

No Middle Person

In my church newsletter article of August 4, I shared that I had written a study guide on C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* which I started in 2018 and have been editing ever since. In the weeks since that article I have gotten serious about getting it published. Truth is, I was afraid to do so in the past. When you embark on an endeavor such as this you learn some new things, and sometimes those things are not pleasant. One thing I discovered is that, as a writer, you do not send a manuscript, well alone an idea for a book, directly to a publisher. Instead, you have to find a literary agent to do your bidding with established publishers. That is the first, and probably the highest, hurdle to getting published.

Each literary agent, or agency for whom they work, has different requirements about what you send to them for consideration. Some only want an query email with a summary of the book you want published, something about you and if you're already published, and personal marketing ideas. Another agency I contacted just wanted an email with a synopsis of the book and the first five pages attached. I first thought that, if I have to do all of this work, why would I need an agent? Why not send it directly to a publisher? I soon discovered, much to my chagrin, that this is all a part of the screening process. The bottom line is that potential agents want to know that you are passionate about your creation before they will consider you as a client. So far, I've been rejected by two agents, and learned that two more are not considering potential clients for the rest of 2020. The personal lesson for me is that rejection does test one's resolve, but I will keep trying.

As I thought about what to write this week of Christmas on our walk of faith as Christ's disciples at Lake Lotawana Community United Methodist Church, my mind wandered back to this process of (hopefully) getting a book published. Is there is a larger lesson that can be gleaned from my experience of wanting to be a published writer? On the surface, there appears to be no similarities that can be drawn between the two, but that doesn't mean that something can't be learned. Upon further reflection yesterday, I found that lesson.

There is a misconception within Christianity that an individual must go through an "agent" of sorts in order to get to God, just like I have to go through a literary agent to get to a publisher. That is a false teaching within Christianity. You and I have direct access to God. That is what Christmas is all about. When we have a relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, we have a direct relationship with God through the mystery of the holy Trinity. You do not need an intermediary, even if that "agent" is me. As your pastor, I am here to help you in developing or strengthening your relationship with God through Christ our Lord, but the heavy lifting in maintaining that relationship must be done by you, and often that maintenance is done in times of stress and difficulty.

Each Christmas season reminds us that, in fact, we don't have to go to God; God has come to us in the Christ Child, Emmanuel, "God with us." God initiated our holy relationship in the form of a small, helpless, and innocent child that is totally dependent upon his parents. That is a relationship of which we are all familiar, and it is a helpful image to seeing that the door is now open so that we can have that relationship with God through that same Christ Child. In Christ's life, death, and resurrection we have access to the grace in which we now stand (as Paul puts it in Romans 5). Our awareness of God's grace is formed and strengthened in dozens of ways on our walk of faith, and we can increasingly become more and more dependent upon God, especially in the difficult moments of life.

During this strange Christmas season due to the pandemic, maybe now is the time to start that relationship, your faith walk with God through Christ our Lord. It bears repeating; that is a personal relationship, between you and God. While a middle person is not absolutely necessary, they are sometimes helpful in giving another perspective on what inhibits your holy relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

If you are like me and already on a faith walk with Christ Jesus, then this Christmas is a time to assess where we are as we face a new year in ten days. Am I moving forward and finding new ways to serve my Lord and Savior? Or have I stopped on that journey for some reason and now find myself spiritually (emotionally and rationally) stuck and unable to move forward?

Whatever the case may be for you, my prayer for you this Christmas is to identify with the Christ Child, sense the love God has for you regardless of the past, find other perspectives and role models that help you visualize what that holy relationship looks like, and start trusting God again in 2021.

