

VIEW FROM THE LAKE

Abiding Peace Lutheran Church



Pastor's Article – The power of genuine welcome

In April our Council President, Aaron Hyndman, lead us through a thought-provoking forum conversation about how to continue growing in our intentional welcome as a congregation. He stressed the point about intentional welcome because even with a strong reputation as a welcoming community, we can still do the work of learning. We can be more intentional about planning how to welcome people, and we can practice exercises that help us to hear our own stories and patterns of speech to anticipate when we might raise barriers without intending to. We definitely have the right spirit of welcome. And we can continue to learn what feels welcoming to others. It was a great conversation, and it gave all the participants useful tools. So, in celebration of the welcoming efforts at Abiding Peace I wanted to share two stories to remind us about the impact we can make that we might not even realize.

The first story was shared at the Synod's Faith, Hope, & Love event last weekend by a young adult named Maggie. Maggie is one of my oldest son's, Quinn's, closest friends. I first met Maggie about 3 years ago, when both Quinn and Maggie were still in High School. Quinn was the first person who immediately respected and used their correct pronouns (they/them) and made sure that our family did the same when Maggie spent time in our house. It did not feel like a big deal to us because that's who Maggie is. When Maggie went to Family Camp with us at Crossroads the next year, I automatically corrected their gender designation on the sign-in form at registration to non-binary. I had never realized this, but Maggie noticed my correction. In the story they shared as part of the LGBTQ+ panel at Faith, Hope, & Love they said their first thought had been "is this what it feels like to be seen?" It was a moment that made them feel safe enough to actually show up as themselves at Crossroads, the place that has become their safe haven. Something as simple as crossing out an F and writing NB, genuinely changed their life. And I never knew until last weekend.

The second story is from a conversation after Aaron's forum. Allison, the partner of our new choir member Emily, had come to worship to hear Emily sing and stayed for the forum. Allison is Jewish, so she hadn't planned to stay after the service, but you all and your warmth drew her in. She joined in the forum discussion and sharing and that continued after the meeting broke up. She told me (and gave me permission to share) that she has spent most of her life in mostly Christian neighborhoods and communities, so she has visited a lot of churches. She then said, "This is the first church where I genuinely feel like I am welcomed and I can just be myself."

That is the kind of difference we can make. Two beautiful people, made in the image of God, with prior experiences of not being able to present as their whole selves, who can know that they belong because of how they are welcomed. This is why we welcome. Because it matters.

- Pastor Serena

June 2026 newsletter deadline: 5/27
Any news/ photos can be sent to Catherine
aplcbuddlake@gmail.com

Worship: 10:00 AM
Online/ In-person



Our Mission and Purpose:

Abiding Peace Lutheran Church makes Christ known by welcoming all people to a supporting and accepting place to grow in faith and community and to serve the lord as people created by god, saved by Christ and nurtured by the holy spirit. we are a reconciling in Christ congregation, committed to the full inclusion and celebration of people of all sexualities, genders, and gender expressions, and to the work of racial equity.

Phone: 973-691-9393 Website: www.abidingpeacechurch.org

Notes from Council

Our Council met on April 13 via Zoom with all members in attendance. Major discussion topics and decisions are below:

- **On-going Business:**
 - Directory update is in process. A physical draft will be prepared and shared with the congregation for corrections before finalizing the new directory.
 - Various minor repair projects will continue to be completed as weather allows.
- **Budget update:** Giving improved substantially in March (with 5 Sundays in the month), resulting in a reduction in our year-to-date deficit. Our deficit going into April was about \$3,500.
- **New Partnership:** Council reviewed a draft contract with a new community partner, who is looking to open a half-day, pod-schooling enrichment program for kindergarten age children in September. This partnership has been in development for about 6 months Council approved the draft contract, pending review by our legal consultant. The draft was reviewed and found appropriate, so it was signed on April 23rd. Hummingbird Academy will begin their tenancy in July, preparing the school room for the program start in September.

