

Mission Connection

MISSION CONNECTION

AUGUST 2020

**“He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.”**

Psalms 23:2b-3a

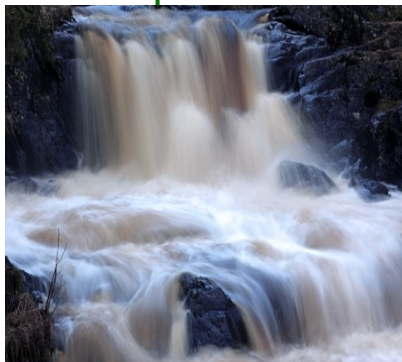


Pastor's Message

As July gives way to August, the refreshing rains become increasingly scarce. The skies may darken for a few hours, but never seem to develop into anything significant; lots of promise, but no delivery! Lawns begin to go off-color and the corn plants go into preservation mode – their leaves curl inward and point upward to reduce the amount of surface area that is exposed to the sun's moisture-depleting rays. We long for the abundant rains of spring we took for granted or perhaps even complained about!

The life-giving qualities of water are repeatedly used in the scriptures as metaphors for God's abundant provision for his people. The Psalms describe the faithful as being like trees planted by streams of water, the Good Shepherd leads his flocks by still waters, and Jesus identifies himself to a thirsty Syrophenician woman at the well as the Living Water.

While the human body may last a few weeks without food, it can only survive a few days without water. As our bodies begin to experience the effects of dehydration, one of the symptoms is a decrease in normal brain function. Our thinking becomes sluggish, our minds disoriented and confused. As a result, as the process of dehydration progresses, we actually become less able to discern what is happening, thus increasingly unaware and unable to take the necessary corrective actions.



The same insidiously destructive pattern occurs in us spiritually as well. The longer we go without our souls being refreshed by the Water of Life from God's Word, the more we need it and the less likely we will be aware of our deteriorating condition.

Health experts tell us that by the time we feel thirsty, our bodies are already experiencing some of the negative ramifications of dehydration. The solution (pun intended) is to proactively drink more water throughout the day. Work to make it into a spiritual habit as well! Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

Cloud of Witnesses

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

We believe that even those saints who have died are still alive in Christ Jesus. Among them are those giants of the faith upon whose shoulders we stand, and they, too, comprise this “great cloud” that surrounds us. Here is a list of “Cloud Members” who are remembered during the month of August:

August 1:	Dorothy Hamlett, Mission in Christ partner, died 2017
August 8:	Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans)
August 11:	Clare, Abbess of San Damiano, died 1253
August 13:	Florence Nightingale, died 1910; Clara Maass, died 1901; renewers of society
August 14:	Maximilian Kolbe, died 1941; Kaj Munk died 1944; martyrs
August 15:	Mary Mother of Our Lord
August 20:	Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, died 1153
August 24:	Bartholomew, Apostle
August 28:	Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, died 430; Moses the Black, monk, martyr, died around 400



Over the Coffee



“When asked, ‘What is more important: praying, or reading the Bible?’, I ask, ‘What is more important: breathing in, or breathing out?’”

Charles H. Spurgeon





Stanza of the Month

Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters (WOV 697, v.1)

In addition to this hymn using one of my favorite tunes, *Beach Spring* (which just happens to be used in another of my favorite hymns: *Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service*, LBW #423), this first stanza picks up on some good Lutheran theology and hints at some classical orthopraxis that has gone by the wayside over the generations!

Wash, O God, our sons and daughters
 Where your cleansing waters flow.
 Number them among your people;
 Bless as Christ blessed long ago.
 Weave them garments bright and sparkling;
 Compass them with love and light.
 Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit, holy dove and heart's delight.

Contrasted with some approaches to baptism that tend to think of it as a public display of one's commitment to Christ and the Church, God is identified here as the sole actor: *Wash, O God, our sons and daughters*; his is the water, his the washing. This cleansing water is not simply water. Instead, it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word and is a "bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit." (Luther's Small Catechism). Being counted as members of Christ's Church – *numbered among his people* – comes as a result of his reckoning, not our deciding!

'*Weave them garments bright and sparkling*' - baptismal gowns are still used in some traditions, but even in denominations where they may be common, the proper wearing of the garment is often lost. The baptismal gown is not something to be worn when the baptism occurs, or during the baptism, but after, when the newly baptized emerges from the water! "Bright and sparkling" and woven white in color, the baptismal gown symbolizes our putting on Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27) having been buried with him in death. That imagery is echoed in Christian burial of the dead where the believer in Christ is once again "clothed" in Christ Jesus when the coffin is covered with the pall.





Ask Pr. Gary!



