Contentment in a COVID World [1]

As you are aware, in the middle of August I (Pastor Conner) received a positive COVID test and spent over a week in isolation away from my family and my Zion family. It gave me the opportunity both to reflect and to empathize with so many individuals (perhaps you) who have gone through similar circumstances or who are preventively isolating.

COVID continues to impact us in real and painful ways. All of us have had trips, sporting events, and concerts canceled, along with meetings, conferences, get-togethers, and more. Some of us have lost jobs or seen loved ones lose jobs. And many of us are enduring decision fatigue as COVID moves through the population, continually forcing us to evaluate risk and alter plans.

The search for contentment in such a world, therefore, is very real. It's not a search for mere optimism (seeing the glass half full). Optimism is well and good, but we are looking to go deeper than that, because sometimes the glass is just plain empty and optimists are imagining stuff in the glass that isn't there.

The Apostle Paul talks about contentment in Philippians. At the time he was in prison, which I can't imagine was too swell. Yet, Paul says he learned how to have contentment despite his circumstances. That's what we're driving after: contentment despite our circumstances.

In Philippians 1:21 Paul writes this: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." These are remarkable words! Paul is viewing his entire life through Christ. His life is defined by the life and love of Jesus for him.

Before anything else is true in Paul's world, this is true. If he survives prison, his life is defined by Christ. If he is executed, he will be welcomed into Christ's presence to await the resurrection. So, before Paul reads the newspaper, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Before he faces another day in prison, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Before he considers his surroundings, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

If you drink this in, it's pretty powerful. Jesus died for your sins and rose for your life. Your life is defined by the life and love of Jesus. If God grants you continued life, you can dedicate it to the furtherance of His name and Gospel. If He calls you to be with Him, you'll be free from the sorrows and sufferings of this world.

As we consider contentment in a COVID world, we remember Paul's insight: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." So, before you get up for another day of isolation, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Before you head out into a COVID world and face the risk of infection, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Before we consider our finances, our job, our school, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Notice that we're not denying hard things. Paul was in prison, after all! We're not denying the world's curse. We're not denying sorrow and grief, suffering and tears. These are very real. COVID is real. But COVID can't take away Jesus' life and love for you. COVID can't remove you from Christ

[1] Adapted from a series on contentment from Morning Prayer 8/19 – 8/25.

or Christ from you. “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Unless you decide to reject Christ, nothing is going to change “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” No circumstances, no virus, no nothing is going to change that. And that simple but profound reality is moving us in the right direction toward contentment.

Continuing through Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we see the theological center, the blazing sun of the letter, in chapter 2 where Paul shares a rich and profound Christological poem that simultaneously exalts Christ even as it calls us to emulate him. Paul writes,

> Have this mind among yourselves [we’ll come back to this], which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

We don’t have time to dive into the rich theology of the poem, so we’ll just make two observations. First, Christ, unlike Adam, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. And how much suffering has been brought into our world because Adam wanted to grasp for equality with God and because we have repeated the sin of Adam, trying to grasp equality with God, trying to be in control, trying to define reality, trying to exercise authority over others. We’re terrible gods!

Have you ever studied the temperaments of the Greek or Roman panoply of gods? They were petty and vindictive, devious and devilish. And if you can’t see ourselves in that, you’re not paying very close attention. Jesus isn’t like that. He humbled Himself, taking on our flesh and dying on a cross.

One other things needs to be highlighted briefly. Paul says, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow… and every tongue confess.” That’s an astonishing statement. Here’s why: Yahweh declares through the prophet Isaiah:

> To me every knee shall bow,
> every tongue shall swear allegiance. Isaiah 45:23

That’s Yahweh speaking and Paul is putting Jesus on the same plane! Jesus is one with Yahweh. That’s who took on flesh. That’s who humbled Himself. That’s who died on the cross. That’s who did it all to reconcile you, to redeem you, to rescue you.

But let’s go back to what Paul started with, “Have this mind among you…” Paul is encouraging us to adopt this mindset, to think like this, to think like Jesus who humbled Himself for us. Think about some of the things that cause us to be discontent. Somebody has more than us. Somebody gets credit for something they really didn’t deserve. Somebody gets the promotion you thought you deserved. Somebody has all kinds of advantages that you don’t have. Somebody has a better life than you.

And that sort of thing has the power to eat at us, to irritate us, to upset us, to kill contentment. Yes,

it's possible some injustice has occurred, but we'll put that aside for now (because, remember, we worship a God of justice and He will sort it all out); Paul is exhorting us to adopt the mind of Christ. He didn't consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing. When it comes to contentment, then, it's not found in being first. It's not found in being king of the mountain. It's not found in self-elevation. That sort of thing will make a mess out of your life in a hurry because it makes everybody a threat to you; everybody is somebody who is in your way. And that will kill contentment if there are 7 billion people in your way.

