

ZION NEWS

July, 2021

The church in the heart of Penn Hills that is the heart of Penn Hills

Pastor's Page

“Baptism is...”

Earlier this week, one of the coaches at the gym I attend who is also a friend, texted me what she called, “a professional question.” She and her partner are expecting their first child this Fall and they have been getting the “when will she be baptized” inquiry from both sets of grandparents. This couple, while baptized as infants themselves, are not practicing Christians. And my guess would be that they do not expect to be at any point in the foreseeable future.

However, my friend wanted to know how to break it to one of the grandparents’ that it was “OK” for the infant to not be baptized, perhaps as justification and assurance to the Catholic grandmother that her little granddaughter was not destined to the proverbial infant purgatory/Hell. Part of me wonders if it wasn’t also for their own reassurance as well, though my friend and her spouse would never admit it. I also sensed her question had more to do with family dynamics than on God’s mercy upon those who aren’t baptized. Perhaps some of you can relate to this sort of inquiry with your own children and/or grandchildren.

So, what did I say to my friend? For starters, baptism was not a “get-out-of-Hell-free” card or something that we do to appease Gram-Gram or even an excuse to throw a big party. After all, these kinds of examples place baptisms’ emphasis and gift not on the good and gracious mercy of God but rather on fear, on manipulation, on appeasing our own appetites to be the center of attention. On our decision and not God’s. Our participation rather than our reception. Where we are the subject of the verbs rather than God as the subject and we as the object.

I invited her to think of baptism (and relate it to her mother-in-law) as being akin to The Draft of any sports league. (My friend is after all, a big-time lover of all things sports-related and sports-adjacent). From the moment that their little Zoë will enter into the world and over the course of her life, everyone and everything will want to “draft” her onto their team. They will put together the spiffiest looking team, make the shiniest of promises. And over the course of little Zoë’s life, she will be traded and traded from person to person and thing to thing.

Yet, only One will choose her when she’s considered to be “un-draftable,” not tradable. The one with the lowest stats. The bottom of the barrel. When she’s considered to be weak and vulnerable and worthless in the eyes of the world. There God in Christ Jesus will still step in and say, “Yes. Yes. Yes. This one. She is the one that I choose to draft. Never to trade. Forever and always.”

“Yes, you are mine when you pass through the waters. Yes, you are mine when flames try to consume you. I have knit you together in your mothers’ womb. And from the top of your bushy little head to the tips of your tiny toes, I know you. You are known by me. And I love you. No matter what, beloved child of God.” And I ended by saying that even though little Zoë does not know who this God is, she is already known and adored by God. God who loved her so that he knew the world needed her in it, and so she was made. These kinds of questions regarding faith and God’s work not only in the world but in individuals’ lives, and in particular those who are closest to our own hearts, are always on the lips of both the faithful and the unfaithful.

The righteous and the pagan. May we each take time this month to reflect on our own baptism into Christ and not only pray for all people to be baptized into the life that we share as brothers and sisters in Him, but be ever so bold as to proclaim this good news of God's ever radical and all-consuming draft of love and grace and mercy for the whole world. And if posed by the same question as me from someone that you know, how would YOU respond?

Peace, Pastor Martha

Deacon's Desk:

This week I've been think a lot about the words we use in baptism, confirmation and receptions of new members liturgies and how similar those three things are. During the course of each, the presiding minister asks the congregation, "People of God, do you promise to support these sisters and brothers and pray for them in their life in Christ?" To which those gathered answer, "We do, and we ask God to help and guide us." Therefore, I think it is safe to assume that if you are reading this, you have been asked that question and given that same answer, a number of times of the course of your life. And as a good Lutheran, I ask you what does that truly mean, to support our sisters and brothers, and pray for them in their life of Christ? We start by saying, yes, I want to be part of this faith community. We make a commitment. We show up for each other and the community as a whole. We check in on each other.

While the world has changed around us this last year and a half in ways that we cannot yet conceive, one thing has not changed: We need each other! We need to be in community with others in order to grow our faith! We need to be in community with other disciples of Christ. Faith is like love; it grows exponentially when it is used and shared. And in order to keep those promises we all have made to one and other during baptisms, confirmations and reception of new members, we have to commit to showing up for each other to use and grow that faith and love.

I know that over the last 18 months we have all developed new patterns of life, we got in the habit of worshipping in our PJs while enjoying our breakfast, our evening meetings, and Bible studies have been zoomed in from kitchen tables, back decks, and even our beds. But as we all begin to reengage with the outside world, it is also time that we recommit to be present for one and other. As you forth in the planning of your post pandemic days, where will worship, and faith based activities be? Will you be committing to the promises you made?

