piece was passed around — where, blending today's gospel, Jesus questions: "America, do you love me?" I thought it clever, until I sat with a harder truth — it's not about whether America loves Jesus, or even Peter for that matter. It's about being the church, a community that loves our neighbor the way Jesus loves us.

Jesus would ask us a first time: "Church, do you love me?"

And we might say: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

To which Jesus might say: "Then care for the poor, stand in solidarity with the marginalized, do not allow the trans community to be erased, or refugee, asylum-seeking, immigrant siblings to disappear."

Jesus asks a second time: "Church, do you love me?"

And we might say, a little testy: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

To which Jesus would say: "Then seek justice, show mercy, and for-Christ's-sake walk humbly with your God!"

Do you see where this is going?

And Jesus asks the third time: "Church, do you love me?"

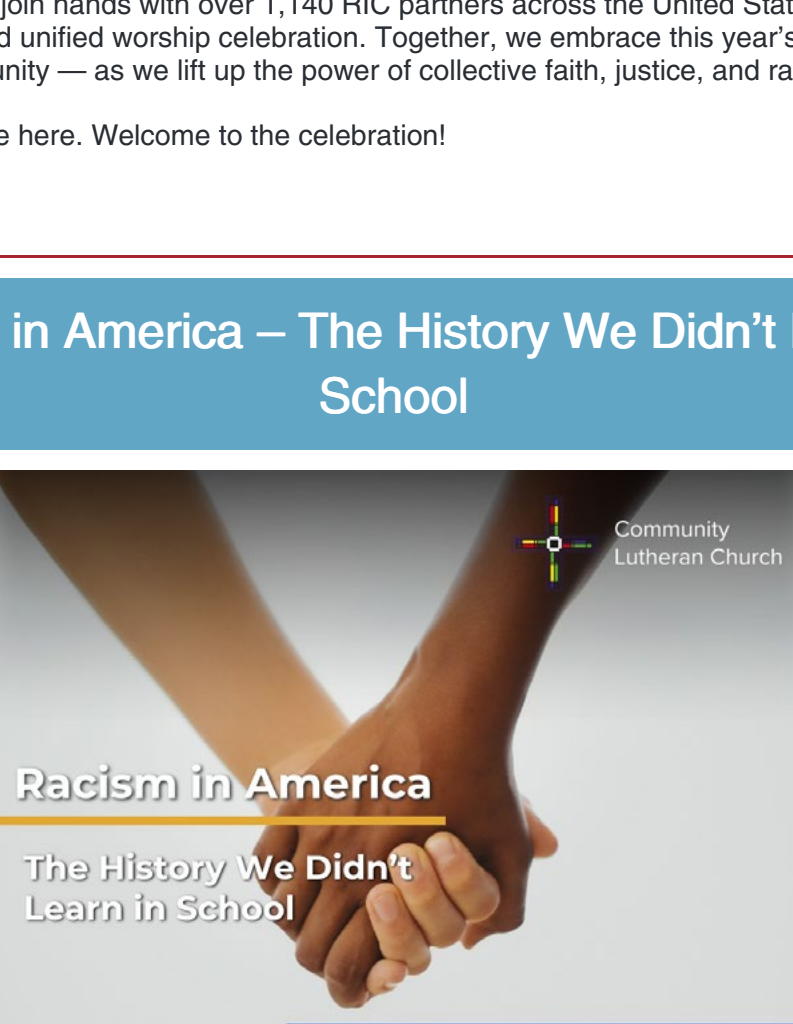
And we might feel some big feelings because, well, we're the church — we're the ones who show-up, why isn't Jesus picking-on someone else: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

To which Jesus says: "Then welcome the stranger, protect sanctuary, love your neighbor as yourself, and remember that whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me."

Three times Peter gives the same answer, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." And I think he did. It was a conversation about love, freedom, and moving forward. Like Saul who breathed threats, and Peter whose feelings were hurt; we need to understand that our identities needn't be bound to our pasts, but that in Christ and the power of the resurrection, we have a future.

Dear Church, tending and feeding a hurting and hungry world, calls us into the margins, to lift up our voices, and with the courage of our resurrection faith, to stand in solidarity, together in Jesus' name.

One Big Pride Worship Celebration Sunday



Our annual One Big Pride Worship Celebration Sunday is a joyful expression of our commitment as an RIC congregation. This special service reflects our ongoing dedication to the work of welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ people in the life of the church.

We are proud to join hands with over 1,140 RIC partners across the United States and Canada in this vibrant and unified worship celebration. Together, we embrace this year's theme — Resilient Community — as we lift up the power of collective faith, justice, and radical love.

We're glad you're here. Welcome to the celebration!