I'm not saying there isn't appropriate satisfaction taken in legitimate accomplishments, in having legitimate goals; there is. This is the stuff of Ecclesiastes – rejoicing in the works of your hands. I'm saying that, paradoxically, contentment isn't found in advancing yourself; it's found in emptying yourself. Specifically, it's found in emulating Your Savior, in living His life after Him, in living a cross-shaped, cruciform life.

Do you know what the problem is? Our world is upside down. All our striving and competing and comparing and complaining has all been focused on securing our position on the top. The problem is, our world is upside down. And this has been the triumph of Satan. He's made us believe that we're right side up and God's kingdom is upside down. But we've got it wrong. All our striving to secure our position on the top has only brought us closer to hell.

And Paul sees it. He sees the truth. He's saying, "You're going the wrong way. You're upside down. The right side up kingdom of God has come and contentment in this kingdom is found in self-denial, in self-emptying. Fellowship with Heaven, joy, contentment, it's this way. See it and follow it in Jesus."

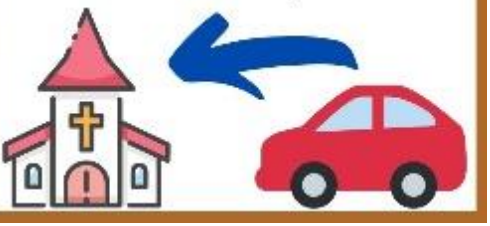
So contentment isn't found through self-promotion, but through self-emptying, through emulating our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To summarize briefly, no circumstances, whether COVID related or not, can alter Paul's confident confession: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." That remained true for Paul and it remains true for us. Further, we live in a world that promises contentment at the top, once everyone else has been surpassed and outdone, but it's a lie because our world is upside down. We need the right side up kingdom of God to reorient us. And we see this kingdom in Jesus, in His self-emptying and self-denial for us. Contentment, therefore, will not be found in adopting the ways of the world, but in emulating the ways of Christ.

We'll continue our conversation on contentment next month as we continue to make our way through Philippians. – Pastor Conner

after several years of hiatus, Trinity's Sunday School is back up and running sharing God's truth

+Saturday, October 10th
+5-7pm - *free will donation*
($10 suggested donation)
+Fundraiser for the Priscilla Guild one of Trinity's service organizations
+drive-up to to Trinity-Manilla church & we'll bring the food to you



While 5 years old, I think the data probably holds true: pewforum reported that nearly 74% of people looking for a new site for worship took *style of worship* into consideration before deciding.[2] I'm not for "selling" people the Divine Service, but there is room for affirming why we worship the way we do. So here's the question: why is the way we worship at Zion and Trinity significant?

Saturday/Sunday

Before we even engage the actual act of Divine Worship, there's significance in how we meet. Traditionally, Christians have gathered on Sundays (Acts 20:7). Why? Same day Jesus rose from the dead, and worshiping on that day was a reminder of God's action. But there's no explicit mandate that Sunday is *the* day that Christians worship. In fact, the only biblical criteria for the kind of rest Christians should engage in is that Christians need to be in God's Word in order to experience true rest (check out Hebrews 4); that kind of mandated rest can happen Saturday or Sunday.

[2] https://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/23/1-the-search-for-a-new-congregation/

Christian worship is not just a ME activity; it's a WE experience.

But here's the important piece: Christian worship is not just a ME activity; it's a WE experience. The Christian faith and the structure of the Divine Worship argues that Christ called us to be a united body (Romans 12:1-8). It's no longer just about my wants, my preferences, my likes, or even dislikes. I've been called to serve in and be served by Christ's masterpiece the Church…whether I like the person who's in my pew or not.

If you think about it, the world we live in calls us to live according to our personal preferences: "Have it your way" (Burger King). Amazon eliminates the need to be around people when it comes to shopping. Netflix, Prime, CBS, Hulu, YouTube, HBO, Starz, Disney+ give us hours of entertainment – we never have to leave our homes except for work. Plus, our phones seemingly connect us to people, but research indicates that face-to-face interaction is not the same kind of interactions we're having on Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, and so on. Point is, there is plenty out there that's drawing us away from others and into ourselves. But Christians are called to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." That renewal happens in community, not in isolation. So, whenever we worship, the important piece is that it's we, not just me.

Confession & Absolution

There are plenty of well credentialled articles discussing the pitfalls of trophies for young

athletes who participate but don't necessarily win. Essentially these articles conclude that trophies for all discourage true athleticism; "If I'm going to receive praise whether I win or lose, why try?" *Great question, Kid.* But a piece these articles do not pick up on is we're creating a culture in which we as people – especially our kids – aren't *the problem*. We're always winners; we're always decent people.

When Christian writer G.K. Chesterton was requested to write up an expose answering the question "What's wrong with the world today?", Chesterton responded with a "Dear Sir, I am. Yours, G.K Chesterton." It's funny, and it's right.

The structure of the Divine Service is radically countercultural because rather than handing you a trophy, the very first thing you encounter is "Hey there, Sinner. Time to confess."