WE LIVE AS STEWARDS

Christian steward is obedient

Christian stewards obey God by setting aside a part of all their income for others. [Jesus replied to the ruler]. There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; then come follow me. "But when he [the ruler] heard this he became sad; for he was very rich. [Luke 18:22-23].

Reasons why obedience to God is important:

1. Jesus Calls Us to Obey.

In Jesus Christ we find the perfect model of obedience. As his disciples, we follow Christ's example as well as his commands. Our motivation for obedience is love.

2. God Rewards Obedience.

But don't just listen to God's words, you must do what it says, otherwise you are only fooling yourself. For it you listen to the words and don't obey. If you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. [James 1:22-25].

3. Obedience to God Demonstrates Faith.

When we obey God, we show our trust in him. And we can be sure that we know him if we obey God's words truly show how we know, we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. [John 2:3-6]

In gratitude and humble trust
We bring our best today
To serve your cause and share your love
with all along life's ways
O God who gave yourself to us
In Jesus Christ your Son
Teach us to give ourselves each day
until life's work is done. [ELW 695]

Altar Guild: I think we can all agree that having the opportunity to worship together again is a true blessing! And as all the working parts come together to make worship a meaningful experience for everyone, we find we are in need of help on **Altar Guild**. This is a really great way to serve. You are assisting in preparing for worship, and you get all the training you need! If you think you'd like to learn more, please reach out to Brenda Wolfe at BLB0630@comcast.net or by phone: 412-243-4354.

Zion Book Club: Zion's Book Club meets on Mondays at 1:00pm – please contact Diane at DianeSantoriello@gmail.com or 412-435-6297 for more information. Everyone welcome! Here are our upcoming Books:

7/19 “The Dutch House” by Ann Patchett

8/16 “Saving Freedom: Truman, the Cold War....” By Joe Scarborough

9/20 “The Dearly Beloved” by Cara Wall

Summer Worship Series

July 25: Gifts of the Global Church

Which continent currently has the highest number of Lutherans in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)? If you guessed



Europe, the land of Luther, you'd be correct! According to 2019 LWF statistics, Europe has about 32.6 million Lutherans; and Luther's home of Germany still makes up the largest portion of that with 10.8 million members - the largest number of Lutherans in a single country. But did you know that the *second* largest continental group of Lutherans are in Africa? As of 2019 there were 28.1 million Lutheran Africans (note: not far off from the shrinking number in Europe), and that number has been steadily growing! Africa boasts the single largest LWF member church in Ethiopia, which has over 10 million members itself - almost as much as Germany and nearly three times larger than our own

Evangelical Church in America (ELCA)! Asia is in third place with 12.4 million Lutherans, and North America comes in a distant fourth place with only about 3.7 million shared between the USA and Canada....and that's not even counting all the Christians who aren't Lutheran! The **vast** majority of those Christians are in Africa and Latin America, which are both growing greatly.

Obviously, there's no competition among these continents for membership supremacy. We all share in the Word of God and together make up the one body of Christ. But I think it's striking to notice that most Lutherans in the world are living **outside** of Europe and North America! And those majorities are growing!

I think it is important to note at this point that, though this growth and shift in population is recent, there have been Christians in Africa and Asia since the earliest days of the church. In our white-washed understanding of Christian history, we often forget the great contributions of the churches, theologians, monks, and missionaries of churches in the Middle East and North Africa. Their wisdom and insight into the life of Christ has been a constant presence in the global church, often overlooked or forgotten by Western churches.

It should also be said that within North America there is a great diversity of cultural expression and tradition in the church, and those gifts are no less valuable to the church!

All of this to say that as members of Zion Lutheran Church in Penn Hills, we are part of this diverse and changing global church. Each of the statistics presented above represents real-life people of faith, living out the gospel and worshipping together in their own unique places, languages, and cultures. The languages, traditions, and musical styles of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, though perhaps foreign to us, are a treasure of the church. They shed new light on the gospel, enliven our worship life, and enrich our mutual understanding of our brothers and sisters of different lands and cultures.

