

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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In our continuing effort to be responsible church leaders, all meetings, activities and events are suspended until further notice due to the coronavirus.

We continue to record our Sunday worship service and post it on our Facebook page.

ST. LUKE'S COUNCIL CONNECTIONS

Commemorating a life and service to Christ as we mourn the loss of our Pastor.

Rev. John E. Lamb
April 17, 1954 - August 3, 2020

St. Luke's Congregation Council members share how Pastor Lamb touched their lives.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL:

President

- Ted Zimmerman

Vice President

- Patti Engler

Treasurer

- Lynn Weaver

Recording Secretary

- Susan Simonnet

- Corliss Bachman

- Kathy Baker

- Keith Lewis

- Kathy Patterson

- Charlie Talaber

- Leslie Talago

- Martin Westman

Council President

Ted Zimmerman

When Janey and I moved to this area after retirement from thirty years of mission work in Taiwan and Hong Kong, we checked the websites of most of the Lutheran Churches in the Allentown area and visited a few of them on Sunday mornings, but not for long. St. Luke's website told us about the bilingual Pastor who was working to build a bilingual ministry. Having that information, and a visit one Sunday morning, was all we needed to commit to St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, and we have never regretted our commitment.

Pastor Lamb welcomed us warmly as did many others, so we felt "at home" almost right away, and felt a bond because we, too, had worked in a bilingual situation for so long. We especially enjoyed informal Spanish language lessons in Pastor Lamb's office for a time. While we know there have been times when we had bilingual worship when no one was present who needed Spanish, it was clear Pastor Lamb had built up excellent relationships with quite a number of Spanish speakers in the community who identify with St. Luke's as their church home even if they did not attend on Sunday mornings.

It still hurts to think of St. Luke's without the loving and caring presence of Pastor Lamb in our midst. His caring spread out far beyond the walls of St. Luke's to others in the community, such as the English as a Second Language classes that we look forward to restarting when it is possible. Another example is that of a family of refugees brought to the United States from Afghanistan by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. They arrived in Allentown, a mother and father with seven children, and one more child who was born shortly thereafter. Pastor Lamb befriended them and helped them negotiate the monumental challenges of establishing a home here. They are all devastated by Pastor Lamb's death and it is a tribute to his loving outreach that they feel they have lost their stateside grandfather.

Pastor John Lamb's enthusiastic involvement with Vacation Bible School, Jesus Christ Superstar, The Neighborhood Center, children's sermons, visitations, community organizations, and the ministry of St. Luke's have been hugely appreciated by a wide spectrum of people in Allentown, and he will be missed more than words can express. Janey and I feel privileged to have known him.

Corliss Bachman

What will make these remembrances most interesting, I believe, written by various members of our congregation, is that each one will come from a different, personal perspective. With that in mind, I will mention the many occasions I would see Pastor Lamb outside of St. Luke's, at the Allentown Art Museum and the Banana Factory in Bethlehem. He had a curiosity about art and enthusiasm for being around people who shared those interests. I grew to count on finding him in the crowd at exhibit openings and First Fridays, always with a great big smile and warm greeting when he saw me.

Every once in a while, when the Pastor split and repotted his beloved house plants, he would bring lots of clippings to church to share. I happily took some of the aloe and Christmas cactus. Last December, I discovered that my little Christmas cactus had bloomed, with gorgeous deep pink flowers. When I reported that to the Pastor, he was as excited as I was. To me, the act of sharing plants is much more than just practical or generous. It is a lasting connection. Whether it is in my garden beds or on a window sill, whenever I pass a plant that has been given to me by a friend, even years later, I am reminded of that person. I will be tending my special Christmas cactus very carefully.

Kathy Baker

Pastor John Lamb was the first clergyman that I ever had the privilege to know as a person, not 'just' a pastor. Although unaware of it at the time, I first got to know him when he was going through a difficult time in his life. Unfortunately, I was not much help to him with that.

As I became more active at St. Luke's, I discovered he was not perfect, but he was kind and thoughtful, and he cared about all of us. One time he gave me a pair of socks with cats on them; when he could see I was confused, he reminded me I had mentioned I love unusual socks and that my feet are always cold.

As I learned about his background, I really admired his past assignments in El Salvador and in Puerto Rico. He would describe the people there, and his face would light up and his voice would get so excited. Once, apropos of nothing at all, he told me that he really enjoyed being a pastor.

Pastor Lamb truly enjoyed working and spending time with children. He was always present during VBS, and he reached out to children within and outside of our congregation. He was very kind, and he would always talk with the children who seemed to need him most and connect with them.

Part of me cannot believe that he is gone. It happened much too quickly, and I can't help looking for him when I go to church, or when we 'go to' council meetings. Pastor John Lamb, you are missed.

Keith Lewis

Dolores and I will always remember our oldest grandson, Devin's confirmation classes and how Pastor Lamb worked with the other Lutheran pastors teaching a combination of confirmation classes. He confirmed Devin and was a part of our four grandchildren's first communions and our youngest grandson, Onyx's baptism.

When I started assisting with communion, he noticed how nervous I was when pouring the wine and he took over pouring the wine; leaving me to give the bread. I will always treasure that he got me involved being a communion assistant.