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The Divine Service forces you to come to grips with reality. *Yes, people in prison have contributed to the world's problems. Yes, that person did a lousy thing as a parent – yes, so-and-so was raunchy – yes, your employee lied and ruined work for you. Those are all true problems…but we're not concerned about them right now. It's time to put you in the hot seat.*

Jesus told a religious seeker once that in order to fully live, the seeker had to be born again (see John 3). While it's not firmly expressed in this encounter with Jesus, before alive people can be reborn they have to die to themselves. Jesus arrived in order to raise dead people physically and from sin. Jesus can't heal you unless you're sick first (Matthew 9:12). In the Confession component of the Divine Service, God, through the Words of Scripture, brings us to grips with our illness and the need to die to self.

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

Hebrews 10:22: "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Connected to Christ, we can be honest before God and with ourselves knowing that the Father will acknowledge us since we have an "in" with the Son.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,
C who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124:8: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." This particular Psalm is one of many of the Ascent Psalms. Literally, as Jewish visitors arrived at Jerusalem and walked *up* towards the Temple they would sing this Psalm. Again, this is another WE experience. You're not alone in your sin (that's why experiences like AA are so powerful is because AA leaders help attendees see that they're not alone in their addictions).

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,
C and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Psalm 32:5: "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to

the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." David encourages sinners in Psalm 32 because he proclaims that men are saved once they're honest with themselves (verse 1). We can be honest with our shortcomings, rudeness, and sinfulness because God will forgive.

Which leads right into God's response to people who identify themselves as the source of the world's problems. He forgives through the pastor. And it's more than God saying, "No, big deal" or "You're forgiven." It's "I [God] forgive you…." God speaks in that moment to you. And that authority to forgive through pastors comes from Jesus Himself to the first pastors of the Church:

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them [after His resurrection] and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld'" (John 20:19-23).

Before we close, you might be wondering, "Well, if God is going to forgive me whether I'm honest or not," or, "It's OK if I'm not all that faithful in this area of my life because God is going to forgive me either way." Fair enough. But that evaluation of God's forgiveness is pretty lame! Why? Because what did it take for us to have confidence to step into God's presence without being destroyed in the first place? Why can God speak forgiveness to you without being an unjust God? Answer: it took the death of the Ultimate Person of the Universe, the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth for that to all happen. We don't go through the entire Passion account every Saturday/Sunday, but the fact of the matter is Jesus literally suffered so that God could speak forgiveness to you.

You treasure precious gifts you receive; we need to re-realize the precious gift we receive in Jesus of Nazareth. And that's the reason why a "it's not a big deal" type of attitude towards holiness makes no sense for Christians. – Pastor Johnson

More on the Divine Service next time…

Running Commentary
2 John verse 6

"And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

John gave the commandment in verse 5: love. Love unconditionally.

And that's, according to verse 6, what characterizes the Christian experience. Walking. Walking, but on what kind of path? A path that is informed by the unconditional, undeserved love of Jesus of Nazareth and all that He went through before and during His crucifixion. It's a path that avoids obstacles which lead to idols (i.e. self-love).

Griefshare is a 13 week program that tackles different emotional responses that come with grief. It tackles guilt - "If I'd taken them to the hospital an hour earlier would they have lived?" Griefshare tackles changing relationships that either strengthen or unravel at the time of loss. It also gives you positive responses to give to people when they're attempting to move you through grief. So your kids might want you to get rid of Mom's clothes - Griefshare helps you acknowledge the fact that you're kids are trying to be helpful, but also encourages you to determine when it's right to move clothes out or not.

You can jump in at any time during the 13 weeks and you don't need to catch up. Each session begins with a 40 minute video and then a group discussion. Trinity hopes to offer this experience 2x/year so if it's not right now for you maybe it will be in the future. There is a one-time $25 charge which pays for your books.

A Conversation on Mental Health *Part 1*

During the first week in September, I (Pastor Conner) addressed the question of mental health in our morning prayer sessions. Over the next couple months, I will include a lightly edited text from those sessions. You can view them on Zion's Facebook page by searching form the teachings/prayers from September 1 – 3.[3]

…

We're talking today about mental health today, but what we're going to talk about isn't just for people who struggle with mental health; it's for all of us. We have a simple point, which we'll expand upon in a moment. Here's our simple point: (and I would give credit to the person who coined this phrase, but I can't remember where I read it, so just know it wasn't me; I'm not this smart):

What you think affects how you feel affects what you do.

Okay, let me expand on this just a bit and then we'll give some examples. What you think, what you believe to be true, what you believe is real, what you believe about reality, affects how you feel, and how you feel influences what you do, the way you choose to act or react.

Let's take some examples. Let's take some of the things we choose to believe. We'll start today with some of the destructive thoughts we sometimes choose to believe.

- I'm stupid.
- I'm incapable.
- I'm a loser.
- Everybody hates me.

