

# Countryside Trinity Church

## Connections

May 22, 2020 Edition

### From Pastor Brant...

In Acts 17 we find Paul in the city of Athens, what had been the center for arts and education for centuries. It is a city in which people have pursued beauty, and culture, and knowledge, a city which seeks to testify to the inventive power of the human mind and its ability to express some of the deepest hopes and dreams of humanity. To this day we are still influenced by this creativity in many ways. Even after the collapse of the Greek world and the rise of the Roman world, Athens remained a place of great learning. It is also a place where many different religions and their shrines had gathered. It was said that there were more statues of the gods in Athens than in all the rest of Greece, and that in Athens it was easier to meet a god than another person. It was the university town of the world. There were coffee shops on almost every corner. There the people would gather to share a reading of a particular philosopher or a poem that caught their fancy, or a play that explored the vagaries of human life. There were outdoor cafes where people would gather over a simple meal and fine wine to discuss the newest ideas for what gave life meaning.

Yet in this place of beauty and art and knowledge, we learn that Paul is “deeply distressed” as he sees the endless array of idols found around town. I am imagining his feelings of distress are a mixture of both frustration and sadness as he recognizes the futility as well as the ignorance in their efforts to find meaning, wholeness, and peace for their lives through these creations. In all this effort there is clearly a yearning for something more, there is clearly a longing that pushes these people to continue to seek out the power and the relationships that bring satisfaction and fulfillment to life. So Paul responds as he usually does in the face of their unknowing about his God, he preaches, he takes the different opportunities that are presented to him to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to those he sees as bounded by their brokenness and sin. As is his usual practice, he first heads to the synagogues, and then out in the marketplace. Some hear and respond. Others dismiss and ridicule, calling him a “babblers.” He does create enough buzz around town to be invited to the center of education and thought, to explain his thinking to those who have expressed some curiosity in what he has to say.

In a way that is both in tuned with the rhetorical practices of his audience and respectful of their achievements and efforts, he commends them on their efforts to seek out the divine. He recognizes their understanding of the unity of humanity and wants them to understand that this “unknown god” has become known to them in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is through God’s act of validation through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that his life of self-sacrificial love is shown to have great authority and efficacy. He challenges them to repent from any ways of living that are different from this, an understanding of their own limitations and their need to turn back to the One true God who has been revealed to them in the person of Jesus Christ. The courage of Paul is displayed in his willingness to act so that these people would not be left in their condition of unknowing, as he takes the challenge head on to confront their limited rational thought with the impossibilities brought on by divine revelation. In so doing, he loses most, but not all of his audience. It takes a while, sometimes a lifetime to see, that the Way of truth, the way of love, is the one that leads to a life that is abundant and eternal.

## **Session Actions, May 19<sup>th</sup>**

The session met via Zoom on Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, and took the following actions:

- It suspended worship through June 28<sup>th</sup>
- Agreed to a motion from Christian Outreach that \$1000.00 be taken from the Food Basket Fund and to send \$500.00 to the East Side Soup kitchen and \$500.00 to the Old Town Soup Kitchen.
- Agreed to a motion from Christian Outreach to donate the collected Easter Basket food to the East Side Soup Kitchen.

Christian Outreach wants to remind members that the May Mission of the Month is Habitat for Humanity, and that the June Mission of the Month is East Side Soup Kitchen.

## **Return To Worship Taskforce**

In a previous session meeting, the session appointed a taskforce to plan for the eventual returning of the congregation to face to face worship. This taskforce includes as its members: Mary Ann Parker, chair, Kevin Barnum, Kathy Loviska, Lynne Groom, and Pastor Piper. Its initial guidelines it is proposing to session at this point include:

- Waiting until permission is given by the state to meet in groups of 50 or less
- Screening all who wish to participate in worship before they enter the sanctuary, including questions about symptoms and having a temperature taken through the use of an infrared thermometer
  - All participants will enter through the Eastern doors in an orderly fashion that maintains proper social distancing of family groups
  - Masks are required and provided for those in need of one
  - Participants will be seated only in designated seating, keeping at least 6 feet between them and any other family group throughout the service
  - There will be no choir nor singing
  - There will be no bulletins. Information will be provided through technology.
  - The bathrooms immediately adjacent to the sanctuary will be designated as Unisex and participants are asked to use them only in times of great urgency
  - Participants will be dismissed in an orderly fashion so that social distancing can be maintained at the end of the service.

The taskforce trusts that those who do not feel safe will not return to the service until they do feel safe. The online services at First Presbyterian will continue as long as it is agreed to between the three churches involved. The session is currently pursuing the technology that would permit us to live stream our service from our own sanctuary once our combined services come to an end. We seek to honor your choice to stay at home by working to include you in as many of our opportunities to worship and serve Christ as we can.