- Q Pr. Gary, other than the fact that we really miss the fellowship aspect of gathering together, what makes worship important?
- A This is an important question in these challenging times! There are several important considerations. First, as Christians we believe that all of creation, but particularly humankind, was created for the purpose of worship, with an inherent *need* to worship. Repeatedly throughout the book of Psalms especially we find references to all of creation either being called upon to worship or being observed as worshipping. Jesus declares that if humankind did not worship, the rocks would (Luke 19:40)!

Ironically, at the same time, we often want to make too big of a deal out of our worship. We often want to over-emphasize what we're doing to the exclusion of what God is doing. For this very reason it is a good exercise to think of our gathering itself first of all as passive – we are *gathered by* the Holy Spirit; it is His doing, not ours. Secondly, more correct perspective is maintained if we name the gathering as reflecting God's activity rather than ours. This can be done when we think of the gathering as the Divine Service rather than the Worship Service. In the latter, the emphasis is on what we are doing (albeit in response): we sing, we pray, etc. In the former, the emphasis is on the Divine who serves us. God comes to us through His Word and through the Sacraments.

The Divine Service is unique in that it holds a promise. Many people would like to claim that they can “worship” anywhere, doing anything, i.e. in nature, etc. When we claim to perform such worship, not only is the focus on what we're doing, but there is no guarantee that God will show up to hear it! The promise of Jesus in the holy Scriptures, however, is that wherever two or three are gathered “in his name”, he promises to be present in the midst of them.

August Worship Leaders***

Sunday, August 2	Sunday, August 9	Sunday, August 16	Sunday, August 23	Sunday August 30
Lector: Chris Schlee	Lector: Betty Burkhalter	Lector: Annie Puffett	Lector: Connie Puffett	Lector: Chris Schlee
Cleaning: Jerry & Ginny Hawkins	Cleaning: Jerry & Ginny Hawkins	Cleaning: Jerry & Ginny Hawkins	Cleaning: Jerry & Ginny Hawkins	Cleaning: Jerry & Ginny Hawkins

*** If serving in this capacity is not something you are comfortable with, please let the church know.



Council Meeting Minutes

July Council Notes

Mission in Christ Church Council Agenda
Tuesday, July 28, 2020
At Mission in Christ Church

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Present: Pr. Burkhalter, Connie Puffett, Michelle Schlee, Michelle Borrett, Deron Hakert, Dave Gould, Jerry Hawkins. Deb Ommen, Betty Burkhalter

Absent: None

Opening Devotions: Connie Puffett shared a devotion based on a reading from Hebrews on encouraging one another

June Minutes: June meeting minutes were emailed to the council. No reading of the minutes took place at this meeting. There were no corrections or questions. Michelle Borrett made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Betty Burkhalter 2nd; Approved

Treasurers Report: Michelle Borrett provided a written treasurer's report. Beginning balance was \$11,685.77. Offerings totaled \$9,407.88 - \$600 was designated for the building fund. Expenses for June totaled \$5,876.57. Ending balance for the checking account was \$8,425.00. Jerry Hawkins made the motion to approve the Treasurers Report, Dave Gould 2nd. Approved. Dave Gould requested for the next meeting a summary of income year to date, expenses year to date and budget status.



Second Quarter Benevolence: There is \$2,261.64 available for benevolence distribution. The council made the exception to distribute the funds to be split equally between three causes: The Ekka Family, Strawberry Point Backpack Project and Xavier Roach. Deron Hakert made the motion to approve the benevolence distribution, Michelle Schlee 2nd. Approved

Pastor's Report: Pastor Burkhalter provided a written report of Joys & Concerns (sound system, loss of Ivanelle, recorded hymns/liturgy by Joan and thinking ahead regarding Sunday face to face services due to the spike in COVID 19 cases) His personal mic system appears to be working again – may have been humidity related. He will check to see if the one owned by the church is working. (NOTE: After the council meeting, he looked at the church's mic and recalled the reason it isn't working is due to the inability for it to pair with the system.) With the increase in COVID 19 cases in Iowa, we need to keep in mind that we may need to return to 100% online services should the Governor deem it necessary to stop/slow the spread. Pr. Burkhalter also shared stats regarding attendance – in person and online.

Worship/Music: No report Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, funeral attendance has been limited to immediate family only for some and restricted attendance for others. Connie Puffett asked if we could do something extra special on All Saints Sunday for those who have passed away this year. Pr. Burkhalter will discuss this with the Worship/Music team.



Council Meeting Minutes

July Council Notes Continued

Education Report: No written report. Connie Puffett shared that this fall she will provide education to the youth in her home. Pr. Burkhalter will contact the regular attendees regarding in person or via ZOOM adult education.