At some point all of us have entertained these thoughts or believed them. How do these make us feel? Terrible! We feel depressed. We feel defeated. We feel dejected. We feel like a black hole has just opened up in our chest and we want it to suck us in. So what we think affects how we feel.

And then what do we do? Comfort eating, stress eating, binge watch TV, drink too much alcohol, turn to pornography, post something inappropriate on social media, say hateful things to people, sink into a black hole of self-pity, turn sullen toward the world, become bitter and biting. We turn to some destructive behavior, because we reason, "What's the point of trying? I'm stupid. I'm incapable. I'm a loser. Everybody hates me anyway."

And not a shred of that is true. Now, it may be true that we lack certain skills or abilities – there are

[3] During those sessions, I recommended William Backus' book *Telling Yourself the Truth*. I continue to recommend it as an excellent source for learning to stop listening to yourself (specifically, the negative and destructive thoughts that try to take up residence in your mind) and to begin speaking the truth to yourself (specifically what God says about you).

tons of things I'm no good at! It may be true that some people don't like us or aren't kind to us – I can't testify to that! It may be true that we screwed something up or hurt somebody or damaged a relationship – been there, done that, got the T-shirt! Those things may be true.

But they are not the full truth. There's more to this story that we need to hear, and I'll get to that in just a minute. But I want you to notice what kind of statements we have allowed to take residence in our minds. These are identity statements. *I'm stupid. I'm incapable. I'm a loser. Everybody hates me.* These are *I am* statements. This is who *I am*.

You are not defined by your failures. And you are not limited by your successes. Your identity is bigger than that.

But that's not true. That's not who you *are*. You are not defined by your failures. And you are not limited by your successes. Your identity is bigger than that. I want to get to that in just a minute, but I want you to see how your foundational beliefs are derailing your life. You are believing something to be true that isn't. You are building your feelings on falsehoods and then justifying your behaviors on them. But it all comes back to your foundational beliefs about reality.

What you believe affects how you feel affects what you do.

I want you to understand how critical this is because this is where lies are believed. They're often below the surface. They're not usually articulated or well formed. They're certainly not said out loud. And this is how Satan defeats us. The lie is planted and believed and the feelings and actions follow, which destroy our lives, and the lives of people around us.

This is why we need to say our beliefs out loud. The lies need to be exposed. We need to bring our beliefs out into the light, to say them out loud so we can hear them. It may be helpful to say them out loud to a mature Christian friend or pastor. When they're in the light, we can evaluate them. We can discuss whether they're true. We'll have to talk more about this in the future, but this is where we often stop short because we never get beneath the feelings.

But often, just forcing ourselves to say our beliefs out loud is enough for us to realize how silly they sound when we bring them out in the open. *Everybody hates me.* Really? *Everybody? I'm incapable. I'm stupid. I'm a loser.* Really? It just sounds silly out loud, doesn't it? But that's the stuff swirling around in our minds that we are choosing to believe – and we're basing our feelings and actions on them!

Here's the thing we're probably going to have to talk more about, but if your feelings are built on lies, your feelings are wrong. Yes, feelings can be wrong because it's impossible to have a feeling that isn't based on some belief about reality. And if the belief is wrong, the feeling is wrong.

I know you're thinking, "But what if my feelings are built on truth?" We'll have the conversation soon. What do we do if the truth is hard? For now, I want us to understand that our feelings are built on beliefs, and we need to press beyond the feelings to get to the core beliefs. It's there that we'll discover the truth or falsehood of our beliefs.

This is why I so often emphasize why it's important to hear the truth, to speak the truth out loud. It's why the Church is so important – because we

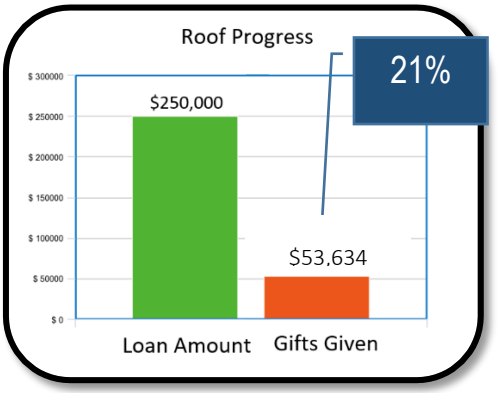
gather specifically to speak truth out loud. This is why I have encouraged us to say the Apostles' Creed out loud every day. We need to hear the truth out loud every day. This is war. We have to fight back against Satan. We have to fight back against the untrue, destructive thoughts that derail us over and over again.

Christ died for your sins. Period. Christ rose for your life. Period. He must think pretty highly of you to do that.

Here's the truth: Christ died for your sins. Period. Christ rose for your life. Period. He must think pretty highly of you to do that. And you are baptized in Christ. You are a child of the living God. Jesus is your Lord. Jesus is your Savior. These are the identity statements you need to hear over and over and over again. You are loved by God. You are forgiven by Christ. You are not defined by your failures or limited by your successes. You are defined by your baptism into Christ. This is who you are.

