

Pastor's Column

It has been a year. In January 2020 we heard about that Wuhan, China virus. We rolled our eyes at the Chinese who eat bats and dogs. (They probably roll their eyes at us for our sugars and preservatives.) In my naivete I assumed the virus would only hit crowded cities on either coast. I could not imagine it making its way here to bucolic Northeast Ohio. Shows you what I know about pandemics.

I got my first taste of reality the last week of February 2020. A lecture had been planned at Kent State Ashtabula. The topic was the 50th Anniversary of the Kent State Shootings, May 4th, 1970. I remember that event the way I remember the assassination of John F Kennedy. I was a sophomore in high school. I was in 5th period German class with Frau Benson. The news alert went out. She interrupted class to share what had happened. We were out in Oregon and had no idea where Kent, Ohio was. But the event shocked and sickened us.

Anyway, in February 2020 when I saw the sign posted on the Kent State auditorium building that the lecture had been cancelled due to Covid19 concerns, I knew for the first time how serious this really is. But still, I was naïve. I anticipated things would be cancelled for a while at Messiah, but for sure we will be back to normal by Easter 2020. For sure we will resume the Sunday Forum, schedule Theology on Tap, look forward to Red Brook Vespers, plan for VBS, reserve a place for the annual picnic, etc. But, no. Nada. The pandemic took hold and America went into masks and isolation.

Now, I do not have direct access to the mind of the Almighty. All I know of God is revealed thru the written word (bible) and thru the Living Word (Christ). But I do not think God sent Covid19 as a punishment. I'm sure the televangelists have raised many dollars pushing that sound bite. I do know thinkers such as Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon, Luther's colleague at Wittenberg University, made a lot of references to "affliction". Affliction, such as Covid19, does have a way of strengthening our faith. I'm sorry to say that, to say anything positive about a microscopic virus that has killed half a million Americans. But affliction does have a way of clarifying priorities, managing resources, prioritizing commitments, directing energies. Covid19 is not a pestilence sent from God; it is part of the biochemical structure of this universe. Its consequences are tragic. As destructive as it is, people of faith are the ones who learn from it, see the long-term perspective, marshal resources for cure, fast and pray for healing. In other words, we grow and mature, we gain stability and depth, we understand and comprehend how very much we depend on grace and promise. God speaks grace and promise. Especially during this. The light is at the end of the tunnel and she is getting brighter.

Faithfully your pastor,
Michael Meranda

Daylight Savings Time Starts Mar. 14

Turn your clocks ahead one hour at 2:00 am on March 14 or you'll be early for Church. That is the day that DST officially starts for 2021.



There is a bill under consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives to cancel DST for one year. But, that bill hasn't gotten any traction yet.

So for now it's still fall behind and spring ahead!

Messiah Foundation Contributions

In Memory of Jan Koschik by Lois Zook
In Memory of Jan Koschik and James Ryan by
Renee and Ed Spencer

**April Messenger Copy
Deadline, 12 noon
March 30**



Stewardship Corner

By: Russ Jepson, Stewardship Chairman

We have all been subject to a daily briefing on the status of the Covid 19 virus. The new cases, hospitalizations and deaths, in addition the good news, the number vaccinated, the percentage drop of new cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

Other good news is, good stewardship is being practiced daily, as seen on the nightly news, groups and individuals providing for the emergency needs of people in crises thru no fault of their own.

We've seen the past year and continuing into this year, massive job loses, business closings and failures, people on the edge of losing homes or being evicted and not being able to feed their families. As we've witnessed the events in Texas, we see it only takes a major weather event to bring any of us to our knees.

A quote from Martin Luther: "faith, like light, should ever be simple and unbending, while love, like warmth, should beam forth on every side, and bend to every necessity of our brethren."

We are our brothers keeper, James 2: 14-17.