"Council Members Share their thoughts on Holy Week".

We were discussing at the last council meeting about possible upcoming forums and one idea was about what is our favorite service of Holy Week and why. I thought that could make an interesting article for the newsletter.

I love all of Holy Week and doing it all, walking through all of it. Starting with Palm Sunday (as Palm Sunday, not passion), with the pomp and anticipation of riding in to celebration. Then on to the realization in the garden after the Last Supper that things had turned and Jesus would be betrayed. I love having the Seder dinner beforehand and the service is so poignant.

Moving on to Good Friday and the tragic solemnity of the whole service makes me reflect on all that it means to sacrifice for others. The beginnings of hope arise with the Easter Vigil to be followed by jubilant celebration of Easter! I am not sure I could pick a favorite. It would be like only reading one chapter of a book.

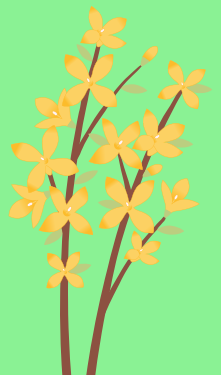
That said, I have 2 special celebrations that stand out for me. I was lucky enough one year to be in London on Palm Sunday and attended Westminster Abbey for the service. Walking in waving palms and singing All Glory, Laud and Honor, while passing by such famous tombs as Henry VIII, was pretty awe inspiring. They did perform the Passion, all sung. Beautiful!

One of my most memorable Easter's was also traveling. After 40 hours of travel, I arrived at the island of Yap, Micronesia, in the Pacific. It was 2 am Easter morning. The guide that picked us up at the airport wanted to know if anyone would want to go to Easter service. I was the only one that said yes. When I asked what time, she said 6, as in 4 hours from then. What the heck, I had already been up 40 hrs, what's a few more. I showered ate a little and got taken to the service. It was incredible! The women were dressed in their traditional dress, grass skirts, naked above waist but bodies painted yellow with ochre. They were wearing beautiful flower leis and also had flower leis on their heads. Everyone had these head leis. I did not. When it came time in the service to pass the peace, they passed their head leis instead. One sweet little boy about 4 saw my dilemma and had an extra one and brought it over to me so that I could participate. This gesture of kindness by one so young will always stick with me. My heart was so full that day!

While these two beautiful services were indeed special, I love everything about all of the Easter Week at Abiding Peace. I hope, if you have not had the chance previously, to consider next year. In the meantime, enjoy the rest of this beautiful Easter season!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!!!

Blessings,
Shelli Skeels



"Council Members Share their thoughts on Holy Week".



With a special emphasis on the “Palm Sunday Path” this Lenten/Easter season, our acts of worship during Good Friday service opened a new avenue for meditation that impacted me in such a profound way. I wasn’t just affected in the way that I was anticipating. I also found meaning in an unexpected experience that gave me such awe for the way God reveals himself so powerfully.

At this year’s Good Friday service, the Palm Sunday Path led me along a route that, although brief, manifested some clear insights that left me with so much comfort and gratitude. I have always considered it to be a deeply moving act of worship when we each have the opportunity to show reverence to the cross toward the close of the service. And this year, in alignment with the Palm Sunday Path, we were encouraged to offer a palm branch as we reflect, meditate, or worship at the foot of the cross.

My heart has been so heavy with the burden of living in a country so divided in every way imaginable, not just in the secular domain, but also the realm of the sacred. So much tumult between denominations and factions each advancing conflicting perspectives of God, Jesus, morality, authority... my heart breaks when I reflect how distant we are from the heart of Jesus as expressed by his prayer in the 17th chapter of the book of John when he prayed for the unity of the church.

For that reason, I decided that I would meditate on John 17 as I prayed at the altar rail before approaching the cross. And at the rail, I held not one, but several palm branches. As I read the words of John 17 on my phone and prayed, I decided I would tie them all together in a knot that I would lay at the foot of the cross in a symbolic act.

