

Countryside Trinity Church Connections

September 23, 2020

From Pastor Brant...

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.—Genesis 3:6-7 (NRSV)

The session met last night, this time in person for the first time since March. It was a very different experience than being seated around the large table in the lounge. We were spread out, the ten of us, in the fellowship hall, seated at tables so that we were more than 6 feet apart. We used the large screen to Zoom in a member, a process we are getting used to. People were screened as they came in the door, asked questions about their health and possible recent exposures to others who might have Co-VID-19. The infrared thermometer that was purchased was used to check peoples' temperatures, and masks were worn throughout.

In the meeting the session approved a budget for 2021, we heard of the progress Chuck and Roger are making in preparing the manse for selling, we authorized the Spiritual Life Team to create opportunities for small groups to come into the church to watch recordings of the Sunday Service. We struggled with the challenge of holding a congregational meeting for the election of officers when we are choosing to follow state and national guidelines about what it means to meet safely. We denied permission to a group that annually rents the fellowship hall for a family gathering, though we are sad about this, but feel it is important for the sake of our witness and our community.

In all of our debates, both in the session, and also in our community and in our nation, we are trying to create just and safe boundaries that will make for a healthier and more peaceful world. In our nation we watch the struggles of those who are also working to create safe boundaries. The debate about wearing a mask, though it seems a simple and easy enough way to protect ourselves and others, rages. We are concerned about the rules to be followed in our voting, which makes sense as it is a very sacred right that not many in our world have.

In this formative passage from Genesis, we hear again the story of our brokenness, our story concerning how God places before us the invitation to trust in God's desire for us to live a life that is rich and meaningful. It reminds us that God's love is often communicated to us in the boundaries that God sets before us. It is our story of disobedience, how we tend to ignore and even dismiss our limitations pretending that we know all that we need to know for the life abundant. It is foundational to our faith in reminding us who we are and who God created us to be us to be in relationship to God and to one another.

Our story has its setting in a paradise created for the purposes of sustaining humanity and allowing humanity to experience the love and blessings of God. First the man, and then the woman are created, and then God puts a boundary out there for the two to follow, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." The scene is created for living life at its fullest; humanity is given by God the setting needed to enjoy God and creation for all its worth, if only humanity will accept what is offered to it on God's terms. What happens next seems to be at the very center of human nature. There is an invitation to wonder if the limits God has placed before humanity are really essential to follow. There is a desire for more that comes out of our distorted sense of who we really are. The words of the serpent, representative of those distortions from our own anxieties

and of those passed on to us from community invite us to violate the boundaries God has created for us for life. Thinking that we know our limits better than God does, we ignore God's call to live mindful of our relational needs to God. Trusting too much in our own small perceptions of reality, we ignore God's call to live mindful of the needs of all humanity. And in doing so, we destroy essential parts of our humanity.

The story of the garden is our story, the one we live out every day. It demonstrates our refusal to be obedient to God, and to follow God's guidance for what brings life. It is not about one act in the distant past that has forever tainted our lives. It is about the choices we make each moment of our lives when we make them regardless of what God says is best for us. It is about our refusal to take responsibility for our choices, furthering the distortions by blaming them on others, just as the man blames the woman. Our anxiety about whether or not our needs will be met by God invites us to dismiss the needs of others, to lose our empathy towards them and what they are experiencing. Desperate to keep control over those things that we believe, through our distorted knowledge, are good for us, we dismiss the love and wisdom of God.

This last week our nation has mourned the loss of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Supreme Court Justice who sought to follow the law of the land in many different situations in life. Whatever you might think of her views, she was someone who took seriously the importance of creating within the Court an atmosphere wherein the justices were to hear and contemplate the wisdom of the others. Her deep friendship with Antonin Scalia, someone with whom she strongly differed concerning the issues of the law, speaks to her willingness to respect the boundaries of life. She set before us a model of how to act with respect and dignity as we engage with people with whom we disagree, even strongly. She reminds us that there are boundaries in relationships to be followed should we dare to understand both our sinful tendency to think of ourselves as being more important than we are as well as the need for us to accept our limitations with humility and grace. A little hubris around election time can be a good thing.

Take care,

Brant

Virtual Communion on World Communion Sunday, October 4th, 10:30 a.m.