The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture, prepared by an international group from many of the member churches of the LWF, puts it this way:

JESUS CAME TO BE THE SAVIOR OF ALL PEOPLE. HE WELCOMES THE TREASURES OF EARTHLY CULTURES INTO THE CITY OF GOD. BY VIRTUE OF BAPTISM, THERE IS ONE CHURCH; AND ONE MEANS OF LIVING IN FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO BAPTISM IS TO MANIFEST EVER MORE DEEPLY THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. THE SHARING OF HYMNS AND ART AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP ACROSS CULTURAL BARRIERS HELPS ENRICH THE WHOLE CHURCH AND STRENGTHEN THE SENSE OF THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH. THIS SHARING CAN BE ECUMENICAL AS WELL AS CROSS-CULTURAL, AS A WITNESS TO THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE ONENESS OF BAPTISM. CROSS-CULTURAL SHARING IS POSSIBLE FOR EVERY CHURCH, BUT IS ESPECIALLY NEEDED IN MULTICULTURAL CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBER CHURCHES. (NS 5.1)

When we welcome the hymns, art, and other elements of worship from across the world, we are strengthening our sense of communion with the church throughout time and across cultural barriers. For this reason, our special worship service for the month of July will use exclusively music from non-European-descent sources (Asia & the Pacific, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Native cultures). Since we already incorporate these things on a regular basis, some of the music will be familiar to you! I hope you enjoy the lively and deep faithfulness present in these traditions as we welcome them into our worship on July 25. La paz de Cristo sea siempre con ustedes. Andrew

Passages: Intersections of the Sacred in Cairo Egypt
special World Refugee Day Edition

World Refugee Day

A day that is observed every year on June 20, by the United Nations and people all over the world to honor **refugees** around the globe. It celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

For us here at St. Andrew's and StARS every day is "World Refugee Day" as we work to create safe spaces and challenge systems so that people no longer need to flee their homes and seek shelter in countries afar.

A part of our marking of this day was an interfaith worship service. Shared below, it was an amazing day of music, prayers and so much more. We spent the morning lifting up the justice, courage and love that are a part of the work with and for displaced people. We also spent part of our time in appreciation for the work of Chris Eades.

Chris has been the executive director of StARS for the past seven years and is now stepping on to move on to other ventures, leaving in his absence a new Executive Leadership Team made up of ten individuals, seven of whom are people with the lived experience of forced displacement. We look forward to the new and creative ways this team will lead the ministry--they are blazing new paths with this non-hierarchical model which reflects the true nature of StARS.

Peace be with you all.

Your friend in Christ, Pastor Christie

Who is a refugee? Some definitions

Every minute 20 people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution or terror. There are several types of forcibly displaced persons:

Refugees: A refugee is someone who fled his or her home and country owing to “a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion”, according to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention. Many refugees are in exile to escape the effects of natural or human-made disasters.

Asylum Seekers: Asylum seekers say they are refugees and have fled their homes as refugees do, but their claim to refugee status is not yet definitively evaluated in the country to which they fled.

Internally Displaced Persons

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are people who have not crossed an international border but have moved to a different region than the one they call home within their own country.

Stateless Persons: Stateless persons do not have a recognized nationality and do not belong to any country. Statelessness situations are usually caused by discrimination against certain groups. Their lack of identification — a citizenship certificate — can exclude them from access to important government services, including health care, education or employment.

Returnees: Returnees are former refugees who return to their own countries or regions of origin after time in exile. Returnees need continuous support and reintegration assistance to ensure that they can rebuild their lives at home.

UN Action 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol help protect them. They are the only global legal instruments explicitly covering the most important aspects of a refugee's life. According to their provisions, refugees deserve, as a minimum, the same standards of treatment enjoyed by other foreign nationals in a given country and, in many cases, the same treatment as nationals.

The 1951 Convention contains a number of rights and also highlights the obligations of refugees towards their host country. The cornerstone of the 1951 Convention is the principle of non-refoulement. According to this principle, a refugee should not be returned to a country where he or she faces serious threats to his or her life or freedom. This protection may not be claimed by refugees who are reasonably regarded as a danger to the security of the country, or having been convicted of a particularly serious crime, are considered a danger to the community.

The rights contained in the 1951 Convention include:

The right not to be expelled, except under certain, strictly defined conditions;

- The right not to be punished for illegal entry into the territory of a contracting State;
- The right to work;
- The right to housing;
- The right to education;
- The right to public relief and assistance;
- The right to freedom of religion;
- The right to access the courts;
- The right to freedom of movement within the territory;
- The right to be issued identity and travel documents.

Some basic rights, including the right to be protected from refoulement, apply to all refugees. A refugee becomes entitled to other rights the longer they remain in the host country, which is based on the recognition that the longer they remain as refugees, the more rights they need.

StARS believes as one of its core values in Refugee leadership and participation: The leadership and participation of displaced people is indispensable to any meaningful response to forced displacement. We consider the leadership of displaced people intrinsic to any effective movement for change, and to the creation of effective interventions in and for displaced communities. We believe that displaced people should not only have a seat at the table; displaced people own the table. We advocate for refugee leadership and participation, and we refuse to accept anything less. When the displaced are excluded, our movement suffers and displaced people suffer. Our leadership of this organization has significant meaning and value as we move local and global communities toward change.

