

Leadership Letter for the Week of April 27-May 3

Sisters and Brothers of Zion Lutheran Church,

Even as we continue to make our way through these challenging times, the signs of spring are all around us. The daffodils, tulips, and crocuses add color to our yards. The blossoms of dogwood trees started to open this week and buds on many trees become more apparent each day. Perhaps as we witness the beauty of God's creation amidst the difficult pandemic realities, the words found in Matthew 6: 27-33 might provide comfort if we find ourselves feeling anxious and uncertain. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Our updates and announcements for the week ahead:

-we continue to offer our Sunday 10:00 AM worship service on the Zoom platform for those with internet access via computer, tablet, or a smart phone. As mentioned last week, the following link, meeting #, and password will be the same every week as each of our supply pastors have agreed to provide the Sunday worship via Zoom. **The information for connecting to the service:**

Topic: Sunday 10:00 AM service via Zoom. To join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2INb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09>

Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654

One tap mobile, +16465588656,,84354840714#,,1#,022654# US (New York)

Or Dial by your location, 1 646 558 8656 US (New York), Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654

-For those without internet access, you can continue participating in Zion's virtual Sunday 10:00 AM worship service by utilizing the Service of the Word template provided later in this newsletter.

40 households attended the Zoom service this past Sunday with Rev. Janet Hoover serving as our supply pastor. Rev. Hoover provided a wonderful sermon! Several of those participating households had multiple family members viewing the service from the same location. In addition, a number of Zion congregants also participated by utilizing the Service of the Word template created by our Worship & Music committee. (Thanks to Jim and Kim Marscher!) Despite the challenges posed by social distancing and the prohibition of public gatherings, our Zion family continues to worship together each Sunday!

The Call Committee met for the first time this past week to begin the process of finding our next pastor. The following members of our congregation have generously agreed to serve on the committee: Linda Bennett (church council liaison), John Blackburn, Jack Henke, Ryan Kulawy, Lisa Lucas-Myers, Debbie Murdock, Doreen Nicholls, and Jeff Ritchie. We will provide more information about the call process and ways in which we will look to involve all members of the congregation in the coming weeks.

Zion will host a desperately needed blood drive for the local chapter of the Red Cross on Thursday, May 21st, in the Fellowship Hall. The blood drive is open to the public, including members of Zion. Advanced sign-up for a donation time is encouraged. More information about signing up will be provided once available. The Red Cross assures all considering donation that strict safety and hygiene practices will be in place.

We continue to be moved by the generosity demonstrated by so many members of our Zion family in the acts of kindness, constant thoughtfulness directed toward others, and the financial support for the work of our church. Thank you to those continuing to make phone calls to members in order to keep folks connected. Thank you to the team that has made our

Sunday 10:00 AM service via Zoom a reality. Thank you to all those “essential workers” at Zion who keep us afloat with all the challenges that the pandemic presents. We feel privileged and humbled to be members of this Zion family.

I'll close with words from my favorite hymn, *Here I am, Lord*. “Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night. I will go Lord if You lead me, I will hold Your people in my heart.” Let's continue to hold one another close in the best ways we can during this time of separation.

Peace,
Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson
Church council co-presidents

4 Easter – May 3, 2020

SERVICE OF THE WORD

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy, and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God, **We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

In the Mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are raised with him to new life. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism. We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you created us in your image and planted us in a well-watered garden. In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched, and you gave us water from the rock. When we did not know the way, you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters. At the cross, you watered us from Jesus' wounded side, and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life. We praise you for your salvation through water, for the water in this font, and for all water everywhere. Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love. Satisfy the thirsty and give us the life only you can give. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: *I Know That My Redeemer Lives! #619, Verses 1 & 2 –Mary Senn*

Vs. 1 I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, he lives, who once was dead; he lives, my ever living head!

Vs. 2 He lives triumphant from the grave; he lives eternally to save; he lives exalted throned above; he lives to rule his church in love.

