



Region 1 Disaster Preparedness and Response
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.

REGION 1 HAMMER & DANCE

July 29, 2020

United for Ministry in the Days of COVID-19.

The Social Service Agencies
and Synods of Region 1.

Dave Brauer-Rieke, Consultant

Region 1 Lutheran Disaster Preparedness & Response

971-255-9331 dave@climateimagination.com

Last month I made reference to a very helpful article in [The Atlantic](#), "[This Is Not a Normal Mental-Health Disaster If SARS is any lesson, the psychological effects of the novel coronavirus will long outlast the pandemic itself.](#)"

I also promised that for the next few weeks the "Hammer and Dance" would look at the long-term effects of the coronavirus on mental health realities. It is not only long-term effects that we are concerned with, though. We are seeing the impacts of uncertainties, financial realities, emotional stress, and anxiety on people already today. And these people are our own clients, congregants, deacons, staff, pastors, children, and family.

Today I wish to thank [Sr. Clare Josef-Maier](#) of Central Lutheran Church in Eugene for sharing her insights and expertise with us. On pages 2-3 she writes about the mental health challenges faced today by college students. In the weeks to come we will hear from other Region 1 partners as well.

Thank you to all of you who continue to give so much of yourselves, your gifts, and your compassion to those in need. Please take care of yourselves!

Dave Brauer-Rieke



[Click Video to view or share](#)

Masks – wear them!

This great little video
is a production of





No Ground, No Horizon

Sister Clare Josef-Maier is a Minister of Word & Service in the ELCA. Her training and prior practice is as a mental health counselor with students specialized in gender/sexual identity, psycho-spiritual integration, and mindfulness-based skills. She now greatly enjoys sharing her passion for inclusion, empowerment, and exploration through campus ministry.

Sister Clare is currently called by Central Lutheran Church in Eugene Oregon to their Christus House ministry. Christus House is intentional student housing offered within a Christian context. She was asked to share with you her current experience with college students during these times of COVID concern. Thank you, Sr. Clare!

I graduated with my BA from Pacific Lutheran University in 2009. As a generation, Millennials have not been shy about our agitation with the confluence of rising costs of undergraduate degrees and the weakened economy we entered upon graduation. But this year particularly, I see that Millennials may have been merely canaries in the coal mine.

Today, I am a Lutheran campus minister to the next generation of college students. The rising burden of student debt has persisted as a concern, but economic strain even on active students is also receiving press. Prior to the arrival of COVID-19, the news was already saturated with increasing concern about what we were seeing and hearing from college students: devastating numbers reporting housing and food insecurity, depression, anxiety, and stress levels.

We know that more Americans are dealing with the mental health effects of spending more time indoors, away from loved ones and, in many cases, unemployment. But mental illness has long been a pressing concern for college students: More than 40 percent have felt “so depressed that it was difficult to function,” according to a 2019 report from the American College Health Association. Prior to my call as a campus minister for the University of Oregon and Lane Community College in Eugene, OR, I worked with student clients in Seattle, WA. Young people from the University of Washington and Seattle Pacific University came into my office day after day, often with remarkably similar distress.

Consider the probable combinations of this variety pack: the academic pressure and competition among peers; the weight load of balancing credits with work; the looming threat of graduation and the existential crisis of seeking “the right career;” beginning to unpack family (of origin) system trauma; navigating adult romantic relationships; having crucial world views knocked over like bowling pins by their academics; and exposure to a new level of cultural and ideological variance. There are many other relevant influences on student lives today, from technology and social media to the parenting patterns of Boomers and Gen Xer's. The particularities of a person's identity matrix – race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, etc. – further differentiate their individual experiences.

Suffice to say, to be in this phase of young adult life is often to lose the ground under your feet and simply pray that you can swim. Depending on who you are, you may have been well equipped to meet the challenge, or you may not. You may have strong support, or you may have none. But looking in from the outside, the anxiety, depression, and stress of today's students are not difficult to understand.

How then has the COVID-19 pandemic intersected with this narrative? Well, if there was no ground before, I don't even know what there is now. A recent [Washington Post article](#) noted that there was a spike in distress in March, which isn't surprising. It found many students right around finals, already at a stress peak, in many cases now being sent home, told to shelter-in-place, and shifted hastily to an online format. As students struggled through the seismic changes in their schooling, they simultaneously struggled with the rest of us through greater social isolation and general unease. Preliminary data show students also experienced higher-than-normal levels of anxiety and depression through the summer. Graduating students at all levels lost much of the recognition and affirmation of the ceremony itself this summer, and were "launched" – most with considerable debt – into chaos and mass unemployment.

Through it all, I have had the enormous privilege to work with an intentional living community of students called Christus House. These students have been an inspiration to me personally in the ways they banded together during Spring Term to keep each other safe and sane. They have taken the pandemic very seriously and had careful, intentional conversations about risk tolerances and supporting transparent, ongoing communication so everyone could consent to sharing their home safely. They started a regular morning work-out regimen for the whole house. They knocked on each other's doors when they started to get worried or hadn't seen someone for a while. We kept up our weekly Bible study over Zoom, and they were great sports.

