



Images of the Cross

Sunday Worship Themes

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April 5 - Palm Sunday

Images of the Cross

Upside Down King

Mark 11:1-11

Pastor Katherine preaching

April 12 - Images of the Cross

Victory

Colossians 2:6-15

Pastor Phil preaching

April 19 - Holy Humor Sunday

Pastor Phil preaching

April 26 - MCC Celebration Sunday

Pastor Phil preaching



Tabor Church News

April, 2020

Phil's Ponderings: A Whole New World

Many of you are familiar with the popular song from the Disney Movie Aladdin, "A Whole New World." That's kind of like what life feels like right now: we're living in a whole new world with a new language and new cultural practices (e.g. "social distancing," "quarantine," "pandemic," "the 6-foot rule," "stay at home," etc.) In reality, we are living in a unique time in history in which the whole world is impacted by the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). But unlike the song from Aladdin, not everything is "shining, shimmering, splendid." In many ways, the whole world is suffering right now. Many people are living with heightened fear and anxiety. Hospitals capacity is being tested. Many people have lost work while other people's jobs have become more stressful. Everyone is impacted by this pandemic.

As people of faith, where do we turn for help and hope? It is my prayer that this time of physical distancing will actually be an opportunity for us to grow in deeper relationships with God and with one another. Many of us find ourselves at home with our closest family members. While this can cause conflict, I hope we also embrace quality time with these beloved people. Many of us (not everyone) find ourselves with more free time. For me, I have found it important to focus more on self-care to help keep me in a calmer, non-anxious state of mind so that I can be a positive presence with my family and with you the Tabor Congregation. For me, self-care means:

—Meeting virtually with my Spiritual Director, my Leadership Coach, and fellow Pastors.

—Spending time outside exercising (running or biking) while listening to audio books.

—Spending quality time with my family and embracing times of play, reading, games, and rest with a spirit of gratitude.

—Trying to develop a consistent morning and evening routine that includes prayer, yoga, and listening to music.

Tabor Church Family, as we continue to journey into this "whole new world," I believe that there are indeed opportunities that are "shining, shimmering, splendid" if we have open eyes and open hearts. Therefore, may we be people who lament and feel each other's pain, offering all our requests up to God, and may we be people who recognize God's calm and creative presence amidst the chaos. May we take care of ourselves as we take one step at a time so that we can live non-anxiously in the present, open to the "whole new world" that God has in store for us, the kingdom of God, which continues to break in all around us.

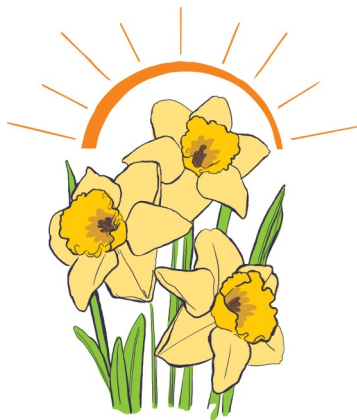
~Peace, Pastor Phil

P.S. Here are some reflection questions for you to consider individually or as a family:

What about this "whole new world" seems most overwhelming to you?

What does self care mean for you?

What aspects of this "whole new world" are "shining, shimmering, splendid"?



Easter Plans

While our traditional Easter plans and rituals have been altered due to the impact of the coronavirus, we still invite you to recognize and celebrate this important time of year with the Tabor Church Family in the following ways:

—Share the name/names of loved ones you would like to remember with an Easter Lily (whether or not you purchase an Easter Lily). These names will be listed in the Easter bulletin.

—On Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, participate in worship by watching the church Youtube playlist or reading through the transcript and reflecting on the reflection questions.

—Throughout Holy Week, prayerfully read through the “Images of the Cross” booklet that was sent out with the Palm Sunday bulletin. This booklet is designed for you to do with your family each day of Holy Week leading up to Easter.

—On Easter morning, get outside for a walk or run, praying a prayer of hope and resurrection, and take a picture of the sunrise. Share that picture with others, perhaps even posting it on the church Facebook Page.

—As we journey through the darkness of coronavirus and Holy Week, may we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and the hope we have in our God of life!

~Pastor Phil

Rosie's Reflections

"Have no fear, God is here." Let me tell you a story.....

Several years ago, when I taught the preschool class during Faith Formation at Tabor, the lessons focused on God's presence. One of the activities to reinforce this was to repeat together, "Have no fear, God is here." Every Sunday morning, we began class with this prayer first with an audible whisper then gradually increasing our volume. Soon their sweet little voices were proclaiming together, "Have no fear, God is here!" We practiced this prayer so that when we experienced times of feeling alone, being afraid, or feeling sad, we would remember; "Have no fear, God is here." Anytime is a good time to thank God for being *near* and being *here*!