Yours in Christ our Lord,

Pastor Tom

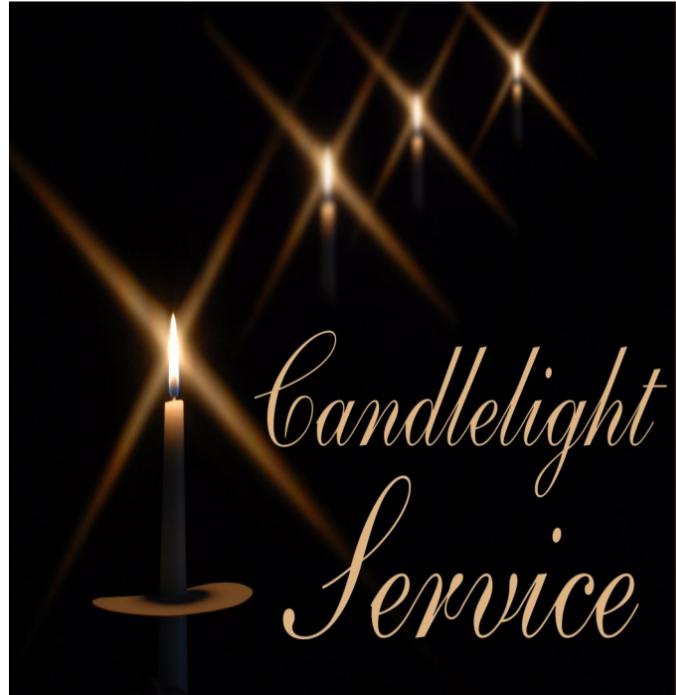


A silhouette of a nativity scene against a dark blue night sky filled with stars. A bright, multi-pointed star shines from the top center, casting a beam of light down on the figures. The figures include Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in a manger, with other animals visible.

*Join us for our Virtual
Christmas Eve Service*

at 8:00pm

Online at Facebook/LLCUMC

A graphic for the Candlelight Service featuring a lit candle in a holder on the left. Several other candles are visible in the background, their flames creating a starburst effect against a dark background.

*Candlelight
Service*

Covid has changed the way we are worshipping this Christmas Eve, but that doesn't mean we can't share in the beautiful gathering of our Candlelight Service. We ask that everyone light a candle, either alone or with your family while watching the Christmas Eve Virtual Service. We would love to see your Christmas spirit, so please share a photo to help us all feel the peace and joy of this day even though we are apart. If you would like to come by the office and pick up a candle and holder please feel to contact Tonia and she will have them ready for a quick and safe pickup.

Office: 816-578-4544

Email: secretaryllcmc@gmail.com

Blue Jean Christmas

This year our church once again partnered with Mason Elementary to provide new clothing for children of needy families as identified by the school counselor. Because of your extraordinary generosity in the past, we had sufficient funds remaining in our Blue Jean Christmas account to fully support the 2020 Blue Jean Christmas! We were able to purchase two pants and shirt outfits for 22 local children very much in need of new, warm clothes. The Mason principal and counselor both expressed their sincere thanks to our congregation for our many years of support to this local partnership. It is truly a blessing to be a part of a congregation that so graciously shares its resources with those in need in our local community!

Thank you!
Lee Fuerst
Church Council Chair



On Going: Les Case, Wade Davis, Roger Grable, Richard Fuerst, Winnie Fuerst, Harvey Geary, Michael Hatfield, Linda Koley, Shane Miley, Nancy Rowe, all the families who have lost loved ones or are sick from the Covid Virus

Depression and Mental Health: Robby Sherrod

Strength and Healing: Gene Crist, Graves family, Mike McMillin, Kirk Morehead and family,

DJ Petty, Dennis Rogers, Andrew White, Luke, Emma, Leih

Missions: Kenyan G-Marc Project, Chics for Chicks, Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Harvester's Food Bank, Lazarus Ministries, Tarsney Lake Families, Congregation de Mellier, Heart and Soul Children's Learning Center

Please contact the office to update or add prayer requests

2020 Missions Giving Tree to benefit Lazarus Ministries

We are collecting for men, women, and children:

- New socks and new underwear



- Gently used (or new) warm winter coats



- Monetary donations to fund the Lazarus meal program



DONATED ITEMS may be dropped off at the church office on Monday - Thursday mornings throughout December (816-578-4544). Checks may be mailed to the church. Please make payable to LLCUMC with "Lazarus Ministries" notated in the memo. **THANK YOU!**

December 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29 Online Services 10:00 am	30	1	2	3	4	5
6 Online Services 10:00 am	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Online Services 10:00 am	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 Online Services 10:00 am	21	22	23	<i>24 Christmas Eve Service Online 8:00 pm</i>	<i>25 Merry Christmas</i>	26
27 Online Services 10:00 am	28	29	30	31		