On Sunday, October 4th, World Communion Sunday, we will be offering a virtual celebration of Holy Communion. We recognize that this celebration is one that has its setting around a table and the sharing of bread, but in this time and place the session believes our best choice is to offer it in this way. We are inviting you to experience its power to unite us and strengthen us for lives of service even while we are apart from one another. If you choose to celebrate the Lord's Supper along with us during this service, please have your own bread and juice/wine ready for the celebration. It may add to your experience if you and your family gather together around a table prepared for this in the ways that you see fit. Along with the bread and cup, you might want to have a candle to represent the presence of the Holy Spirit, and a small bowl of water to remind you of your baptism. Work to make your space a sacred space, one in which you present to God your longing for God's presence in your lives.

Online Worship on Sunday Mornings at 10:30 on YouTube CTC Saginaw

We continue to place on our FB public and group pages our order of worship for the day, and we are hopeful that it will enhance your worship experience by offering the words to the hymns and other parts of the service so that you may participate more fully.

It is not the same as being here. We recognize it and continue to pray for the end of our forced isolation due to the virus. We believe God can and use this time to strengthen our ministry, if we seek God's guidance and consolation in this time.

We ask that you are patient with us as we work out the kinks in the technology and learn the finer details of creating audio visual presentations. If you have feedback about any of our digital outreach content, we'd love to hear your gently phrased criticisms.

We ask that you continue to be in prayer for the volunteers who provide assistance for our services, as well as for new volunteers to step up for these positions. If you have an interest in serving in the ministry of the gospel as a camera person, a computer assistant, or a worship planner working with media, please contact the pastor so that you can review the job description and the responsibilities of these positions.

Suspension of Inside Worship Continues

At its meeting on September 22nd, the session affirmed its decision to not permit in person worship. The session will continue to follow the recommendation of the presbytery and the guidelines set out by the Governor concerning indoor gatherings.

Sunday Morning Showings of our Recorded Service at 10:30 AM

Beginning on Sunday, October 11th, both the sanctuary and the fellowship hall will be opened to a limited number of people (9) in each space for those who want to watch the recorded worship service for the week. The session wants to expand our worship opportunities so that we might include those who are not able to participate due to limits in technology. If you want to participate, please follow these guidelines:

1. Call the church office during the week to reserve spots for you and your family members. Spaces in the sanctuary will be assigned first, followed by spaces in the fellowship hall and you will be notified when you arrive. Efforts will be made to rotate seating so that all those who want to worship in the sanctuary will be given an opportunity to do so over time.
2. Masks are required. They are an essential element in keeping one another safe, especially in indoor spaces with limited air movement. There will be masks available free of charge if you need one.
3. Participants will be screened prior to admittance. Questions will be asked concerning his or her present state and possible exposure through others.
4. Temperatures will be taken using an infrared thermometer and those with high temperatures will not be permitted to attend.
5. Participation will be recorded that we might, if needed, contact participants about possible exposures following the service.
6. There will be no social time following the service inside the buildings. You are welcomed to socialize outside before or after the service if you wear masks and keep appropriate physical distance from one another.
7. The service premieres at 10:30 a.m. Please come early that you can be in your seats when the service begins.

Improvements of the Manse

Improvements on the manse are continuing as it is prepared to be listed for sale. The painter is almost complete and a new garage door and opener will soon be installed. Thanks to Chuck Davis and Roger Scovill for their work. As part of their effort, the driveway and walkway near the garage entrance are being replaced so as to improve drainage away from the foundation. If you have any need of large concrete steps, please speak to Roger. They can be yours for free!

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 September is \$8,500. Please remember you can make an online donation through our app, and if you need help with this, or if you want to run your donation by the church, please call the church office. Our online service

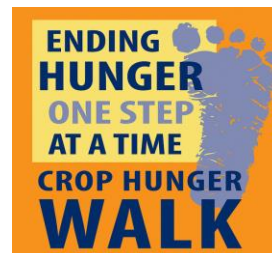
includes its usual time of thanksgiving and dedication for our gifts, so you may want to have your money and envelopes or perhaps even your phone ready so that you can more fully participate in this time.

Christian Outreach

Please remember our local ministries during this time, as they work to provide additional resources to our community in this time of pandemic and need your support.