One day a parent questioned what I was teaching their child, then proceeded to tell me about the night their child began calling loudly after being tucked in for the night. When they went to check, the child told them she was practicing what I had taught them to pray -- "Have no fear, God is here." The child had remembered!

I've often thought of this story, and how this simple prayer can lead us into a deeper trust in God's presence no matter what we're facing. We believe it and teach our children to believe it, yet on some level, especially during times of uncertainty, like this pandemic we're facing, we can easily sink into feeling abandoned by God. Our trust might falter in when we find ourselves under mental and emotional strain. We've all been there.

This story reminds me to keep drawing on the deep well of love that the Trinity fills us with – a deep well that never runs dry, even though we ourselves feel dry, depleted and alone. In these times, remember that the Holy Spirit groans for you when words and prayers don't come. I am groaning for you too.

In the days and weeks ahead, I encourage you to stay connected with each other in a variety of ways. Reach out through phone calls, emails, texts, and good old fashioned letters. Let's surround each other with God's presence that never runs dry – that never leaves us nor forsakes us. (Hebrews 13:5). "Have no fear, God is here." Remember that you are *near* and *dear* to the heart of God. ~Pastor Rosie

~ Grace and Peace, Pastor Rosie



Katherine's Candor

My dear friends, what then can we say about these things? I miss you all and am saddened that I can no longer meet with you in person for conversation and worship (especially as Easter Sunday approaches). My days are spent differently now than they once were (while recognizing that this is a reality for everyone). Worship planning has been changing every week as we try to figure out how best to provide meaningful worship services in a digital setting. The Youth Group is no longer meeting in person, although we will begin checking in weekly (or as needed) online. And I am no longer meeting folks for coffee and conversation. I am someone who tends to shy away from technology, and yet my pastoring has moved online. Now my days are comprised of digital meetings, conversations over email, and planning for digital worship options, all while sharing teaching duties with Peter on behalf of our children while also trying to figure out how to meet our family's physical and emotional needs in the midst of a pandemic.

My emotions vacillate greatly during the day. Sometimes grief overtakes me. I lament for all who have died and for their loved ones who now grieve because of such a tragic and untimely loss. I lament for those who are currently ill and for their anxious families. I lament for exhausted and overwhelmed healthcare workers. I lament for those who can no longer go to work and who worry how they will continue to make ends meet. I lament because life is now so different from that which is familiar and comfortable.

Sometimes I feel grateful: grateful for more time with my family, grateful for a comfortable home and food in our freezers (while recognizing and lamenting that this not the case for everyone), grateful for opportunities to still connect over social media, grateful for health (at least so far).

Sometimes fear is at the forefront of my mind. I fear for my family and friends as the virus continues to spread exponentially. I fear any time I go to my newsfeed and see what is happening locally and around the world. I fear because I once again am reminded how little of life I have control over. I fear because I have no idea what lies ahead.

I try to hold onto Jesus speaking peace to his disciples in times when they were afraid. Sometimes I am able to do so. Sometimes it is quite difficult.

Sometimes my prayers are filled with a great many petitions. Sometimes all I can do is sit silently before God trusting that the Spirit is interceding with sighs too deep for words. For what can one say about these things?

And yet we are assured that God's presence and love are with us, no matter what may happen. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things yet to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

This is what I try to hold on to at the end of the day. No matter what happens, God is with us and loves us. No matter what happens, God is still sovereign. No matter what happens, God is still the One who holds the ultimate victory, even over death itself.

May the love of God, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and the peace of Jesus be with us all.

~Grace and Peace, Pastor Katherine

Youth Lead Now

On February 29 (Leap Day), I spent the day at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton with 12 High School youth from several different Mennonite Churches along with members of the Western District/South Central Bi-Conference Youth Ministry Committee: Clayton Gladish, Derek King, Isaac Landis, and Marshall Anderson. We gathered from 9am-4pm for "Youth Lead Now," a workshop to encourage youth to grow in leadership skills and spiritual disciplines. Clayton and I led the leadership input, using a version of the workshop we designed and have used in other church settings, and Derek King led the spiritual disciplines. The 12 youth came from several churches, including Tabor (Dawson Duerksen), Journey, Rainbow, Hesston, Whitestone, and New Creation. Throughout the day, we taught three leadership behaviors: distinguishing between technical and adaptive, acting experimentally, and working across factions. Our scripture focus was the "Parable of the Good Samaritan" in Luke 10:25-37.

