



ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH LOVELETTER

Share God's Love; Serve all People

329 East State Street, Mason City, IA 50401

641-423-7749

OFFICE HOURS: Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

August 2020

I'm Not Sure, But Together We Will Figure It Out

I like to live by the axiom, "*It is true kindness to offer real clarity!*" To be honest, that is my attempt at making positive the saying I learned long ago: "*It is unkind to be unclear!*" And to be clear, there is so much that feels unclear in everything that is currently happening in the world and in the church -- both our congregational life and in the wider church -- that it is hard to know what choices we should be making next.

No one knows much about what the future holds as some COVID-19 restrictions are eased, but we know that a lot feels uncertain.

Church leaders are hearing questions such as...

What's our plan?

When are we going to REOPEN the church?

Wouldn't it be better if we _____ (fill in the blank with the latest money saving idea)?

In the face of so much volatility, uncertainty, conflict and ambiguity, an honest leader couldn't be blamed for offering a truthful answer of, "I don't know." But with all the volatility, uncertainty, conflict and ambiguity that is happening everywhere and with everything else, an "I don't know" doesn't help engender any sort of peace or foster any sort of confidence. Whereas, communicating with clarity reduces anxiety. So, let me be clear that although I do not have a lot of answers, I do have many questions. And I am seeking answers from you and many other well-informed voices to a number of these questions:

How can we see the "double edged" nature of everything that is happening in order that we might turn dilemmas into advantages and opportunities, and how can we communicate these opportunities?

How can we improve our skills of discerning God at work, to bring about good even in the hard times?

How can we develop a clarity of vision?

After all, we can't know what to do, if we don't know why we are in existence of what we are here to do in the first place. When conversations about mission and vision become discussions of saving money and maintaining the buildings, for instance, it is clear to me that what we have here is a failure to communicate.

What can we do in this time to break down the structures of false polarizations?

How can we work to bring people from divergent cultures toward constructive engagement?

What can we do to communicate with a quiet transparency that shows an openness and authenticity about what really matters in these moments (without being overly self promoting?)

In our society and even our own community, we see tense situations where people refuse to see commonalities and instead retreat to enclaves of what Brené Brown calls “common enemy intimacies,” bonding with others simply out of shared hatred of the same people or ideals. Indulging in this cheap satisfaction is not living into who Christ called us to be. Rather, we should focus on finding common ground, calming tensions, and improving situations in our community and the world around us.

How can we honor those who are working hard at developing healthy ministries and keeping the vision focused on Christ so that we develop ministries that the community sees as credible and trustworthy?

How can we work together to develop an understanding of what needs to happen, develop plans and innovations, and make choices about what to try?

How can we work together to invite such innovative thinking that even allows for failure, even multiple times as long as we can ‘fail better’ and know we are learning along the way?

How can we best adapt to communication challenges, using a range of mediums to get our message out beyond our current membership and grow our ministries?

How can we create settings within which both creative and challenging thinking and discussion can occur, with cooperation and without conflict?

There are many questions that are being asked in these times, but these are at the heart of who WE are and who God is shaping and making us as God’s people at work in the world. I hope and I pray that as you pray about them, you can think of an answer or two to some of them and maybe you might drop me a note or an email letting me know what the Holy Spirit is guiding your heart and mind towards for the mission and the ministry of our community.

Peace in Christ
Pastor Matthew Muters

LWR School Kit Supplies Needed



St. Paul is wrapping up it’s Lutheran World Relief campaign for school supplies, but could use more pens, notebooks and erasers. Items specifically needed are 393 pens, 112 notebooks, and 107 erasers. The goal is to complete 200 kits which is a combined total for 2019 and 2020. We normally ship in the Spring but with Covid 19 the trucks didn't pick items up in April so we have 2 years worth of school kits to complete. If you’d like to contribute something, either supplies or make a monetary donation, please let Michele Thenhaus (420-6064) or Geri Barker (423-5525) know if you need/want any help! You can take advantage of curbside pick up or delivery with local stores that are currently having good sales also. If you have items you would like to drop off at church call the office, 641-423-7749, and make arrangements with Diane.



Thank you for your generous support!

St Paul Church Council Minutes—July 9, 2020

Attendance - the following members were present for the meeting: Dave Janssen, Linda Koopman, Pat Steinfort, Pastor Muters, and Bryan Bjorklund.

Devotion - Pastor shared a devotion, reminding and challenging us to focus on God's will, rather than our own.

Pastor's Report - Pastor has been working on streamlining service via online. Shared a detailed document titled "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture," which seems timely for today, even though it was from 1993.

Secretary's Report - All approved ahead of time via email.

Treasurer's Report - Around \$5,000 will be needed to be withdrawn from investments, mostly due to the decrease of offerings (assumed this is with conjunction to COVID). Both of SPLC staff have agreed to reduce the workload (again, in conjunction to COVID-19). Motion Pat, second Dave, all in favor.

Monthly Local and Global Benevolence - We are not giving local or global this month nor are we skipping the activity. We are not doing so because we are banking for a larger impact locally for next month. If a member feels compelled to do so, giving to the Lutheran Disaster Response is very impactful. This can be sent to our Synod Office with "Lutheran Disaster Response: Covid-19".

Old Business

Cannonball Days - Cancelled for 2020

PPP - Dispersed all funds needed and should be in good standing with the federal government (pending their process).

Resuming Indoor Church Service - Still pending future exploration and understanding of COVID-19.