## **Combined Worship Continues on Sunday Mornings at 10:30am**

On Sunday mornings at 10:30 you are invited to join us for a combined service of worship from Countryside Trinity, First Presbyterian, and Second Presbyterian churches. Go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and type in First Presbyterian Church Saginaw in the search bar. For the next two weeks, Pastor Piper will be preaching, first on the Ascension in Acts 1:6-11, and then on Pentecost Sunday, on the story of Pentecost in Acts 2. If you are not able to see it live, follow the same instructions and you can watch it any time during the week

following the service. Presently we are seeking ways that would allow people who only have phones, cell and land lines, to listen in on the service.

### **New! Thursday Night Bible Studies, 7pm**

The weekly Zoom Bible Study on Acts is moving to Thursday nights at 7 pm. This week we are exploring the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Acts, wherein Peter and James perform a healing in the Temple. If you are not currently getting an invitation through your email, please leave a message on the voicemail at the church and you will be included in the mailing list.

### **Flooding Relief Efforts**

The latest Bi-Weekly News Brief from the Presbytery of Lake Huron has this to share about the flooding in Midland: "Many families and staff from Midland Memorial, Chapel Lane, and Tawas Area Presbyterian churches were evacuated and some have suffered property damage."

"While the waters were still rising, [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) (PDA) was already in contact with the Presbytery office to help coordinate relief. Executive Presbyter Dan Saperstein has requested virtual deployment of PDA personnel to help with the regional VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Assisting in Disasters) response group. PDA also indicated its interest in providing an emergency relief grant which will be requested as soon as the best way to use the funds can be ascertained."

The Christian Outreach Team has invited those who want to provide financial support to the relief efforts either send checks designated to "Flood Relief" directly to the presbytery office on McCarty Rd. or wait until the links are put in place to donate to the Midland Flood Relief on the Presbyterian Disaster Relief website.

This pandemic challenges us to discover sources of solace and consolation to get us through the times of isolation and loss. It is our opportunity to walk through our lives and see where we have accumulated practices and materials in an attempt to fill our longings and our emptiness that are insufficient for the task. Paul invites us to focus our attentions on the God who has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. He invites us to explore both our longings and where we might Christ at work in the world around us. As the people in our communities work to make sense of not only the pandemic, but now the catastrophic flooding in the area, how can we help them to discover what might be for them the "unknown god" whom they seek in this time?

**Condolences:** Our condolences to the family of Mary Ellen Sierocki who passed away peacefully on May 16, 2020, just a few days shy of her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her funeral was held at Deisler's Funeral Home on Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>. For a full copy of her obituary, you can go to [www.deislerfuneralhome.com](http://www.deislerfuneralhome.com).

**Kroger Community Rewards Program:** We have received our distribution from Krogers. There are currently 23 households enrolled in the program and for the period ending April, 2020, we have received their donation of \$45.01. Thank you everyone for making Countryside your charity of choice.



### **BIRTHDAYS MAY**

- 1 Gwen Henderson
- 4 Joshua Gonzales
- 5 Sue Smith
- 6 Betty Burr
- 6 Marcia Lacker
- 8 Dorothy Hughes
- 12 Barbara Groom
- 18 Doris Ruth
- 21 Seth Diggs
- 24 Katlyn Scovill
- 26 Charles Ohmer
- 26 Lore Woodke
- 28 Sue Paterson

### **BIRTHDAYS JUNE**

- 2 Michael Wayne Groom
- 3 Eric Smith
- 8 Christian (Volker) Saxton
- 11 Robert Bortner
- 11 Dana Hansen Cooper
- 19 Kitty Blehm
- 20 Marilyn Leffler
- 21 Jasmyn Volker
- 29 Eleanor Farnum
- 30 Darren Woodke
- 30 John Furlo

### **JULY BIRTHDAYS**

- 5 Dawn Curtis
- 11 Graham Parker
- 12 Robert Lemmer
- 13 Jean Bortner
- 18 Sidney Diggs IV
- 23 Bobby Diggs
- 24 Zayden Evans (M= Alexa Mahan)
- 24 Dick Mallette
- 27 Susan Anderson
- 29 Holly Furlo
- 30 Lynne Groom
- 31 Rachael Plater



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### **ANNIVERSARIES MAY**

- 4 Tom & Chong Ladner
- 7 Floyd & Lois Krzak
- 15 Christine & Paul Greenwood
- 16 Kathryn & Kevin Barnum
- 18 Randy & Lynne Groom
- 28 Christian & Bradley Saxton

### **ANNIVERSARIES JUNE**

- 21 Edward & Lori Halase
- 29 Ronald & Jean Anne Miller

### **JULY ANNIVERSARIES**

- 28 Charles & Irene Ohmer