

The Parish Voice

St. Thomas Lutheran Church — Streetsboro, Ohio

August 2020

It's not the first time I've heard this, and each time I do hear it I wince. She said, "*You don't have to go the church to be a Christian.*" It is a commonly-held view. It stems from a confusion about what it means "to be a Christian."

The prevailing view (and the one that allows this particular comment) is that Christianity is basically an ethical system. What most people incorrectly assume is that the Christian religion is first and foremost about ways of behaving. They will tell you that "to be a Christian" means to exercise tolerance toward others (and especially toward other points of view), doing good things (such as giving money to feed hungry people or volunteering to visit old folks in the nursing home), dealing honestly with others, and maintaining a moral lifestyle. This, for many people, is the sum and substance of the Christian religion.

Please take note that a word snuck into that last paragraph that doesn't belong there: "religion." Christianity is not a religion; that is the first and fundamental flaw that throws people off from rightly understanding what it means "to be a Christian." Religion IS about what you do, and how you live, and the ideas you embrace. So we can rightly speak of the world's "major religions" — Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism. Christianity is often lumped into that collection; but that is incorrect taxonomy.

Christianity is not a religion; it is a faith. Just playing with words? NO! The Christian faith is not about behaviors; the Christian faith is not about morality. The Christian faith is not even really about ideas and doctrines. The Christian faith is about a relationship. The earliest Christians expressed that relationship in a very simple phrase: "*Jesus Christ is Lord.*"

For them, that was not a matter of mere words. To confess Jesus as Lord meant to risk all for the sake of that relationship. Since it was illegal to admit any lordship other than that of Caesar, to confess the lordship of Christ was an act of civil disobedience punishable by death. But they could not confess any other truth: Jesus was their Lord; that was the relationship they valued above everything else.

How does that impact what it means "to be a Christian"? There are no behaviors that can be measured apart from the lordship of Jesus. There are no ideas or thoughts that can exist outside of the lordship of Jesus. There is nothing that the Christian can think, say, feel or do that does not come under the Lordship of Jesus. Because the faith (not the religion!!!) is about the relationship with the Lord Jesus.

What is that relationship? For too many, it is an arm's-length relationship. Many people know *about* Jesus; many *work for* Jesus; many will confess how wonderful Jesus is. But for too many that is a theoretical discussion because they really do not know Jesus. To know someone, you need to spend considerable time with that person. Getting to know another also involves sharing a lot about yourself with them.

The relationship with Jesus is unique, one-of-a-kind. Jesus is Friend to Sinners; but He also King of kings and Lord of lords. The relationship with Jesus is not like the relationship with your bowling buddy, or that girlfriend you turn to when you need advice. You can go to Jesus with any need, and share with Jesus any tribulation, sorrow or heartache, as well as any triumph, joy and celebration. Unlike your buddy or girlfriend, who may be able to empathize with you, Jesus is the one who brings the joy and can resolve the difficulty. The relationship with Jesus is not like that with your boss, with whom you must always keep a certain distance . Jesus invites you in close to Him, and though you recognize that He is Lord (and you are not!), there is a deep connectedness that you can share with Jesus that you cannot have with any other relationship.

“But,” you may ask, *“can’t I have that relationship apart from going to church?”* In theory, maybe ... maybe! But the Lord Jesus has told us, and modeled for us, how the relationship works best — in community. Jesus did not walk the earth alone; He chose companions (flawed, foolish, misunderstanding, hesitating companions, at that) to journey with Him. He instructed that we do the same. The Biblical injunctions to *“bear one another’s burdens,” “care for one another,” “forgive one another,” “love one another”* presuppose a community in which the faith is shared and supported. When that community gathers, those who understand what it means “to be a Christian” want to be there.

One thing more. Because Jesus is Lord, He is worthy of all praise — *“ALL praise!”* Yes, one can voice thanks and praise to Christ in private. Such private praise does nothing to build up and edify the rest of the Christian community. Jesus never wants us to live for ourselves alone; we are to follow Him in lives lived for the benefit of others. My corporate worship is therefore more to be valued than my private praise because it does lift and sustain others.

So, *“You don’t have to go the church to be a Christian,”* simply will not stand under scrutiny. The Christian “religion” might allow that you could go off on your own and live a virtuous, moral life; the Christian faith will not. The Christian faith, indeed, would turn that statement inside out — “I understand what it means ‘to be a Christian;’ where else would I want to be?”

Our Worship This Month



August 2 — Pentecost IX

Sermon: *“How Big Is Your Faith?”*

Texts: 1 Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 136; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

Peter walks on water; ever try it? Is that what faith is all about? Or is faith something other than that?



August 9 — Pentecost X

Sermon: *“Who Gets In?”*

Texts: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8; Psalm 18; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15:10-28

Jesus models for us a way to embrace those we may not, at first, find so embraceable.