Outdoor Church Service - This coming Sunday, 7/12/2020 at 9:00 AM

New Business

Action Team Survey Results Report - A very thorough packet of information was collected, organized, and created with a focus on the strengths and weaknesses of both SPLC and OSLC. It is worth noting, this collection of people is not a decision making body. They are simply providing the information needed to make the best decision moving forward for us all. Lastly, the energy and output of this group is impressive and an inspiring example of what can happen when the people of SPLC and OSLC join forces.

Next Meeting - Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 6:30 PM.

Motion to Adjourn - Motion Bryan, second Pat, all in favor.

In your service,
Bryan C. Bjorklund

Worship Update

We can continue to worship outdoors as the weather allows. Outdoor worship gives us the ability to physical distance and since we will be outdoors, we can also sing! As long as the weather cooperates, we will continue to meet at 9:00am in the parking lot at Our Saviour's where there is lots of shade and a nice breeze. Recordings of the service are also being loaded to Pastor Matthew's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PastorMuters/videos>.

If you are not sure how to see the service live go to the church's Facebook page and look at the left side of the screen. You will see Videos in the list and you just need to click on it. **You can also go there at any time to see previous videos.** We have also added the weekly bulletins to the St. Paul webpage, stpaulmc.com. The home page contains the current week and if you want to view previous bulletins go to Groups then Worship and Music.

The following are worship helps for the coming month. We hope this information will help you.

Sunday, August 9, 2020 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

Elijah finds the presence of God not in earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the sound of sheer silence. When the disciples face a great storm on the sea, they cry out with fear. Jesus says: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Amid the storms of life, we gather to seek the calm presence of Christ that soothes our fears. In comforting words of scripture and in the refreshing bread and cup of the eucharist, God grants us peace and sends us forth to be a sign of God's presence to others.

Prayer of the Day

O God our defender, storms rage around and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Readings and Psalm

1 Kings 19:9-18

The LORD speaks to Elijah on Mount Horeb

Psalm 85:8-13

I will listen to what the LORD God is saying.

Romans 10:5-15

Hearing and confessing the word of faith

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus walking on the sea

Sunday, August 16, 2020 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

Prayer of the Day

God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Readings and Psalm**Isaiah 56:1, 6-8***A house of prayer for all peoples***Psalm 67**

Let all the peoples praise you, O God.

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32*God's mercy to all, Jew and Gentile***Matthew 15:[10-20] 21-28***The healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter***Sunday, August 23, 2020 12th Sunday after Pentecost****Introduction**

In Isaiah the people are advised to look to their spiritual ancestors as the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus declares that the church will be built on the rock of Peter's bold confession of faith. God's word of reconciliation and God's mercy are keys to the church's mission. Paul urges us to not be conformed to this world but to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, using our individual gifts to build up the body of Christ. From the table we go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.

Prayer of the Day

O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.**Readings and Psalm****Isaiah 51:1-6***The enduring foundation of God's salvation***Psalm 138**

O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever.

Romans 12:1-8*One body in Christ, with gifts that differ***Matthew 16:13-20***The profession of Peter's faith***Sunday, August 30, 2020 13th Sunday after Pentecost****Introduction**

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God's words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.

Prayer of the Day

O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.**Readings and Psalm****Jeremiah 15:15-21***God fortifies the prophet against opposition***Psalm 26:1-8**

Your love is before my eyes; I have walked faithfully with you.

Romans 12:9-21*Live in harmony***Matthew 16:21-28***The passion prediction and rebuke to Peter*

It's important to pray for ALL our family & friends, so our list is rotated among our congregation.

Keep this in a convenient place for prayer time. If you don't have a daily prayer time, this might be a good time to begin.

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|---|--|
| 1. NE Iowa Synod | 16. Mary Paulsen & family |
| 2. St. Paul Lutheran Church | 17. Tim & Beth Rozen & family |
| 3. Our Saviour's Lutheran Church | 18. Carol Rye & family |
| 4. Our government, military leaders, troops & families | 19. Diane Sage & family |
| 5. All who suffer from illness, infirmity or loneliness | 20. Jayne Schiek & family |
| 6. Confined shut-ins (home, hospital, nursing home) | 21. Crystal Schriber & family |
| 7. Those who are dealing with losses in their lives | 22. Carlyn Schriver & family |
| 8. All who hunger and/or are homeless | 23. Kirk Schriver & family |
| 9. All who seek God; finding comfort, peace, renewal | 24. Margaret Simkins & family |
| 10. Dennis & Nancy Marsh & family | 25. Megan & Gary Slocum & family |
| 11. John & Carol Meyer & family | 26. Pat Steinfort & family |
| 12. Margaret Movick & family | 27. Dane Birkholz & family |
| 13. Jim & Diane Murphy & family | 28. Ian & Kristen Stockberger & family |
| 14. Marv Murphy & family | 29. Larry & Deb Stockberger & family |
| 15. Ron Nielson & family | 30. Micah & Jessica Stockberger & family |
| | 31. Bryan & Michele Thenhaus |

PRAYER CHAIN

Please call any Prayer Chain member below if you have a prayer request. All requests are kept confidential and you can share as much information as you are comfortable with. You may call any member and they will start the chain.

Prayer Chain members:

Geri Barker 641-423-5525

(please do not leave message)

Anne Gannett 641-421-6852 (leave message)

Margaret Movick 641-201-1250

(leave message)

Diane Murphy 641-512-5851

(leave message)

Happy August Birthday!

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| 8/1/ | Jack Gannett |
| 8/2 | Crystal Schriber |
| 8/10 | Chris Wallace |
| 8/11 | Karol Wallskog
Jayne Schiek |
| 8/15 | Rhett Buffington |
| 8/20 | Jim Bailey |
| 8/23 | Beth Rozen |
| 8/24 | Harold Gaiser |
| 8/31 | Tanya Dahl |

