

Countryside Trinity Church

Connections

July 21, 2020

From Pastor Brant...

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose". Romans 8:31

The lectionary passage this week from the book of Romans presents us with this bold affirmation. It is one that has sustained us through all sorts of challenges. It can also become a platitude easily misappropriated when someone we love is in a great deal of pain and confusion. It often challenges us to our core as we face the destructive forces in our world which seem to show themselves so often. Work together for good? A pandemic, the murder of an unarmed black man by those entrusted to serve and protect, inadequate health care resources, the most economically vulnerable are the essential workers who have to face the threat of exposure to a disease if our economy is to survive. These are piled on top of already difficult issues around injustices in our legal systems, poverty among a wider portion of our community, and families under stress through social changes. And in the face of these we continue to make what seems like the preposterous and perhaps, to those who suffer deeply in the midst of these situations, insensitive claim - all these things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose? What do we do with such a sweeping claim in the face of such expansive suffering?

Jesus' descriptions of the kingdom of heaven as found in Matthew 13 may help us as we face the contradiction of God's great promise and our very real finitude and failings.

Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed."*

Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast."*

Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field."*

Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea."*

These don't provide us with quick and simple answers. These are rich and complex metaphors. They present us with the themes of transformative smallness, impacting hiddenness, joyous surprise, exponential growth and persistent effort. Mustard seeds get planted and tended. Yeast gets added to other ingredients; there is kneading and also waiting. Treasure must get dug up, unearthed and recognized as something of worth. Nets must be cast, repeatedly, hauled up over and over again, their contents made ready for consumption. The good, life-giving end does not come without energy, patience and days of no or very mixed results. All things work together for

good and this is God's ultimate doing, but we are gifted with the responsibility to participate in that good's emergence.

Jill Duffield, the editor of the Presbyterian Outlook, suggests the following:

In these parables we find our direction about how to begin the work that we trust will allow God's power to infiltrate and transform the world around us. We compare what is to what ought to be, adding the needed ingredients, working them in, letting them rise and kneading some more, until the bread of life emerges from formerly disparate parts and all are fed. We look through the dirt and the rubble, digging until we discover hidden treasure underneath what looked like desolate land and search the landscape for things of worth that reveal what is truly valuable: people, relationships, creation, beauty, mercy, truth, kindness, joy, love. We are the people called to keep casting the nets and fishing for people - all kinds of people whom God will sort out, people who need to know that Christ is for them and we are, too.

Do all things work together for good those who love God? We do indeed trust that the answer is yes, because we believe God's power is at work in all things. We trust that in the smallest of God's seeds shelter can happen to nurture and guide. We trust that God is at work through what we might experience to be futile work to bring care and compassion to our hurting world. We persevere, trusting that our striving is part of God's work to bring redemption to us as individuals as well as to our community.

We are called to be, by our tireless efforts, witnesses that God never abandons us.

Take care,

Brant

Outdoor Worship Series continues July 26th at 6:30 pm

Our Outdoor Worship Series continues this Sunday on the back lawn of the church. This week we will focus on the good news as found in Romans 8, ***If God is for us, who is against us?***

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 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

Our current plans are to start live streaming our service from our sanctuary on Sunday, August 2nd. If this happens, then this Sunday will be our final outdoor service. If not, then additional outdoor services might be scheduled.

Combined Worship Ends This Sunday

This Sunday is the last of our Combined Worship Services with First and Second Presbyterian Churches. Go to www.YouTube.com, and in the search for First Presbyterian Church Saginaw.

The session expresses its appreciation to First and Second Presbyterian Churches for their support and collaboration as we faced the challenge of providing worship services to our community while we are away from one another.

We are thankful for the wide variety of music which enriched our services and for the opportunities provided to our accompanist, Andy Glynn to share his talents.

The pastor expresses his appreciation to Dan Groom for supporting Andy, assisting him in finding the musical pieces appropriate for each service.

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 **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 as it allows you to strengthen your relationship with God. Our goal for July is \$9,000. Our goal for June was \$8,500, of which we collected \$5,600. 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.

Financial Statements

It is the normal process for semi-annual statements to be sent out to members and friends of the congregation at this time of year. As normally done, these statements will be mailed to you. This year, however, if you don't receive an email copy of this newsletter, your statement will be enclosed along with this newsletter. If you do receive an email copy, then yours, of course, will be sent directly to you. Thanks to Lori Halase for her work in preparing these statements, adding them to the envelopes and then mailing them.

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, and for August is
- 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 clerk to mail you an Absent Voter Ballot Application. Requests to have an absent voter ballot mailed to you must be received by no later than 5 pm the Friday before the election, July 31st.
- By 2:00 p.m., August 1: Voters may submit written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive new ballot by mail.
- Up to 4:00 p.m., August 3: Electors may obtain an absent voter ballot in person in the clerk’s office.
- By 4:00 p.m., August 3: Voters may submit written request in person to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive new ballot in the clerk’s office.
- Up to 8:00 p.m., August 4: Election Day registrants may obtain and vote an absent voter ballot in person in the clerk’s office or vote in person in the proper precinct.

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.



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



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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