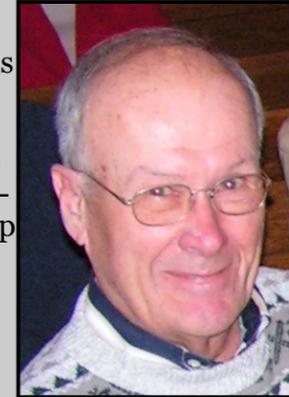
Let us all do our part locally or nationally as God calls us.

Memorial Fund Contributions

In memory of Jan Koschik:
Fred and Dawn Grimm
Joyce and Lanny Anderson
Jerry Kujala
Cathy and Jeff Carle
Hal and Connie Cooper
Sherri Hurst
Bonita Laveck
Lorene Rapose
DeeDee and Frank Maenpa
Patricia Johnson

Memorial Gifts to Food Pantry By:

Donna Kiddle
Nancy Mudd



Welcome Home to Messiah -- 2021 February 21 thru February 28

In a few days, February will be in our rearview mirror. It was certainly eventful. February began with the Super Bowl. Even though few of us are his fans, we got to see Tom Brady set a record no one will surpass. Super Bowl week took us into impeachment week. We relived the horror of January 6th as House Managers attempted to link former President Trump with insurrection. As February rolled on the Covid19 vaccines continued to roll out. Recent days brought a glimpse of good news. Statistically, the rapid spread of the disease has slowed down.

As for me, I'll always remember February 20th. That was the date I was inoculated, vaccinated against Covid19. Inoculations have been a matter of fact, way of life for me all of my life. For some reason, the one of many I remember is the Smallpox vaccine. A few years after I had received it, National Geographic published an article chronicling the eradication of Smallpox from the globe.

Vaccinations are a rite of passage in our national culture. I recall my children, when they were newborn infants, looking shocked and then indignant when the doctor's nurse plunged the syringe into their thighs. Thru grade school years and into high school, local health departments made sure vaccinations were up to date. It was part of being a good citizen, helping to maintain the health of the community.

I recently likened my vaccination to justification by grace. That doctrine is as central for Lutherans as the power sweep was central for the Vince Lombardi Packers. In Lutheran thinking, God brings a loving disposition toward us. God forgives. God draws us into relationship with God's Self. That action from God is the pure grace of God. We cannot earn that. We do not deserve that. We merely receive that. I felt similarly getting vaccinated. The syringe plunged the vaccine into the muscle in my upper right shoulder. That vaccine brought healing to me. I did nothing to earn it. I did nothing to deserve it. It was just freely given. And I gratefully received. I left the inoculation site that day with renewed gratitude for health and science. I left the inoculation site that day with renewed commitment for praying and caring.

Faithfully,
Pastor M

Members At Worship



Pictured here are members at Worship one recent Sunday. Top left, Phyllis and John Higgins; top right Norma Williams and Herb Watts; middle picture the Lindberg family; and on the left, Pastor in the pulpit.

It is really nice to be back in face to face Worship again after a relatively long period without in person Worship.

The digital you tube Worship that Pastor and others create is great and a lot of us enjoy it. But it isn't the same as in person Worship.

As this pandemic is winding down and we begin to get "back to normal" it'll be nice to see all of you at Messiah again. Let's hope that isn't too far in the future!

Messiah Lutheran Church
615 West Prospect Road
Ashtabula, OH 44004

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Messiah Messenger

March 2021

Worship:
Saturday 9:30 am
Sunday 10:00 am
Sunday School:
Will Resume Later
Adult Forum:
Will Resume Later

*For The Members and Friends of Messiah Lutheran Church,
615 West Prospect Road, Ashtabula, OH 44004
Phone 440-992-9392
Fax 440-992-1348
Email: messiahlutheranbulao6@windstream.net
Web: www.messiahashtabula.com*

*The Rev. Dr. Michael Meranda, Pastor
Phone: 440-998-7321
Cell: 440-645-2586*

**Welcome
Home To
Messiah**