Prayer of the Day

O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE WORD

First Reading: Acts 2:42-47

Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:19-25

Gospel: John 10:1-10

Sermon *The Gate to Abundant Life* –Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

Good Shepherd Sunday

Psalm 23

Normally I am a fast-moving busy bee. My husband is always telling me to slow down, whether I'm carrying the laundry upstairs, driving, or slicing and dicing in the kitchen. I often do four or five errands around town on a Saturday or go to two or three meetings in the evening after work, efficiently following my to do list or calendar, and then afterwards, can't tell you where all I've been. Have you ever gone out the door and not remembered what you went outside for? Not exactly mindful.

The past weeks have been a whole different experience for me. I am the member of the family who leaves the house to get groceries or pick up prescriptions. Those infrequent trips are carefully planned, with masks and gloves. I no longer carry a phone into the store so I can multitask while I shop. I carry a bank card in one pocket and a shopping list in the other. I use wipes and hand sanitizer and think carefully about every action with my hands to avoid cross contamination. Every aisle of the store must be navigated carefully, red x at the end of one, green arrow at the end of the other. I have to be careful of who is around me and how far I stay away from them. No more dashing and darting around the store, grabbing what I want quickly off the shelf. And most of all I think so carefully about entering and leaving the store, my car, and especially the house. I don't want to spread anything that will steal health or kill or destroy.

I don't think I've ever been so careful in my life about my goings out and my comings in. I've never thought so intentionally the membranes of social life, the doorways, the gateways between public and private spaces. Inside to outside and back inside. And I say a little prayer. Let me bring food home and keep everyone safe.

Our Gospel reading today talks about Jesus as the Gate of a sheepfold, and that's the image I want to talk about. Sometimes when Jesus tells a parable or uses a complex illustration, we have this instinct to do a complex allegorical reading, mapping each player in the story. Who's the stranger? Who are the bandits, Who are the thieves? There are even more if you keep reading to the end of chapter 10, there's even a wolf and a hired hand. It's easy to get lost in all those details, and even the gospel writer says that the people listening to Jesus couldn't understand what he was saying. It's a confusing array of images.

What I think we can instantly grasp, however, is the deep sense of human vulnerability in this passage that we know is real, especially now, but really always. Remember, we put ashes on our foreheads to recall our own mortality at the start of Lent a long time before any of us heard of coronavirus. The simple truth is that we live in a world in which thieves and bandits are real. It's a world in which there are things that threaten human wellbeing, things that threaten human life, human dignity, and human hope. *And that's the world into which Jesus comes.*

We live in a world in which each one of us is vulnerable, each one of us is limited, It's a world in which each one of us must come to terms with things that will rob us of life, eventually, the things that do threaten our dignity and do threaten our hope, and threaten to drive us to despair. *That is precisely the place where Jesus meets us. That's where he lays down his life, in a world where those forces are real.*

Historians describe how some middle eastern shepherds kept their sheep two thousand years ago. There was a large pen with four rough sides made of piled up rocks, low walls into which the sheep were herded for the night. Now the doorway of this pen was about two feet wide. Not wide at all. It was a small entry. It was basically the one small gap in the wall.

So, and this is the question: what was the door made out of? This is crucial. Was the door made out of wood that a carpenter had constructed? Was it made out of wool, a wool blanket that a weaver had woven? Was it made out of stones that the shepherd had piled up? Was it made out of sticks, all laced together to form a barrier? Was it made out of leather, a hide from the sheep? What was the door made out of?

Here is what these ancient people knew, even the ones who were fishermen, not shepherds, Pharisees not farmers. There was no door. The *shepherd himself* was the door. At night, the shepherd himself would sleep there in the small opening of the rock wall. He would sleep there, by the fire, with his rod and staff. If any thief or wolf would come, the shepherd would defend the sheepfold with his short stocky club or his long-pointed staff. Literally and actually, *the shepherd himself was the door*.

When Jesus says "I am the gate/door" he is saying "I am the door to the fullness of life. I am literally the door *into* the safety and security of the sheep pen *and* the door *out* to the green pastures and the abundant life and feasting that goes on in those pastures. I am the door."

Now what does this mean for us, a people locked down in our homes for weeks and weeks, protecting ourselves and others from a pandemic virus about which we know little except that it is a thief and bandit, taking health and life suddenly and without warning?

