

Pastor's Column

I write this on the 5th Day of Christmas. A lot of planning precedes Christmas Day. A lot of joy happens Christmas Day. A lot of rest and recovery follow Christmas Day. The Christmas festival anchors our calendars. I recently remembered two major, secular festivals.

I learned about Sea Fair Festival shortly after my arrival in Seattle. The congregation warned me that attendance would plummet Sea Fair weekend. Did it ever. All of Seattle slowed down to observe summer and water related events. There were the usual exhibits and performances. Lake Union hosted sailing events and Lake Washington hosted motor boat events. My favorite memory of Sea Fair was sitting on the roof of the parsonage and watching the USN Blue Angels do their magic in the sky. Perhaps the most memorable Sea Fair event occurred in 1955. Boeing had just rolled out a prototype for the 707 Jetliner. If you've flown in the 1960's, you've flown in a 707. Air Force One, that brought the body of President Kennedy from Dallas to Washington DC, was a Boeing 707. Anyway, when the 1955 test pilot flew the new 707 over Lake Washington for Sea Fair, he did a barrel roll! All of Seattle seemed to have that confident, fun, in-your-face kind of energy.

Within a few days of my arrival in St. Paul, MN, I first learned of Winter Carnival. Since 1897 the city of St. Paul pauses for a week in February to celebrate winter events. They don't have a summer festival. Too many mosquitoes. But in those severe Minnesota winters, any chance to escape a dark house is welcome. There are exhibits and concerts all over the city. The most favorite exhibit is the ice sculptures. It's amazing how humans adapt to dangerous temperatures with warm clothing options. You start with thermal underwear. I still recall a couple behind me at the entrance gate to Como Park exhibits. She said, "It's down to 3 degrees this afternoon." He snorted, "Perfect weather . . . if you're a penguin." (At least it is a "dry cold" we would encourage one another.) People are so NICE in Minnesota. That's actually an expression they have for each other - Minnesota Nice!

Think back and recall your favorite festivals. Did you take them in with your family? Did you go with your friends? Did you go with other families? Remember how good the summer sun felt on your face? Remember how crisp the winter air felt? Which junk foods did you especially enjoy at food stands? What kind of music events did you prefer? Did you buy any interesting pieces of art? Did you come home with tacky trinkets that you soon discarded? Did you have any mishaps, such as a flat tire or dead battery? Did you make a new friend?

Covid19 extends its ugly grip into year 2021; we will not be attending any large group gatherings soon. But we have good memories of events past. We have high hopes for events future. One of my favorite hymns in the hymnal is "Hail Thee, Festival Day." The hymn describes the victories of Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost. That is what God is doing with us these days. God is preparing us for victory festival over sin, death, and this preset evil. Confident of God in God's future, we celebrate while we wait.

Pastor Michael



A September 2008 picture of the Adult Forum on Sunday morning. When we get out of this pandemic and return to normal it'll be nice to go to Sunday Forum again! Your editor misses all of these events and looks forward to their resumption. This pandemic has been quite the experience and has really caused us to "pause". Fortunately, no one in our congregation has died from Covid19. We have had several members who have caught the virus but survived. Be safe!

The Virus Versus Us

By: Russ Jepson, Stewardship Chairperson

The year 2020 is history! It couldn't come soon enough for all of us, especially with the new vaccine that came into play at the end of December and others soon to follow.

This virus is no case of the sniffles as some people seem to be treating it as.

A comparison between now with the virus and the past military conflicts between 1861 and 1975, a period of 114 years, shows for 23 of those years the U.S. was at war with 1,178,000 military souls combat and non combat were lost.

Per Veterans Affairs in round numbers:

Civil War (4 years)	-----513,000	Note this does not include those who died in Civil War prisons..
WWI (1 year)	-----117,000	
WWII (4 years)	-----404,000	
Korean War (3 years)	-----54,000	
Vietnam War (11 Years)	-----90,000	
Total	1,178,000	

The combined average of lives lost in war in that 23 year period per year is 51,000. The virus in comparison in just nine months has cost 300,000 souls, not with weapons of war, but with a microscopic germ, as deadly as bullets and bombs, bringing the same anguish to families and friends.

We of the Christian Faith need to be the stewards of all God has given us, including our fellow human family, by following the directives of those responsible with bringing this scourge to an end.

Pastor Meranda, even with all the safe guards put in place involving the Church and following religiously his own personal safety has tested positive. A lesson to all of us to be as diligent in our daily activities to escape the virus as we wait for our turn to receive the vaccine.

We pray his healthy return.

Stay safe so we can greet each other unmasked with hand shakes and hugs hopefully soon in this new year 2021.

Romans 13: 1-7

Pew Missing

For those members who haven't been in Church recently one half of a pew has been removed on each side of the Church. This is to provide a place for people in a wheel chair to park. A great idea!



Church Mouse Heard

One of the Community Church pastor's favorite premarital counseling jokes is this one: Adam and Eve had an ideal marriage, he didn't have to hear about all the men she could have married, and she didn't have to hear about the way his mother cooked.



Giving Tree Thank You

I could never find the words to correctly say thank you! What yall and the giving tree did for us this year completely changed our lives. This year has been hard on so many families and my heart breaks for them all. To receive this absolute blessing was exactly what we needed and completely came by surprise! We have never had anything like this happen and I just can't say thank you enough! We will always pay it forward as much as possible!

Thank you a million Times over! Stay safe and stay warm!

