

The Petra Press

Newsletter of the Williamstown Lutheran Church

Graniteville, Vermont * * * 207-370-0355

www.wlcvermont.org

Vacancy Pastor
Rev. Robert Fischer

February 2021

(Vacancy) Pastor's Corner

When Have We Repented "Enough"?

The season of Lent begins this month, and one of the purposes of the Lenten season is to give us time to ponder on our sins, and on the need for repentance and forgiveness. But, what is "repentance"?

John the Baptist rightly refused to baptize (and forgive) the Pharisees and Sadducees because he saw that they weren't sincere. Their "repentance" was done for the sake of appearance only. The truth was that they didn't believe John was a prophet of God (Matt. 21:23-27) nor did they have any intention to change their ways (Matt. 3:7-10).

Genuine repentance, as the Augsburg Confession beautifully puts it is:

"...nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror, on account of sin, and yet at the same time to believe the Gospel and absolution (namely, that sin has been forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ), and this faith will comfort the heart and again set it at rest. Amendment of life and the forsaking of sin should then follow, for these must be the fruits of repentance, as John says, '*Bear fruit that befits repentance*'" (Matt. 3:8).

Notice that genuine repentance has *two* parts to it and *one* result. The first part is to confess and admit the sin in question and have sorrow because of it. The repentant person is done with cover ups and excuses. He sees himself as the *guilty one*, not the *victim*. All this fills him with sorrow, and disgust, and fear of God's punishment. The second part, which is the most important, is to believe that because of the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross, the sin has been forgiven. Unfortunately, many seem to think that what brings us forgiveness or atonement is our confessing the sin. This is false because it turns our confession into a good work by which we seek to make atonement for our own sin. Forgiveness comes

only when we believe the *Gospel*, that our sin is forgiven not because of *our* confession or sorrow, but because of the atonement of *Jesus* on the cross. If repentance is genuine, it strives to bring an important result: the sinful behavior is stopped, the proper behavior is begun. These are the fruits that are spoken of in Matthew 3:8 above. We'll never live a *perfect* life, but we should always be *striving* against sin, and not deliberately *giving-in* to it.

Repentance should be genuine, but we dare not require more than *God* requires. Unfortunately, there has always been a tendency in the Christian church to do this. Many a poor soul has truly repented as described above, but then torments himself with questions about whether his repentance has been *enough*: "Have I felt *enough* sorrow over my sin? Have I repented long enough, anguished and prayed long enough? Am I really sincere? If I am, then why do I still feel guilty?" Such questions rob us of the comfort of forgiveness. We've repented "enough" when we can say with the tax collector, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13), when we seek to amend our sinful life; and then look to the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus for the full payment of our sins. We don't look to our frail, sinful selves for forgiveness, but to Christ. That's the joy of repentance!

Blessings,
Pastor Fischer

*The
Season
of
Lent*



The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 17th.

Due to the vacancy, there will be no midweek Lenten services this year but there will be in-person Holy Week services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday; and of course, Easter Sunday.

A link will be emailed each week to the online midweek Lenten services of the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Waterville, Maine.



PRAYERS NEEDED

Marsha Prestridge was to have knee-fusion surgery on Thursday February 11, however, it has been postponed as the parts needed had not been received. Marsha's surgery has been rescheduled for Friday February 19. Please keep Marsha and her family in prayer.



Operation Christmas Child

Let's keep Operation Christmas Child in our prayers and continue to gather items for 2021.

Ideas for February: Accessories – think sunglasses, hair ties, barrettes, jewelry, watches, etc.

Ideas for March: Quality Crafts



Care Net Baby Bottle Drive

The Care Net Pregnancy Center of Central Vermont's annual Baby Bottle Drive continues through March 1st.

There are two ways to support this effort:

1. Take a Baby Bottle, fill it with loose change, cash or check and return it to church by March 1.
2. There is Virtual Baby Bottle Drive, which rounds up your change automatically with your credit or debit card each month. Visit the Care Net website at www.carenetcv.org for more information.

