

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church



The Teller June, 2020

FROM BISHOP WILLIAM O. GAFKJEN (MAY 22, 2020) REGARDING IN-PERSON WORSHIP

In light of what President Trump said today about faith communities gathering in-person for worship immediately, I reassert my earlier recommendation to the people and communities of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod that in-person gatherings for worship continue to be suspended, at least into June and probably longer.

The church does not need to re-open. The church – the body of Christ – has been open and working all along. Most of the congregations and other ministries of this synod have continued to engage in active proclamation of the Word, fellowship, faith formation, and service to and with the neighbor throughout this wilderness, albeit in different ways. We can continue to engage these ministries for as long as we need to, even as we begin to plan to gather in-person and in new ways when it is safer and we are better prepared to protect God’s beloved. Yes, the ministries of the body of Christ are “essential services,” but we don’t need to sit in a sanctuary to experience and share them.

“‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other” (1 Corinthians 10:23-24). While something like gathering in-person for worship might be “lawful”, that does not mean we should

necessarily do it. Rather, we are called to keep our focus on doing what is beneficial, what builds up, and what addresses not only our own needs and well-being, but the needs and well-being of others.

“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:13f).

We are not only freed from enslaving powers and attempts to appease God, but we are freed for bearing Christ’s love to the neighbor. Freedom in Christ empowers self-giving love and service to others and to the world...especially at times like this.

I know that it’s not easy to stay at a distance from siblings in Christ. It’s incredibly difficult for many of us to not be worshipping together in person. It’s incredibly hard for me, too. I long to be in the physical presence of congregations, leaders and ministries, to gather in person with groups of deacons and pastors, to preach and preside in person, to pass the peace, to share a cup of coffee in the narthex, to laugh and pray and wonder and weep together.

But we who bear the mark of the cross of the crucified and risen Christ on our brow and the seal of his Spirit on our hearts have a particular call: to let cross-formed love for our neighbor take precedence over the urge to satisfy our own needs and desires, as appropriate or well-intentioned as they may be. And we, of all people, can be patient in caring for ourselves and our neighbors. We know that God is at work, just as God was at work in and through the cross and empty tomb.

In an early treatise entitled “On the Good of Patience,” Bishop Cyprian suggested that when Christians entrust themselves to the patient God, who steadfastly and persistently continues to work hope, healing, and reconciliation in the world, and live patiently with themselves and others, they shine with the light of Christ in ways that both run against the impatience of the cultures in which they live and draw others toward Christ.

May God give us such patience and peace now and in the days ahead!

Ponder Anew...what the Almighty can do!
Belong. Believe. Be Sent.
Share Jesus Christ for Life!

Our mission statement. One developed many years ago but that has stood the test of time. Short. Concise. Easy to say. And now, thanks to Alan, can be sung as well. What does it really mean? For us as a congregation and for us who call Zion home? I'm going to take the next few months to look at just that. I invite you to share with me if and how you connect with the statement and any thoughts, ponders, feelings you have.

As I have begun reflecting on the statements as a whole and the words individually, one of the first questions I have to ask is "How has this changed due to the pandemic? Zion is not the same as we were and we can't totally go back to our "normal". Some things will be the same but there will be changes and adjustments. So as we look at our mission statement, I have in the back of my mind the Bishops words "**Listen Deeply Think Creatively Act Boldly**" How might we do that in this context? I invite you to "*Ponder Anew*" with me.

The first is *Belong*-
What does it mean to "belong"? Oxford Dictionary says: "1. To be the property of. 2. Be a member or part of (a particular group, organization or class). Interestingly, the time when the word belong was most use was in the 1840's. It's had a steady, gradual decline since then, with a slight increase in the last 10 years.

The first definition refers (or should) to inanimate objects. "It did not belong to them."

The second one seems to fit better. To whom or what do we belong? Do we belong in name only? Belong in our thinking? Our actions? Our beliefs? How we live? For a designated time period? In other words, is our sense of belonging deeply embedded and felt or more surface oriented?

