APRIL 2020

Reflections

by Pastor Jay

> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Peter 1:3*
>
> *But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31*

Greetings to all my brothers and sisters in Christ! Peace be with you!

To say that we're experiencing some bizarre and challenging times would be a gross understatement! So much going on in our world today — wars, conflicts, persecution, violence, crime, natural disasters, terrorism, economic uncertainty, unemployment, disease, death - to name but a few. We fear for our children's future, for our families, for our financial future; we fear for our safety. Worry and anxiety can overwhelm us like a heavy dew descending upon us in the darkness of a moonless night - choreographing our every move and decision.

We want to cry out, "How long O God!? When will this end? How do we cope through this crazy onslaught of fear in our lives and the lives of our loved ones?" … …

Even now, as I sit here and write this, I just received a text from a fellow pastor who had a member of his church lose a close friend to COVID-19 virus. It's real and it's *happening!*

We know that not all days are filled with grace and growing. There are times of struggle along times of peace. Times of sadness alongside times of joy. Times when we feel we have been given more than we can handle. Some people even try to assuage these paradoxical feelings by saying, "God will not give us more than we can bear;" but they're usually NOT the folks *experiencing* "something" more than they can bear! But if you're the one living with chronic illness, or recently lost someone near and dear to your heart … It can make you wonder, "Where IS God in all of this?"

And yet, it's not God who is creating the pain and suffering … Who "takes" our loved ones away from us. Rather, our God loves each of us unconditionally! Who KNOWS and SHARES in our pain and suffering through the pain and death of Jesus Christ! Whom we can turn to when we hurt so bad we can't even imagine going on, feeling like we don't even WANT to go on at times.

Jesus IS there to comfort us, embrace us, hold us - CARRY US when need be - and *see* us through. Thanks be to God who gives us Hope to Life in Christ! … Our Lord who has promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Henri Nouwen paraphrases this when he writes, "Hope frees us to live in the present, with the deep trust that God will never leave us."

In one of the following articles, *Practice: Lamentation for a Time of Crisis,* referencing Aaron Graham and his, *"Lament," An American Lent Devotional,"* we read about prayers of lamentation and how we so often misconstrue them as though we are weak or lacking in faith. But that's simply not true! "We need to be reminded that our cries are not too much for God. God laments with us. In fact, God wants us to come to the Divine Presence in our anger, in our fear, in our loneliness, in our hurt, and in our confusion" (Richard Rohr, "Complaining to God," Tikkun, vol. 23, no. 3 (May/June 2008), 12-13).

This is our Hope! Our Faith! Our Trust in God! The writers of the Old and New Testaments speak repeatedly of trust and confidence in God and God alone! To throw our whole hearts, minds, bodies and souls into the care of God! *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11)

Yes, these are strange times. And while we may have to separate - practice our "social distancing" - we are all unified through God's Grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. Read the Psalms. Lament. But also KNOW that you are never alone; Christ *forever* abides with you! As the Apostle Paul wrote:

> *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Christ, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ's Love for you all!

Pastor Jay

Scripture

Psalm 46
(Martin Luther based his famous hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, on this psalm)

[1]God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
[2]Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
    though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
[3]though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
[4]There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
    the holy habitation of the Most High.
[5]God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
    God will help it when the morning dawns.

6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.
8 Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.
10 "Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."
11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalm 91

(Verses in Psalm 91 inspired the writing of the hymn, *On Eagles' Wings*.)

1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
2 will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
4 he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
5 You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
8 You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,
10 no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.
11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
12 On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
13 You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
14 Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
15 When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
16 With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

Romans 14:18
If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Wise Words from Martin Luther written in 1527 concerning the Plague (a pandemic)

When Martin Luther was dealing with The Black Death plague, he wrote these wise words that can help inform the way we approach things happening in our world right now.

> "I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God." (Luther's Works Volume 43 pg 132 the letter "Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague" written to Rev. Dr. John Hess)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leadership During Social Distancing

If we cannot hold public meetings such as congregation council meetings during a pandemic, how does leadership make decisions. Our constitution and bylaws determines how this can be done.

C12.13. The Congregation Council and its committees may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference and, to the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

C13.01.01 The Executive Committee may conduct Congregation Council business in emergencies, subject to the approval of a simple majority of the Congregation Council at its next regular meeting."

The 2020 Executive Committee is composed of President Mike Cocayne, Vice President Michael Knock, Secretary Jolene Duschen, Treasurer Mark Oppedahl, and Pastor Jay Ilten.

Worship During Social Distancing

It is now clear that April is too soon for in-person worship to resume in congregations. Most of us have already begun to grieve the prospect of being apart in Holy Week and on Easter. But when public health is at stake, being apart is the loving thing to do. Do not lose heart. The tomb is empty. The Risen Christ is with us.

