

Covenant News



June 2020

Pastor's Spin

It seems like all I've been doing lately is stealing ideas from other churches and the pastors I trust. Now, it isn't quite as immediate as seeing whatever response to COVID-19 this other congregation comes up with, and instantly pass it along to our council leaders. No, I go through my usual visceral process: "That's going way, *way* overboard...this pastor is just trying to draw attention...do we have to be obsessed with the .0000000001% chance!?" But then, I eventually realize my colleagues are not coming up with these plans by themselves. They're not conspiring with each other across computer screens over and against their respective faith communities. Instead, they've consulted with medical professionals in their congregations and beyond, checked with their church's insurance companies, actually read through these scientific studies as opposed to just hearing/reading about them being referenced in newspaper articles or on news network shows. Safe to say, we've tried to go back to our biology/chemistry/anatomy & physiology days in high school (all of which were not my favorite parts of my teenage days, to say the least), to better understand aerosols and droplets and whatever else.

One of the ideas I've decided to steal, after a fair share of mentally wrestling with it, is an image I heard from The Rev. Sherman Bishop, who now serves as interim pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion (as well as serving as Dean for the Cleveland West conference of us deer-in-the-headlights appearing pastors). When I first heard the metaphor, of sorts, I thought it was incredibly over-simplistic in trying to describe this massive coronavirus problem regarding the organized church operation. And yet, after going through my usual visceral instantaneous and stubborn reactions, I realized there was something to it, after all. He brought up what we usually envision with our general decision-making is similar to approaching a fork in the road: there is a correct way to go and an incorrect way. When it comes to our Westernized culture of black-and-white outlook on the world, including for our own lives, that mindset takes over not just with financial planning or moral values, even religion, but also a global pandemic. There is a right and a wrong way to "re-open the economy" in terms of timing and the who/what/where details, which carries over to in-person public worship...again, at least from our perspective with not too much background in epidemiology (a branch of science I never knew existed until this virus made me learn about dreaded science again).



The Rev. Bishop encouraged us to consider something else: it's as if we're walking into a cave, not knowing the terrain at all. Granted, we will walk in after we do our fair share of discussing the plan with all our fellow hikers on this rather tumultuous turn on our collective journey, but let's get one thing straight: we're not about to charge in without any care for what lies underneath our feet or what surrounds us entirely. We understand this is going to be a matter of us taking one step forward

and a couple steps back. When it comes to in-person public worship, we'll try some things that won't work. We'll take a step back and reassess. We'll try something else. We'll need the usual divine allotment (as well as from each other) of grace, forgiveness and Resurrection empowerment. New research may come along from other leading epidemiologists (or other immensely intelligent people), and we may have to take another step back that will lead us to more frustration and second-guessing and wondering if we're going way overboard. Welcome to the cave.

Thankfully, this whole ministry operation, this whole lengthy arduous and beautiful road of faith, is sustained by the One who's been in a rather dark cave of death, who knows what we need to keep moving forward, regardless of how we do so. However, the whole idea behind the Resurrection was and is that our Lord would never leave anyone behind in this life. The Resurrection life was not going to be limited to a select few disciples or to certain sisters and brothers in Christ who worship in-person by such and such a date. The church is divinely emblazoned with the same principal: we are not going to leave anyone behind (at least, we *shouldn't*). We will figure out whatever way we can to ensure that the same Gospel of unstoppable love, relentless grace and undeniable hope gets proclaimed for us all to experience and be further sustained for whatever terrain lies ahead. Amen (so let it be)!

In Christ,
Pastor Brad

A special thank you to all our leaders of Covenant groups that were put together at the beginning of our physical time apart, because of COVID-19. We encourage you to keep checking in on each other as we will not have the same opportunities to do so before, during or after worship in the near future. Pastor Brad will, also, be doing so since there will not be a receiving line with him. Regardless of the circumstances, we remain a family in Christ!



happy birthday

6/1 Mike Garvin
6/16 Michelle Pekar
6/23 Paula Hohenstein
6/29 Ken Frajter
6/29 Samule Reddig



6/11 Vimal & Kelly (Constant) Bhatnagar
Happy 15th Anniversary

6/13 Steve & Claudia Senderak
Happy 56th Anniversary

6/20 Mike & Joan Garvin
Happy 50th Anniversary

Worship

An e-mail was sent out last week with our tentative plan to host a drive-in worship on Sunday, June 21 at 9am. You would drive into the back parking lot and park, keeping a space in between you and the next car. You may even setup lawn chairs in front of your car, if you like. Pastor Brad and Robin (perhaps, an assisting minister as well) would lead worship outside. One of the reasons why we are doing this is because many scientific studies (if you're interested, please visit a more concise description at www.drheathernelson.com/singingandcovid19) reveal the danger of singing indoors, as well as speaking corporately (such as when we speak the creed and the Lord's Prayer together). Doing so outdoors gives us more options. We will take the next few weeks to consider, for starters, options between outdoor speakers and AM/FM transmitters so that everyone who attends may hear as clearly as possible.

