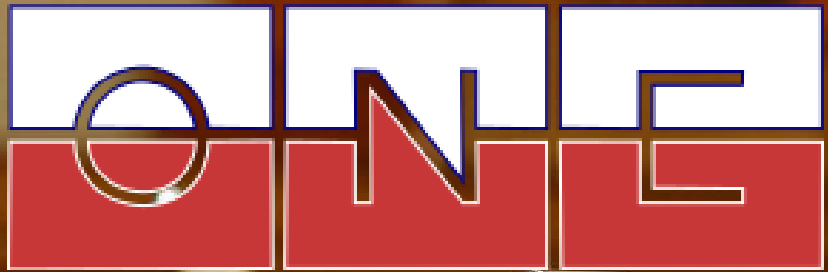
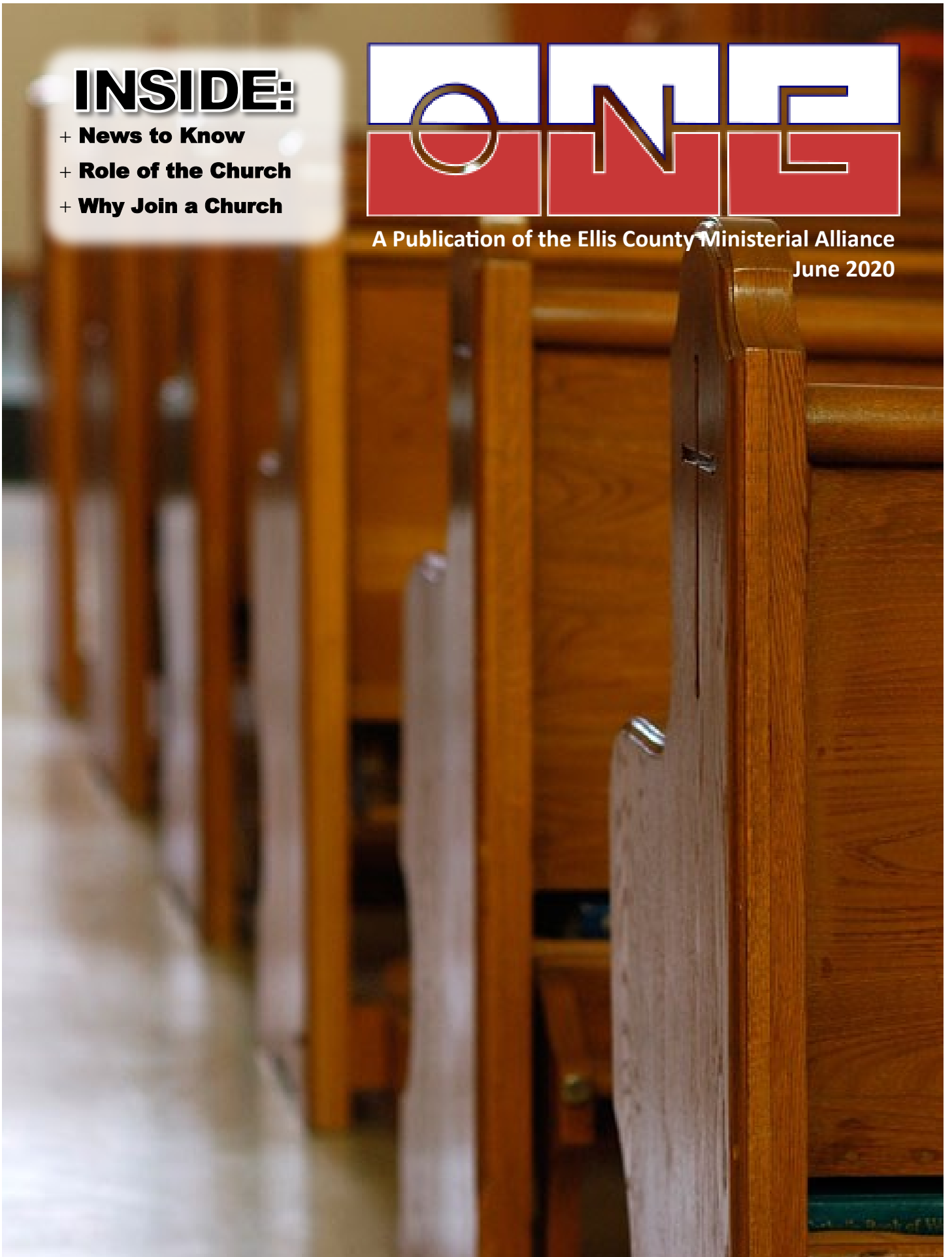


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News to Know

North Oak resumes in-person worship

North Oak Community Church, 3000 Oak St., has resumed in-person worship services, but with some restrictions.

