

It's Great to be Back!
Deaconess Lori Trinche
LCMS Northern Illinois District

What a joy it is to be in God's house praising Him and worshipping Him in song. We confess our sins, receive absolution, and hear the Word preached with practical application taught by faithful pastors! We meet in person to receive the Lord's Supper for strength and encouragement that richly renews our hope and strengthens our faith. We meet for the mutual fellowship and encouragement from brothers and sisters in Christ.

Church is not a self-righteous "country club" for members only. Rather, it's an oasis of living water in our often-parched journeys through the daily news and trials of life which seem only to tell us that we should be frightened, and without hope. It is a place for sharing the love of Christ and extended family.

In the pew are sinners of all races and sizes – families, singles, those suddenly single - which includes widows, widowers, and those divorced - all trying to navigate a "new normal". There are orphans, single moms with no place else to go for love and support, the elderly, and young people confronted by trying to fit in with "what everyone is doing". Some are wealthy, some struggling financially, many struggling silently with loneliness, depression, addictions, health problems, unresolved anger or grief, and everything in between. We are reminded that there is a place for everyone in God's house. It is up to us to extend a warm, personal invitation and the hospitality and grace that Christ models for us. In Hebrews 10:23-25 we are told, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

As Luther would say, we are to be living as "little Christs" out in the community, living life with a free, easy quality, filled with happiness even when plagued with the suffering that comes from being Christian. We are called to share that Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection has provided the forgiveness we need to freely come before God. We can show people in our attitudes and actions that church is a place filled with love, hope, healing, forgiveness and life!

Lord, may we see with Your eyes those who are struggling and alone. May we reach out to them with Christ-like compassion and invite them with hospitality, so that they, too, will be excited and joyful to come to church!