

October, 2021

**MARK: MY WORDS**

“Then (Jesus) took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not Me but the One Who sent Me’” (Mark 9:36-37). These last verses from the Gospel reading several weeks ago was Jesus’ response to the disciples arguing with one another about “who was the greatest” among them.

Jesus was teaching His followers then and now that, in the new way of the Reign of God, “greatness” is not measured by wealth or power or status as it is in the eyes of the world. Rather, Jesus summons His disciples to a way of life that seeks to be “great” by caring for the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, and those with no power, voice, or influence.

But there is also another application of His command. “Little children” are not the only ones who have no standing in the world’s eyes. There are many who find themselves helpless and powerless because of illness, disease, natural disasters, financial struggles, mental health issues, or homelessness, to name a few.

One such group that has been in the forefront of the news in these last weeks are refugees from Afghanistan who have fled the country because of their assistance to U.S. forces over the past two decades, their opposition to Taliban rule, or general fear of living under their oppressive government. According to recent statistics over 65,000 refugees were evacuated during and following the withdrawal of U.S. military forces and personnel after two decades in the country.

Many of these refugees have been temporarily housed at military installations. Camp Atterbury near Indianapolis is one such facility. Refugees have been undergoing vetting procedures as well as medical screenings. Once processed, they now await resettlement from various governmental, religious, and social service agencies.

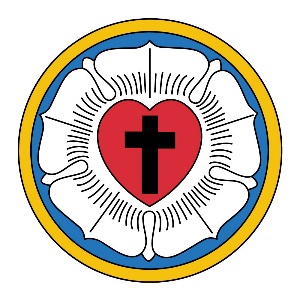
Surely these exiles from their homeland are heart-breaking examples of the helpless, powerless, and voiceless in our world to whom Jesus calls us to extend our hospitality and welcome. Many of them have little more than the clothes on their backs. Try to imagine having to flee to a foreign country where the land, language, customs, and people are utterly unknown and perhaps incomprehensible.

All of these refugees need permanent resettlement in communities where they can find housing, schools for their children, employment, and assistance in rebuilding their lives and hopes. In these last years, our congregation has helped many of the “last and least” in our community through our work with the men and women’s homeless shelters and our community soup kitchen.

Since both of these ministries are now overseen by other agencies or communities of faith, we need a new focus for hospitable “welcoming.” A member of the congregation shared a thought that we should investigate what would be involved with sponsoring of one or more of these Afghan refugees. I think that is a terrific idea and a powerful embodiment of Jesus’ command in the passage from Mark.

I do not have any personal experience with such an undertaking. Several of my previous congregations had sponsored refugees before my call to serve them. I do know that it is a long process, one that can take years of commitment and service to make sure families assimilate well into the community.

Over these next weeks, I and whoever else is interested will begin to look into the process and find out what would be needed for us to consider such sponsorship. We will report to you what we discover along the way as we then with prayer and humility discern how God is calling us to provide relief, hope, and “welcome” to these displaced, precious, beloved “children” of God that Jesus has placed in *our* midst to offer His love and care.



**RE-FORMATION**

October brings, of course, a church festival near and dear to Lutheran hearts: the commemoration of Martin Luther’s nailing of the 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg calling for change in the Roman Catholic Church’s theology and practice, especially regarding the sale and use of indulgences. This date of October 31 has traditionally been observed and celebrated as the “birthday” of the Lutheran Church, although, as we have stated many times, Luther initially did not desire to split from Rome but wanted to see it “re-formed” in accordance with the teachings of Scripture from which it had deviated over the centuries.

As noted in last year’s edition of this newsletter for the month, because of COVID, this Day took on special meaning. With former ministries gone and many of our old ways of living and serving necessarily changed due to COVID, we said that as a congregation we, too, needed to “re-form” ourselves so as to better serve those in need around us.