Racism in America – The History We Didn't Learn in School



Bridge Building: A Six-Week Zoom-Only Course with Sue Linderman

Join us as we seek truth, understanding, and a path forward. In this six-week series, Sue Linderman will explore the policies, practices, and beliefs that have shaped racial disparities in America—from slavery and Jim Crow laws to redlining, mass incarceration, and voter suppression.

Each session will examine a different period, connecting historical events to the inequities we see today. Through learning and discussion, participants will reflect on how this history informs our faith and our role in addressing inequality.

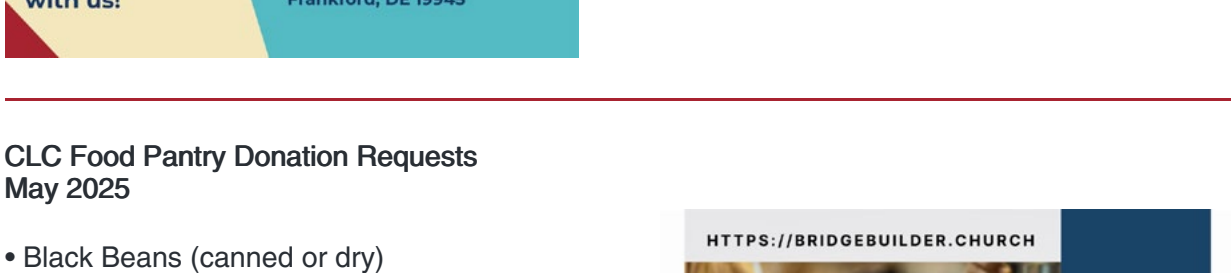
Course Topics Include:

- The roots of systemic racism in America
- How laws and policies reinforced racial inequality
- The Civil Rights Movement and its ongoing impact
- Voter suppression—past and present
- The role of faith communities in racial justice

The class will take place on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. beginning on May 14.

[Register Now](#)

White Bag Ministry Begins June 16



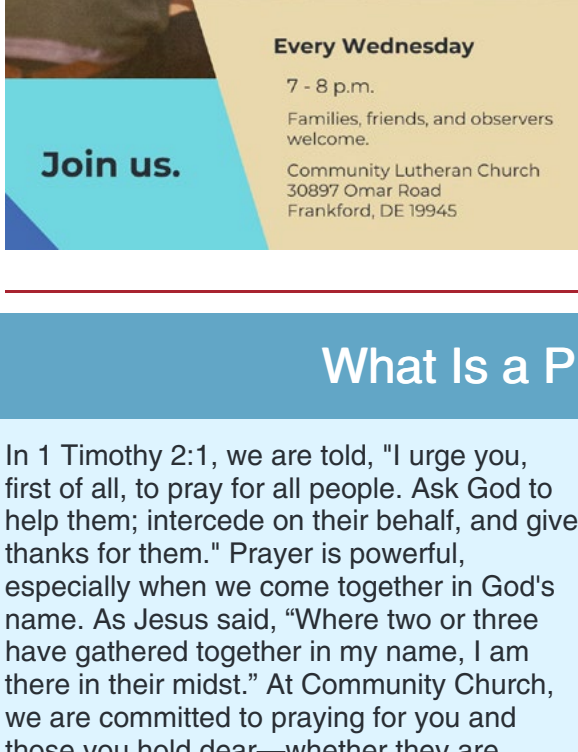
The school year will be over before we know it! That's when our White Bag Ministry will begin. The last day of school is June 13, and we will begin packing the White Bags and delivering them to the Frankford Library on June 16. We are in need of donations and request the following:

- Granola bars
- Breakfast bars
- Mac and cheese cups
- Individual fruit cups (shelf stable, not refrigerated)
- Single-serve juice boxes
- Individual Shelf-stable milk
- Individually wrapped packs of crackers
- Pudding cups (shelf stable, not refrigerated)
- Individually packaged fruit snacks (for example, Welch's fruit snacks)
- Instant oatmeal packets

Have something else in mind? If it's shelf-stable and kid-friendly, we'd love to include it. Donations can be dropped off at the church on any Sunday.