Sunday Worship
We have developed a plan for online worship services with other Dubuque area Lutheran churches in partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary. Our plan is to continue to worship together using these means until public worship services are held once again. You will be kept posted weekly with instructions or if plans change.

To participate in live worship via Zoom, copy and paste or click on this link:
[https://wartburgseminary.zoom.us/j/887508411]
People may, also, participate on any phone.
Call (646) 558-8656 and enter the Meeting ID/code 887 508 411#.
Sunday worship services will be at **9:00 a.m.**

Changes or Additions
Pastor Jay will send announcements via email about any changes to the above or other possible observations during Holy Week (Maundy Thursday and Good Friday).

Council Highlights

from March 2020 meeting

- The Open Closet only served 100 people at the March 7th event, possibly due to the flu virus (this was pre-federal mandate of no gatherings of 10+ people). Visitor's to the closet that day were required to use sanitizer upon entering and leaving the closet area.
- Dolphin Cabinetry will install donated cabinets in Salzmann Hall in the near future. We would like to purchase some new kitchen cabinets with Memorial funds.
- Party with a Purpose (to benefit Almost Home) is scheduled for Friday August 7th at Hotel Julien.
- In the near future, a new security system will be installed with swipe ID cards. This system will be installed and donated to St. John's through a gracious donation by one of Pastor Jay's cousin, Joel.
- St. John's will host the May 17th meeting for Interfaith Green Coalition. DDCO recently presented a program about the Marshallese on behalf of a Social Worker who works closely with this population.
- Council voted and approved to donate a portion of the Schmalz bequest to Boys/Girls Club for their Feed the Kids program.

Quotes

“An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.” – Henry David Thoreau
“Only through love can we obtain communion with God.” —Albert Schweitzer

Treasurer's Report

General income was $2,441 short in February, for a year−to−date shortfall of $4,059. There is $37,665 left in the general fund for future shortfalls.

February general income and expense
Income: $9,767 ($20,995 year-to-date)
Expense: $12,209 ($25,054 ytd)
Shortfall: $2,441 ($4,059 ytd)

Financial Contributions

During this time when services are suspended, everyone is encouraged to send their offering to the church office. The mission of the church continues!

Electronic givers: Thank you for your continued support!
Others: If you've ever considered setting up electronic giving, now is an ideal time. Contact treasurer Mark Oppedahl at (563) 580-4495 or copy and paste or click on [markoppedahl@gmail.com] for more information.

Lifelong Lutheran Learners

Join Lifelong Lutheran Learners as we study the book of Galatians.

Since we cannot meet in person this month, we will try something new. Read the chapter scheduled for the week, submit your comments and questions to me and I will then compile and send these out to all who are participating.

Contact me via e-mail to have your name added to the list of participants to receive the schedule and other communications. Sharon Speckhard, [sdspeckhard@gmail.com].

The Messenger

The Messenger is more than a newsletter. Typical church newsletters are short. They contain a brief message from the pastor or president, and short announcements of past, current and future events. But the Messenger contains so much more. Pastor Jay provides longer reflections on which was may meditate, timely Scripture Readings, Christian educational material, and opportunities for members to share things about their ministries. Oh, and, yes, sometimes the pastor finds other relevant things such as quotes to sprinkle here and there.

Church Office Hours

Church Office hours have changed. They are currently 8:00am-12:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday

More Quotes

"There will come a time when you believe everything is finished.
That will be the beginning." —Louis L'Amour
"This above all; to your own self be true." —William Shakespeare

Articles, Spiritual Practices, and More

The Almost Home

As the 2019-2020 Shelter Season comes to a close, I would like to share some demographics about the men who we have served. People all have preconceived ideas about who is homeless, we want to put them into one simple category.

Guest House Coordinator, Chris Berlin has submitted the following data: 9% were in the age range of 18 -30 years of age, 26% were in the 30-39 year range, 30% were in the 40-49 year range, and 35% were over 50 years of age—one man was 83 years old (we were able to reunite him with his sister and he moved in with her.)

The men we sheltered recognized with the following racial categories as used by the US Census: 83% were White American, 16% Black or African American and 1% as Asian American or American Indian.

As the spread of COVID-19 has reached pandemic levels, I brought the Almost Home Team together to think about our core values. We agreed that everything we do here is centered on others, not ourselves or the numbers—we have to have numbers because grantors are looking for impact. Our values are about humility and solving for others' needs, not our own.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly created a challenging and uncertain time for our organization and our ability to provide services to those who need them the most. We currently are sheltering 4 men, all are working and awaiting apartments. We have them spaced 10 feet apart. They are asymptomatic. Their bedding and clothing is washed on a sanitary cycle. The shelter, handrails, bathrooms, Intake Office, and Lobby are cleaned twice daily; we use a cleaner approved by the Centers for Disease Control. If any staff member uses the church office, we wipe down the door handles, phone, table, etc.