August 16 — Pentecost XI

Sermon: *“Let’s Rock”*

Texts: Isaiah 51:1-6; Psalm 67; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

Peter gets a new name: “Rocky!” But it is his confession that rocks. Can we join him in those words of awe?



August 23 — Pentecost XII

Sermon: *“The Art of Cross-bearing”*

Texts: Jeremiah 15:15-21; Psalm 138; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus bids us to take up the cross; Paul provides the guidelines on how to do just that.

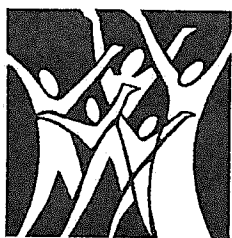


August 30 — Pentecost XIII

Sermon: *“The Demands of Love”*

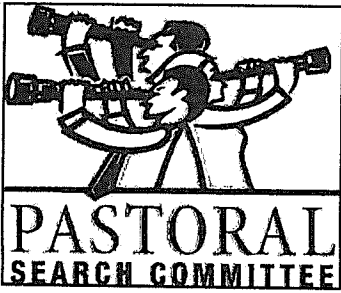
Texts: Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus instructs us on the importance of love offered in forgiveness. It’s a lesson we need to keep learning.



Worship

Throughout the month of August we will continue to worship in two ways: 1) Those who feel comfortable doing so are welcome into the sanctuary (which will mean wearing masks, using hand sanitizer, maintaining proper social distancing, and submitting to having your temperature recorded); 2) Those who prefer may stay in their cars; the service will be broadcast over speakers (we are still looking into obtaining an FM broadcast signal so that you can tune in on your car’s radio and keep the air conditioning operable). Either way, we value your presence with us in worship — every Sunday.



The Church Council has appointed a Search Committee to help guide the congregation in shaping the future of pastoral leadership beginning next year. Pastor Just has announced his plans to retire at the end of 2020, so we will need to figure out what we will do in his absence.

Several options are before us:

We could seek after a full-time pastor by calling someone already in service in another congregation (calling from “the field”).

We could seek a recent graduate from one of the seminaries (calling through the Council of Presidents).

We might look to a neighboring congregation to explore joining forces by merger, or by an arrangement of Pastor-sharing similar to what we had with Epiphany, Northfield when Pastor Just first joined us.

We may look into inviting another retired Pastor to serve us part-time.

We could schedule several Pastors to provide “pulpit supply” on a rotating basis, perhaps filling in when necessary with lay leadership.

There is a possibility that a fourth-year seminarian may be invited to come to us on weekends.

Each of these options come with positives and negatives — finances being a major consideration. The available pool of Pastors, retired or otherwise, who can or will serve is somewhat diminished. Securing a Pastor from the field or through the Council of Presidents would take considerable time. All of which is saying that the Search Committee members have a major task before them, and will need everyone’s support, encouragement, and cooperation.

So please add to your prayer list our new Search Committee: **Gilbert Ayers, Robin Hoffman, Guy Jeanblanc, and Diane Pencin**. We thank them for their willingness to serve.

On July 23, Pastor Just is scheduled to take part in an on-line “Town Hall” meeting with Concordia Plans Services, the organization in our Synod that runs the Health Plans and Retirement Benefits Plans. The outcome of that meeting is not known as this edition goes to press, but the information that is gleaned, especially as it impacts budgets and planning, will be shared with the Church Council and the Search Committee.

Some changes are coming to Abundant Life Ministries, who have used our building for years. Pastor Rich Nickerson has accepted a transfer at his secular job to the Columbus area, so he will be moving back and forth between there and here for the next school year. The congregation will have a meeting on August 2 to decide about their future here at St. Thomas. Please pray for the Nickerson family and the people of Abundant Life during this transition.

1 + 1 + 1 giving

We, along with other English District congregations, are raising money to help our missionaries spread the good news of Jesus. 1+1+1 means \$1 per member each Sunday. There is a plastic box as you pick up your bulletin for you to place your \$1 each Sunday. It will be posted each Sunday in the Offering List. Thank you for your donations!

WE CARE!

Your church family is here for you in this time of the Covid-19 virus. If you need someone to help you with groceries, doctor visits, etc. or just someone to talk to, please call your church family. You received your church directory last month. We are here for you! Would you like a hymnal so that you can sing along with facebook? I can make sure you get one. Marla can be reached at 330-472-3045 anytime. If I can't help you I will be able to find the person you need. We miss all of you and can't wait for the day we can worship together again in our church sanctuary.

Stay safe everyone! You are all in our prayers!