Instead of sharing more details about what we did and taught throughout the day, I'd like to reflect a bit on the transformation that took place with the group. When the 12 youth arrived, they sat at the 3 round tables, hardly talking or looking at each other. By the time we got through the Bible Study on Luke 10, group conversation began to get more energetic. By the time we finished lunch, the group decided to move the three tables together into one "mega-table" so that we were a unified group. By the time we got to the last session, some of the youth reflected on how they didn't want to leave because they felt like they had bonded together as a group while learning some important leadership tools. For me personally, I felt energized to work with youth who were open and energized to learn and to put leadership learning into practice. I was also excited that the group came up with several potential experiments that could be implemented in a variety of settings. Thus, on leap day 2020, we really did "leap into leadership." As I think back on this experience, I am grateful for the opportunity to use my gifts to help make a positive impact in the lives of young people.

~Peace, Pastor Phil

P.S. I wrote the above article before the impact of the coronavirus on the United States. In looking back, it seems strange that the Youth Lead Now event was only about a month ago!



Something Fun

- 1) How does Moses make his coffee?
- 2) Where is the first baseball game in the Bible?
- 3) On the Ark, Noah probably got milk from cows. What did he get from the ducks?
- 4) How do we know Peter was a rich fisherman?
- 5) What kind of man was Boaz before he married?

Answers below



March 8 Worship: Reconciliation
Destroying Divisions

Answers to Something Fun

- 1) He brews it.
- 2) In the big inning. Eve stole first, Adam stole second, Cain struck out Abel, The Giants and the Angels were rained out.
- 3) Quackers.
- 4) By his net income.
- 5) Ruthless.

Pausing to reflect on coronavirus

by Heidi Regier Kreider, WDC Conference Minister

Wow, March has been a long month...or at least it feels that way! Just a month ago I attended a 100th anniversary celebration banquet for Mennonite Central Committee along with several hundred other people. Now, that kind of gathering seems unthinkable! Every day since then the coronavirus pandemic has brought changes and challenges that we never considered before: Cancellations, school closings, lay-offs and economic downturn, stay-at-home orders, daily news of suffering, death and rising numbers of COVID cases, the exhaustion of medical providers and the anguish of making hard choices about care-taking and social isolation... These are just a few of the new realities that surround us and bind us together with our global community.

As conference minister, I have been focusing on offering encouragement to pastors, gathering resources to communicate to congregations and leaders, exploring forms of financial assistance, and coordinating adjustments for WDC staff. As we prepare to enter another month of this unfolding situation, I pause a few moments to share some reflections and observations:

In a crisis, priorities shift. Hygiene and meeting basic daily needs are now our first concern. Suddenly hand sanitizer and toilet paper are scarce! Other staple supplies like flour, sugar and milk have become more precious. Garden seeds and baby chicks are in high demand for their promise of fresh vegetables and eggs in the months to come. Emotional and mental health practices are more crucial now than ever, whether that means a daily walk, listening to music, chatting with a friend (by phone/video or from a distance, of course), or just getting enough sleep. Beneath the stress and anxiety of this time, we are also feeling a lot of sadness and loss as our dreams, plans and goals have been set aside with the cancellation of church events, conferences, banquets, fund-raisers, concerts, birthday parties, graduation ceremonies, vacations, projects, travels, family visits and more. Yet, at the same time, resourcefulness abounds! Pastors and church leaders are creatively using all kinds of social media, phone calls and old-fashioned mail to connect with church members, hold Sunday school, worship together, pray for one another, and reach out to their communities. Congregations are sharing ideas and resources with each other. New gifts and talents are being realized and offered for the common good. New skills are being learned that will serve us well into the future.

On a deeper level, the coronavirus pandemic is revealing very starkly the systemic inequities that have always existed in our society. While some of us are only experiencing minor inconvenience, others among us are facing immediate crisis due to lack of dependable income, healthy food, child-care, adequate medical care, or internet connection. The pandemic also exposes our common humanity and frailty, and contradicts the myth that we are invincible and in control. While we should, of course, do all we can (please, please follow guidelines for stopping the spread of COVID-19!), we must also humbly acknowledge our human limitations and mortality. This is a time to be honest with our doubts, questions and fears - and also to affirm our hope and trust in our Creator God who enters our suffering in solidarity with us. In the same way, this crisis is a time for us to practice compassion and generosity, to share sacrificially with others, to give what we can to support those who are struggling most. It is a time to practice patience and kindness for care-providers, our families and friends, co-workers, and ourselves.

As we find our way forward in these uncertain times, may we know the deep peace of God's care, Christ's call to justice and compassion, and the wise guidance of the Holy Spirit.