When, at the end of the year, I hosted an exit interview with our Graduate Resident Director, he told me, "I've always felt like this community is a unique treasure for what it is. But this year, I cannot imagine how to communicate how important it was for the residents. Other students I talked to struggled so *much* with the isolation and loneliness at home." And I know this to be true. I know the coming year will be very hard. Food and housing insecurity numbers will be up. Mental health and physical wellness will be down. Unfortunately, this does coincide with reduction in grant funding that supports Lutheran campus ministries, as our denomination too suffers consequences of the pandemic. But we're out there, reaching for these students every day. Being there for them helps me with my own blinders. Our faith does offer us both ground and horizon, even when this world offers us neither.

Please keep us in your prayers.

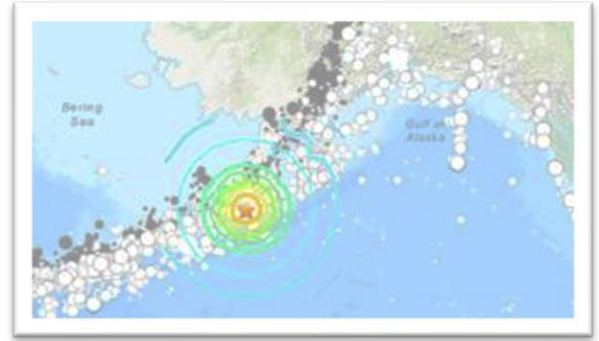
Sr. Clare Josef-Maier
[Contact Information](#)
[Christus House](#)

[ELCA Campus Ministry](#)



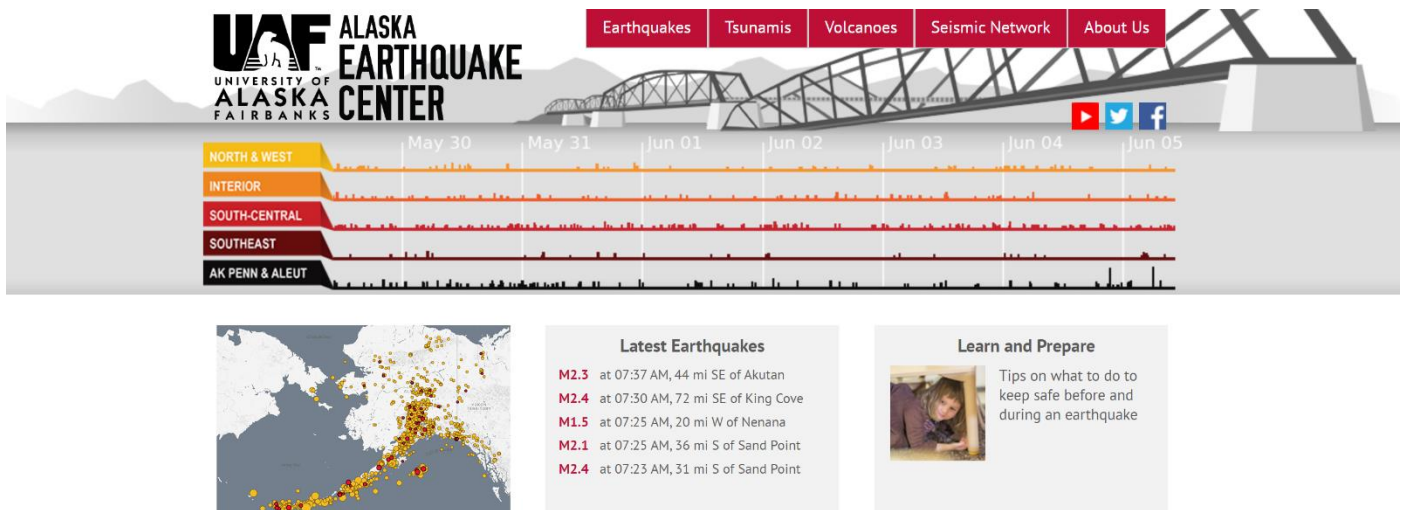
Alaska Earthquakes – A Reminder

“A powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Alaska, south of the Aleutian Islands, Tuesday night (July 21) local time, prompting fear of a tsunami, the U.S. Geological Survey reported. The earthquake hit at 10:12 p.m. local time (2:12 a.m. ET on July 22, or 06:12 UTC) about 65 miles (105 kilometers) southeast of Perryville, Alaska, and 528 miles southwest of Anchorage. The tsunami warning, which had been issued for areas in south Alaska, the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands, was later canceled. “ ([LiveScience July 22, 2020](#))



A 7.8-magnitude earthquake can be incredibly damaging. However, when it happens underwater sometimes the greatest concern is the creation of a giant wave, a tsunami, that reeks its own havoc on coastal communities. Fortunately for Alaskans, the 7.8-magnitude earthquake off the coast of the Aleutian Islands this last week neither created such a wave nor did it do significant damage on its own.

However, this earthquake is sending us a message. COVID or no, there is an ongoing concern about a major Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake off the coast of the Pacific Northwest due sometime in the next 50 years. That could be tomorrow.



According to the [University of Fairbanks Alaska Earthquake Center](#) Alaska has experienced 25,597 earthquakes this year, as of Tuesday, July 28, 2020. Obviously most of them are innocuous. All of them, however, remind us that the earth has a mind of her own and all of us in Region 1 of the ELCA are susceptible to major subduction zone events. Large I-5 corridor cities are directly susceptible to earthquakes. Alaska is uniquely susceptible to “earthquake swarms,” and eastern Washington, Oregon, Idaho and even Montana will be deeply impacted by emergency aid needs when a subduction zone event occurs. *Praemonitus, praemunitus*. Forewarned is forearmed. Now is the time to get your synod, congregation or agency Disaster Preparedness and Response Team up & running!