When you start here, it changes everything. No, it doesn't make you good at everything or competent in everything and it certainly won't make everybody like you, but it will build your life on truth. It will found your feelings on truth. And it will affect the way you live in some pretty significant ways. – Pastor Conner

Let's pray.
Father of mercies, look with kindness upon us Your broken people. We are prone to believe lies. We are prone to give them access to our minds, even prone to let them move in and claim a permanent room. And these lies affect how we feel and these feelings affect what we do. Help us to speak our beliefs out loud, to say out loud what we are thinking, what we are believing about what is real. Help us to bring these beliefs out into the light so that we can evaluate them against Your Word. And help us to hear Your Word out loud, both with the Church – the community of Word hearers that You have established – and help us to hear the Word individually. Help us practice saying Your Word out loud so that we can hear it, so that we can hear truth, so that we can base our feelings and our actions on truth. Finally, Father, thank You for connecting us to You through our baptisms into Christ. Help us rise each day with this reality in our minds, with this identity in our hearts, that we may live joy-filled, truth guided lives. We are bold to pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.



Please consider making a special gift to the roof or to other ongoing and upcoming mission and ministry expenses, including technology and facility needs. Ask in the office for a detailed list of giving opportunities. Thank you for your partnership!

Preschool Praises for September

September is all about the basics and learning how preschool works! The first week we spoke about school rules and played a game to decide what is a real school rule and what isn't. There is no rule that you have to bring your pet elephant to class, but you do have to listen to the teachers! We began teaching the children how to write their names with dry erase markers. This is great because it not only teaches them the letters in their name, but also works on hand/eye coordination and fine motor skills. The second day of creation was our focus for Jesus Time and we made a craft to symbolize God creating water and sky. We are practicing our songs for the Pancake Breakfast and are excited to share them with you on October 11th! Pastor spoke to the children about the first day of creation when God made light and separated it from the dark and did it all with His word because He is powerful!

ZION Lutheran Preschool Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

The second week we focused on feelings and looked at pictures of others and determined what feeling they were expressing. It is incredibly important for children at this age to develop relationships and empathy by being able to figure out someone's feelings by observing their face and body language. We looked at day 3 of creation during Jesus Time and made a craft to represent when God made land and plants with His Word. Pastor spoke about the second and third days of creation and practiced the song that we will be singing with the preschoolers at the Pancake Breakfast.

The third week was about jobs. In the past we would use this as an opportunity for family members to come in and talk about their jobs with the children, but as a precaution this year with Covid, we decided not to do this. We spoke about different jobs and tools that are needed in different fields. The children played a matching game where they matched different objects to the type of job that they would be used for. We asked each child what they want to be when they grow up. We got answers including doctor, dentist, firefighter and werewolf! The children also got to try a new skill by using scissors to cut on a line. For some of these children, this is the first time they have handled a scissors, so we have to start with the basics like "no running with a scissors" and "always have the point down when carrying the scissors", "we only cut paper, not hair or clothes" along with where fingers go in the holes and how to hold the scissors with your thumb pointing up when cutting. As an adult, we take for granted all of these little details that now come naturally to us, but it is very important to set that foundation for these little ones so they can be successful. We continued writing names and for Jesus Time we spoke about creation day 4 when God made the Sun, Moon and Stars all with His Word. Pastor also spoke to the children about the vastness of the universe and how creative and complex God made the Sun, Moon and Stars.

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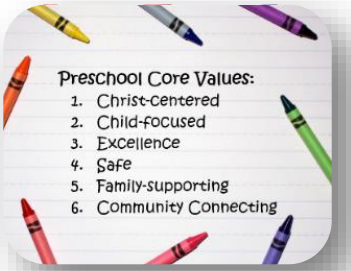


The fourth week we spoke about family and prepared for Mom's Night. The children loved being able to share pictures of their families with their class, then put the pictures up around the classroom so they can look at them whenever they want. Mom's Night was a little different from other years, but we still had a lot of fun and the children loved spending time with their moms at preschool! They decorated picture frames and got to fill them with a picture that we took and printed off that evening. They also made a scrapbook page to put into our class scrapbook that will be sent home with each child as the year goes on so that they can share and learn about their friends with their families. The children learned how to draw a person and did Self-portraits which we will do again at the end of the year to see how their drawing has matured. Creation day 5 was the focus for Jesus Time and Chapel as we spoke about how God made the birds and fish in all of their diversity and beauty. Our God is so incredibly creative and made such wonderful sights for us to discover and observe.

We invite you to join us this year for the Pancake Breakfast and help support the preschool. We will have a hybrid plan this year with dining in and drive-up available. Thank you to all those who have donated to the preschool for the start of the year! We appreciate your financial support but also your prayerful support of our ministry.