Thus far, we have not been able to accomplish that goal. With new members of Council and School Board and the resources of the synod and other church organizations, we will continue to seek the path the Lord is putting before us so that, through our school and congregation, we might find new ways to faithfully and fruitfully proclaim and enact the Good News of what God has done and is doing for the world in the crucified and risen Jesus.

*Ecclesia semper reformanda est.* “The Church is always to be reformed.” May God grant us the patience, perseverance, faith, and hope to engage in that endless Gospel work.



**MISSION DISCERNMENT**

For some months now, I have been writing and preaching about the need for us to determine through prayer and study to what new areas of ministry and mission God is calling us. At the August Council meeting, three resources for such judgement were presented to them for their consideration.

Two of them are offered by the Indiana-Kentucky Synod and are designed to help congregations find ways to connect their gifts with the needs of the neighborhood and community around them. The third resource was the Strategic Plan approved by the congregation in 2014 after a long and thorough two-year study. It was suggested that we revisit that plan to see if there were any components on which we could still draw.

As of this writing, the Council has not yet met for September; so no decision about whether to pursue any of these options was made. Updates will be provided in next month’s newsletter.

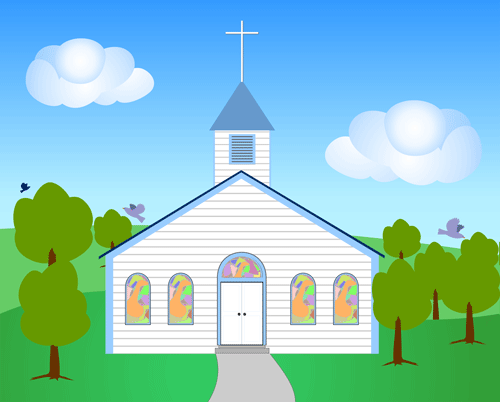


**COVID WORSHIP UPDATE**

La Porte County remains in the “orange” COVID zone as of mid-September. In the August Council meeting, it was decided that, in this situation, we would continue to meet in-person for worship but require masking and social distancing. We would suspend the distribution of Holy Communion and allow singing and spoken responses, but ask that they be somewhat muted.

As long as we remain in “orange,” these protocols will stay in effect. It is discouraging to move backward from the no-masking and celebration of Communion that we enjoyed earlier in the summer; but out of concern for the health, safety, and well-being of everyone, even those fully vaccinated, we feel this is the right and faithful approach.

If the level moves to “red,” then the Council will call a special meeting to determine whether we will continue to meet in-person or return to remote worship only. For many reasons, we pray that we will not have to return to that arrangement and that we, our families and friends, our school children and their families, and all of God’s beloved children may be kept from harm and enjoy the goodness of life He desires and intends for us all.



**BEAUTIFYING OUR GROUNDS**

Thank you to our member couple who wish to remain anonymous for their hard and tedious work of weeding around the church entrance doors and in front of the Luther House. They undertook their work on a very hot and sunny Saturday afternoon, and we are deeply grateful for the sacrifice of their time and energy to keep our grounds a beautiful testimony to the glory and goodness of God’s creation.



**HEALTH UPDATE**

A number of you have kindly asked about my heart health issues. I am thankful to report that I remain in a normal sinus rhythm. I have seen the Nurse Practitioner of my cardiologist twice in the last six months, and all the tests remain normal. I will see my regular NP at the end of October and the cardiologist in November.

They have allowed me to resume my running and exercising, although not to the degree in which I was engaging before the diagnosis of the A-Fib and the procedure to correct my heart rhythm. Through their care and the medications they have prescribed, I am able to stay active and strong. With many of you, I daily experience the continued healing ministry of Christ through medical personnel and medication; and for that gift, we all thank and praise the Lord.



**A REMINDER**

I continue to have difficulty reaching members by telephone, both by direct calls and voicemails. Many times it takes two, three, or even four attempts to get through. I suspect it is because my cell phone number, from which I almost exclusively call, has a 630 area code from the time I lived in Illinois. People have told me that they see the number come up on their caller ID and assume it is a telemarketer.

