

Countryside Trinity Church

Connections

April 18, 2020 Edition

From Pastor Brant...

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

What a time of temptation we are in. With all of the anxiety that we are experiencing, with all of the unknowns and uncertainties we are facing, we find people responding in a variety of ways. Some are reacting to the fears by hoarding what they can, stockpiling toilet paper, or hand sanitizer, or facemasks. Some are reacting by seeking new ways to prey on the fears of others, setting up scams to take advantage of those too anxious to think clearly. Some, on the other hand, are responding in ways that bring joy, and laughter, and support and compassion. They stand on their balconies and offer salutes and loud praises to people they recognize as bearing the brunt of this pandemic, they drive by houses and hospitals in long lines of cars and trucks with horns blaring to say thanks. They buy gift cards, and write notes. People have been very creative in using this time to celebrate our humanity and to express their appreciation.

This week we look at the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

In this petition we once again find ourselves, as we have in the last two, begging God for something that we know we cannot provide for ourselves. Alone against the temptations of our broken humanity we are powerless. The best we can do is to plead with God to keep ourselves moving in the right direction, for God to offer to walk alongside us that we might not stray from God's ways and God's mercy.

One translation that I find helpful to me as I think about this petition is, ***Keep us in this time of trial.*** I like it because I find that the word "keep" has two connotations. The first is its expression of our trust in God's care while we are facing temptation. Recognizing our inability to make the most loving choice amongst the innumerable choices we have, it expresses our hope that we will stay secure in God's work of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. The second connotation of the word "keep" is the recognition that it is in the midst of the challenge that we experience the most growth and the greatest assurance of God's love. In the Garden of Gethsemane we hear Jesus pray ***"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."*** In the face of temptation we struggle to not run away from the difficulty but to continue stand firm in our trust that God can use us to bring about God's kingdom in the world.

As we think about temptation this time of year, Peter's inability to remain loyal to Jesus is not far from our minds. In the Gospel of Luke, following Peter's boasting that he will never betray Jesus, Jesus responds with an ominous remark: ***"Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded (obtained permission in the text note) to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail.*** That is the struggle we face in the midst of temptation, to be sifted like wheat, to have our strength and our resolve just evaporate away. Keep me in the time of trial is as much a plea that God will hold me together that I might persevere and remain faithful.

To be delivered from evil, or rescue us from the evil one, is clearly a plea on our behalf that we might avoid becoming sucked into the destructive forces that are at work around us. Whether that evil is the sense of panic that we experience seeping into our society, or the invitation to view our value using the judgments of the world, or to participate in the partisanship of the different groups in our society which seek to diminish and disrespect the other side, we feel that pull. We are aware of the invitation to lose ourselves in what are in reality temporary gains. We can hoard, or seek fame and fortune, and status, we can strike out at others, but these things only distance us from a loving God who seeks not only our wholeness but the wholeness of all.

This petition serves as a reminder to us that God always places before us the choices of obedience. God constantly invites us to respond to the generous gifts God grants to us by making the choice to follow God in all we do. God, however, always acknowledges our right to decide which path we will follow; God will not protect us from the right we possess to choose how we will respond to what we experience in the world, for God longs that we experience growth and maturity, and this comes only when we take responsibility for the choices we make.

I invite you this week to focus on this petition, to discern what needs you have and how your choices are being determined through your relationship with God.

Combined Sunday Morning Worship on YouTube Continues

Our combined worship service with First and Second Presbyterian Churches continues this Sunday at 10:30 am. **Go to YouTube and search for First Presbyterian Church Saginaw.** This week Brant will be preaching. Our organist, Andrew Glynn will again be contributing music to the service.

As part of this service, I would invite you to participate in the offering time by making your regular offering to the church. Presently Mari is working to add an online donation opportunity to our website, but until it happens, please take this time to either write your check to the church or mail it in, or use the Bill Pay option at your bank. Mari and Kathy will insure that the mail is picked up and that your checks are processed. Please keep in mind any ministries to which you provide regular financial support that they might be sustained in this time where their might be reduced giving.

Weekly Zoom Beatitudes Bible Studies, Wednesdays at 7 pm

Our weekly studies on the Beatitudes continue via our Zoom account on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm. This week, on April 22nd, we will be exploring the beatitude, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

All members who have given their email addresses to the office are sent an invitation to participate on your laptop, tablet, smart phone or even your land line phone. You can download the Zoom app, and then use the information provided in the email to join the online meeting, or you can call the number given in the email. Though video is not needed to participate, we do love to see your smiling face as well as hear your voice. If you are having issues joining the meeting, please let the church office know so that we might be able to guide you through the necessary steps.

Your Faithful Giving

The session expresses its thankfulness to those who continue to be faithful in their financial support of the ministries of Countryside Trinity. We appreciate those who have responded to the recent letter from the Stewardship and Finance Team by sending in their tithes and offerings. Please continue to use your resources to ease the sufferings of our community, nation, and world, that God would be honored by your devotion and by the actions of healing and wholeness you empower.

Prayer Concerns

We lift up prayers for Lila Neumeyer, who is undergoing rehabilitation at Wellspring in Frankenmuth and the Princinsky and Cobb families on the death of Justin Princinsky. Let us also continue to lift up the members of our community and world who risk their health and the health of their families to ensure that we are safe and cared for, that they might be strengthened and protected.

Thank you!

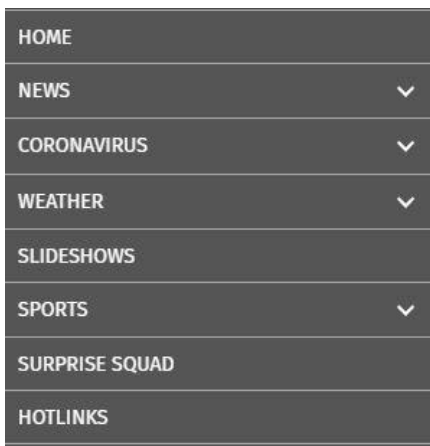
Nancy Easlick wishes to thank all of you who previously ordered Easter plants and were kind enough to come to the church on April 11th to pick up your plants. Also a big thank you to Dick Easlick and Dan Groom, for their assistance in loading the plants in the cars so our members and friends could continue to practice social distancing.

Region 7 Food Program

For anyone 60 years of age or older who may be having difficulty getting out and/or finding what they need in the stores during this Covid19 Pandemic, there is a Federal program to help you. If you have internet and an available way to get online – go to www.WNEM.com and look to the top left corner of the screen for the menu. It looks like this:



click the "Menu Button" and a drop down menu will appear. Looks like this:



You should click on "Hotlinks" which is the 8th item on the list. A listing will open up of all the Hotlinks that are available.

You should click on the one that looks like this:

Request a delivery, meal, or friendly reassurance

At this point, you will fill in your information beginning with "Individual Information" and continuing to the end of the page and click on Submit. It might take a few days, but you will receive a telephone call regarding this program and they will set you up to receive the free items at your door.

If you are not computer savvy or don't have internet availability, you can simply call 1-800-858-1637 and tell them you wish to sign up for the food box delivery program. They will ask you a few questions, mainly your name, address and age and will then add you to their list to receive a box of food and paper products if you need them. It is my understanding that you will receive enough food to make 22 meals.

I saw this picture on Facebook and wanted to share it with everyone. It says a lot!

