

Christ Moravian Church
Pastoral Letter for the weekend of September 13th, 2020
Worship Focus on Kick-Off Sunday: “*God’s Forgiving Grace*”

Dear Friends in Christ:

As I focus my thoughts for this weekend’s pastoral note I recognize that today (Friday, September 11) is that day of memory and prayerful reflection of events that occurred 19 years ago, but still are riveted in our minds and hearts today. Earlier today, the President of the Provincial Elders’ Conference, Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller, sent this note to the church. I believe including it in our congregational letter is more than fitting.

Dear church,

The Daily Text for today, Friday, September 11 reads, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not be silent at my tears.” Psalm 39:12

On this day we ask the Lord to hear our prayers for a world in need.

We remember this day nineteen years ago, when the US was shattered with the blasts, destruction, and death in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania. We remember how the world joined in common resolve to bring healing and hope from the ashes. We grieve the innocence lost, and lift up those whose lives were forever altered by the death of so many.

We pray this day for all those in the path of horrific fire and destruction on the US West Coast – in California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and elsewhere. We pray for those who have lost loved ones, who have left everything behind with only the clothes on their backs. We pray for those whose homes may be safe but who suffer from the suffocating air quality throughout the region. We pray for those who battle the fires, those who bring food and water and shelter and hope to evacuees, and those who are coordinating long-term responses to this pattern of fire and destruction.

We pray for refugees and immigrants throughout the world, whose lives hang in the balance in the midst of COVID-19, fire, violence, and loss. We pray for those seeking solutions to these overwhelming challenges; we pray for hope.

We pray for all those affected by COVID-19 – for the sick and dying, for school administrators, teachers, and students, for parents and family members, for health care workers, for those seeking a vaccine, for the unemployed, those fearing eviction, for the hungry and homeless. We pray for all those responsible for making decisions that impact our lives. Give patience, understanding, courage, and kindness to all.

We pray for the healing of the nations – for civil discourse, for a willingness to listen with care to the voices of people around us, for an appreciation of diversity, and respect for all. We pray for the US election process and for a fair and safe election.

We pray that we might respond to God's grace in the world and in our lives with faith, love, and hope.

Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry; do not be silent at our tears.

In Christ,
The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller

Through these difficult months of this pandemic, I have certainly appreciated the fine and faithful leadership of all of our denominational leaders both locally and across the wider scope of the province. Those prayerful thoughts from Betsy Miller remind us all that our response to God's graceful love is simple thanks in prayer.

Steve Blackwell will make the Kick-Off Sunday worship video available on Saturday again. I really appreciated a week away as Rev. Michael Ward and others led that September 6th service. I wanted to say an extra word of thanks to the many contributors to CMC SOME GOOD NEWS. The many episodes offered such joy and hope and just plain good news that came to lift our spirits. As we go into the fall, we will pause those episodes but certainly tip our hats to those creative geniuses who took part!

The regular links, children's and youth activities, and congregational info are with this email note.

Fall Blessings to All,
Pastor Steve Gohdes

Parting the Red Sea

Exodus 14:19-31

Word Search Puzzle

T Y W E U J N W C I Z N X S S
W T C B K L J P M O S E S V C
U H P Z E Q U P D X S Z H R L
X K A A Z V A C G S M E N K O
F F R N Y T Q P H R Y L A T U
X S C T D L D W W A O P Y D D
I V D H F K D T A G R U S V B
F D D R Y E S R T L A I N U D
S V X Q Y F P A E B H J O D W
N K T R U S T V R W B B X T S
L L U E L S F E H K L Y P E S
B A U U B A M L C E I H S T M
S V R J J V F I G G P R T G P
G W X M A E Y N S N O T I I V
Z P T Y Y D A G O H L W Z K A

WATER	TRAVELING	GROUND	ARMY	CHARIOTS
DRY	SEA	SAVED	MOSES	HORSES
ANGEL	HAND	CLOUD	TRUST	ISRAEL

CROSSING THE RED SEA (EXODUS 14)



Decoder Puzzle

Each number represents a letter of the alphabet.
Substitute the correct letter for the numbers to reveal the coded words.

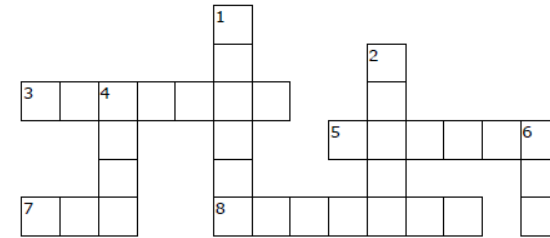
C	B	F	G	T	Z	J	K	U	O	D	X	E	P	L	W	Q	A	Y	H	S	I	R	M	V	N
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

- 20-18-26-11 _____
- 21-13-18 _____
- 11-22-25-22-11-13-11 _____
- 11-23-19 _____
- 15-18-26-11 _____
- 20-10-23-21-13-21 _____
- 1-20-18-23-22-10-5-21 _____
- 18-23-24-19 _____
- 21-18-25-13-11 _____
- 5-23-9-21-5 _____

HAND	DIVIDED	SEA	LAND	HORSES
ARMY	DRY	TRUST	CHARIOTS	SAVED



Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- A two-wheeled horse-drawn battle vehicle used in war and races in ancient Egypt
- a large animal with four legs which people ride on or use for carrying things or pulling vehicles
- Something that has no water in it or on it
- Separated into two or more parts

DOWN

- The surface of the earth
- A light puffy, or billowy formation floating in the air
- The military land forces of a nation
- A large body of salt water which is partly or completely surrounded by land

CHARIOT	DIVIDED	CLOUD	GROUND
DRY	ARMY	SEA	HORSES



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Worship & Event Links for September 13th, 2020

Topic: CMC Bible Buddies

Hi Everyone,
I hope this finds you well.

We will be starting the Sunday AM Bible Study via Zoom this Sunday (September 13th) @ 9:00AM. We will be using a study based on **Feasting on the Word** a Commentary series edited by David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor which follows the lectionary. Andrea has attached the lesson for the week to the e-mail.

The link to connect is below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89652809069?pwd=cG9MUmp1MmpNYTFMeFpzK1ZUQytWZz09>

Meeting ID: 896 5280 9069

Passcode: 370623

One tap mobile

+14388097799,,89652809069# Canada

+15873281099,,89652809069# Canada

Looking forward to seeing you!

Barb: -)

Children's Activities

<https://kidsupfront.com/kidsathome/>

You could be happily busy!

Glo

Links to Online Worship:

Christ Moravian

<https://www.christmoravian.com>

Good Shepherd

<https://www.goodshepherdmoravian.org>

Rio Terrace

<https://www.rioterracechurch.org/live>

Moravian Church Northern Province

<https://www.moravian.org>

for details of events happening within the wider Moravian Church

Focus on Matthew 18:21–35

WHAT is important to know?

— From “*Exegetical Perspective*,” Lewis R. Donelson

The passage, to the surprise and chagrin of many Christians, concludes, “So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (v. 35). Despite Christian nervousness about the implied limitation on God’s mercy, readers of Matthew have long noted that the provisional nature of God’s forgiveness that is articulated here is also articulated throughout the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew at least, God’s forgiveness to some extent depends upon our forgiveness. Christians, who live under God’s grace and forgiveness, will be judged by this same God, mostly by whether they show the same grace and forgiveness to others.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “*Theological Perspective*,” Kathryn D. Blanchard

Peter makes explicit the perennial question that plagues all Christians in all times and places: When may we stop forgiving those who offend us repeatedly? Christians since the early church have consistently taken the meaning of Jesus’ answer—whether translated “seventy-seven” or “seventy times seven”—to be crystal clear: never. God is a God who forgives completely, and the body of Christ is called to do likewise. However, even God’s forgiveness has its limits. The theological tenet that God’s “default” stance toward the penitent is one of mercy must lead to the conviction that God’s people are those who likewise practice mercy—willingly, concretely, and as a communal way of life.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “*Pastoral Perspective*,”

Charlotte Dudley Cleghorn

Marjorie Thompson writes: “To forgive is to make a conscious choice to release the person who has wounded us from the sentence of our judgment, however justified that judgment may be. It represents a choice to leave behind our resentment and desire for retribution, however fair such punishment may seem. . . . Forgiveness involves excusing persons from the *punitive consequences* they deserve because of their behavior. The behavior remains condemned, but the offender is released from its effects as far as the forgiver is concerned. Forgiveness means the power of the original wound’s power to hold us trapped is broken.”

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “*Homiletical Perspective*,”

Charles L. Campbell

The issue here is not how many times an isolated individual should forgive some other random person who sins against him or her. Rather, the context is the community of faith. The concern here is the life of the church and the practices necessary to build up the community of faith. At the heart of those practices is forgiveness, not as an isolated act, but as an ongoing activity among members of the community. Within this context, there can be no limit on forgiveness, because it is a never-ending practice that is essential to the life of the church.

Parables

Seven of the remaining 12 sessions in this quarter (including today's) are from Matthew. Of those seven, five consist of parables (and a sixth teaching is clearly parable-like).

Although the church almost exclusively identifies parables with Jesus, the Old Testament has several examples of such teachings. The prophet Isaiah tells a parable about a vineyard that yielded wild grapes to convey the basis for God's impending judgment against Israel in the practices of injustice and violence (Isaiah 5:1–7). Similarly, the prophet Nathan tells King David the parable of the ewe lamb to make the king confront his culpability in the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:1–10).

Some of Jesus' parables are told in situations of conflict (Luke 15:1–3). More generally, they provided listeners in his day with an object or experience or relationship in everyday life that Jesus uses to invoke or convey some spiritual truth.

Many parables, particularly those in Matthew, identify their intent as revealing some aspect of God's sovereign realm ("kingdom of heaven"). Some people may take that to mean that parables reveal what life will be like in the afterlife. Certainly God's reign points toward the future. Clearly, the qualities of that realm have not been fully realized on earth. We wait and hope with longing for such fulfillment. But the reign and realm of God exist now, in our midst. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21). Parables describe characteristics and qualities of God's reign that intend to transform how we live on this side of the grave.

One further note: Jesus often infuses parables with extreme hyperbole. In this week's parable, the debt of the first servant is said to be "ten thousand talents." "Ten thousand" was the highest numerical notation in that day. Likewise, a talent was the largest sum of money. Such a debt would have taken an ordinary day laborer more than 136,000 years to repay. The exaggerations in Jesus' parables are not to be understood literally, but spiritually. It is an impossible debt to incur, yet even it is forgiven. Jesus does not mean that forgiveness reaches its limit on the 78th offense (or 491st, as some manuscripts render that formula). He means that God's forgiveness has no limits.