When the time came to tie the knot, something happened that I certainly should have anticipated, but wasn’t at all expected: the palm branches were old. They were rigid. I realized that it would be impossible to tie them tightly together; they would break and shatter.

So what I had to do ended up revealing so much insight to me in that moment. I had to be gentle. I had to move slowly and deliberately. I had to feel the tension and the vulnerability, understanding that pulling too hard would tear the palms apart.

In that moment, I realized what God was telling me. There’s a reason why gentleness is considered a “fruit of the spirit.” At times, it is the only route we can take to achieve a breakthrough. My palm knot was not tight, but it held.

There is a delicate balance that must be discovered, through some sort of amalgamation between fighting for justice and speaking the truth in love. In this era we have been called to live in, living day to day under the burden of pervasive Christian nationalism, prosperity gospel, and so many other doctrines that are spiritually and morally bankrupt, it’s important to realize that even as we battle, the journey of the Palm Sunday Path does not bring us to conquer or overthrow.

The way forward involves love, kindness, gentleness, and a steadfast pursuit of what is right. May we remember this as we carry out our mission not to divide, but to carefully, gently, lovingly pull people together in a way that will not come undone... that Christ would be made known, and that we may all be one.

Aaron Hyndman



GET INVOLVED

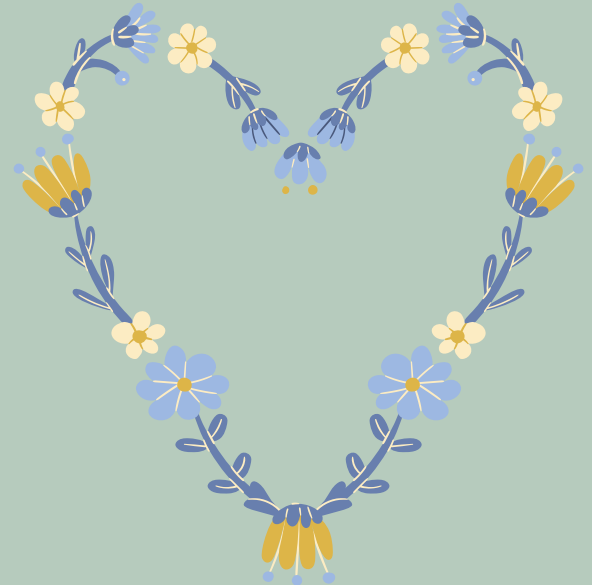
In response to the new addition of ministry spotlights to weekly announcements, you may be interested in following-up on one or more of the opportunities to engage your energy and passions through one of the highlighted ministries. Below are the ministries highlighted in April (and those planned for May), with the contact information of whom to reach out to.

- Church GArden – Sue Stirrat: stirrat@optonline.net
- Pride Mount Olive – Pastor Serena: pastorserena@optimum.net
- Worship Assistant Roles – Catherine Belfiore: aplcbuddlake@gmail.com
- Choir / Music – Ben Schroeder: benmschroeder@gmail.com
- Sign Ministry – Pastor Serena: pastorserena@optimum.net
- Sunday school – Pastor Serena: pastorserena@optimum.net
- Feeding Ministries – Sibylle Schroeder: healingartquilts@verizon.net



Abiding Peace contributed to church research showing resilience.

As a former professional researcher, Pastor Serena tries to participate in worth-while research when she can, and last year she participated in a survey about church recovery post-pandemic. The research has now been released and offers some interesting findings about how participation in faith communities is shifting in our current world. To read the summary copy the following link into your browser:



<https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/research/national-survey-research/signs-of-rebound-amid-uneven-recovery-the-changing-congregational-landscape/>



SPACE IS LIMITED - REGISTER EARLY!