Three services are being offered each Sunday, the Rev. Larry Chute, interim pastor, announced via email. Social distancing is being observed at all services, and attendance at each service is limited.

A service at 8:30 a.m. is "especially for those most vulnerable (seniors and/or immune-compromised individuals)," he said, although younger people may certainly attend as well.

Services at 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. are specifically designed for families with children. Families are asked to sit together for the immediate future, Chute said. Individuals living under the same roof do not need to practice social distancing.

At both services, a "Children's Focus" will be led by the children's director. Children's church and the nursery will be available sometime in June.

Attendance is limited to 70 individuals per service. Individuals must register on the church's website, www.northoak.net, stating which service they plan to attend.

Chute said, "You only need to register one time for your preferred service time. If at any point you desire to be registered for a different service, please contact the church office. (There is) no need to contact the office if you are simply out of town or unable to attend one weekend, and no need to register every week."

The 10 a.m. service will continue to be streamed live on the website.

An offering box will be placed near the entrance doors to the sanctuary. Bulletins will also be available near the entrance to the sanctuary and are meant for one-time use only, he said. Coffee and juice fellowship in the Gathering Space will not resume until further notice.

The custodial team is cleaning and disinfecting the church facilities as recommended by the Ellis County Health Department, he said.

"Please feel free to return to services when you are comfortable. It is a matter of conscience for each household," Chute said.

More information is available by calling the church office at (785) 628-8887. Office hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to noon on Friday.

Church collecting crayons, coloring books

The Children's Ministry at First United Methodist Church, 305 W. Seventh, is embarking on a "Crazy Crayon Mission Project."

From now until August, the church will be collecting broken and unwanted crayons to recycle. After the crayons are sent to the recycling company, new recycled crayons will be purchased for children in the community. The church is also collecting new coloring books to go with the crayons. The church is hoping to collect 100 pounds of crayons to recycle.

The drop-off location is in the hallway at the top of the church's second floor.



ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to one@ourecma.com.

The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

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The People of Hays Step In to Fill the Gap

Becky Rogowski

Hays First Presbyterian Church

Just a month ago, something big happened. I couldn't have predicted it. I definitely didn't expect it. While there are many negative things surrounding the pandemic known as COVID-19, there have also been so many positive things that have come to fruition. I found myself fortunate enough to be involved in one such instance. I am still wrapping my mind around the enormity of it.

When the schools shut down due to the virus, our USD 489 food service was able to continue providing meals for the children of Hays. Children ages 1-18, regardless of school enrollment or income, were able to visit one of three meal sites to pick up that day's lunch and also breakfast for the next morning. Approximately 1,600 meals a day were being served. The children's tummies were staying full. This helps them be healthy (virus-free) and helps them learn. UNTIL... USD 489 announced on Thursday, April 16, that a food service employee had tested positive for COVID-19 due to a nonwork related exposure. This meant the meal sites would be shut down the following week.

Having previously been employed with the district in my former career in education,

I knew the serious implications a week without the food service could have on many families here in Hays. I was glad to see that McDonald's was stepping forward with \$1 Happy Meals for the week, but I knew that even \$1 would be too much for many families. I reached out to a teacher-friend and fellow high school classmate, Heidi Wamser, to see if it was possible to make a donation toward the costs. I felt that I could approach my church family for additional contributions. I also felt that being the secretary for the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance could give me more access to potential donors. Little did I know what would happen next.

