

A Note from Your Pastor – Back To...?

Dear Friends in Christ,

By now you have already noticed the Back-to-School advertisements for school supplies and clothing. Those ads generally begin in July and signal the new Fall season. This year is different. The “how” of the Back-to-School year is a big question mark for parents, students, teachers, administrative and support staff. The options being offered are: an in-person classroom approach with diminished hours; a totally remote/virtual learning approach; or a hybrid of both. It’s a tough decision for all involved and certainly a prayer concern for the well being and safety of all participants.

The Big Ten Football Season has also been postponed until Spring. It’s hard to imagine that on a crisp autumn day, that the the Big House in Ann Arbor will be silent and empty of football players and fans. Even more difficult to imagine is that God’s house at St. Andrew’s U.C.C. on the same Fall Sunday morning, just may have more worshippers in the sanctuary than there are football fans in the Big House stadium. Who would have ever thought that!!!

In the same way, the Fall schedule at St. Andrew’s is looking different, too! At this writing, most Fall activities continue to be cancelled or postponed until further notice. The Monthly Dinners, Rummage Sale, the Choir, Wednesday Bible Study and Piecemakers are all on hold. It’s not only St. Andrew’s, of course, but most churches, learning institutions, corporations and small businesses are adjusting on the fly to circumstances that were never imagined back in February. The Coronavirus pandemic has pressed the question: What are we here for?

Last year, the Outreach Committee scratched the surface of that question when trying to make a Mission Statement for the congregation. They wrestled with questions like:

- What is the purpose of the congregation? Who is St. Andrew’s U.C.C.?
- What does the congregation stand for? What are the core values of the congregation?

This is the Mission Statement that evolved from that conversation:

Passionate in Community -- Growing in Faith -- Serving in Christ’s Name

The pandemic has challenged us or forced us to look at that statement again and now ask, “How are we to be and do church in this strange new world?” Just as worship is looking different, so might the rest of community life.

It is my hope that this pause or in-between-time, can be viewed as a gift! Like a time-out in a sporting event, this pause can give the church the opportunity to discern once again, what our real work and ministry is. This gift of time is both a frightening thought and an exciting opportunity.

These are uncertain and unprecedented times, when upheaval is the norm. We braille our way along, traveling not by sight, but by faith, trusting that the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ and gave the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is holding, loving and guiding us all the way!

See you in September!!!

Peace and Prayers,

In Christ,

Pastor Bigelow

WORD PICTURES OF GOD – THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Continues to be the Sunday Morning Worship Theme for September.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 6

Communion Sunday

New Testament: Mark 4:1-20

The Parable of the Sower – A Soil Test

Sermon: *What Kind of Person Are You?*

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 13

New Testament: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

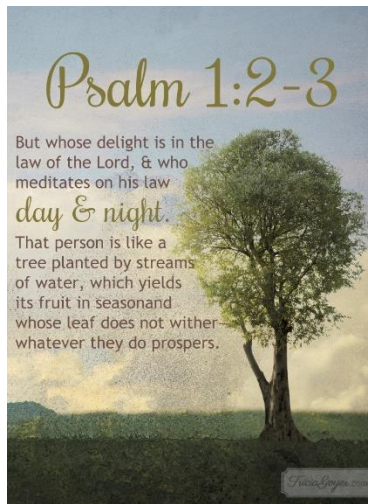
Sermon: *Waste and Grace*

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 20

New Testament: Matthew 13:24-30, 36, 43

The Parable of Weeds Among the Wheat

Sermon: *The Problem with Weeds*



MAKE YOUR DAY GREAT AGAIN! – LIVING THE PSALMS will serve as the Worship Theme for the Monthly Wednesday Mid-Afternoon Vesper Service.

Each month, a Psalm will serve as the focus of the service. The August service focused on Psalm 1, the Psalm for the Wednesday, September 9th service, will be Psalm 13. Please feel free to study the Psalm and bring your own Bibles.

This is an alternative worship service, different from the Sunday Morning Service, in that the liturgy is simpler and more informal. For those who are concerned about gathering in larger "crowds," this service enjoys fewer worshippers in

attendance.



SENSIBLE PROTOCOLS

Jesus summarized the commandments by saying, you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these commandments, depend all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

These commandments are the most important protocols for us to live our lives by, but the command to love one's neighbor as oneself has taken on some new dimensions in this Coronavirus pandemic.

St. Andrew's U.C.C. seeks to love our neighbor as oneself and caring for the health and well being of each person, by observing sensible protocols when gathering. These include: plastic shields installed around the pulpit and communion table, sanitizer dispenser installed on the wall when entering the sanctuary, and practicing social distancing when in the sanctuary and outside and wearing a mask.

Continuing to refrain from singing, using the fellowship hall, passing the offering plate and attendance sheets, and shaking hands. It is our hope and prayer, that these sensible practices will not only keep us healthy and well; but also reflect the second commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself.