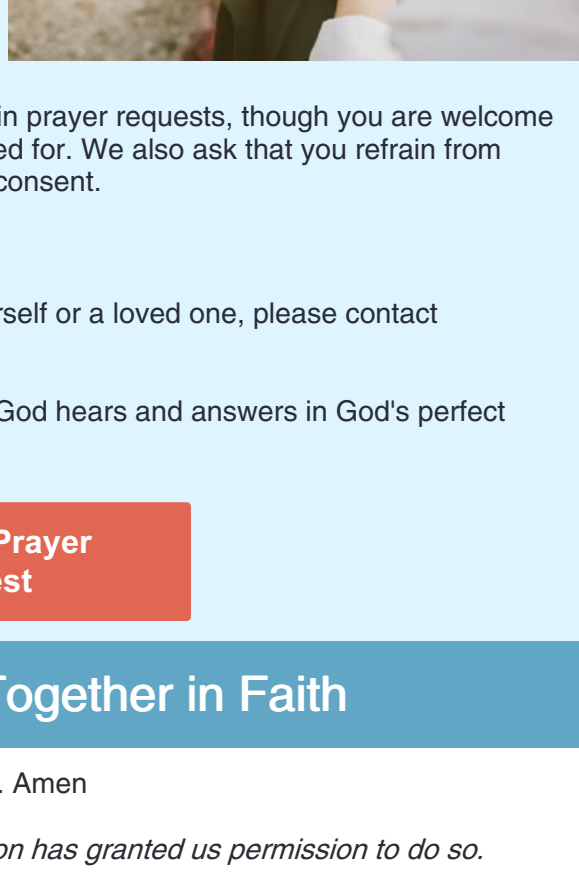
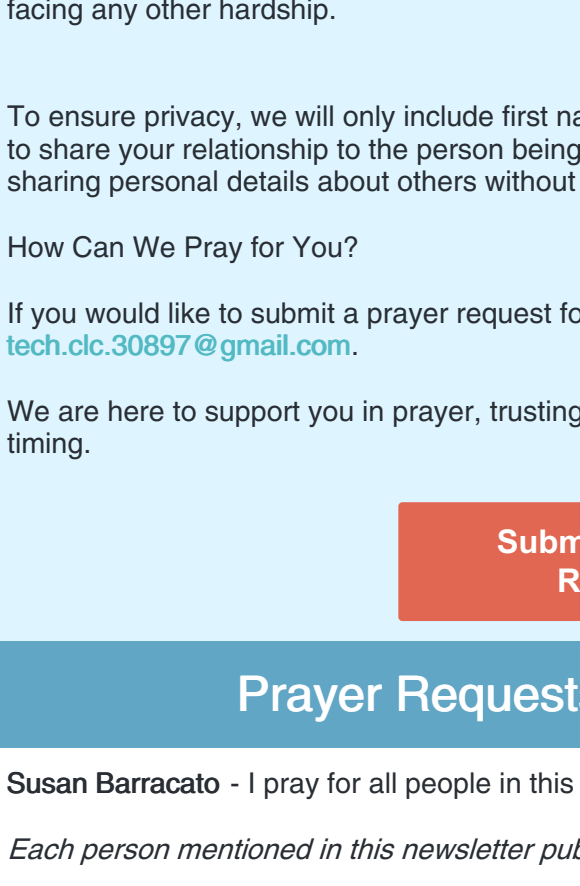
Thank you so much for your support of this important ministry. -Terri

What's Happening at Community



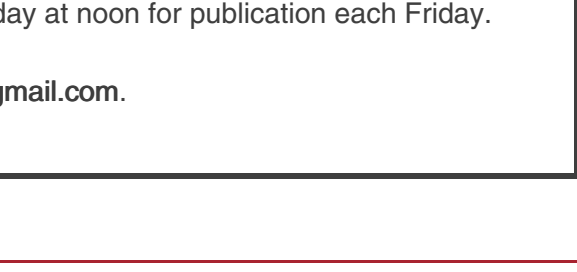
Our ESL classes end on May 22 and begin again on September 4.

We will send our students home for the summer with plenty to work on, hoping that they will continue to practice the English they have learned in class.



What Is a Prayer Request?

In 1 Timothy 2:1, we are told, "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them." Prayer is powerful, especially when we come together in God's name. As Jesus said, "Where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst." At Community Church, we are committed to praying for you and those you hold dear—whether they are struggling with illness, grieving a loss, or facing any other hardship.



To ensure privacy, we will only include first names in prayer requests, though you are welcome to share your relationship to the person being prayed for. We also ask that you refrain from sharing personal details about others without their consent.

How Can We Pray for You?

If you would like to submit a prayer request for yourself or a loved one, please contact tech.clc.30897@gmail.com.

We are here to support you in prayer, trusting that God hears and answers in God's perfect timing.

[Submit a Prayer Request](#)

Prayer Requests: Together in Faith

Susan Barracato - I pray for all people in this world. Amen

Each person mentioned in this newsletter publication has granted us permission to do so.

Team Leaders

Please submit e-newsletter articles every Tuesday at noon for publication each Friday.

Articles should be emailed to tech.clc.30897@gmail.com.