We know that just as we came in, we will eventually go out. God is with us inside, and God will be with us outside. "You are with me" we recite from Psalm 23 every Good Shepherd Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Easter. God is with us in the valley of the shadow of death, bringing us to still waters, restoring our souls in a raging storm. And God is also with us in the green pastures, the plentiful meals, the beauty and fellowship, and our ministry in the world.

We are always moving between safety and danger, illness and death, sorrow and joy, life and death. Our mortal lives make it so. But as we move from one space to the other, we are met by Jesus the Gate. What Martin Luther long ago said about the sacrament of Holy Communion, Jesus actually said about himself: "It [he is!] is the ford, the bridge, the door, the ship, the stretcher, by which and in which we pass from this world into eternal life," true life, abundant life.

Very soon we will begin to venture out again, and we will see Jesus once again not just as a guardian against danger but also as a portal into ministry, love in action in the world with those who are in need or left out. How will we make this transition as individuals, in our churches, and in our communities?

How will we practice abundant life, and not just abundant economy? How will we move into a future where, as a people, we put "the front line over the bottom line?" Will we hear the voice of the shepherd who values the one sheep as much as the ninety-nine? Or will we hear the voice of thieves who are willing to steal, and kill, and destroy?

In our comings and in our goings, let us mind the Gate, who came that we might have life, and have it abundantly.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Anthem: *The Love of Jesus Medley* -arr. Mark Hayes

Prayers of Intercession

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Comforting God, you carry us tenderly. We pray for those who walk through dark valleys overshadowed by anxiety and overwhelmed with suffering. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, we praise you for those who maintain and operate farm equipment, for those who plant and harvest crops, for local farmers' markets, and for those involved in agriculture of any kind. Strengthen their hands as they feed the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, you desire justice for the hungry. Bless advocacy work, food pantries, and feeding ministries in our congregations. May none of our neighbors lack for basic needs. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit especially: those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, Paul, Gail, Fran & Claudia, Edie Marie, Suzee, Bill Toepp, Claudia T., the family of Janet B., Michael Gilleece and family, Donna B., Debbie, Diane, Caryn, Helene, Steve & Jess, Your Neighbors clients, Dave, Jordan, Alison, Theresa, Barbara C., residents of the Presbyterian Home, Paul Van Allen, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken unto the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn *Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us* #789, Verses 1 & 4 -Mary Senn

Vs. 1 Savior like a shepherd lead us; much we need your tender care. In your pleasant pastures feed us, for our use your fold prepare. Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us; we are yours. Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us; we are yours.

Vs. 4 Early let us seek your favor, early let us do your will; blessed Lord and only Savior, with your love our spirits fill. Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still. Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still.

Blessing

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope, and turn your mourning into dancing. Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Christ is risen, just as he said. Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia! **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

To our church family,

Rusty and I want to express our profound delight in getting the weekly church service mailed to us. We do not have a computer or smart phone, so our online communication is not a reality for us. A special thank you to Mark and Kristen for their weekly contributions. We hope to attend services in church soon. -Bill & Rusty Pentland.

Enjoy this 2nd recipe exchange provided to us by chef Jon Daly

We encourage you to send in recipes, too!

Easy Chili Pie

Prep 20 MIN

Total 60 MIN

Servings 6

Ingredients

Use your leftover chili or even a can of Hormel Chili (1 to 1 ½ lbs.)

1 can (2 ¼ oz) sliced ripe olives, drained-Optional

1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese (4 oz)

½ cup Original Bisquick™ mix

1 cup milk

2 eggs

Sour cream, if desired

Shredded lettuce, if desired

Chopped tomatoes, if desired

1 cup of Frito corn chips, if desired

Directions

1. Heat oven to 400°F. Spray 9-inch pie plate with cooking spray.
2. Heat up your leftover chili.
3. Add ½ of the chili then ½ cup of cheese. Repeat these two steps again. If using olives, put on top.
4. In medium bowl, stir Bisquick mix, milk and eggs with wire whisk or fork until blended. Pour over the top of the pie plate.
5. Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. Serve with sour cream, lettuce, chopped tomatoes, and Fritos.

Being able to watch the church service at home on Zoom has been inspirational for me. -Cheryl Edmiston