ZioN Lutheran Preschool Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

Saved to Serve,
Mrs. Gore & Mrs. Nemitz

What Makes a Meaningful Life?

What does it mean to live a meaningful life? To each of us, that may mean something different. Living a meaningful life may mean that you're at peace with yourself, with your life, and with everyone around you. Living a meaningful life may mean that you feel peace, love, joy, contentment and freedom most of the days of your life.

The more meaningful our lives feel, then the more joy we experience. Meaningful activities spark positive emotions and deepen social connections, both of which increase our satisfaction with life. Pursuing meaning makes you feel good about yourself because you are pursuing something bigger than yourself.

Your life purpose consists of the motivating factors of your life—in other words, the reasons you get up in the morning. Purpose can guide life decisions, influence behavior, shape goals, offer a sense of direction, and create meaning. For some people, purpose is connected to a job/career, whatever that may be —meaningful, satisfying work.

Make friends wisely; friends are important in every phase of life and when it comes to live a meaningful life, they become even more important. So, you should surround yourself with the positive friends who give a meaning to your goal and your life as well as encourage you to reach there.

There really is no need to be saying things that you don't really mean and when you live a meaningful life. You should not feel the need to be fake. A meaningful life means that you know what is important to you and what is not. You choose to dedicate your life to what is important so you don't need the approval of others.

The following are eight ways to make your day more meaningful.

1. Establish a morning ritual. You're more likely to get more out of your day if you start it off right.
2. Plan your day. ...
3. Practice a hobby or skill. ...
4. Spend time with 'meaningful' people. ...
5. Practice self-care. ...
6. Do one thing at a time. ...
7. Go outside. ...
8. Treat your time like you treat your money… not wasted

Janet Brus, RN
Psychiatric Medical Care, Manning Regional Healthcare Center
Program Director

Amigos en Cristo

News from ***La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Amigos en Cristo:*** *Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church:* **Vacancy Pastor Daniel Vogel**, Denison, Iowa

October 2020

Call Process for Denison and Storm Lake: As I reported last month, the Amigos en Cristo Call Committee met with Rev. Keith Haney, the Iowa District West Assistant to the President for Missions. This past month (right) I met with Rev. Haney and Rev. Turner to continue the discussion of the Call process. We decided that Amigos en Cristo will be the Call Committee, and pending the decision of the District Board of Directors, the District will call the pastor.

The Call committee will be made up of members of both Denison and Storm Lake Hispanic ministries. We hope to soon receive the Call list of possible bilingual pastors from the District President Turner so we can begin considering them. We hope to also have interviews with some of the pastors as some of them have served or are serving as foreign missionaries. Please keep the mission of Amigos en Cristo and Storm Lake Hispanic church in your prayers as we move forward with this historic Call.

Meeting with Iowa District West President, Steve Turner (left) and Assistant to the President for Missions, Keith Haney. We met at the District Office at Fort Dodge to discuss the Call process for Amigos en Cristo ministry.

Worship in Storm Lake: 'Poco a poco' means 'little by little' and that summarizes our worship group at Grace Hispanic in Storm Lake. Humberto (Betin) (right) is a very talented musician, originally from Mexico. But for the past 20 years he has lived in Storm Lake and has been a member of our Hispanic ministry for many of those years. He has also struggled with his health for many years and therefore has had to be very careful during the Covid-19 pandemic. So it was a real blessing when he could return to church and play with me last month for our worship service at Grace. He also traveled to Denison with Paula and me to play for our service at Amigos en Cristo.

The pandemic continues to be a struggle in both Denison and Storm Lake as many are still fearful of going out in public. So we continue to live stream the service of our worship service either in Storm Lake or in Denison. We hope that many are being blessed by these virtual worship services when they cannot be present. Yet out of the chaos of these past months God has blessed us and brought us together. For example we are thankful that in Denison we have had 2 long time inactive families who have returned to worship again with us.

Please Pray: + For new and old families that God would bless them in the new school year both at church and at home.

Please Pray: +For the Lord's blessing during and after Covid-19. That the Lord will strengthen our churches and especially the elderly and sick during this time of national and local uncertainty. + For the process of calling a bilingual pastor to serve Amigos en Cristo, Denison and Grace Hispanic in Storm Lake with the help from Rev. Haney and the District leadership.

Rev. Daniel Vogel, 32678 Aspen Ave., Manning, Iowa, 51455
Home: 712-653-2354 / Cell: 712-309-1292
Email: daniel.vogel@ziondenison.org

Fellowship Club/Orphan Grain Train Update

The Zion Fellowship Club has served as our congregation's advocate for the Orphan Grain Train (OGT) ministry. Recently OGT was ranked 6th nationally out of approximately 9,000 charities in the US for relying totally on private contributions. In addition it was noted that 98.2% of all donations go toward OGT's mission; only 1.8% goes toward administrative and marketing costs.

