

THE SILVER LINING

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS/AUSTIN
MARCIA MITTWEDE, ISM DIRECTOR

While the COVID crisis is causing chaos, there is a silver lining to it.

Our online classes with internationals are flourishing! Internationals from 13 different countries continue to meet online in 12 classes led by a great group of volunteers who join us in teaching every week. About half of the students, many who are not yet believers in Jesus, are in one or more of the four Bible classes offered. We thank God for the opportunity and technology that allow us to proclaim the Gospel to them no matter where in the world they are.

While most of the internationals are living here in Austin, we have also welcomed those who are now living in China, Japan, S. Korea, Iran, Peru, Turkey, Taiwan, and Panama, as well as in Massachusetts, Alabama, New York, Florida, Kansas, Georgia, Louisiana and Michigan.

Jesus has not changed. He says, in John 14:27, "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." So we move forward in faith and not fear. Prayer, not panic. Service, not selfishness.

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MAKING "APPLE CIDER OUT OF APPLES"

JUDY TANG, IFC DIRECTOR
UNIVERSITY OF WI-MADISON

Okay, maybe it doesn't have quite the same ring as "making lemonade out of lemons," but you get the idea from this "appropriately seasoned" expression. We continue to be in a season of trying to make the best of the situation that we are in right now. We continue to experience exhaustion, frustration, and confusion about so many things that are happening in our world at the moment.

The technical process of making apple cider from apples is relatively easy... fill a pot with water and add apples and spices; bring to a boil then simmer; mash apples and simmer; strain and squeeze getting all the juice out and discard the solid pieces. But how do we take the hard things that we're experiencing today and "make something good" from them?

First and foremost, we PRAY and we TRUST that God is in control! These go hand-in-hand... God wants us to bring our requests to Him, believing and trusting that He can, does, and will answer our prayers according to His sovereign will. We have faith that God's answers will be for His glory and our good. This is a daily, hourly, and moment-by-moment action of communicating with God the Father, knowing that He will never leave us or forsake us. Just remember that God created the universe, has eminent power to affect things that happen, and has personal relationship and love for His children.

While bringing our requests to the Lord, we also respond with THANKSGIVING! We recognize that God has given us the greatest gift

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LOCAL APPLE PICKING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POPULAR FALL ACTIVITY AT THE INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER IN MADISON, WI. STUDENTS STILL GOT TO EXPERIENCE THE ACTIVITY AND ENJOY THE COMPANY OF EACH OTHER, AND THE IFC VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF.

possible... His Son! Jesus sacrificed His life so that we might receive eternal life. And not only that, but through faith we receive forgiveness, peace, joy, and hope. These are gifts that we cannot find in the world but are found in Christ. We can also be thankful for the ways God is working in and through us, that he keeps His promises, and that He is the light in the darkness.

Meditate on these verses and may they encourage you today!

Philippians 4:6-7: "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need,

and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

John 14:27: "Jesus replied, 'I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.'"

Deuteronomy 31:6: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

GOD'S WORK MATTERS

AUGUSTA MENNELL, CAMPUS MINISTRY DIRECTOR
ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH AND STUDENT CENTER
SLIPPERY ROCK, PA

I had always wondered what had happened to Paul (not his real name), an international student from Africa. I had come to believe that the time he had spent with campus ministry at All Saints had not really meant much. This week I realized I was wrong. Seeds of faith and friendship had actually been planted.

As usual, I sit in my office with the door open so I can say hello to whomever walks in. The church door opened and I looked up. To my astonishment and complete amazement, in walked Paul. It had been several years since he had come to visit. I had thought our campus ministry work had not mattered; I found out just how much it actually had.

Paul came back for more than one reason. He came to say that he missed All Saints and wanted us to know how thankful he is for all the time and love we gave him while he was a student at Slippery Rock University. His eyes shone as he recalled happy holiday meals at our home; how he felt so accepted, along with the many other international students who came to All Saints activities; how he deeply appreciated our nonstop encouragement during all of his struggles to survive financially, emotionally and spiritually.

Paul also came in to say that he was sorry. He apologized for just dropping out of our lives. He knew we cared. He knew that we were worried about him. He knew that every time we would see him at the annual SRU International Dinner, where he voluntarily promised he would be back soon, we worried because he did not. He apologized because he knew All Saints loved him like family and really wanted to be sure he was okay. We especially missed time with him in worship.

Paul went on to describe his present life. He's been married but that did not last. He is full of regrets. He now lives with his family. He stays in touch with many former international students who



GREETING STUDENTS WITH WELCOME BOXES

had come to SRU and ASLC. He is also in contact with his former best friend, who now lives back home in Africa. As he talked about his broken marriage, and his deep care for his former girlfriend, his eyes welled up with tears. Pain filled his face. Guilt and remorse were almost too much to bear.