The Burlingame Family

Welcome Home to Messiah December 27 thru January 3 / Pan- demic Years 2020-2021

Living has become complex. I have two long library stories. They illustrate how times have changed.

It was summer of 1975. I wanted to practice Latin. I knew that Concordia College library in Portland, Oregon had a set of Der Weimar Ausgabe. It's referenced as "WA". It's the 60-volume collection of Luther's writings in German and Latin. The volumes are huge. The covers are a nice light blue. I went to the usual shelf to find Luther's Galatians commentaries. But "WA" was gone!

The librarian, Mr. Berger, was there. He said something about "WA" takes up so much space and are rarely used so they got moved to a back room. Just a minute, he said. He came back with the volume I wanted. He handed it to me. He told me just remember to return it before the end of summer.

Normally, a librarian does not hand over an expensive volume to someone without a formal check out. But he knew me. The world was smaller back then. The world was safer and simpler that Summer of 75.

The other library story illustrates how much has changed. It was about a year after Nine Eleven. I happened to be in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Marquette University has a good Jesuit library. Marquette would have "Christian Dogmatics," that multi volume systematic theology of Karl Barth. For years I had wanted to read what Barth said about Johann Blumhardt. Blumhardt was a German Reformed pastor in Moetlingen, Germany. A spiritual awakening occurred in his parish. There were stories of healings and renewal.

So, I was glad for the opportunity to finally read Barth reflecting on Blumhardt. But Nine Eleven was still on our minds. America had become security conscious. My countenance sank as I entered the foyer of Marquette library. A huge sign said no entry unless you have identification and provide a request in writing specifying exactly what you want to research.

I was shocked. All my life, libraries had stood as symbols of academic freedom. Patrons flowed thru library doors, walking symbols of the exchange of ideas. Fortunately, I knew exactly what volume and section of Barth on Blumhardt I wanted to read. For one of my pieces of identification, I showed my little certificate of rostered clergy card from East Central Wisconsin Synod ELCA.

That is my tale of two libraries. It's not that Marquette was bad and Concordia was good. It illustrates how times have changed. In 1975 life was smaller and our institutions were more accessible. By 2002 life had become dangerous: we were less known, we had to be checked out, we were a possible security risk for domestic terrorism.

Managing life's externals has become exceedingly complicated. (How many passwords on different "apps" on your smart phone do you have?) But the core of our blessed simplicity remains the same. We are forgiven sinner, so we are free to do all sorts of good things. Darkness will always seek to have its way over us, but we belong to Light who overcomes darkness. Prayer is always at hand, an access code is NOT necessary for us to

sign in. We are members of a community of faith. A heavenly communion of saints prays for us. Someday we'll gather together, face to face and voice to voice. We'll chuckle at how complicated life has become. But we'll trust that each new challenge brings opportunity for us to mature more strongly in hope and love.

Faithfully,
Pastor M

Letters & Emails

Rev. Dr. Michael Meranda,

My name is Robert White. The attached check is in memory to my wife, Janice Ann Kneisley White, who passed away on November 12, 2020 of natural causes. We were married for 52 years and I miss her dearly.

Janice was the daughter of Lucille J. Kneisley and granddaughter of John C. Johnson, one of the founders of Messiah Lutheran Church.

Janice grew up in Messiah and was a member there for many years up through college. She attended Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. One of her most outstanding achievements was that she was a member of the Oberlin College Choir that went to the Soviet Union in 1963 and 1964. Janice had quite a singing voice.

Janice and I were members of Messiah in the years around 1980 as we lived in Ashtabula for two years while we cleaned out the Ashtabula house we had at 1330 Bunker Hill Road after Jan's mother Lucille passed away.

Use the money towards your choir if you wish. I know this is what Janice would want.

Regards,

Robert D. White, Husband

Web Page Note

Church Treasurer, Candace Rodgers, alerted us to the fact that our web page address was not included anywhere in the Messenger. It is www.messiahastabula.com. It will permanently appear right below our email address on the first page.

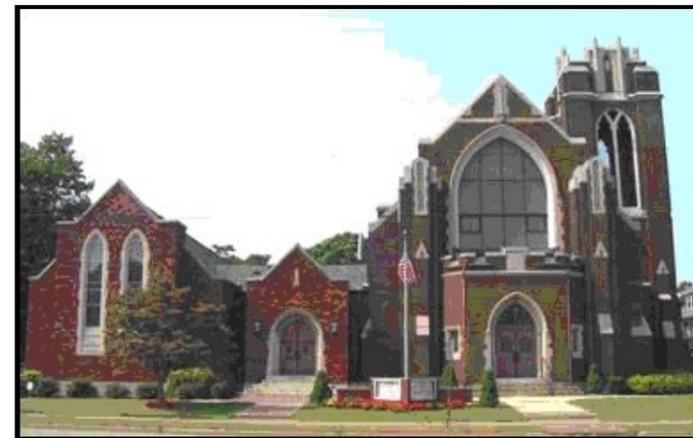
Worship Cancelled Through Jan. 10

Congregation Council cancelled face to face worship through January 10. Council will meet January 11 and will decide at that time when to resume services.

**February Messenger Copy
Deadline, 12 Noon
January 26**

**Messiah Lutheran Church
615 Prospect Road
Ashtabula, OH 44004**

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**Welcome
Home To
Messiah**



Messiah Messenger

January 2021

Worship:

Saturday 9:30 am
Sunday 10:00 am

Sunday School:

Will Resume Later

Adult Forum:

Will Resume Later

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