Within the next thirty minutes, Wamser and I had the word out about how to help fill the needs and a plan for any excess funds. Within the next hour, several other businesses in town were also stepping forward with offers of meal options for children and their families and we were figuring out how to spread the wealth! The other restaurants who assisted that week were: Old Chicago, Pheasant Run, The Paisley Pear, The Press, Taco Bell, and Wendy's. Dialogue Ministries also provided 120+ food boxes to families without transportation.

Wamser and I collected donations via cash, check,

Venmo, PayPal, and Square. We wanted to be sure we could still reduce contact and follow social distancing guidelines. We wanted it to be easy for people to give if they wanted to. We had no idea how much people were waiting to do something! By the end of the week, ALL of the participating businesses saw an increase in sales and THOUSANDS of meals were served. The city of Hays was BUSY at mealtime! There were lines at the drive-thrus at ALL of the participating restaurants.

More than \$20,000 in donations were received by Wamser and I. This total doesn't include the donations that went directly to restaurants or from any of the service clubs in town! This blew our expectations. We thought maybe we could raise \$2,000 to cover the costs of the Happy Meals for the week. We had no idea when we started that the other restaurants would participate or that the town as a whole would give the families of Hays the biggest hug ever!

McDonald's was able to give the Happy Meals free of charge for the entire week. The donations exceeded the costs of the meals. They served 4,728 Happy Meals during the week. The remaining funds were donated to Dialogue Ministries to continue the efforts of feeding children and families in Hays.

The People of Hays Step In to Fill the Gap (continued)

The Press received state reimbursement to cover meals that week in the same way USD 489 does since USD 489 could not operate.

Old Chicago was able to serve their pizzas for free on two of the days due to donations. They also chose to remain open during the rest of the pandemic due to all of the community support.

The Paisley Pear received numerous donations directly, as well. In mid-May, they also had a day to give away 200 pizza kits to families in need. The Fort Hays State University Teacher Education department also gave away children's books with the kits.

Pheasant Run reported that they received numerous community donations as well.

Hays is an absolutely amazing and supportive community. Great things happen in lots of places, but do they happen to this magnitude? I've never witnessed it before. I am proud to be from Hays and I am proud to be raising my children here.

THANK YOU, Hays.

All Are Welcome

Cheryl Glassman

St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church

Looking back over the course of my 63.75 years, I cannot remember not being part of a local church. My mother was Catholic, and my father spent most of his life going to the Methodist church. My grandfather was a Quaker minister, and my grandmother played piano and sang in the Methodist church choir. I loved participating and coming to know the different aspects of going to church. As I see it, being part of a church, especially locally, is something of a gift. It is a place to find comfort, peace, growth, and most importantly, a place to know and share the presence of God and His Son Jesus through the eyes and actions of others.

My daughter, Sarah, who has lived in the Queens, New York, area for almost 15 years, has been the music director of

3 churches, all different denominations. She is currently the music director at St. Michael The Archangel Church in the Bronx.

Over the years, I have visited her approximately 2 times a year. Inevitably, I am there over a weekend, and so attend services with her. No matter which church I have attended, two things stood out. The first was that all present possessed a love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and found comfort and joy in sharing it with those around them. It was evident in their demeanor, as well as their participation.

The second thing was a sense of welcome. As Sarah and I entered the church, she was greeted by or greeted someone, and everyone wanted to know who I was. Then, when the service would start, we all would sing, read or listen to scripture, pray, and commune in the presence of the love of Jesus. Not once, as

they would ask, and then knew I was a Catholic, did I feel outcast or different. We were all there to pray and share in the love and word of our Savior.

Now, I do realize there are those who raised their eyebrows at my presence; I could see it in their faces. But I have come to a place in my own spiritual journey where I believe in order to grow we must be willing to open our hearts and share God's love with others. I made sure I made an effort to reach out to those who were unsure, and I thanked them for allowing me to pray with them. I truly believe if we can share God's presence in a genuine fashion it will help others see Him through us a little more clearly.

Sarah's church in the Bronx, although Catholic, is unique from what I am used to here in Hays, America. Her congregation is 80% African American or Hispanic. Hays does not have the gift of

All Are Welcome (continued)

immense diversity, and although it is growing, every person should know the humbling realization that we are all in this together.

