

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
July 25, 2021

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

Worship News

Worship is now in the sanctuary beginning at 9:30 (summer hours).

Procedures and Requirements for In-Door Worship

- Masks are optional.
- Three hymns will be sung. Masks are required when singing.
- Sign in on sign-up sheets that will be on the table as you enter the church.
- Pick up your bulletin and communion kit at the table in the Gathering Area
- Place your offering in the offering plate at the table in the Gathering Area
- Sit only in designated seating places (if you are sitting with more than two people, please sit on the sides)
- Greet and visit with people before or after worship outside
- The air conditioning will be on.
- The service will be on-line for those not yet comfortable being inside.
 - In order to not overload the internet, please either power down your phones or put them on Airplane Mode.
 - Also, so that the people who are joining us on-line can hear the congregational responses and announcements, a worship leader/reader will lead the congregational responses and all announcements must be made at the pulpit.

Sign-Up for the 175th Celebration Worship and Picnic – August 15th at 10:00 a.m. In honor of our ministry together with Good Shepherd UCC, we will be having a joint worship service followed by a picnic with a catered lunch at Jim Dietrich park on August 15th at 10:00 a.m. Hope to see you there.

Church Directory – JoAnne has been updating our current church directory and will be providing updated hard copies of the directory later this month. If your contact information has changed in the last 5 years, please forward that information to JoAnne either by email at GSELC4201@gmail.com or by calling her on the phone at 610-926-4201.

Worship Leaders – We are in need of people to help lead worship by reading both the congregational responses and the lessons. Please let Pastor Denise know if you are willing to volunteer.

If you have prayer requests, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Denise

Home Phone

610-750-6432

Cell/Text Phone

610-858-818

Ephesians 4:1-16

4¹⁻³ In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

4⁴⁻⁶ You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

7⁷⁻¹³ But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. The text for this is,

He climbed the high mountain,
He captured the enemy and seized
the plunder,
He handed it all out in gifts to the
people.

Is it not true that the One who climbed up also climbed down, down to the valley of earth? And the One who climbed down is the One who climbed back up, up to highest heaven. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

14¹⁴⁻¹⁶ No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are easy prey for predators. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source

of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us,

nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father
and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN.

As we reach the half-way point in Paul's letter to the people of Ephesus, Paul shifts from reminding the people of their blessings; that is; their adoption into the family of God, their diversity designed to create strong and vital communities, and the unity in and through the faithfulness and obedience of Christ; to the work that they each have been being called to do to celebrate, to guard and to protect their unity in Christ.

If Paul were writing this letter today, we would probably consider the first three chapters of Ephesians a summary of the visioning process and chapter 4 the beginning of the plan of action.

Paul states; in light of what I have just told you, go and do

what you have been called to do, go and be like Christ with one another.

I hear Paul saying: People of the church of Ephesus get off your duffs. Being God's church is not a spectator sport. Being God's church is all about participation. So, go and do what God has called you to do, love one another.

Paul, is not just encouraging or suggesting that they get their act together, Paul is commanding them to get their act together. As he says: go and steadily, pour yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

Hmm, I wish he had said go out and perform acts of kindness and service: like running a summer camp for kids, collecting food for the food pantry or feeding the people at Op House.

But that is not what Paul is directing the Ephesians to do at this point of his letter. Paul is commanding them to go and do whatever is necessary to restore and/or maintain the Spirit of peace and unity that God has created to bond their faith communities together.

GO (and in this case) not out there, but go to that person in here with whom you have become estranged.

Go to that person not necessarily to reconcile your differences but to inspite of your differences reach out to reconnect and repair your relationship,

Go quickly and begin mending fences that have been broken

down from either years of neglect or the most recent storm

Go to one another and do the hard work of reconciliation and restoration, the hard work of forgiving and being forgiven, the hard work of clearing the debris and unloading the baggage. So that the unity of God's church may be restored and renewed.

When I was in my call at St. Marks in Rhode Island after more years than I was a part of, the debate regarding whether the parsonage would be restored or torn down was ended with a vote to restore it.

As the work on the project proceeded, I learned a lot about the hard work of restoration.

I have learned that you just can't cover up the damage especially when it came to walls and floors. But with regard to the wallpapered walls, we needed to remove every little piece of the

old wallpaper, sand the rough spots and patch the holes to create a smooth surface before we could refresh the surface with paint or new wallpaper.

And that is true of relationships that get dinged and dented up and have deteriorated over what may be days or years. You need to chip away at the damage and the hurt, you need to smooth out and fill in some of the gaps that have formed; so that the old dings and dents don't keep surfacing.

I also learned the tremendous amount of both hard work and attention to detail that is required to remove years of wear and tear on the hardwood floors.

I witnessed the countless hours of sanding with various grades of sandpaper and then the intricate work of replacing some of the rotting boards and resetting nails that had to be

done to bring those floors back to reveal their original beauty.

And those of us who watch HGTV see time and again that restoration takes both demolition, the removing of the old and construction, the rebuilding to restore the building not back to what it was at one time, but what it needs for future use.

In the case of the church, to reclaim and restore the peace and unity that God has created for us and in us through Christ. We have to be willing to do the hard work of speaking the truth in love with the goal of restoring healthy relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And as each relationship is unique to the parties involved, restoration may require acknowledgment of the brokenness in order to make amends, it may require that we ask for forgiveness, or that we may have to be willing to receive forgiveness, we may have to

reach out and help carry those who are hurting or struggling or we may have to encourage and support those who are novices. Whatever it is, it is the important work of guarding and protected our unity in Christ by contently attending to our relationships with one another.

God created us to be different and God also gave us all the gifts that we need to create and maintain healthy and vibrant communities united in our faith in Christ

Use Christ as your role model. Speak the truth in ways that are not confrontational. Hold people accountable without judgment Forgive and be forgiven and move on

Speaking the truth in love, holding people accountable and forgiving and being forgiven creates relationships that can withstand the storms that we face, relationships that restore and maintain healthy and vital

communities and relationships that allows us all to live in the unity and peace that Christ has already accomplished for us on the cross.

Being God's church is hard work, much like the scrapping, the sanding and the cleaning that needs to take place in a house undergoing restoration project.

But it is the work that we have been called to do, so that we may live, laugh, love, work, serve and worship together in the peace that God has accomplished for us through Christ The peace, the unity and the love of Christ that surpasses all of our understanding.

AMEN

Hymn
The Church is One Foundation

1 The church's one Foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is His new creation,
by water and the Word;
from heav'n He came and sought her
to be His holy bride;
with His own blood He bought her,
and for her life He died.

2 Elect from ev'ry nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy Name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with ev'ry grace endued.

4 The church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord, to defend,
to guide, sustain, and cherish,
is with her to the end;
tho' there be those that hate her
and false sons in her pale,
against the foe or traitor
she ever shall prevail.

6 Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with Thee.

Blessing

May
The love of God,
The light of Christ,
And the joy of the Holy Spirit
Abide with you on this day
and forever more.

AMEN