ORPHAN GRAIN TRAIN
Relief for Human Need Worldwide

During the June 1, 2019 through May 31, 2020 fiscal year OGT sent 239 full shipments (40 or 53 ft. containers) of donated relief supplies and food within the United States and internationally. More than $44 million worth of donated humanitarian aid, food, and disaster relief assistance was distributed.

Zion's local connection has been with the Iowa West Branch out of Ida Grove, Iowa. Zion volunteers and community donations were part of three shipments out of the Ida Grove warehouse. Two shipments went to the Republic of Georgia (formerly part of Russia) and a shipment to Moldova (formerly part of Romania). Thank you for your support!

FELLOWSHIP CLUB
ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
MANNING, IOWA
Celebrating and Sharing Christ's Redeeming Love

A future Zion calendar/newsletter will share information on another clothing collection and an opportunity to volunteer at the Ida Grove warehouse. Be watching the November newsletter/calendar for information on resuming Fellowship Club meetings and activities. An afternoon or morning meeting time is being explored. Any input on meeting times would be appreciated. As with many other church organizations the coronavirus has disrupted our routine. We value our fellowship together and time to study God's Word and be about His work.

ANNUAL PRESCHOOL FUNDRAISER

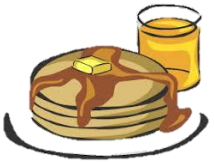
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11th

SERVING FROM 9AM-NOON

FREEWILL OFFERING

JOIN US FOR EGGS, SAUSAGE, AND PANCAKES

ZION
Lutheran Preschool
Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

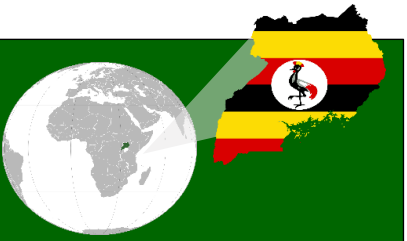


NEW FOR 2020!
EAT IN FELLOWSHIP HALL OR DRIVE THROUGH!

FOR DRIVE THROUGH, ENTER THE SOUTH CHURCH ENTRANCE

Sponsored in part by Thrivent Financial

Summer 2020



Introducing Rev. Mark and Megan Mantey
Serving in Uganda

The Lord's Work Continues

Since March, Uganda has been in some form of lockdown because of COVID-19. During the last three months, restrictions were lessened, but schools and public worship have not been able to resume. Nightly curfews also remain in effect. We share this to give insight to our day-to-day living and also to re-enforce the Lutheran Church of Uganda's ability to adapt to circumstances for the sake of the Gospel.

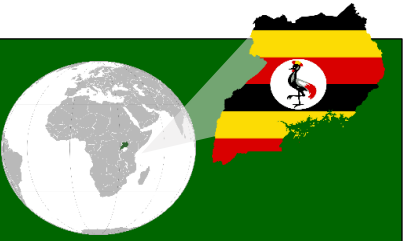
Despite the challenges that continue worldwide, we witness that the Lord's work continues. The Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU) leadership met to discuss how they can best continue training their seminarians while also recognizing government operating procedures. This included limiting the number of people gathering together, not having formal classroom instruction, and maintaining health and hygiene practices.

The LCU leadership decided to focus immediate opportunities for the Year 4 seminary students, as they were originally scheduled to graduate in June, 2020 before classes were dismissed due to COVID-19. The goal was to finish the classes from March in a practicum or hands-on approach so the students could apply what they have learned so far. The arrangements included three different mission center locations for the students, which followed the government operating procedures. This also allowed other LCU pastors and leadership to participate and help prepare the seminarians for pastoral ministry.

In this hands-on, four-week program, the students focused learning on pastoral ministry, teaching the Small Catechism and Bible studies. They also reviewed and applied Hymnology for various worship settings, and finished theology course units that helped them understand and apply Scripture to their various contexts. Please continue to keep the LCU leadership and the seminarians in your prayers as they grow together.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven…a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance…" ~ Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 We are both so grateful to remain in Uganda during this time. Much of our lives has changed and yet much remains the same. We continue to work from home, but also remain in constant contact with the Lutheran Church of Uganda. The LCU has utilized zoom meetings to connect with leadership in the rural areas so ministry planning can continue. We have been able to join those calls and share greetings with far away friends in other parts of the country.

Summer 2020
Continued…



Introducing Rev. Mark and Megan Mantey
Serving in Uganda

Since the seminary is currently not able to resume at full capacity, our day-to-day routine has changed substantially. Yet, God continues to provide us with opportunities to serve Him. We still connect with students, faculty, and LCU leadership. We still serve alongside the LCU and strive to learn more about how the LCMS can best collaborate with them. We still celebrate life together, whether it is birthday celebrations, worshipping together over the radio, or socially distanced gatherings. We still listen to one another, mourn together and are present for one another… even though it looks differently. For all of these opportunities, we're grateful the Lord abundantly provides.

A Lutheran youth group learns some regional Ugandan dances.