How can you support us?

Prayer and encouragement are always welcome and so appreciated!

Financial support is also necessary for us to continue our work. More information about how your congregation can support us can be found at: <https://community.elca.org/Egypt> for individuals donations can be shared here:

https://support.elca.org/site/TR/Events/General?px=1066411&pg=personal&fr_id=1370

We would also absolutely love to hear from you! We are always available to participate with congregations online and provide information, sermons, music and more! Our email addresses are:

Christie.manisto@elca.org Steven.saari@elca.org Many thanks to all of you.

Summer Activities:

Picnic Sundays

The last Sunday of each month this summer will be Picnic Sunday. You are invited to bring picnic or brown bag lunch for your household and join the rest of the Zion family for lunch on the lawn. Those Sundays are July 25, and August 29.



Congregational Photo Scavenger Hunt: July 13-15

A Scavenger Hunt list will be emailed and published on social media on July 13, and each household can participate. We will gather for the results and ice cream on the church lawn on July 15. Stay tuned for more details.



LUTHERAN DAY AT KENNYWOOD JULY 21ST:

Join us on July 21st for a fun-filled day! Tickets are \$25/each for ages 2-59, \$15/each for ages 60-69, and \$11/each for those ages 70+. Checks should be made out to: Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod. If you are interested in buying tickets, please see Deacon Amy.

July 25 after worship: Join us for crafts, caroling, and cookies outside on the lawn.



Water Fun Night: August 5 at 7pm





OREMUS

Care Facility: Carol Hendershot (Woodside, Presbyterian Sr. Care, Oakmont)

Prayers Requested For: Bob Beresky, Shirley McClure, Teddy Urban, Les Vidmar, George Dippold, Alan Dippold, Al D'Ambrosio, Neil Santoriello, Wayne Stumpf, Marie Dixon, Chris Vuocolo (nephew of Mary Lou D'Ambrosio), Jean Betker, Beth Rall, Joe Hesketh, Morgan (niece of Joe & Marc Schuler), Jim Kelly (cousin of Bob Page), Chris Nieser (cousin of Julie Nieser), John Santoriello (brother of Neil Santoriello), Bob Swezey (friend of Annette Felmley), Jack Kelly (friend of Tony Lamorte), Bob Scott, Patty Donelli (sister-in-law of Wanda Kojza), Sandra Short, Evelyn Lamm, Theodore Stolp, Jr., Ingeborg Booher, Nancy Fabel, Mary Jean Hawkins (cousin of Neil Santoriello), Nick Matthews (friend of Kathy Conrad), Rachel Faulkner, John & Margaret Thompson (mother & father of Darren Thompson), Larry Dillon (cousin of Rhonda Pope), Kim Paronish (sister-in-law of Kara Albrecht), Oak Moser (friend of Diane Santoriello), Denise Capobianco (friend of Sandra Short), Michelle Manziatti (friend of Rhonda Pope), Judy Danik (friend of Charlotte Murray), Tom Brown (nephew of Amy Seroky), Yolanda Szitas (mother of Carol Dugan), Bekki Hessong (cousin of Diane Santoriello), Samara Davis (sister of Diane Santoriello), Aarika Maisak (friend of Kara Albrecht), Dan Smerker (grandfather of Cassie and Kyra Short), Patrick Taylor, Dorothy DeLuca (sister of Evelyn Ross), Donna Spinazzola (friend of Sallie Lazar).

JULY BIRTHDAYS

7/1	Aliyah Clark	
7/1	Kathleen Feller	
7/2	Lilah Hernandez-Tolmeo	
7/3	Cassidy Betker	
7/4	Jim Seroky	
7/7	Kathy Conrad	
7/9	Jim Snider	
7/9	Elaine Bartley	
7/10	Richard Neumann	
7/12	Marion Ertel	
7/14	Katie Hoback	
7/15	Jameson Faas	
7/15	Guinevere Bartley	
7/15	Katie Welsh	
7/16	Wanda Kojza	7/19 Evelyn Ross
7/18	Lisa Rickus	7/21 Ray Rall III
7/18	Matthew Dippold	7/23 Ruth McWilliams
7/19	Paul Feathers	

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

7/1/77 George & Chris Dippold
 7/7/90 Tom & Annette Felmley
 7/11/81 Ed & Lisa Rickus
 7/24/97 Tom & Jane Bigenho
 7/27/19 Sarah Meyers & Chris Urban
 7/28/18 Ashley & Regis Faas