

Countryside Trinity Church

Connections

June 25, 2020 Edition

From Pastor Brant...

They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh." Genesis 18:9-15

As reflected on Father's Day on Sunday, one of the joys I had has been to give thanks to God for a Father who enjoyed a good laugh. He was not one to tell jokes, he was not a punster, he was not someone who could tell a good story; he could poke fun, he could smile, and he had a twinkle in his China Blue eyes that conveyed a joyful spirit.

I am thinking that one of the reasons this season has been difficult for us is that we haven't been able to gather with each other to laugh. In our gathering time before and after worship, I would always hear the laughter that you all share. I heard stories, jibes, self-deprecation that brings people together and allows us to continue to face the challenges of our lives and our ministries. It brings us hope. Our laughter together is one reason why I am thinking that many of you are hoping for a return to worship. We are in the planning stages of a Sunday afternoon worship experience that will start on July 12th, and we are planning for indoor worship to start on Sunday morning on August 2nd, depending on whether or not the session stills sees that it will be safe for us to do so. I am anticipated our time and laughter together.

In the story above we hear of the laughter that escapes from Sarah when she hears God's ludicrous promise that she and Abraham receive that they will be bringing forth new life in the days to come. "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" is God's response. Good question.

For Abraham and Sarah the thought of not being able to have children was a cause of great sadness. One imagines that they had had lots of time to grieve this loss and come to grips with it; with the lost dreams and hopes, with the despair that comes from misguided thinking that perhaps God had not heard the many times they had fervently asked for a child. The thought that new life would spring forth from them was quite unbelievable. And yet, this is what God does. In due season they are bouncing Isaac on their laps and changing his diaper and celebrating his first steps, all the time laughing with amazement about the grace they had received.

What new life will God bring out of our time away? I would invite you to take some time in the midst of your isolation and time away to ponder the following question: What values do you think are essential for the church to hold on to in the midst of this time when we are away from each other? Laughter is one of them. This I know not only because you expressed it in our annual congregational meeting, but also because of the way you offer it to one another. In this time away, I would invite you to share your stories about the wonderful things God has done. When I mean share, what I am hoping for is that you will write them down, in either your own handwriting, or on a computer and then mail or email them to the church. I will read them through and, with your permission, will either share them through our newsletter, or during the different worship opportunities around which we can gather in the next few months. I do not anticipate that all of the stories will be filled with laughter, but I do imagine that a deeper joy will come through.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

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 search for First Presbyterian Church Saginaw.

Please note, it is the session's intent that we will be able to live stream our services from our church building on August 2nd, even if we are not able to meet together in our building.

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**

Outdoor Worship Series, "Creation Celebrations," to start July 12th at 6:30 pm

The Spiritual Life Team is planning a series of outdoor services starting on July 12th. As we will be outside we will focus on the gifts of beauty and life offered to us by our Loving God. *Please bring with you any "percussion instrument" with which you can make a "joyful noise" that you might be able to express your thanks and joy to God.*

All participants are requested to do the following:

- Enter the building through the doors at the western end (far left) of the church and walk through the hallway to the back yard of the church
- A mask is required. One will be provided if you don't have one.

- Please bring your own lawn chair if you have one. Chairs will be provided for those who don't.
- You are invited to make your offering either before or after the service in a basket in the backyard as you enter or leave.
- You are welcome to come early or stay afterward to fellowship with one another. Please practice appropriate socially distancing protocols if you do.
- Please check the weather as these services will be postponed by severe weather.

These worship services are tentatively scheduled through July and will end when we are able to meet together in our sanctuary.

Return To Worship Taskforce

As of this moment, the session is planning for the church to resume indoor worship on August 2nd, depending upon the state's guidelines for groups of 50 or less. 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 Study will not meet July 2nd, but will resume July 9th at 7pm

On the 9th we will explore one of the most important stories in the life of the church as we look at chapters 10 and 11 of Acts, the conversions of Cornelius and Peter. 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.

These Days Booklets

These Days Booklets for the 2nd Quarter and the new ones for the 3rd Quarter are available and can be picked up on the porch near the office in a plastic box. Take what you need.

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 for July is Emmaus House
- 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.

Take Care,

Brant



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



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