

Countryside Trinity Church Connections

June 18, 2020 Edition

From Pastor Brant...

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. -- Luke 15:20-24

This is, of course, the return of the Prodigal Son, one of the most beloved stories in scripture. It tells the tale of a young man who selfishly abandons his family in search of what he thinks will be a far better life, only to end up burning through all of his cash and eating the pigs' food, before "coming to his senses" and returning home.

What is of special importance on this Father's Day is for us to recognize just how much "unfatherly" behavior the father displays in his welcoming of his son back home.

To begin with, one has to understand the utter disrespect the son demonstrates for his father by asking for his inheritance early. We don't really see it in the text, but the people who would have first heard this story would have been shocked and dismayed to hear these words come out of the mouth of a son. It demonstrated a total disregard for the work of the father in providing for the son and for guiding him towards a life of blessing. We hear of no reaction from the father, though, just "*So he divided the property between them.*" There is no effort to dissuade the boy from the course he has set, no words of wisdom shared, only what seems to be a silent acknowledgement that the boy is of an age in which he can choose his own path. Then off he goes. Good riddance!

Overwhelmed by his new power and riches, unaware of the ways of the world, the young man soon finds his hedonistic lifestyle ending up with the greatest humiliation for a nice little Jewish boy, feeding pigs. He comes to his senses and devises a plan for his return, throwing himself at the mercy of his father, hoping that he might regain some hope for his future. Back home he goes.

What his father does in response demonstrates the "unfatherly" qualities of God "the Father". The first clue to this "unfatherly" behavior is when we learn that the father's overjoyed response is triggered "*while he was still far off.*" The father had to be on the look-out for this to happen. He would have had to have spent many a morning and evening sitting on his front porch, peering out at

the horizon, just hoping to get a glimpse of his son heading home. That's not what would be expected of a father in Jesus' time. Instead, the father was expected, after such a humiliation, to completely turn his back on his son. The groveling that was proposed by the young man was to be expected and offered for some time to come. This longing for a return would have been frowned upon by the community and seen as weakness in the father.

The father opens himself to further humiliation from the crowd by running out to greet the boy. He would be wearing a tunic and a robe, and he would have had to hold each of them up as he ran to the boy. Besides, old men don't run, it's too undignified. Yet there he goes, abandoning all decorum, dismissing the ridicule and derision he would receive, caught up in the celebration of the son's return.

And then to throw his arms around him and kiss him and welcome him back with such enthusiasm? You get the picture. This father breaks all the norms to welcome his son back home.

We have witnessed different norms for fathers change over the years. In the past the expectation was that the father was the stern distant disciplinarian, ("Wait 'til your father gets home!") while mothers were the sources of compassionate and invited emotional responses. That stereotype was and is rarely true. Many mothers provide the strong discipline that helps their children develop into responsible, competent adults. Many fathers provide the safe emotional environment that invites children to share their emotional worlds and thus develop into healthy human beings who can develop relationships of trust and growth. The reality is also that the same parents aren't always able to provide the same level of compassion and discipline to each of their children, though they both are needed. Many experts in child rearing think that when parents work together they can discover one another's strengths in providing either discipline or compassion, and can learn from the other how to better provide what the child needs at the proper time.

One of the blessings of this pandemic may be the way it has invited fathers, and mothers too, how to be better parents. It has invited parents to create clear structure for their kids during the day, when to clean, when to do school work, when to cook, when to play, when to discover hobbies and gifts. It has invited parents to teach their children different skills and to gain a better understanding of the strengths of their parents. It has created opportunities for times to listen and to really explore a child's emotional world and understand the ways he or she understands the world around them. Children thrive on these things. The personal attention, especially when a parent is emotionally available, creates a sense of esteem that will see a child through difficult times.

This Father's Day give thanks for those adults in your life, whether or not they are or were your biological parents, whether or not they were male or female, who provided you with the discipline and the compassion you needed to help you grow in wisdom and stature.

Take Care,

Brant

Combined Worship Continues

Continue to join us on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am on YouTube for our Combined Worship Services with First and Second Presbyterian Churches. Go to www.YouTube.com, and in the search for First Presbyterian Church Saginaw.

Combined Services Available on your Phone

If you do not have internet you can still listen in on the livestream of the service on your phone. To listen in on the service here are the steps to follow:

- Call **1 312 626 6799**
- When you are asked for your Meeting ID enter: **868 9628 9319**
- You don't need to respond to the request for a participant ID.
- When you are asked for your Password: enter: **1838**

Session Actions, June 16th

The session met via Zoom on Tuesday, June 16th, where it took the following actions:

- Suspended inside worship through the month of July
- Approved the development of an outdoor worship experience at the church
- Approved the purchase of a streaming camera and tripod that would allow the church to live stream our services. It is the wish of the session that this camera would be ready to live stream our service on the first Sunday in August for those who choose to continue to shelter at home in order to avoid the virus

Return To Worship Taskforce

The Return to Worship Taskforce continues its work to refine the protocols the church will use when we return to worship. Presently these include the following:

- 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.

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 3rd 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 so you can be included.

Again, you can join this Bible Study through your phone if you do not have a computer with a camera. To participate:

- call 1 312 626 6799
- enter the Meeting ID: 401 512 5270.
- You don't need to respond to the request for a participant ID.
- enter the password: 687903.

Let the office know if you have trouble connecting that we might provide assistance.

Financial Report

Our monthly goal for May was \$9,000, of which we collected almost \$8,400. Your faithful giving empowers us to continue our witness to the work of Christ in the world.

Our goal for June is \$8,500. Please remember you can make an online donation through the Give Plus app. If you want to run your donation by the church, please call first to insure that someone is at the office to receive it.

Christian Outreach

Please remember our local ministries during this time. Because we are not able to collect our Least Coin Offering, our support of the three ministries supported by this offering, the Presbytery of Lake Huron Hunger Fund, the Michigan Conference Hunger Fund, and the East Side Soup Kitchen, is down. These and many other local ministries are providing additional resources to our community in this time of pandemic and need your support.

- Our Mission of the Month in June is Habitat for Humanity.
- If you have not completed your Census 2020 materials, and would like some assistance, please let the church office know.
- Michigan's Secretary of State has sent out, in response to the pandemic, applications for absentee ballots for either or both the August and November election. If you have not received a request for these from the Secretary of State's office, you can either fill one out online at <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/> or request the church to mail you one. The deadline for mail applications is July 31, and for in person application is August 5th.



The family of Mary Ellen Sierocki would like to thank the members & friends of Countryside Trinity Church for their thoughtfulness during her recent passing. We appreciate all the prayers, cards of comfort, phone calls and Memorials given in honoring her life.



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

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Taylor Hansen (M = Dana Woodke)
- 4 Marianne Bird
- 4 Kathryn Barnum

- 5 Dan Groom
- 8 Chad Parker
- 10 Randy Jacob
- 12 Fran Prueter
- 13 Kyle Redfield
- 15 Ainslee Mahan
- 15 Aubree Mahan
- 17 Joan Comstock
- 21 Karla Parker
- 21 Casey Redfield
- 22 Brooke Vernon
- 31 Jim Lorenz



QuotesIdeas.com

ANNIVERSARIES JUNE

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

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

- 28 Charles & Irene Ohmer

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

- 8 Louis & Jean Diechman
- 11 Dan & Barb Groom
- 17 Dallas & Jackie Williams
- 29 Darren & Joann Woodke
- 29 Duncan & Sandy Redfield