Thank you for your prayers as we navigate how to best serve and share the Gospel through our vocations amidst COVID-19. Please also pray for our LCMS and LCU colleagues as they also strive to do the same. We continue to pray for our friends and family (YOU!) who share in the Lord's work in Uganda. Thank you for continuing to walk with us in this way!

PLEASE PRAY FOR: • Health and safety as we serve • Health, safety and healing for God's people around the world • The LCU as they continue to plan, prepare and implement ministry • Wisdom and discernment as we plan for life in ministry in the months ahead

GIVE THANKS FOR: • The opportunity to remain in country serving alongside the Lutheran Church of Uganda during COVID-19 • God's provision and care for all who are struggling during this time • The LCU pastors and seminarians as they share the Gospel and minister to God's people throughout Uganda via radio programming, phone calls and limited visitations

PRAISE GOD FOR: • The individuals, families, and congregations that continue to support the Lord's work in Uganda through our hands with prayers, encouragement and financial support

UPCOMING EVENTS @ ZION & TRINITY

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

Morning Prayer (M-F) via Facebook Live at 7:30 a.m. (viewable anytime)

Thursdays in October: Griefshare at Trinity (6:30 p.m.)

October 15 — **Thursday afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)**

October 11 — **Preschool Pancake Breakfast at Zion (9:00 – Noon)**
Worship at 8:00 a.m.
In-person dining and drive-thru available

October 21 — **Mission Central at Zion**
Supper at 6:00 p.m. for confirmation families
Session at 6:30 p.m. for all

October 25 — **Reformation Celebration**
Celebrating the all-sufficient cross of Jesus

November 1 — **All Saints' Day**
Remembering those who have gone before us in the faith

November 15 — **Whose UR / Political Engagement for the Christian**
Supper at 6:00 p.m. for confirmation families
Session at 6:30 p.m. for all

October Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1 Eric Rosener
2 Norah Vetter (T)
Ferdonna Zimmerman (T)
3 Marcus Borkowski
Alan Morris
4 Amy Dawson
Robert Ehlers
Chelsey Jensen
Camden Morris
5 Brian Birks (T)
Bennett Riesberg
Katelynn Wittala
6 Haleigh Alexander
Benjamin Ramsey
Richard Zinke
8 Marlene Borkowski
Juanita Kurth
9 Vivian Blackford
Susan Mahnke (T)
Amelia Vetter (T)
Bonnie Witt
11 Houston Alexander
Kimber Arp
Drew Doyel
Lynn Kruse
Skyler Sandage
12 Justeen Schwieso
Weston Stribe
14 Wendy Ahrendsen
Lance Gruhn
15 Barbara Doyel
Justin Frank
Lori Lenz
Kaylyn Nelson
Jodi Ramsey
Betty Schroeder
Sandra Sextro
David Weller
16 Miranda Benton
Mya Gaskill (T)
17 Pamela Garvis
Phyllis Lamp
Haven Reese
Gordon Schmarzo
18 Kate Greving
Don Lamb
19 Gloria Ewoldt
Sonia Kuchel
Julie Weller
20 Steve Borkowski
Andrea Nulle
Natalie Hanson
21 Rodney Borkowski
Pam Kusel
Nancy Walters
22 Luella Borkowski
Cynthia Genzen
23 Kyle French
24 Diana Eddy
Wyatt Grabill
Jill Mohr
25 Trevor Booth
Nathan Janssen
26 Zach Rasmussen (T)
Bret Saunders (T)
27 Brody Blom (T)
Bobby Doyel
Randy Dreher
Amos Olson (T)
Lois Peters
Daniel Tibben
29 Christopher Dreher
Louis Dreher
30 Claire Behrens
Mallory Dreier
Justin Segebart (T)
Geraldine Stripling
31 Abel Hinners
Callan Stribe

Anniversaries

9 Ryan & Bobby Doyel
10 Neil & Shala Hass
Duane & Kay Otto
12 Gerald & Rita Beck
13 Howard & Audrey Roe
14 David & Julie Weller
16 Dale & Karen Reinke

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

Official Acts

Wedding:
Mitchell John Hanson and Natalie Dee Nulle; August 22, 2020; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Funeral:
Bonita "Mitch" Jane Robinson; Died October 30, 2019; Funeral November 4, 2019; Pastor Robert Riggert; Graveside Service September 19, 2020; Pastor Jonathan Conner

In Our Prayers

Nancy Grimm, Arlene Mohr, Dewayne Buhr, Ron Schilling, Connie Sorbe (Annette Hilsabeck's mother), Nancy Walters, Ron Brus, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Natalie Mason (Bruce and Mary Grimm's daughter), Gage Carlson (great grandson of Russ and Virginia Mohr), Maridee Bohlmann (David & Joene Bohlmann's daughter-in-law), Patty Meeves (Laurene's daughter in law), Carolyn Werner, Jeanne Gruhn, Luke England (Ben's brother), Bary Kienast, Leonard Damman