Update for the Call

The following email message was sent out on Wednesday February 10 to the WLC members.

“WLC Family,

I am sad to announce Pastor Yeadon has declined the Call extended to him by our congregation. A letter from Pastor Yeadon is attached for your reading.

I want to thank the members of the Call Committee who have worked diligently throughout this process.

I will be working with the Elder's, Call Committee and NED Leadership to set up a roadmap with options for our congregation as we move forward. Although it feels discouraging, we must remain positive in prayer and have trust in the process.

We as a congregation must remember this is a Divine process and God is working in both our lives and in the lives of the men, we *think* we want to minister to our community, but it is God who will ultimately lead us with the man for us.”

Matt Chin

Portals of Prayer

We know many of you are staying at home for your safety during this time and may want a *Portals of Prayer*. One can be mailed to you, please contact Matt Chin or Kathy Laughlin and we will be happy to send one out to you.



December 2020 TREASURER'S UPDATE

A brief summary of the financial position of the congregation at the end of January 2021 shows that our total congregational income for this year (2021) is higher compared to last year at this time. Since the parsonage is now rented and we are receiving rental income, the monthly income is higher by almost \$1,200 than when the parsonage will be occupied by a new pastor. Expenses are much lower than last year at this time since we currently are not paying a full-time pastor. Thank you for continuing to support our church family through your tithes and offerings despite the difficulties of this time.

	Year to Date Income	Year to Date Expenses	
January 2020	\$6,109.98	\$6,585.67	
January 2021	\$6,935.83	\$3,976.36	

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” Malachi 3:10

To God be the glory!

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Currier

Reminder for 2020 WLC Giving Statement

If you would like to receive your 2020 WLC Giving's statement via email, please send me an email at BLaugh38@gmail.com with **subject line WLC**.

If you would prefer a paper copy sent to you via US postal service, let me know. Otherwise, your statement will be left in your mailbox in the Narthex at church.

Thank you,
Bob Laughlin



The Stay Connected Corner was well received and so we will continue with this for the next few months. This new section is meant to be a way for us to stay connected during this strange time.

I hope I have not missed any updates, if you sent me one and you do not see it here, please let me know and resend. Thank you.

Here are a few words from some of our church family.

Barb & John Currier:

WE HAVE MOVED!

The Curriers are excited to share their news that they finally have made the move to their new home on John's family farm in Danville, VT. Our new address and telephone number are:

John and Barb Currier
654 Currier Road
Danville, VT 05828

(802) 684-3331

Ture Nelson:

Many in our church family have been asking about Ture. I recently spoke with Sheila Walther who has been in contact with him. He is home and doing well and is back to work, working remotely.

From Kim Prestridge:

It's been right at a year since Dan died, and though it's been hard, it's been easy to see God's care for us. Thank you to everyone who have sent cards, texts, phone calls, etc. We are so thankful for the support.

Update on Katie Currier:

Katie Currier has been staying busy on her 'Covid-vacation' working on a virtual dance duet. If you can find your way around YouTube, you can find the trailer for *Reverie* and on February 14 there is Valentine's Day Special Presentation of *Reverie | World Premiere* at 5:00 pm EST. If you see Katie, ask her about it.

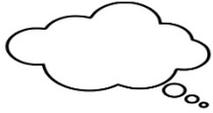
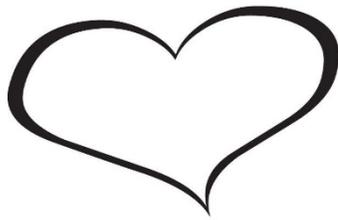
I watch the trailer and it is amazing!
Kathy L

Update on Chester Chin:

The Chin Family would like to thank all for the faithful prayers. Praise God Chester is back at home and recovering from COVID-19. He is feeling fatigued and being monitored for complications but is on the road to recovery.

Staying Connected using Technology

Kim Prestridge has a great idea to help us all stay connected. We can use some technology to keep us connected. Kim has access and can host Zoom events such as a lady's night where we could chat, sing, share scripture, etc., and a church-wide Zoom that could be like a fellowship feast (without the food). If you are interested please let Kim know, and if enough are interested she will set it up! Kim's email is kim.prestridge@gmail.com



Thoughts from Mike Schumacher

Last month I wrote about dogs as pets and roses not wanting to have thorns, and I am still thinking of those things. My mind seems to work in spurts, and I cannot stop it sometimes, anyway, dogs lead me to the shepherd boy David. He did not have a dog either because they were unclean animals. In Psalms 22 David says, "Dogs surrounded me, a band of evil men has encircled me; they have pierced by hands and my feet." Dogs and evil men linked together in this messianic Psalm that Jesus quoted when he cried out "My God, My God why have your forsaken me!"

Out of all creations dogs were used to express utter degradation and contempt. All through the Old Testament it says things like 'dogs shall like their blood; and Jezebel was eaten by dogs, etc. And on the cross Jesus transformed dogs into 'man's best friend'. He turned degradation and disgust into blessing. The Pharisees and elders probably knew Psalm 22 by heart and when they heard Jesus quote verse 1, they probably looked around at what was going on all around them at that very moment and at least wondered at the exactness of what they saw aligning with the words of Psalm 22. The scorn and mocking, bones out of joint, the thirst, the casting of lots for his clothes and finally "a generation yet unborn will serve Him and speak of His righteousness". I wonder what they thought.

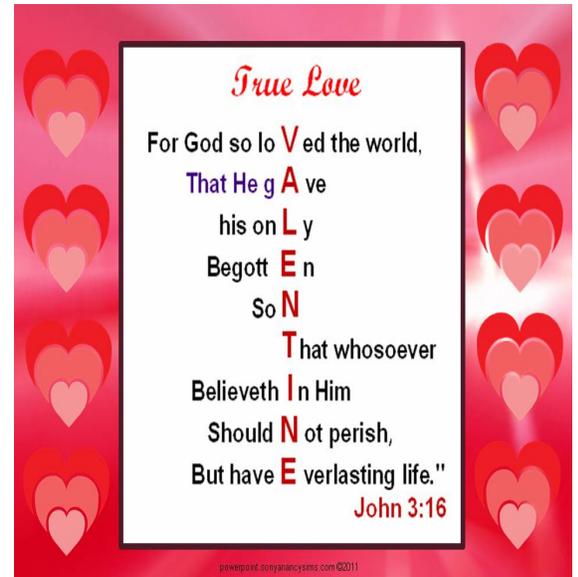
And then on their way home they felt the earthquake and stumbled in the darkness and someone ran to tell them that the thick curtain that kept everyone out of the most hold place was ripped open beginning from top to bottom and even a pagan roman soldier said that this must be the Son of God. And they had insisted He be crucified because he'd said that very thing about Himself. I wonder what they thought. "It must have been the earthquake...we'll have to get it replaced. We'll have to be sure to keep people out of the most holy place ... they cannot go in there!" But some of them did come to faith on Pentecost. I wonder what they thought then when Peter said, "who

you_killed". Talk about a radical change! And our salvation is just as radical. We cannot say "Lord I thank you that I am not like the Pharisees "(in the story of the Pharisees and the Publican). All we can **ever** say is "Lord be merciful to me.... a sinner!"

Maybe next I will think about Lazarus and the rich man and the dogs licking the sores of his body. No telling where thinking about the Bible will lead.

Welcome to Lent.

Mike S



The deadline for the March edition of Petra Press is Tuesday March 9. Please continue to send in your submissions for "Staying Connected Corner", articles, pictures, etc. Thank you to all our contributors.

