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From Pastor Jeremy

I cried today. Not about anything in particular mind you. My family is all well. Nothing especially bad has happened. I just cried because I really needed to cry. I cried because life has been hard for a while now. I cried because I am sad. I cried because I am tired. Tired of living through pandemic. Tired of being unsure and worried. Tired that somehow a global pandemic has only further divided our country by political lines instead of uniting us. Tired of the lies. Tired of the anger. Tired of the hate. Tired of injustice that seems to have no end. I am just tired and sad and hurting. I think all of us are. It is OK to admit that. It is OK to cry.

As I was just finishing up my cry something pretty amazing happened. A song came on the internet radio station I was listening to. Which in itself is not amazing at all. But the song was quite unexpected. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus starting blasting over my speaker. Which I was not expecting because I was not listening to a Christian station. In fact none of the other songs that came on were remotely religious. Yet as I sat there crying over my speakers came the lyrics,

“Come, thou long expected Jesus
Born to set thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in thee”

As I sat there listening to these beautiful words I began to cry again. Harder this time. But these were different tears than before. These were the tears I have cried many times over my life. Tears not of sadness, but of joy. These were the tears I cry when I become overwhelmed by God’s love. For in that moment where I was overcome by being tired and hurting I was suddenly reminded that I was not alone. Jesus had come. Jesus was there. Right there with me as I cried. Reminding me I was loved. Reminding me I was freed. Reminding me of his presence.

I needed that reminder so very badly at that moment. Maybe you need that reminder right now. Life has been hard. It has been strange and scary. I don’t know when it will end, but I want it to so very badly. We are all tired. We need some rest. Through Christ coming into this world and into our lives we can find it.

For as strange and different the past year has been there has still been one constant through it all. God’s love. A love I have been reminded of over and over again in the midst of unprecedented weirdness. A love which makes me cry tears of joy whenever I fully experience it. Joy. That is what Christ come into this world brings. That is what God’s unending love brings. Even in the midst of this difficult time where we are all so tired and unsure there is joy.

In fact, that is how the first verse of Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus ends as it refers to Christ as "joy of every longing heart." Our hearts are longing right now. In that longing we find joy. A joy we can experience even in the worst of times. A joy that nothing can ever take away. I hope your longing hearts can find that joy right now. I hope your tears of sadness can be turned to tears of joy. For Christ has come. Christ is here. Christ is with you. You are loved. Know that and let it give you joy. Life may be hard, but Christ has come. You always have a reason for joy.



In Person Worship

Beginning in February we will once again be offering worship in person. In order to do so safely we ask that everyone familiarize themselves with the worship guidelines and follow them as we gather together. As the vaccine makes its way into our community I, like many of you, am hopeful things can get back to normal. Yet, it will take time and we need to remain cautious. I look forward to worshipping with you again though as we use the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of all who attend.

Indoor Worship Guidelines

If you are feeling ill in any way, please do not attend.

We ask that you wear a mask as you come to worship in the building. While not 100% effective they do significantly decrease the chances of spreading the virus. As being in the building forces us into an enclosed space it is important to take this necessary precaution. If you have issues wearing one, please continue to stay home and watch the service online.

Practicing social distancing guidelines – We will have every other pew roped off to ensure 6 ft between people.

Please also sit on the opposite side of the pew as the people in front of you in order to stagger and better distance from one another. We have plenty of space to accommodate our average worship attendance.

As you arrive at the church sit in the pew furthest towards the front. I know this will be hard for you good Lutherans out there, but yes begin at the actual front of church. At the conclusion of the service we will exit single file beginning with the back rows. Please be patient and keep your distance from one another as entering and exiting.

Due to the increased risk of infection posed by singing, we will only be having special music performed during our services. Please do not sing along.

We also ask that you do not vocalize spoken parts of the service, such as the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer. You may repeat them silently or quietly to yourself but do not project your voice so that others can hear you.

As you enter the sanctuary there will be a table with sealed communion kits that include a wafer and a cup of grape juice, please grab one and go to your seat. Do not touch any cups other than the one you take with you. During the appropriate time you will be instructed to unseal your communion first with the wafer and then the grape juice.

There will be baskets for you to leave your offering as you enter or exit the church. If you must use the bathroom please use the provided disinfectant to clean surfaces once you are finished. There will be hand sanitizer available throughout the church, please use it! We will still not be handing out bulletins but the service will be projected on our screen for you to follow along. Obviously, there will be no sharing of the peace, shaking of hands, hugging, or other contact, nor will there be fellowship time or shared food.

Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting will be held on February 14 after our worship service. This meeting will be conducted in person while simultaneously live streamed through facebook. You may participate through whichever means you would prefer. We will include the votes of those participating online into our total tally.



Ash Wednesday

We will have an in person worship service on Wednesday February 17 for Ash Wednesday. During which Ashes will be applied as you enter the sanctuary through use of individual cotton swabs. We will also be offering the imposition of ashes during the day in a drive-through fashion. Pastor Jeremy will be outside from 12-1 as well as 4-5 for those who would like to receive ashes without coming to the service.



Lenten Worship

We will not be having in person midweek lenten services this year. Pastor Jeremy will instead be posting a short video every Wednesday throughout Lent on facebook and youtube. During these videos we will learn the history of some of our favorite hymns, many of which have fascinating back stories that further deepen their meaning. There will also be a time of prayer and singing. May these short worship experiences be an uplifting part of your lenten disciplines this year.



Ministerial Lenten Worship

Perry Ministerial will not be offering midweek lenten services this year. Instead there will be a short written devotion sent out every week done by a different area minister. Look for these in your email or let Pastor Jeremy know if you would like a written copy sent to you.

Offering Envelopes

For those that use offering envelopes you will find them in your mail box at church.



Sunday School

Sunday School will continue to meet throughout the rest of this school year. If we are worshipping in-person we will also have in person Sunday School following worship. We will also offer an online option for parents who would like to have their kids take part that way. Please let Pastor Jeremy or Meg Menke know how you would like to participate.

February 7	The Boy at the Temple
February 21	John the Baptist
March 7	Jesus Goes to Nazareth
March 21	The Disciples
April 4	Four Friends *Easter
April 18	Ten Men Healed
May 2	The Good Samaritan
May 16	The Lost Sheep and Lost Coin



Church App

This is a great time to check out our church app. On the app, you can watch worship services every week. You can give your offering. You can also keep in touch with one another through our prayer wall. Here anyone can post prayer requests or just things you are thinking about. You can put your name with it or just post things anonymously. Others can then comment on them and share their feelings as well. It is a great way to keep each other informed on things we are going through during this difficult time. There is a link to the app on our website.



Offering

As you worship with us I ask that you please remember to continue giving your offerings every week. This is something you can easily do online as well. Click the link on the front page of our website to quickly and easily set up an online giving account. Or you can mail your checks to the church during the weeks we will not be meeting in person.

Prayer List

Prayers are powerful and as a church we want to be sure that whenever anyone in our family is hurting we are lifting them up in prayer. So please feel free to contact Pastor Jeremy with any prayer concerns you may have. These may be for yourself or for people you care about, members or not.



Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes - January 20, 2021

Present: Pastor Jeremy, Sally, Jill, Meg, Paula, Rusty, Nicole

Officers Elected: Matt Hardy – President

Meg Menke – Vice President

Nicole Hayes – Secretary

Worship Decisions:

-Pending the evaluation of Covid numbers in Perry on January 29th we will begin in-person worship again on February 7, 2021. Live streamed services will continue to be available as well.

-In-person services will follow the same protocols that were previously in place (masks, spaced seating and hand sanitizer)

-Positive Covid numbers in Perry will be evaluated weekly to determine if in-person worship will continue.

Sunday School:

-Sunday school will be in-person starting on February 7th, too.

Lenten Services: -Lenten services will be done on-line only.

Ash Wednesday:-If we are having in-person services at this time, Ash Wednesday service will be held in-person as well as live streamed on February 17th.

-Pastor Jeremy will also have a few times during the day when people can remain in their cars at the church and he will apply their ashes for them.

Annual Meeting:

-The annual meeting will be held after church on February 14th, 2021. If we are in-person at this time the meeting will be held in-person with the option of joining online. If we are not having worship in-person, the meeting will be held entirely online.

Property Report:

-All storm damage has been repaired.

-A corner of the roof is leaking and has rotted wood under the shingles that needs to be repaired.

Finance Report:

-The church is in good shape financially.

Committee Changes:

-Faith Formation Committee – Meg Menke and Nicole Hayes

-Worship and Fine Arts Committee – Paula Nelson and Caitlynn Lamm

-Fellowship and Care Committee- Sally Radke and Jill Onnen

-Property Committee – Rusty Burgett and Matt Hardy

Next Church Council Meeting: Wednesday, February 24th at 7:00pm.