Oasis Presents Poetry Day

Saturday, May 16

Creating Space for Wisdom

Exploring how Poetry leads to Connecting with the Divine,
Ourselves, Nature, and Community



FACILITATOR - PASTOR SERENA RICE

Serena Rice is the pastor of Abiding Peace Lutheran Church in Budd Lake NJ, where she has served for nine years, following a career as a licensed social worker focused on policy and advocacy. Prior to ordination, she served as the Executive Director of the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey, an education and advocacy organization focusing on state-level poverty and racial equity concerns. Writing (both prose and poetry) has been an important creative outlet for most of her adult life, and she has a blog for some of her writings: www.faithfamilyandfocaccia.com. She finds spiritual renewal in time with her family and their pets, and in sharing meaningful time with her friends.



9:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Please bring your own lunch
and a lawn chair.
Snacks and drinks will
be provided.

REGISTRATION

\$75 - \$95

A Sliding Scale Payment allows our events and
retreats to be accessible for everyone.

Hosted by the House Next Door
173 Princeton-Hightstown Road
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550

*Join the NJ Synod Anti-Racism Team for a zoom
workshop*

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS:

**CONFRONTING THE SIN OF
CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM**

Monday, May 11, 2026

7:00-8:45pm

*An interactive workshop,
explaining & exploring the misapplication of
Christian scripture, symbols, and language to justify a
policy agenda
that runs counter to the teachings of Christ*

Presenters:

Pastor Serena Rice & Pastor Sara Lilja

Use this link to register :

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/
d5w0OeqmRoOFcOPO54iPdA](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/d5w0OeqmRoOFcOPO54iPdA)



**Celebrate Reformation Day 2026 with the NJ Synod
in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany
Reformation: Then and Now
October 26 - November 5, 2026**

**To read Bishop Compton's Invitation, Itinerary & Registration info:
go to: www.njsynod.org/germanytrip**

**Travel with Synod friends, Bishop Compton and our docent, The Rev. Dr.
Kit Kleinhans, recently retired Dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary.**

**Interested? germanytrip@njsynod.org
Pastor Carol Lindsay, Synod Trip Coordinator**



May 3
Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

May 10
Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21

May Readings
May 17
Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
John 17:1-11



May 24
Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:24-34,
35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-
13
John 20:19-23

May 31
Genesis 1:1—2:4a
Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

**Food Pantry Needs
for May:
Pasta Sauce; Jelly;
Parmalat Milk**

Senior Activities For 2026

May 20 - Kentucky Derby Race
(bring your own wind-up horse or other
animal.)

June 17 - Book Discussion
(book choices, '

"Theo of Golden" - Allen Levi,
"Correspondent" - Virginia Evans, or "The
Cafe of Life" - Dr. Arno Burnier D.C.)

July 8 - Pool Party

August 19 - Movie

September 16 - Oktoberfest

October 21 - Halloween Party

November 18 - Christmas / Holiday Party
(The schedule is open to changes.)

THANKS A BUNCH!!

Thanks to everyone who donates
food to Faith Kitchen, and
everyone who comes to help
prepare the food. We usually
serve over 100 meals!! - Sibylle

May Birthdays

May 5 Shelli Skeels
May 11 Jackie Schwier
May 26 Karina Laird
May 27 Catherine BlackBurne
May 27 Maria Jerez-Kearney



May Anniversaries

May 24 John and Sue Stirrat

Spring



**Did we miss a milestone?
Please email Catherine
aplcbuddlake@gmail.com
to keep us up to date!**

COUNCIL & MINISTRY

May Office Hours:

Pastor Serena's office hours will vary in May due to variations in her son's school schedule for testing. As always, check weekly bulletins and Monday e-blast for weekly changes. In addition to posted hours in the office, she is also available to the congregation by cell phone or email during the week: (908) 458-3940; pastorserena@optimum.net. Her day off is Saturday, so please refrain from sending non-emergency messages or calls on Saturday. pastorserena@optimum.net. Her sending non-emergency messages or calls on Saturday.

April 27 – May 3

- Tuesday, Apr 28: 9:00am-2:00pm – Ministerium Day (off-site)
- Wednesday, April 29: 12:00pm-9:00pm
- Sunday, May 3: 9:00am-1:00pm

May 4 – May 10

- Wednesday, May 6: 3:30pm-9:00pm
- Thursday, May 7: 9:00am-1:00pm
- Sunday, May 10: 9:00am-1:00pm

May 11 – May 17

- Wednesday, May 13: 3:30pm-9:00pm
- Thursday, May 14: 9:00am-1:00pm
- Sunday, May 17: 9:00am-2:00pm

May 18 – May 24

- Wednesday, May 20: 1:00pm-9:00pm
- Sunday, May 10: 9:00am-1:00pm

May 25 – May 31

- Wednesday, May 27: 3:30pm-9:00pm
- Thursday, May 28: 9:00am-1:00pm
- Saturday, May 30: 9:00am – 3:00pm (Synod Assembly)
- Sunday, May 31: 9:00am-1:00pm

Officers

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

Aaron Hyndmann
Heather Nilsen
Howard Corneilson
George Pawlo

Council Members

Christine Resciniti
Ken Schwier
Shelli Skeels
Sibylle Schroeder

Howard Corneilson
Maria Jerez-Kearney
Heather Nilsen
Aaron Hyndman
Tyler Schiess

Ministry Leaders

Arts & Crafts
Christian Ed. & Youth
Evangelism
Fellowship
Finance
Financial Secretary
Messengers Dancers
Mutual Ministry
Property
Social Ministry
Seniors
Stewardship
Worship & Music

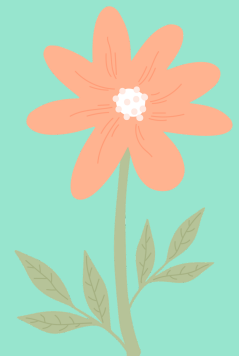
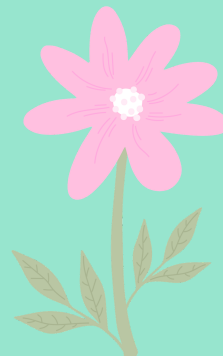
Sibylle Schroeder
Heather Nilsen
Aaron Hyndman
Demetria Laird
George Pawlo
Nita Persson
Mary Kasakove
Heather Nilsen
Vacant
Sibylle Schroeder
Sibylle Schroeder
Ken Schwier
Mary Kasakove

Our Staff

Pastor:
Serena Rice
pastorserena@optimum.net
c: 908-458-3940

Music Director:
Ben Schroeder
benmschroeder@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:
Catherine Belfiore
aplcbuddlake@gmail.com



May 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 Zumba , 9:00am
Worship 10:00am ³ Sunday School Forum: Being a Connecting Church, 11:45am	4	5 Faith Kitchen, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	6 AA @ 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, 7:30pm	7 Cluster Zoom Study: Meditation, 7:00pm	8	9 Zumba, 9:00am
10 Worship 10:00am Mother's Day Brunch, 11:30am	11 Worship & Music 10:00am via Zoom Anti-Racism Team Zoom: Confronting the Sin of Christian Nationalism, 7:00pm-8:45pm Via Zoom	12	13 Unfinished Objects Gathering, 2:00- 4:00pm (in Fellowship Hall) Blood Drive, 1:00pm-6:00pm AA @ 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, 7:30pm	14 Cluster Zoom Study: Meditation, 7:00pm	15	16 Zumba, 9:00am
17 Worship 10:00am Sunday School Council Meeting, 11:30am-1:30pm	18	19	20 Senior's Ministry, Kentucky Derby Race 2:00-4:00pm AA @ 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, 7:30pm	21	22	23 Zumba, 9:00am
24 Pentecost Worship 10:00am Forum Evangelism Series: Looking Ahead for Abiding Peace, 11:45am	25 Memorial Day 	26	27 Newsletter deadline AA @ 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, 7:30pm	28	29 Synod Assembly, 9:00am-3:00pm	30 Zumba, 9:00am
31 Worship 10:00am Sunday School Lament & Hope Gathering, 11:30am						