Paul said he has not been in church. Instead, he listens to services on his smart phone. He wants to listen to God's Word. He is searching for the "right" church. He listened to the words we shared: that he become a member of a church no matter how busy his job keeps him; that he needs to go to his church for confession and absolution, because his whole soul is hurting with the pain he carries – pain he could take to Jesus. He said he would do that. He realizes he needs forgiveness.

Just when it seemed that campus ministry did not matter, Paul's visit showed that it does. We held hands before he left to drive South to his job. He and I prayed together. He said he will stay in touch, he will go to church, and he will ask God to give him His strength.

As he drove away, he laughingly and smilingly called out that he'd tell all the "boys" he stays close to from the old days when he was a student. He will tell them to call us to say hello.

We know that this won't be his last visit. He had driven all night to pick up belongings he had kept in Slippery Rock. He wanted to see his old campus. Most of all, he wanted to share from his heart with my older All Saints – the place where he became family. I believe he will return.

It's especially priceless to have Paul's visit. This visit is a reminder that God's Word matters. It grows no matter what the challenges are in a student's life.

All Saints will greet this year's college students with Welcome Boxes. Since we cannot serve student meals due to the virus, we can give the students a treat, which says we're here for them. Now, and in all the years to come.

We thank God that His Holy Spirit keeps them forever. His Word matters.

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

**PASTOR ERIC R. ANDRAE, CAMPUS CHAPLAIN
LUTHERAN STUDENT FELLOWSHIP OF PITTSBURGH &
FIRST TRINITY CHURCH**

We are now about a month and a half into the school year, and I have some bad news and some good news.

As is customary, first the bad news.

There is a pandemic. And this has meant severe university restrictions on officially recognized student organizations, such as your Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF), making it just about impossible to meet in person. It also forced orientation events – such as activities fairs – to move online, and these events were very poorly attended.

But there's also good news.

With our weekly Bible Study moving online, I invited recent alumni from all over the country and many have been able to join us. We have over 25 regulars, with a typical weekly attendance of 13-20, discussing the topic "Conversing about Religion and Politics" (see photo at right).

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We've been hearing amazing ways that people are connecting through the COVID-19 crisis. Please send in your articles, pictures and especially your prayer requests.

Please send your submissions for the JAN/FEB issue by email. Deadline is DEC 1, 2021

- See our privacy policy on our website
- Send your submission as a Word document and images as separate files.
- Please include your name, your role, and the ministry and/or campus you serve.



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CONTINUE PAGE 1, GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

With Deaconess Hanna Kern graciously volunteering to teach the class once again, our weekly online International Student Ministry (ISM) ESL class and Bible Study has resumed, with students joining us from as far away as Japan. Indeed, one of our Japanese students in Pittsburgh invited her friend “Moi” to participate from Tokyo. Though we have actually never met, I was able to connect Moi with LCMS missionaries who are also in the Tokyo area. With them, she will attend church for the first time ever on Reformation Sunday.

I will soon begin teaching our annual Catechesis class, for those possibly interested in communing membership and, for some, baptism. We are anticipating having students from CMU and Pitt, undergrad and graduate students, Christian and non-Christian – including a sophomore at Pitt from China, a Ph.D. student who just came out of Mormonism, a student at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, the Episcopal campus chaplain and his wife (who also previously invited me to join him for a virtual Bible Study with 6 Chatham students), a young mother from Venezuela, an atheist with whom I have had regular conversations on faith over the years, an undergrad at CMU who at First Trinity attended church for the first time ever last month, and others.

With the conflict and polarization over race in our country and on campus increasing, I reached out to the director of the CMU Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion, a fellow Christian. I have known her for years through my on-campus presence and participation at all kinds of events. Over coffee a couple weeks ago, I listened and offered my assistance in trying to create a climate of true conversation and dialogue among the campus community. I also gave her the August issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, which included an article by Korey Maas, a professor at Hillsdale College, on “Political Community and Polite Communication” (which I have been using in the student Bible Study). When I mentioned that Dr. Maas is a good friend of mine, she thought it would be a great idea for him to do an online workshop for her staff and students some time next semester.



With restrictions on in-person group meetings, I have continued to emphasize and expand the 1-on-1 nature of this ministry.

With the above-mentioned restrictions on in-person group meetings, I have continued to emphasize and expand the 1-on-1 nature of this ministry. Just one example: my Jewish student and I continue to meet about every three weeks, and he has now asked me to help him with his Independent Study. The project is under a professor that I know well through our work with the Beatrice Institute, a devout Christian. Our student will be developing a huge infographic on the history of the doctrine of God; among other things, he and I will together study its development during the Reformation.