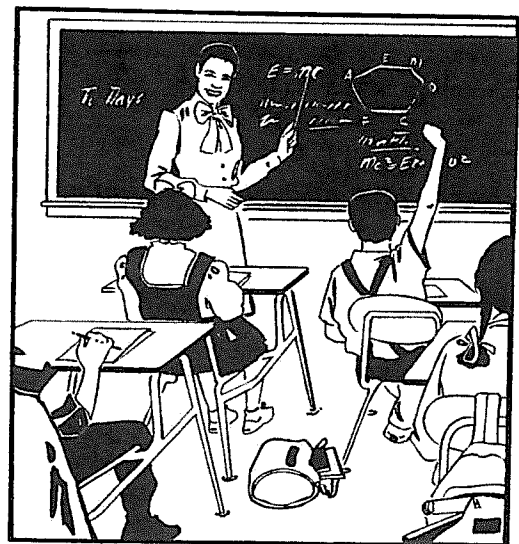
WEBSITE

If you haven't checked out our church website yet, please do and let Del Groff know how you like it or if there is something you would like to see added. The website is www.stthomasstreetsboro.com

Our July-September Portal of Prayers devotionals are available now. You can find them on the table by the door or ask Steve for one and he will bring it to your car.

Contact Person: Please call Pastor Just at 216-789-6688 or Council President Steve Hlava at 330 422-1959 for any emergencies or questions. Pastor Just is in the office on Thursdays from 8:00-4:00.

BACK TO SCHOOL MONTH (WE HOPE) PLEASE DRIVE SAFELY!



REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Abigail Ayers
Cory Hautmann
Pastor Just
Kenny Nicely IV
Ron Stenglein
Russ Carnes
Christine Combs
Bridget Gehri
Sherry Koppel
Frank Manijak
Sandy Platten
Barbara Schreiber
Tara Vargo

Trudy Ayers
Linda Hautmann
Lorene Kozar
Tim Nicely
John Buterbaugh
Scott Corban
Dan Crile
Todd Gless
Brad Kozar
Martino family
Art Robinson
Mary Small
Tim Wheeler

Bill Crile
Palagia Hlava
Joanna Nicely
Carol Poston
Jeremy Campbell
Tom Corban
Sue Ellinwood
Karen Groves
Suzanne Latham
Nadine Nicely
Richard Rohaley
Derrick Smith
COVID-19 patients

Deb Earle
Robin Hoffman
Ken Nicely II
Heather Poston
Carl
Toni Corban
Brian Fisher
Rocky Kinder
Dave Lauver
Samantha Nicely
Diane Seman
Tim Tolodzieski
Sommer & Mark Dunlevy

Mrs. Audrey Holland
4552 Aspen Lake Road
Apartment 102
Brunswick, OH 44212-4582

Mrs. Eunice Haschak
Avenue at Macedonia
9730 Valley View Road
Macedonia, Ohio 44056

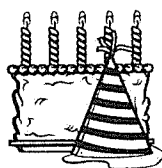
Our College Students—Grace Rohaley, Abigail Ayers, Corey Hautmann and Joanna Nicely

If there is anyone you would like to add or delete from this list, please let Marla Manijak know. You can reach her at 330-626-5120 or fill out one of the cards in the pew and put in offering plate.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays

8-Denise Nicely
11-Steve Manijak
23-Marla Manijak
27-Lori Ludeman
30-Marcy Harrison
31-Tracy Fuldauer



AUGUST BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

Baptism Birthdays

None

Happy Anniversary to

8-2-Tom & Jen Jones and Kenny & Amanda Nicely

OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL HOLIDAYS FOR AUGUST!!

2-Coloring Book Day
3-Watermelon Day
4-Chocolate Chip Cookie Day
6-Root Beer Float Day
10-S'mores Day
13-Left Handed Day

14-Ceramsicle Day
15-Relaxation Day
and World Honey Bee Day
16-Tell a Joke Day
19-Aviation Day
26-Dog Day

Senior version of Jesus Loves Me"

Here is a new version just for us who have white hair or no hair at all. For us over middle age (or even those almost there) and all you others, check out this newest version of Jesus Loves Me.

JESUS LOVES ME

**Jesus loves me, this I know,
Though my hair is white as snow
Though my sight is growing dim,
Still He bids me trust in Him.**

(CHORUS)

**YES, JESUS LOVES ME.. YES, JESUS LOVES ME..
YES, JESUS LOVES ME, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.**

**Though my steps are oh, so slow,
With my hand in His I'll go
On through life, let come what may,
He'll be there to lead the way.**

(CHORUS)

**When the nights are dark and long,
In my heart He puts a song....
Telling me in words so clear,
"Have no fear, for I am near."**

(CHORUS)

**When my work on earth is done,
And life's victories have been won.
He will take me home above,
Then I'll understand His love.**

(CHORUS)

**I love Jesus, does He know?
Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say,
That I love Him every day.**

(CHORUS)

St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 2247
9042 State Route 43
Streetsboro, OH 44241

Change Service Requested

THE PARISH VOICE NEWSLETTER

Office: 330-626-4945

Pastor Just office hours—Thursdays 8:00-4:00

Cell Phone (216) 789-6688 Email: doctorjust@gmail.com

Web Site: www.stthomasstreetsboro.com

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE 10:00 A.M.

HELD IN THE CHURCH PARKING LOT

OR YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US INSIDE

OR ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE