

# Countryside Trinity Church Connections

July 14, 2020

From Pastor Brant...

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11*

Speaking of rain how is the landscape around you? It's my bet that the rain we got last week, even if it wasn't as much as we might hope, was a blessing for you. The season that started off with good rain and brought forth good growth, has lately been hot and dry. My lawn hasn't been so lucky. Parts are brown and crunchy and cutting it feels futile. I can only pray for more rain.

The passage above offers to us the image of rain and snow as signs that embody our hope that the word of God, that is, the purposes, and desires, and intents of God, will find completion and fulfillment. Just as in times of little rain, when there is doubt about whether or not this year's growing season will be successful, we remember times past when the rains did fall, when the crops continued to bring forth their fruit and grain. And, when in the midst of our fears and anxieties, when we are uncertain about how and when God will act, we remember those times when God's power was experienced and known to make God's purposes happen.

In this time of both pandemic and social unrest, just as we scan the horizon for hopeful signs of rain, we scan the world around us to find signs of God's work of redemption and peace. How will God's purposes be worked out when there are such factions in our community and efforts to address issues run into so many barriers of intolerance and woundedness. How do we overcome our long history of racial injustice, our long history of imbalances in economic opportunities, how do we even move forward in educating our children when we are uncertain how to get teachers and children back together in our schools in a way that won't endanger them and our larger community?

It certainly does not include our giving up hope that our efforts to deal with these issues and the others that are part of our community will come to naught. We believe in a God of justice. We believe in a God of compassion. We believe in a God who sees all people as God's children and

who wants all to know and experience life that is abundant and full. We do believe that "God is working God's purpose out as year succeeds to year."

The prophet who offers us the words above took on the overwhelming task of speaking hope to people who had seen their hopes completely crushed. The people who had built their faith on the invincibility of the temple and on their belief that Israel was the promised land promised to them for all eternity had seen both completely swept away so swiftly. They found themselves in exile in a strange land where their beliefs were challenged not only by what was lost, but by the prosperity and riches of Babylon. Everywhere they looked they found their faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob mocked.

In this situation comes this unknown prophet who dares to see God at work in the world. He is reading the political landscape and sees another exodus on the horizon, sees God once again at work to liberate a people living in oppression. This exodus, instead of splitting of the waters, will create "*in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain (Is. 40:3)*. All of nature shares in the joy of the return of the people to Israel. They will once again find themselves in the wilderness, but this crossing will be one of peace, with people confident that God is indeed at work returning them to the land to which they long to return.

*For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;  
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;  
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,  
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

God continues to lead us into a new future if we dare to follow. Do we believe that God will see us through to a time when we can gather safely as a church, and yet find new ways to be the church that gathers around the new technologies of the age to come? Do we believe that with God's help we can heal the wounds brought on by racial injustice, that we can bring release to both the oppressed and the oppressor? Do we believe that with God's help we can bring people together around their differences and thus find a new way forward where people's hopes and fears are validated and celebrated?

We find ourselves in thorny places, places where we are uncomfortable, places where we can hope for greater signs of life. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress, instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle. In places of death new life can come. Let us trust in the power of God to lead us forward into that new life and recommit ourselves to follow God into those places. All of creation speaks of God's power to bring new life. Let us celebrate that power and seek it out.

Take care,

*Brant*

## **Outdoor Worship Series, "Creation Celebrations," continues July 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm**

Our Outdoor Worship Series began on Sunday as we gathered on the back lawn of the church as we will focused on the gifts of creation offered to us by our Loving God. This Sunday we will explore the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares from Matthew 13:24-30. *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. Chairs will be provided for those who don't bring their own.
- 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 invited to seal your offering in a plastic bag a few days before this service. This will help to insure the safety of those counting the money.***
- 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

An outdoor service is also scheduled for Sunday, July 26<sup>th</sup>. Additional services may be scheduled if the session at its meeting on Tuesday, July 28<sup>th</sup> decides to change our current plans to restart worship in the sanctuary on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **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](http://www.YouTube.com), and in the search for First Presbyterian Church Saginaw.

This Sunday Pastor Piper will be preaching on Matthew 13:24-30, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Pastor McCullough will be preaching on Sunday, July 26<sup>th</sup>.

*Please note, it is the session's intent that we will be able to live stream our services from our church building on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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**

## **Return To Worship Taskforce**

As of this moment, the session is planning for the church to resume indoor worship on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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 **Middle** doors in an orderly fashion that maintains proper social distancing of family groups. **Please note this change in the original plan.**
- 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. Ribbons will be used to designate "no seating" areas.
- There will be no choir nor singing. The hymnals are stored away for now to eliminate the need to sanitize them; you are of course welcome to bring your own Bible.
- Baskets will be available at the entrance to the sanctuary where you may place your tithes and offerings at any time. You are invited to seal your offering in a plastic bag a few days before the service. This will help to insure the safety of those counting the money.
- 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. It believes that Jesus Christ is the "sole Lord of the conscience," and that each member has the highest responsibility to do what he or she believes is faithful to that demand and that those who choose to come or not come are serving Christ by honoring their safety and the safety of others.***

**Thursday Night Bible Study will be on hiatus through the summer**

## **Financial Report**

Your faithful giving empowers us to continue our witness to the work of Christ in the world. Our goal for July is \$9,000. In June we collected \$5,700 toward our \$8,500 goal. 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 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 4th and November 3rd elections. By mailing applications, we have ensured that no Michigander has to choose between their health and their right to vote," said Benson. "Voting by mail is easy, convenient, safe, and secure, and every voter in Michigan has the right to do it." According to Benson's office, Michigan voters have embraced this option by a landslide: Officials say they have received about 1.3 million requests for absentee ballots ahead of the upcoming state primary in August -- a 350 percent increase from requests made ahead of the 2016 primary 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 the Absent Voter Ballot Application. Requests to have an absent voter ballot mailed to you must be received by your clerk no later than 5 p.m. the Friday before the election, July 31st. If you're already registered at your current address, you can pick up an absent voter ballot in person at your clerk's office anytime up to 4 p.m. on the day prior to the election, August 3rd.
- Please read closely the rules about when and how to return your ballot. If they are not followed, you risk having your ballot invalidated, as has happened to some voters in states who have hosted primaries earlier this year.

### **These Days Booklets**

These Days Booklets for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter are available and can be picked up on the porch near the office in a plastic box. Take what you need.



### **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

### **SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

- 1 Becky Pequignot
- 3 Rob Halase
- 3 Dora Fitzgerald
- 5 Charles Davis
- 6 Jerry Brachear
- 13 Louis Diechman
- 14 Michael Patrick Groom
- 17 Lois Krzak
- 22 Amanda Dean Groom
- 25 Thomas Kennedy
- 28 Brant Piper
- 29 Tom Ladner
- 30 Vincent Martinez



QuotesIdeas.com

### **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

### **SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

- 9 Roy and Nancy Erndt (1967)
- 9 Shirlee & Roger Scovill (1978)
- 16 Peter & Isabella Dominguez (1961)
- 20 Sidney & Kermit Diggs