Crop Walk

Marcia Lacker reports there will be a "Virtual Crop Walk" this year on Sunday, October 11, 2020. It will be a little different this year as those participating will not be walking in a group - but rather in their own neighborhoods. If you are interested in participating - please contact Marcia @ 989 799-0895 to get an envelope. Those wishing to donate can drop off or mail an envelope to the church marked "Crop Walk".



Greeting Cards: Shirlee Scovill continues selling cards each Wednesday in the church parking lot from 1:00-2:00 p.m. Proceeds from the sale of these cards will support the mission work of the Women's Association. In addition, when available, Shirlee is bringing fruits and vegetables from Roger's garden. There may be sweet corn, melon, tomatoes and more! They are giving these items free of charge for those who would like to come pick it up when they have an over-abundance ripe and ready for your enjoyment.

Please wear a mask and remember to practice social distancing. The cards will be arranged differently than in the past and will be on tables next to her van. The cards will be self-service with a container for the money at the tables. Shirlee will be there to answer questions. Shirlee has kept busy during the time we have been home and, therefore, has many cards to choose from – Birthday, Get Well, Sympathy, Thinking of You, Wedding, Anniversary, Retirement, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hope to see you on Wednesdays in the near future.

Facebook Prayer Group: We have created a FB Prayer Group on our newly created FB Page. It is a private group where only those who are invited can see the messages posted for those in need of prayer. If you are on Facebook and would like to be invited, please call Kathy in the office so she can invite you to join.



This week we are praying for Florence "Betty" Burr as she recovers from surgery following a fall which resulted in a broken hip. She would love to receive telephone calls, her number is 989 607-1500. If you would like to send her a card, she is currently at Great Lakes Rehab Center, 4180 Tittabawassee Rd, Saginaw, MI 48604 in room 206.

Don't forget to let Kathy in the office know about any change of yours or a family member's address, phone numbers or email addresses so she can update the church records and mailing lists. Please email changes to countryside@ctcsaginaw.com or leave a message at 989 793-0125. Thank you.





Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Zachary Plater
- 2 Drew Pequignot
- 2 Dan Groom
- 3 Joseph Ruth
- 5 Mary Longstreth
- 6 Amanda J. Groom
- 11 Dick Easlick
- 13 Ethan Parker
- 13 Ruth Marsh
- 13 Charlotte Armstrong
- 13 Jerry Paquette
- 14 Mike Yusaf
- 14 Tania Yusaf
- 16 Randy Groom
- 17 Elizabeth Jacob
- 19 Christopher Davis
- 22 Jean Anne Miller
- 22 Pat Denno
- 25 Ezra Yusaf
- 26 Ashley Huizar (Scovill)
- 25 Aaron Plater
- 27 Marie Lemmer
- 29 Scott Jacob
- 29 Lori Halase

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Paige Pequignot
- 3 Sam Nolan
- 7 Judi Westendorf
- 7 Christine (Dowling) Greenwood
- 8 Duncan Redfield
- 9 Stephanie Plater
- 10 Anjel Vernon
- 11 Dave Fitzgerald
- 12 Jacob Plater
- 15 Dick Woodke
- 16 Pervez Yusaf
- 19 Martin Bethune
- 19 Bethany Scovill
- 20 Judith Lorenz
- 21 Ronald Miller
- 22 Jacob Groom
- 22 Lucas Gonzales
- 23 Virginia Jarvi
- 28 Jennifer Nolan-Heyn
- 28 Avis Leach

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Rhashell Hunter
- 8 Garth Westendorf
- 12 Melissa Paterson (Shalhoup)
- 16 Alexa Mahan
- 17 Nancy Easlick
- 18 Paula Plater
- 22 Ed Halase
- 24 Nancy Scott
- 25 Brecque Woodke
- 26 Craig Gates

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Aaron & Paula Plater
- 8 Robert & Marie Lemmer
- 10 Eric & Sue Smith

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 17 Jerry & Virginia Brachear (1962)
- 22 Dave & Dora Fitzgerald (2014)

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 15 Joseph & Doris Ruth (1956)
- 24 Bruce & Patricia Denno (1984)
- 27 Dick & Nancy Easlick