That hesitancy to answer is understandable. The most recent figures indicate that over 30% of calls that we receive each day are “robocalls” from telemarketers that cause over $450 million of fraud annually. I have been present in many homes when such calls arrive during our visit; and people tell me that if they don’t recognize the number as being from someone they know, they don’t answer.

I will always leave a voicemail if I cannot get through asking the member to call me back, but that almost never occurs. It may be that if it is thought that my call was a telemarketer, that any voicemail that is left would be a nuisance as well; and it is deleted without listening to it.

So once again I ask that you take note of my number: **630-450-1894.** If you do not remember and therefore do not answer the call, please check your voicemail. It is frustrating and time-consuming to continue to call back, hoping to get through to people, especially if it is important that I speak with them.

Thank you for your attention and help.



Mark your calendar for **Sunday, November 14,** after the church service. That is the date set for our Fall Congregational meeting. We will elect Church Council and School Board members at this meeting.



**DOWNTOWN CHURCHES’ CAR SHOW BENEFIT FOR ERIK TANNEHILL**

Thank you to everyone who gave a donation for Erik and to the St. Paul people who came to see the car show and support the benefit.

St. Paul volunteers more or less worked the food tent. Thank you “good and faithful servants”: Bob Kiser, Craig and Judy Hunt, Don Thompson, Barb Fulkerson, Carey and Brooklynn Howard, Jean Kleinschmidt, Judy Mutchler, Virginia Murray, Rick and Karen Fleming, and Janet Bakken.

The United Methodist Church is counting the money and will give us the final total, which we will report as soon as we receive it.

A picture containing building, person, outdoor, standing

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**A group of people at an outdoor market

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**October Birthdays October Anniversaries**

1 Derek Devereaux 4 James & Susan Tomsheck

Jacob Tannehill 9 James & Sandra Galinowski

2 Lauren Hahn 19 Fred & Carol Weiss

Maria Ruminski 20 Craig & Judy Hunt

Amy VanGemeren 21 Warren & Karen Schacht

4 Natalie Kendricks 24 James & Kimberly Summers

Dennis Wahl

5 Cynthia Payeur

7 Dan McNabb

Milenda Simerlein

8 Susan Callahan

9 Judith Gustum

Jayden O’Donnell

Carol Thomas

11 Laura Childers

Heidi Ponder

12 George Martin

16 Kurt Smith

19 Karen Jarrell

Evan Prast

24 Kenneth Hanft, Sr.

25 Judith Mutchler

26 Bob Kiser

28 Sandra Sobecki

29 Karen Schacht

31 Kenneth Wilson



**IN MEMORY OF SUZANNE CAINS**

**General Fund** by Susan Bagby, Wayne Dolson, Mike & Donna Knoll

**Crusader Fund for Girls Volleyball and Basketball uniforms** by Bob & Karen Kiser,

Janet Bakken, Melinda Nagle, Eva Olsaker, Judith & Herbert Miller, Andy Miller, Aryn Miller



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**Long-Term Prayer List**

Robert Atwood Sherry Brotsky Laura Eilers-Straight

Jim Gleason Andy Hipskind Terry Hygema

Jess Kalvaitis Ryan Krueger Tom & Larry Leuth

Ken Mulder Duane Ormsby Jean Thomas

Linda Utley Chris Weninger



Monday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Wednesday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

**St. Paul Lutheran Church & School Staff**

Pastor Mark Reshan

Organist John Remmel

Accompanists Jary Tannehill, Mark Tannehill, Jacob Tannehill

Choir Director Lori Zylstra

Office Secretary Libby Pollock

Custodian Mark Kloess

School Principal Tracey McCay

School Office Coordinator Lisa Heddens

Thank$ for $haring

Thank you for participating in the Galveston Give-Back Night last month. The church raised $250.00.

This month,we will see you at Holly’s! We’re giving you two coupons so you can invite a friend and give them their own coupon. Remember, the coupon is required for the Give-Back bucks.

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