Ruth Pugh, Open Closet Coordinator, reports that the Open Closet will accept referrals and emails and will provide clothing and bedding by appointment only. One family member preferable, but we understand that some will have to bring their children. They will enter through the back door directly into the Open Closet. If possible, we will have what they need already chosen and bagged. We have been using social media to get the word out. Ruth handed out cards to people this past Thursday and we have asked key members of the downtown neighborhoods to get the word out—there is a remarkable grapevine.

We are suspending acceptance of clothing donations at this time. Our rails and shelves are full, as is our storage areas. I will keep you updated about any new developments. Know that the Almost Home Team will continue your ministries, as long as we are permitted to do so by the City of Dubuque.

Gwen Kirchhof
Executive Director of Almost Home

Health Beat …

COVID-19: Key words to know

Glossary

- Asymptomatic (Symptomatic) - An individual is asymptomatic when they don't how any symptoms. Conversely, someone is symptomatic when they do exhibit symptoms.
- Community transmission**-** Community transmission occurs when a virus starts appearing in people who haven't had any known contact with an infected individual or travelled to an area where it is present.
- Epidemic**-** An epidemic is a large outbreak of a disease in a short period of time. Epidemics often happen when a new disease emerges or if something happens to make people less immune to a disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) said the number of cases in an epidemic can vary according to the types of disease and population that is exposed.
- Pandemic- A pandemic is typically declared when an epidemic has spread to multiple continents or countries. It has sometimes been called a "global epidemic." On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the spread of COVID-19 a pandemic.
- Flattening the curve**-** When health officials say they're focusing on "flattening the curve," it means they're putting in place interventions and restrictions to slow the spread of a virus so there isn't a large spike of cases in a short period of time. The intention is to keep the number of infections manageable so that health-care systems aren't overwhelmed.
- Incubation**-** The incubation period is the amount of time it takes for an infected person to start showing symptoms, if there are symptoms. For COVID-19 specifically, the WHO says the incubation period is estimated to be between one to 14 days.
- Lockdown, Shelter-in-Place**-** Many governments around the world have initiated lockdowns in cities, regions, or the entire country. While there are variations on the specific measures, generally speaking, these have included government-imposed restrictions on movement and closures of non-essential businesses. In some countries people who ignore the rules can be subject to fines or even jail time.
- N95 mask (respirator) - While many people are using facemasks as a physical barrier to prevent the spread of COVID-19, others have resorted to N95 respirators.N95 respirators are respiratory protective devices designed to fit closely to the face and provide efficient filtration of airborne particles. The N95 designation means it can block at least 95 per cent of very small particles.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) - In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) lists gloves, medical masks, goggles, face shields, gowns, and aprons as personal protective equipment. The equipment is intended to be worn by health-care workers and anyone else who may be in close contact with a COVID-19 patient in order to protect them selves and prevent transmission of the virus.
- Quarantine- Quarantine is a restriction of movement that is typically placed on people who were likely exposed to a contagious disease, such as COVID-19.Individuals, families, and entire communities can be put into quarantine. They can be mandatory or voluntary, depending on the situation.

- Self-isolation- Individuals can voluntarily put themselves in “self-isolation,” typically at home, if they suspect they have been exposed to a virus, but they’re not showing any symptoms. They’re advised to not have any contact with others during the period of isolation. For example, if they have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for a disease, they may go into a self-isolation for a period of time to avoid further spread.
- Social distancing - The term essentially means people should stay away from public spaces with large gatherings of people. It also means individuals should maintain a certain amount of distance from each other. In the case of COVID-19, public health officials advising keeping a six feet distance from others.

Fudge Bake Off Recipe

(Or since fudge is cooked and not baked, should it be called a Fudge Cook-Off?)

In the March issue of *The Messenger* we reported on the Fudge Bake Off held on February 14th. As promised here is April Ahlborn’s winning recipe.

Cherry Chip Fantasy Fudge

3 cups sugar
3/5 c butter or margarine
2/3 cup evaporated milk
1 jar 7oz marshmallow cream
1 tsp vanilla
1 bag white chocolate chips
1 10oz jar maraschino cherries - drained and chopped

- Butter the bottom of a 9 X 13 inch pan and set aside.
- Bring the sugar, butter and evaporated milk to a roiling boil in a large sauce pan on medium heat, stirring constantly.
- Cook 4 minutes or until the candy thermometer comes to 234 degrees.
- Remove from heat and add the chips, marshmallow cream and vanilla.
- Stir until smooth.
- Add the maraschino cherries and stir again.
- Pour into prepared pan and let cool.
- Enjoy!!