We, also, wanted to give you advanced notice about the many changes the Covenant council has already discussed for when we do return to worshipping in the sanctuary, not knowing when that will be and not knowing what new information will be made available to ensure the health and safety of worshipers. Nevertheless, this is what we have discussed thus far, knowing we will need to mentally prepare ourselves for such changes for when we do return indoors. As of right now, looking forward:

- pews will be marked where people can sit with so many feet separation between those not in the same household
- the baptismal font will be moved up front
- bulletins will not be handed out, but instead, placed at marked spots in the pews
- hymnals/Bibles/pew pads will be removed from the pews
- no procession/recession of the cross
- offerings will be placed at the back of the sanctuary (no passing of the offering plate during worship)
- no sharing of the peace (at least, not the way we normally do)
- no receiving line with the pastor after worship and worshipers will need to leave pew by pew starting from the back towards the front
- strongly, **strongly** encouraged to wear masks; those who do not will sit in a separate section
- when we do celebrate Communion, individual wafers and cups of wine/grape juice will be placed on tables at the front of the sanctuary; they would not be received directly from the pastor or Communion assistant

Please be advised, such plans can change, but this is to make you aware of our on-going discussions for worship. If you have any questions, concerns, suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact Pastor Brad or one of our Covenant council leaders.



DRIVE-IN

WORSHIP SERVICE

We invite you to join us Sunday, June 21, at 9am as we re-gather for worship in the same space together! Starting on Father's Day, we will do so in our back parking lot. More details will become available soon, but we will most likely designate one driveway for entering and another for exiting. Bulletins will be available for pick-up for when you enter (hymns will be included in the bulletin). Communion will **not** be celebrated the first Sunday we gather, but we hope to do so soon thereafter. Offerings may be dropped off in the church mailbox, or you may continue mailing them in or doing so electronically.

From all of us at Covenant, we wish all the fathers in our life a happy Father's Day!



Well Done, Covenant!

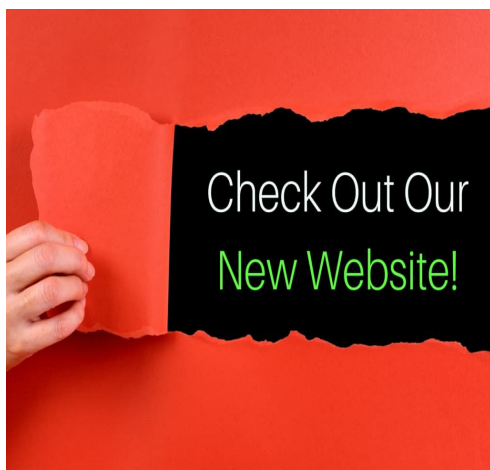
They say that necessity is the mother of invention. I think that we here at Covenant have proved that to be true. Thanks to the co-operation of all those who placed orders for our annual flower sale, we have unknowingly come up with a much more convenient and efficient way to handle the entire sale. Thanks to Covenant's Parish Administrator, Jen Lasher-Dobush, we were able to quickly and pretty successfully send orders to all former participants by email. Orders were dropped off or mailed to those for whom we had no email address. To avoid close contact with those picking up their orders, a drive-thru pick-up lane was designated just outside the rear ramp door. When people called to notify us they were on their way to pick up their orders, we transported their plants from inside the parish hall to a table outside the ramp door awaiting their arrival. Upon arrival their order was loaded into their vehicle and they were on their way. There was no need for anyone to enter the hall or interact with anyone.

Many thanks to all who placed orders and, also, picked them up promptly within the designated time. Due to your co-operation and generosity we enjoyed a VERY efficient and successful sale. We realized a profit of about \$765 (one of the largest profits ever)

Incidentally, if you have occasion to talk to Jennifer Lasher-Dobush or Vince Besednjak, thank them, because NONE of this would have come off without their unselfish dedication.

Congratulations Covenant: we did it!!

With much appreciation,
Arlene Lasher



Please be sure to check out our new website (still the same address: covenantmaplehts.org) with pages setup for bulletins, newsletters, sermons; as well as for links to resources for the journey of faith and information for those needing assistance with food, utility payments, and more. We hope this becomes not just a source for congregational members, but a tool for ministry as well.