With all of the above being said, then, why SHOULD a Christian be a part of a local church? I mean, I felt welcome at all the churches I attended, so why should I worry about being a member of a local church? The answer leads me to think of 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation; announce the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

Each of us has a role to play within the local church. All of us, each person, has been given gifts. Sharing these gifts, whether it be the ability to sing, construct an altar, pray, or greet others, is part of God's plan to unify His people within a church family. The local church gives us a place to feel at HOME, to find comfort, peace, healing, joy, family, share, GROW, and RENEW, all in Jesus' name.

And so then, what is the role of the church? One of my all-time favorite verses is from Ephesians, 2:19-22, and I

believe it is the epitome of what the church's role is meant to be:

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

Cheryl Glassman is a retired R.N. and is director of music and liturgy at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church.

A Humbling Honor

Brandon Nimz
Unite Ministries

The body of believers with Christ as its head can be quite challenging to see. Anyone who has the Holy Spirit and seeks to follow Christ's headship is a member of that body—whether the person is in a denomination of believers or isn't. The Church, which is this same body of believers, extends through different denominations and past their boundaries as well. It is used by Christ to love others—often in ways that we would never think to put together in our own human wisdom. He is the one who knows the hearts of all of the people we are working with; only He can

direct us to do the important, and often very small things, that will bit by bit change situations—and hearts—for the better.

The many different works that Christ once did in person still continue through His current body. Sometimes He uses little actions by many of us to chase after lost sheep, to love the widow, orphan, and foreigner among us, to share the gospel and more. Ultimately, we are supposed to individually and collectively love like Christ loved—for we are His new body. We see this clearly in Ephesians 4:16-17 when it says, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is,

Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

This work being done through us by Christ should eventually be as clear to see as Jesus' work when it was done by Him. We see this intent in one of Jesus's last recorded prayers in John 17:20-23: "My prayer is not for [the disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you

A Humbling Honor (continued)

in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

What a powerful prayer and what a powerful image! This call to be the body of Christ is

part of what drives us to interact with fellow believers in local churches. It is clear that we are not supposed to break the habit of meeting together, that we are supposed to strive for unity in the Spirit, and that we are to strive for unity in love. In doing these things, we

are not only living out the scriptural call that we just read, but we are receiving an incredibly sacred roll that we as adopted sons and daughters of God are invited into. Doing these things is actually participating with God as He slowly answers Christ's last earthly prayer.

Multi-Functions of Today's Church

Becky Rogowski

Hays First Presbyterian Church

In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, I take a few moments to consider what the role and function of the church is in today's current times. Many might suggest it has changed in the last few months, but if we look deep enough, we see that God is ever-present and his love is never changing.

The basic function of the church is to be fully involved in every aspect of people's lives. Christ looked at the needs of the people and provided for them. He then preached about good deeds. Today's church needs to live up to one thing - meeting the needs of people. Herein lies what might change my original statement. People have needs. The nature of the individual needs has evolved

and changed over time. The stance of the church as being a helping agent have not.

While it is true that many of our buildings remain closed, the church is not the building. The church is not closed. The body of Christ is still very much alive. We worship God for all the good he has done for us and we do this in a variety of ways. A name on a membership list is merely a detail. The way a person conducts their life is the true measure. Living a life of service and love for others shows one's loyalty to God.

In a physical sense, church buildings house many services. The worship service is merely one thing that happens inside the walls of a church. Many house food banks. Some house the homeless at night. Some host

blood drives, others host craft fairs and community meals, while others host concerts. Many have groups who meet to start the day with coffee, some include prayers and others choose not to. Programs are available for all ages wherever you go. The programs may not look the same, but the love and care for each age is evident.

By joining your local church, you stake your place in a deep history. God knows you. He knew you before you were formed. You don't have to walk inside a church building for that, but you can gain SO much MORE if you do. I call the members of my church my church family. I have a hundred more grandmas and grandpas. Who doesn't want that? The service and spiritual formation available are endless.



**THE CHURCH IS NOT A SELECT CIRCLE OF THE IMMACULATE,
BUT A HOME WHERE THE OUTCAST MAY COME IN.**

— JAMES H. AUGHEY