Kathy Patterson

Around the time Pastor Lamb was called to St. Luke's, I was going through a difficult five-year period in my life. We were not able to attend church regularly due to my work, we dealt with the loss of my father, and then I retired only to receive a cancer diagnosis shortly after. This time was filled with treatments and also a few other surgeries. I distinctly remember Pastor Lamb calling to sing "Happy Birthday" to me. I got to know him better through his phone calls to check on me and his prompt hospital visits during my surgeries. I liked his calm and reassuring manner. I think he knew I felt kind of lost during this time, and he gently influenced us to come back and get involved again at church. He did this very subtly as he asked if I would be willing to take over the job of arranging for altar flower sponsors. It was indeed joyful to get back to our church family. I now realize how meaningful a phone call, a card, or a visit to another church member or shut-in can be. It is time well spent.

Pastor Lamb was so passionate about many important concerns in our community such as helping the poor, immigration issues, and reaching out to our Spanish speaking neighbors. I think he was influential in raising our awareness of these issues and getting us to think beyond our own problems at St. Luke's and do more outreach in our community. I always enjoyed observing his interactions with our Spanish speaking members. My favorite memories of him include watching him do baptisms (especially of babies) and his interactions with our Sunday School and VBS children. We know that the children at The Neighborhood Center looked forward to his visits. Who can forget his enthusiasm for the performing arts and his participation in JCS! Rest in peace, Pastor Lamb – we will miss your presence here at St. Luke's.

Susan Simonnet

When I returned to Allentown, Pastor Lamb was already established at St. Luke's. I immediately noticed his extremely friendly demeanor. He involved my son, John, in the life of St. Luke's Church through Sunday school and confirmation classes as well as participating in the bell choir, being an acolyte, joining in the youth activities and volunteering at the annual block party.

Pastor enjoyed talking about France and interjecting a French word or phrase into a conversation. Our sons had the same piano teacher and for quite a while our time in the waiting lounge overlapped. He was always keen to compare foreign films, customs and traditions. Pastor also appreciated the arts including the art of surprise. When John held his senior recital at Wells School of Music in January 2019, we arrived at the concert hall in the middle of a very brief snowstorm. Approaching the main entrance through the snowflakes, we thought we saw a familiar figure. Within seconds, it became clear. Pastor Lamb made the 90-minute drive to West Chester, PA to join us in the audience along with close family, friends and classmates for John's senior recital. We were touched beyond words. That act of kindness matched his extremely friendly demeanor. It was only fitting to receive one last act of kindness in the form of a text from him the morning of Wednesday, July 29th, "I have the card, thank you".

Leslie Talago

I have lived in center city for thirty-seven years. I have always had Latino neighbors close to our block. What I didn't have was an understanding of each different nationality, until John became our Pastor. Out of sheer ignorance I thought all Latinos spoke the same kind of Spanish, made the same kinds of food, celebrated holidays in the same way. I was so wrong! It was hard for me to relate to my neighbors except for the casual nod or wave of the hand. I would never attempt to engage them in conversation because I had taken many years of French in school but no Spanish.

I would listen to him speak Spanish to others and I would be completely lost. When he started the ESL classes as they were known back then, it was a small group meeting in his office. Eventually I learned the names of those early students as he introduced us and John would tell me what countries they were from. Gradually I learned there were some distinct differences in the language and all the other suppositions I had assumed about them were not accurate. A trust began to bloom between us. It led to sometimes disastrous attempts at English and Spanish but we all laughed. Only simple single words at first, but then short phrases began to flow between us. They learned my name and if they saw me outside or on the street, they

would holler "Hola Leslie!" As time went by and the classes were moved to the Fellowship Hall this gave the students an opportunity to celebrate both Spanish and American holidays. This meant bringing in copious amounts of food from many different countries. They would bring their children and extended family members to these events and by the office sometimes when they had a question. Then we started having Spanish worship. This opened another cultural door for me as well.

Were it not for John, I would never have been able to build the trust with our Spanish language students and visitors. Because of him, I can stumble through enough Spanish to help people who stop in with very broken English and realize just how terrified they are to try English as I am to try Spanish. Although to this day sometimes I will try to speak to someone in a few phrases of Spanish at their request, only to have them start talking in broken English. That's when I know that my Spanish is really bad and they know their English is better!

John taught me about their different customs, foods and even their rivalries. I got to see through his eyes a whole new cultural phenomenon that I would have never experienced in my own neighborhood if it wasn't for him. For that John, I will be eternally grateful. Lifelong friendships have been formed with some of them as a result. And as I promised you, I will try to encourage St. Luke's to continue to care about these individuals and their families, who are trying so hard to become new Americans.

Lynn Weaver

Pastor Lamb had creative thinking and started an annual tradition of inviting Council members to his home for a Council meeting "off campus" as he would say. This yearly tradition gave us an opportunity for fellowship prior to the meeting. He would serve appetizers and finger foods before beginning the business of our Council meeting. This inspired me to host a book group discussion on "The Invitational Church" by Dave Daubert at my home. Pastor Lamb along with eight other church members met on a brisk Saturday morning this past December for brunch and sharing of ideas. We were looking forward to continuing this very same type of small group discussion in 2020.

On another level, I had the privilege to accompany Pastor Lamb as we delivered flyers for VBS in the neighborhoods surrounding the church a few years ago. It was obvious he was well liked and respected. He was greeted by so many people who said, "Hello Father" and he, in turn, responded by greeting many of them by name - a testament to his commitment to ministry beyond the walls of St. Luke's.
