

From Pastor Dan

“We are all in this together!” If we were to select a motto for 2020, this oft-heard phrase would certainly be in the top running. It makes sense because in the midst of all the crises we faced this year, we witnessed acts of togetherness as we intentionally honored our front-line workers, sourced and distributed millions of pounds of food to those who lost their jobs, reached out to those in forced isolation, and supported the families and friends of the dead and dying. Those acts of kindness shone through the dreariness of a year that seemed to drag on in some sort of perverse “Groundhog Day” never-ending cycle.

But the unfortunate reality dear sisters and brothers in Christ, is that we have not all been in this together. Sure, our better natures brilliantly display themselves from time to time. Yet, overall, the power of original sin sings its siren song; and as was the case with Michael Corleone so it is with us... “They pull me back in.”

In one of my first confirmation classes, a student, I don’t remember specifically who, asked if original sin was “real.” I responded that it was. However, I clarified that original sin was not some apple-eating incident which dammed us all to the fires of hell. No, I answered, original sin is the human proclivity for self-centeredness. As we evolved, the human trait of selfishness allowed us to survive. Granted over time, that genetic predilection moderated and even found itself subsumed into the protective security of communal habitation. Nevertheless, our inherent tendency to focus on #1 has always been there as a barrier to abundant life.

But Jesus will save us from original sin, right? Yes he will and yes he does. But the salvation of Jesus Christ is not some blood-soaked get-out-of-hell-free card. Rather, the salvation of Jesus is our connection to God; our connection to the genesis of creation, the essence of “beingness” if you will. And in and through this connection we are filled to overflowing with unconditional love. And in and through this connection we have the power to unconditionally share that love. This is the heart of Jesus’ message. Unfortunately, but most people are not listening anymore. Even the church isn’t listening anymore; maybe especially the church.

When Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of the Schloss Kirche in Wittenberg, Germany, 500 years ago, only two primary denominations of Christian belief existed; the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox. Today the world is host to over 30,000 Christian denominations.....30,000!!! Why? Original sin; self-centeredness. In

other words, “I don’t like the way you do things so I am going to start my own church over here,” and so on, and so on, and so on.

One would have hoped that over the years the church could have overcome such self-centered interests. And one would have hoped that in 2020 the church would have been a place in which we really could all be in this together. Yet, we were just as fractured as the rest of society whose divisiveness shouted out at us every evening from our TV sets.

As result of the tumult of 2020, many aspects of our lives will never be the same; some for the better and some for the worse. And the church most certainly will never be the same; maybe for the better or maybe for the worse. So, what do we do? As Christians what do we do? You do what you should have been doing all along; you get down on your knees and pray! Get down on your knees and thank your God for all you have even in the midst of scarcity. And then get down on your knees and pray that you will have the faith, strength, courage, perseverance, and hopefulness every day to know that you are loved; to know that you don’t have to fight and scratch and participate in all the nonsense in which we engage to fill the empty places; to know you are already loved to overflowing. And then you can get down on your knees and pray that you will have the faith, strength, courage, perseverance, and hopefulness every day to overcome your age-old addiction to self and let all that bountiful love of God flow through you out into the rest of the world. That is what you can do. That is what we all can do!

“We are all in this together!” Yeah, not really. But we can be. In 2021, we can be in this world together, in this nation together, in this state together, in this community together, and in this church together. Not by retreating into our selfish centers, but by honestly looking in and then compassionately looking out. We can truly all be in this together by believing in the reality of God; the essence of being in the universe. And by believing in Jesus Christ; the one who shows us what it truly means to be a human being.

God bless us all,

Pastor Dan

Council Members. Here is a list of Council Members. Please contact them with any concerns or issues you may have. Council meets once a month and welcomes input from the congregation.

President: Sue Cooley – 715-675-8566; cooley1512@outlook.com

Vice President: Jan Mueller – 715-675-9558; dmjm5455.wau@gmail.com

Treasurer: Mike Kluetz – 715-218-1357; kluetz787@gmail.com

Secretary: Tammi Smith – 715-581-3892; tammism79@gmail.com;
tammism@aspirus.org

Trustees: Lee Sillars – 715-218-5041; rdfx1234@gmail.com

Scott Oestreich – 715-675-4360; scottsmachinellc@gmail.com

Evangelism: Lane Bahr – 715-297-0017; lucylane35@hotmail.com

Fellowship:

Education: Connie Nowak – 715-675-1577; 715-432-3837; bcdenowak@gmail.com

Worship: Sue Harris – 715-551-6282; smae53@gmail.com

“Council Corner”

Trustees

Lee Sillars, Scott Oestreich

This report will be a short one. Furnace filters have been changed. The parking lot has been patched for this year. When spring comes the parking lot will be examined for holding up and issues will be addressed, if any.

Snowplowing stakes will be put around parking lot. Contract for snowplowing is up for bids, no contractor has been approved.

Looking for clay fill for improvements around parsonage in spring. Please call Lee Sillars at 715-218-5041.

Council. The church council nominating committee is looking for folks interested in serving on the church council. Positions that are up for election at our 2021 annual meeting are vice president, secretary, fellowship, parish education and trustee. We ask you to prayerfully consider serving your congregation on the church council. You are welcome to contact Jan Mueller at 715-675-9558 with questions on any of the council positions or if you would like to serve.