Old Business:

Word/Sacrament Ministry for Part -Time Pastor: Connie Puffett started this discussion by offering a thank you to Pr. Burkhalter and shared appreciation for his services.

At our last meeting discussions began regarding Pr. Burkhalter moving to $\frac{3}{4}$ time in September as well as beginning conversations to prepare for Pr. Burkhalter's retirement (considering 5 years out). The council members were asked to discuss with members of our congregation these topics and bring back to the next council meeting suggestions. The council members were also asked to think about the future of Mission in Christ – where are we headed? Pr Burkhalter asked everyone to bring their thoughts to the next meeting regarding a 2 year and 6 year vision and how to get there.

Assumptions and misunderstandings about why Pr. Burkhalter is looking at part time were shared at the council. Some people are angry assuming Pr. Burkhalter is wanting more money. Some assumptions were made that Pr. Burkhalter is dissatisfied with his call at Mission In Christ. Some assumptions were made that Pr. Burkhalter's health is a concern and the reason for the move to $\frac{3}{4}$ time. We discussed that all of these assumptions are incorrect. Pr. Burkhalter hasn't asked for more money. He is not dissatisfied with his call. His health is fine.

Discussions will continue at the next council meeting in August.

Visions shared were:

- ◆ The need to be more visible in the community
- ◆ Bring in more members
- ◆ Bring in more children
- ◆ Bring in more young couples
- ◆ More outreach in the community
- ◆ Increase giving
- ◆ Increase attendance by our current members
- ◆ Grief outreach to the community

We will continue to discuss as a church and council how we can make these visions a reality.



Council Meeting Minutes

July Council Minutes, Continued

Disaster Relief Warehouse: Michelle Schlee shared with the council the materials only cost to build a 30X30 warehouse - \$24,000. The NALC will pay \$15-20,000 towards building the building. After discussion, Jerry Hawkins made the motion to discontinue pursuing Mission In Christ building the warehouse. Dave Gould 2nd. Approved. A request was made to have a drawing of the layout of the church grounds (sewer, electric, etc) drawn up. Michelle Schlee will talk to Chris Schlee about doing this. The drawing will need to be kept at the church once completed.

Sanctuary Blinds: Tabled for next meeting

Tree Removal: Jerry Hawkins spoke with Seedorf about the pine trees in the west side of the property. They feel all of the trees belong to MIC. Jerry has several volunteers

who will help with the tree removal. He is hoping to bring in a tractor and pull them out in lieu of cutting and grinding stumps. Jerry Hawkins made the motion to move forward with the tree removal. Dave Gould 2nd. Approved

High Bush Cranberries: Jerry Hawkins reviewed the site where the bushes were to be potentially planted. He determined that it will not work for that area due to drainage concerns. This will not be pursued.

New Business:

Sound System – Mic: Tabled at this time due to recent developments with Pastor Burkhalter's equipment. Now working.

Delegates for Iowa Mission District Convocation: Connie Puffett and Dave Gould agreed to be MIC's delegates. Betty Burkhalter made the motion to accept Connie and Dave as our Delegates. Deb Ommen 2nd. Approved

Delegate for the NALC Convocation: Betty Burkhalter volunteered to be the one delegate for MIC. Dave Gould made the motion to approve Betty as the delegate. Michelle Borrett 2nd. Approved

Bonfire/Sing Along Gathering: After a brief discussion it was agreed that this would be tabled to the next meeting.

Other Business: Dave Gould will not attend the August council meeting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 18, 2020 @ 6:00 PM at Mission in Christ

Devotions: Deb Ommen

Adjournment: Dave Gould made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Michelle Schlee 2nd. Approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:08 with the Lord Prayer

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Burkhalter
Church Council
Secretary



Mission in Christ Lutheran Church

A ministry of the NALC

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**We're on
Facebook!**

*Join us for Worship
9 AM Sundays and
online through our
Facebook page or
Mission in Christ Website.*

NALC Core Values

Christ-Centered

We confess the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ according to the Holy Scriptures. We affirm the authority of the Scriptures as the authoritative source and norm, "according to which all doctrines should and must be judged" (Formula of Concord). We accept the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses to the Word of God.

Mission Driven

We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples—in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world—must be a priority of the Church in the present age.

Traditionally-Grounded

We affirm the ecumenical creeds and the faithful witness of the Church across time and space. We endorse the form and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the office of the ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament. We seek dialogue and fellowship with other Lutheran churches and with faithful Christians of other confessions.

Congregationally-Focused

We strive to be a church body that is organized to facilitate the ministries of local congregations in a posture of servanthood and a spirit of partnership, through the provision of resources, connections and information.

