

✧ WEST BERKS MISSION DISTRICT ✧

SEPTEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

The West Berks Mission District is a coalition of area Lutheran churches working together to do effective, cooperative ministry. YOU are a member of the West Berks Mission District!

The WBMD office is located in St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1015 Windsor Street, Reading PA 19604.

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Ministry during the pandemic continues as we find new ways to be the church in these trying times. Many of our WBMD congregations have been finding new and varied ways to stay connected with members as well as seeking opportunities to share best practices with other church leaders as we move through this ever-changing storm. Congregations have developed new opportunities for worship – some have been streaming online services or gathering together through Zoom, learning as they go to find what works best for their faith community; some started drive-in worship services on parking lots; as shelter-in-place orders have loosened, several have started having worship outdoors and some small groups are meeting inside; others stay connected through weekly mailings and/or social media posts. Today's church may not be the same – but it certainly is not CLOSED! People are regularly being fed, both spiritually and literally. In addition to worship opportunities, many congregations have grown or initiated new ways of sharing food with neighbors in need in partnership with Helping Harvest. Community meals are still being shared but in take-out form. People are reaching out and checking on others to be sure folks have what they need and so they know they are not forgotten. God is truly among us in so many forms of Christian service being carried out daily. Even in the midst of this tumultuous time filled with so many unknowns, we are still cared for and blessed by a loving God!

Pastors have been gathering each month for Zoom meetings with Bishop Zeiser and synod leaders and also, with other ministers from the WBMD. They have been sharing what they've been doing – what has worked well and what has been challenging. They remind each other that we are in this together and support each other by discussing what is best for all; especially during the phase of reopening some churches. Our congregations vary greatly – in attendance size, in property, in numbers and ages of families that participate, and in leadership structures and personalities. We won't all do things the same way at the same time but we must all keep the safety and well-being of each person and our love for our neighbor as a priority in all we do. We must stay aware of current medical advice and state recommendations for keeping gatherings as safe as possible. We must remain vigilant to keep this virus at bay until there is medical support available through viable treatments and/or a vaccine.

We will continue to be God's faithful people during this challenging time as long as it may prove to be, remembering always that God walks with us, offering his presence and strength to help and guide us, as we seek to do his will. ***Be well friends! Stay safe! And may the peace of the Lord be with you all!***

For now, please continue reading about the changes for our WBMD Fall Assembly in September and learn about the 2020 CROP Hunger Walk being held virtually this October!

Please join us via Zoom for the WBMD Assembly on Thursday, September 17, 2020.

As was the case for so many things, we had to cancel our Spring WBMD Assembly due to the pandemic and were hoping we could meet together by now, but that is not the case. We do have a few items of business that need to be handled at this time however, so we will plan to gather together on Zoom for the meeting. Each congregation should be represented by their rostered ministers and two voting members from the congregation.

The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM and will include a brief devotional time prior to the business meeting. An agenda for the meeting as well as the information about how to connect through Zoom will go out to the rostered ministers at the end of August. Please help us stay connected as the congregations of the WBMD as we continue to seek ways to do ministry together even in the time of COVID-19.



Reading-Berks 39th Annual CROP Hunger Walk is GOING VIRTUAL!!! Sunday, October 11, 2020

This year, because of the coronavirus pandemic and the need for physical distancing, we are introducing our VIRTUAL CROP Hunger Walk. It is urgent that we find new ways to engage our

community to continue raising funds for our CROP Hunger Walk as the current pandemic creates increased need for food and resources for our local agencies and around the world. Now is the time to give more than ever! We are encouraging small groups or individuals to WALK for this important cause. Walk in your neighborhood! Walk around your church! Walk in your home! Walk on October 11th or any time before then. We strongly encourage you to register for our Reading-Berks Walk by going online to www.crophungerwalk.org/readingpa and following the instructions. Encourage your sponsors to donate online as well. Please feel free to contact us if you need help!

Our annual kick-off/fundraising event at Isaac's has also been cancelled. If you prefer having the printed materials and envelopes for walkers rather than doing the online registrations/donation, **we will distribute materials on Thursday, September 10th from 4:30-6:30 PM at Helping Harvest's parking lot.** It will be a simple drive-thru pick-up. **You can also pick-up special CROP Walk masks** for all your walkers. We realize handing out materials might be challenging but having them at a convenient location for people to pick up might be helpful. We will do our best to keep you updated electronically, through emails and Facebook posts. Please share information with your walkers and continue to encourage them to raise funds!

As in year's past, 75% of the money raised at our Virtual Walk goes to support Church World Service's mission to feed hungry people around the world by helping them develop self-sustaining methods of growing crops and raising livestock. 25% of the money raised will go to Helping Harvest (formerly the Greater Berks Food Bank), which provides food locally for those in need. Encourage folks to share information about the Walk with their Facebook friends and share the link for them to donate online. This year, even though we cannot gather together to walk, it is so important to raise funds to support people living in poverty. Helping Harvest reports they are serving more families than ever during this pandemic. The same is true everywhere so your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated!

If you have questions or need more information, please call Dawn at 610-223-2305 or go to www.crophungerwalk.org/readingpa OR check out our **Facebook page!** This link will get you there: <https://www.facebook.com/Reading-Berks-CROP-Hunger-Walk-332030921042472/> **Thanks!**