And Still More Quotes

“The most common form of despair is not being who you are.” —Søren Kierkegaard

“Each today, well-lived, makes yesterday a dream of happiness and each tomorrow a vision of hope. Look, therefore, to this one day, for it and it alone is life.” —Sanskrit poem

Spiritual Practices

Practice: Lamentation for a Time of Crisis
Intelligently responding to the Coronavirus demands that we access resources of physical, emotional and spiritual resilience. One practice Christianity has developed to nurture resilience is lamentation. Prayers of lamentation arise in us when we sit and speak out to God and one another—stunned, sad, and silenced by the tragedy and absurdity of human events. . . Without this we do not suffer the necessary pain of this world, the necessary sadness of being human.

Walter Brueggemann, points out that even though about one third of the Psalms are psalms of “lament,” these have been the least used by Catholic and Protestant liturgies. We think they make us appear weak, helpless, and vulnerable, or show a lack of faith. So we quickly resort to praise and thanksgiving. We forget that Jesus called weeping a “blessed” state (Matthew 5:5) and that only one book of the Bible is named after an emotion: Jeremiah’s book of “Lamentation.”

In today's practice, Reverend Aaron Graham reflects on the elements found in prayers of lament. I hope that you will find in his words and in the text of Psalm 22 a way to voice your own complaints, requests, and trust in God, who is always waiting to hear.

We need to be reminded that our cries are not too much for God. [God] laments with us. In fact, [God] wants us to come to the [Divine Presence] in our anger, in our fear, in our loneliness, in our hurt, and in our confusion.

Each lamenting Psalm has a structure.

They begin with a complaint. . . that things are not as they should be. They turn to a request. God, do something! Rescue me! Heal me! Restore me! Show mercy! Laments end with an expression of trust. Laments end with the reminder that God is setting things right, even though it often seems so slow.

It is right for our laments to turn towards a reminder that God is in control and about the business of righting all things made wrong. Consider praying these words found in Psalm 22, or choose another passage of lament. Before you pray, ask God to speak to you. . .

> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
> Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God,
> I cry by day, but you do not answer,
> and by night, but I find no rest.
> Yet you are holy,
> enthroned on the praises of Israel.
> In you our fathers trusted;
> they trusted, and you delivered them.
> To you they cried and were rescued;
> in you they trusted and were not put to shame (Psalm 22:1-5).

CALENDAR

No public meetings are scheduled at this time during the month of April 2020.
Should the situation change you will be notified by e-mail or regular mail.

WORSHIP

Until further notice:

Live via internet on ZOOM: [https://wartburgseminary.zoom.us/j/887508411]
Live via telephone: 646-558-8656, entering Meeting ID/code 887 508 411#.

April 05	Palm/Passion Sunday	9:00 a.m.
April 12	Resurrection of Our Lord	9:00 a.m.
April 19	Second Sunday of Easter	9:00 a.m.
April 26	Third Sunday of Easter	9:00 a.m.

PRAYER CONCERNS

We pray for these people during worship on Sunday mornings. You are encouraged to continue to pray for them in your personal prayers.

Betty and Rich Esser, Jennifer, Debra, Liam, Carter, Janet, Eleanor, Sheila, Rosie, Lois, Rob, Carolyn, and the family of Juanita Barrett.

BIRTHDAYS

01 – Brandon Hillebrand
05 – Julie Theis
08 – Robert Gomoll
10 – Carole Adams
13 – Paul Largent
14 – Eric Bergman
19 – Pat Cocayne
20 – Sam Kenniker
25 – David Theis

ANNIVERSARIES

04 – Michael & Jolene Duschen
14 – David & Lois Hartman
17 – Michael & Sharon Donahue
18 – Tom, Jr. & Rachael Hillebrand
28 – Paul & Ellen Largent

Remember to check your email for announcements and changes.

St. John Ev. Lutheran Church
1278 White Street
Dubuque, IA

St. John's Mission Statement:
"Showing Jesus' love
by
inviting, welcoming,
worshiping,
and
serving".

Pastor, Rev. Jay Ilten, (563) 543-8882, jayilten@gmail.com
Parish Nurse, Shirley Cocayne, (563) 556-3859 or scoke2@aol.com
Contemporary Music Director, Barb Keough — keoughb@mercyhealth.com
Traditional Music Director, Carolyn Oppedahl — carolyn@oppedahl.com
Almost Home Executive Director, Gwen Kirchhof —
execdirector@almosthomedbq.org
Secretary, April Alhborn **—** stjohnslcoffice@gmail.com
Custodian, Pierce Kohn
Church office - stjohnslcoffice@gmail.com
Church Website: stjohnselcadbq.org
St. John's Cemetery, Tim Hedrick, (563) 581-5283 — tenpindad10@aol.com
Church Office Hours — 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM Monday,Tuesday and Thursday