ANNUAL MEETING. I know some of you are wondering in this mixed up year, when we will have the annual meeting. Our constitution is quite specific about the when and how this is to happen. Normally we have to have it between the third Sunday in January and second Sunday in February. In the constitution C10.04 states, thirty voting members constitutes a quorum and C10.05 states Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted. Also the bylaws state in part V “The President, Vice-President, Treasurer or Secretary shall have the power to postpone the annual meeting due to acts of God for two weeks or More.” Therefore the council as a whole has agreed to postpone our meeting to what we hope is the earliest possible time to meet safely in person. We are tentatively planning this meeting for March 14, 2021. The reports will be made available 2 weeks ahead of this- available at church. We have asked the outgoing council members to remain and they have agreed. We will also try to find people who are willing to take their positions. This is not ideal and we all wish we could do this sooner and safer, but we feel we cannot at this time. Any questions regarding this please call Sue Cooley.

Council Meeting Minutes. Copies of the minutes from the most recently held Council meeting are by the mailboxes. Please feel free to pick up a copy. If more are needed, please contact the church office.

Pastoral Visits. If circumstances conspire to put you in the hospital or if you are directed to a temporary nursing home stay, please let Pastor Dan know by calling the church (715-675-6950), or Pastor Dan’s cell phone (715-212-7359), or sending Pastor Dan an email at dtsire@msn.com. However, because of current COVID-19 restrictions, pastoral visitations are limited. Yet, Pastor Dan can still maintain contact via phone or email.

Eye on Local Art – Pat Plunkett. A new year starts, and new exhibits are being installed at the Center For the Visual Arts (CVA) right in downtown Wausau. The CVA signature show, “The Midwest Season’s Show” will be exhibited on the main floor gallery. This juried show attracts artists from all over our country with a wide range of work and talent. Additionally, in the Loft Gallery of the CVA, you will find the Memorial Show, put on by local artists of the Wisconsin Valley Art Association (WVAA). You can check out the work of local artists, maybe even some of your neighbors. The CVA is strict in following safety protocols, masking and social

distancing being rule #1 to ensure your safety. Interestingly, art galleries are considered one of the safer places to visit. Again, please be careful, be safe, and God Bless.

VISION FOR ST JOHN

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Village of Maine, Wausau, WI is a country church with an average Sunday worship attendance of about 100 folks. We are affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Yet, more than numbers or affiliations, we are a congregation which welcomes all who seek meaning and hope in their lives through all the possibilities of a connection to the love of God in Jesus Christ. At our core, we value and nurture relationships.

We Value and Nurture Relationships With our God

- “He (Jesus) said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

We Value and Nurture Relationships with Each Other

- “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 NRSV)

We Value and Nurture Relationships with our Community

- “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34 NRSV)

We Value and Nurture Relationships with Ourselves

- “For this reason...we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...” (Colossians 1:9 NRSV)

Homebound Parishioners. The following parishioners are no longer able to consistently attend worship services. I visit them to remind them that they are loved by God and loved by their community of faith, St. John. Sometimes it is helpful to hear those reminders from someone in addition to me.

Harriet Wanner 3107 Westhill Drive Wausau, WI 54401	Carol Fitzke 237227 N. 120 th Ave. Wausau, WI 54401
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Joan Schreiber 1957 Kowalski Road Kronenwetter, WI 54455	Harley Goetsch Rennes Health/Rehab Ctr. 4810 Barbican Avenue Weston, WI 54476
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Financial Report for November, 2020

Income Received	November \$6,140	Year-to-Date \$141,850
Expenses Paid	\$10,302	\$124,837
Difference	(\$4,162)	\$17,013

Attendance Report

	2020	2019
Average Weekly/November	132	103
Average Weekly/Year-to-Date	99	115

January Birthdays

1-4 Miranda Clausen
1-4 Heidi Teske
1-6 Florian Kolbe
1-8 Isaac Hoffman
1-8 Justin Zahn
1-9 James Klinger
1-9 Molly Lubecke
1-9 Matthew Nass
1-9 Pat Plunkett
1-9 Jack Saari
1-10 Randy Knapp
1-12 Emmie Steinagel
1-14 Kelly Dehnel
1-14 Jerome Klug
1-14 Brayden Sann
1-15 Lane Bahr
1-15 Jamie Kickbusch
1-16 John Borth
1-16 Jackson Hein
1-16 Tammy Schoepke
1-17 Thomas Anderson
1-18 Pastor Dan Sire
1-19 Rylan Chadwick
1-20 Maxwell Nass
1-21 Thomas Leduc
1-22 Patsy Askew
1-23 Elise Gallenberg
1-25 Jason Tesch
1-26 Karen Kolbe
1-26 Kelly Rosenau
1-26 Dorothy Westfall
1-27 Robin Hein
1-28 Michelle Bolz
1-29 Pat Rogalla
1-30 Selena Sann
1-31 Amber Eno

January Anniversaries

1-6 Clark & Jennifer Bronsteatter
1-19 Curt & Sue Cooley