In the explanation of our statement, we say that the Lord is calling Zion to *live out* its calling to *belong to Jesus Christ and to each other by virtue of our baptism*. I love this but what do we really mean? How would we explain *living out to Jesus and each other by baptism* to someone who wasn't familiar with our church language and practices.

How do we help them to understand what this means to us? This is especially important when now, in our current times, we are having 3 times as many people listen to the sermon and music online as in the pews, it is

essential for us to be able to articulate this for non-church folks.

What came to mind for me, though certainly is only one way of looking at it, is by the word "beloved". As people who claim Jesus as our Lord, who profess the God as Creator and who count on the Holy Spirit to lead us, the word beloved seems to fit beautifully.

When I think of my "beloved" in human terms, I think of Harry. As my husband, my life partner, one whom I love so deeply I can get tears in my eyes, he is the epitome of my beloved. And I am his. Not owned, not even just that we are a "couple", but one to whom our lives are deeply intertwined. And it doesn't matter whether it is in wonderful times or times of sorrow or when we are angry as anything, there is a safety and security and peace found in our relationship.

If we can feel that on a human level, how much more deeply can we connect on a divine level with our Triune God? It is truly in our baptism, though not limited to that, when, as God declared Jesus as his "Beloved Son", we, too, are declared "Beloved". This is a belonging, a connectedness that makes it difficult to describe in mere words. Henry Nouwen, in his book, *Life of the Beloved*, is speaking to his friend, trying to describe this. "...all I hope is that you can hear these words as spoken to you with all the tenderness and force that love can hold. My only desire is to make these words reverberate in every corner of your being- "You are the Beloved." When we can grasp that, we begin to have an inkling of what it means to belong- to Jesus and to each other. And in that belonging, we can only live it out deeply, fully. But there is a whole lot of human stuff that can get in our way of experiencing that sense of belovedness and belonging- insecurity, worthlessness, anger, hurt, etc. And that is why it is an Act of God, to name us Beloved, regardless of our humanness. To claim us and say we belong. In that belonging, we then reach out to others. We are *able* to reach out to others. And how do we do that effectively and sincerely, especially now. Virtually? Differently than we have in the past? What does it mean that we have begun using the word Belong more in recent years? Can we have more of an impact on people's sense of belonging?

What do you think? How would you describe it?

Blessings to each of you as together we share Jesus Christ for Life, albeit in a different way!

Pr. Amy



To Daniel's Place for their continued dedication & service during these times. You truly are essential!
To the Council for your dedication & faithfulness in navigating our congregation during these trying times. We appreciate your hard work & continued desire to keep us all safe.

To Brian and Cheryl Spratt for deep cleaning the church to help keep us and others safe from COVID-19.



Current: Robert & Lois Dowd, Jon Perkins, Elizabeth Schilling, Linda Rager Hampton, George Killian and family, Clayton Marcum

Ongoing: Peggy Gilbert, Barbara & Dan Speicher, Mara Joy Nelson, Owen Vannoster and his family, Pastor Judy, and Jayden Plotner

Homebound: Marie Betten-Niccum, Bo & Joanne Boettcher, Nancy Coble, John Gaerte, Betty Hamlin, Ruth Hauser, Betty Lawrenz, Vada Lee Nixon

ANNOUNCING:

Lynn Losby has agreed to serve as our COVID Coordinator. With her medical background & knowledge, she will help us make decisions & guidelines about transitioning back to worship and activities in a way that keeps us safe & healthy. Thanks Lynn!

June Birthdays



- 1 Clayton Marcum
- 2 Patrick Rosenbarger
- 3 Brian Spratt
- 4 Lynn Losby

June Baptisms



- 1 Erika Kambs
- 5 Ruth Ann Schlitt
- 6 Bill Meinert
- 8 Cheryl Working
- 19 Bob Dowd
- 30 Von Freiden



June Anniversaries

- 12 Jack & Deb Vineyard
- 26 Bob & Sally Krouse





*From the rising of the sun
to its setting the name of
the LORD is to be praised.
Psalm 113:3*

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