



The Mirror

The Congregational Church of Excelsior

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From the Pastor

Just as sure as September turns to October, Summer 2020 turns to Election season 2020. The clock is ticking, and I probably don't have to remind you that we will very soon have a critical decision to make, a decision which needs to be taken seriously--not casually, because it is one which directly affects the current state and future of our nation, and the ramifications of which affect no less than the world itself. So we are each and all "tasked" with the responsibility, as much as the privilege, to exercise our constitutionally-granted right as American citizens to act to express our individual judgment through the vehicle of voting. And to that end, clergy are restricted by federal law from issuing their recommendation for whom to vote (although a law which many clergy have violated, and no doubt will again this year), which is backed by the legal consequence of losing the tax exempt status of their church for doing so (and being caught at it), I thus cannot tell you for whom I will, and I think you should, cast your vote in November. However, while those of us who continue to abide by the law will continue not to do so, so as to avoid irresponsibly putting our congregations at risk of suffering legal penalties for clearly violating established law, that does not mean that clergy cannot educate their people about the biblical, moral and spiritual principles that need to inform Christians of every stripe as they go about making their personal decisions--if they so choose to heed them, and help them in the process. So for that reason, I will take the liberty of sharing with you, as the Pastor's Message this month, the Pastor's Message written by our Minnesota Conference Minister, Rev. Shari Prestemon, which outlines these biblical principles thoughtfully and succinctly, entitled "Where Faith and Politics Meet." Yes, they most certainly intersect, and for those who insist that "religion and politics don't mix," (which is the typical bromide of those who resist the truth of both the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ himself), that, as William Sloane Coffin rightly summed it up: "Those who say that religion and politics don't mix understand neither."

Rev. Prestemon begins by referencing Luke 22:24-27, which says:

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded the greatest. But Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather, the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

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The principle of the separation of church and state harkens back to our founders, when Thomas Jefferson referred to the 1st Amendment to the Constitution, saying, "I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State." Ever since then, our country has grappled with what it really means to have true separation of church and state, and whether or not faith and politics, by extension, should ever mix.

While our sacred scriptures don't have much to say explicitly about political elections in particular, they do have much to say about leadership and how the character of leadership directly impacts the lives of people in ways that matter deeply to God. And while Jesus was not technically a political figure in the way in which we understand and experience that today, what he said and did most definitely has political, economic, and social implications. In fact, he was killed by the Romans because of it.

(From the Pastor, page 1)

Our nation's laws expressly prohibit churches from endorsing any one candidate or campaign. But that doesn't mean that we have to ignore politics entirely. Elections, and the choices that result from them, have moral dimensions that our Christian faith calls us to care about. Clearly, the scriptures call us to be co-creators with God in building relationships and communities based on love, mercy, compassion, and justice. That means we have to be willing to engage in whatever, and whoever, offers the best chance for our core values as Christians, and the vision those values project of not only the future but the present, to succeed and to prosper.

So, as each of us prepares to make our own choice in the November elections, there are several values integral to our faith, as well as the practice of our faith, that we need to use to enable us to evaluate which candidate, and candidates, will move us in the direction of making the beloved community of heaven on earth, our kingdom's goal, the reality by which we live and breathe. And to get there, our sacred scriptures, and by extension their teachings, envision this:

- Servanthood: that is, which candidate(s) understand the office they seek as one that entails humble service to people, and to their greater good, rather than merely one which confers on them power over others?
- Love of neighbor: that is, which candidate(s) exhibit the capacity for genuine empathy, which involves recognizing the dignity and worth of every individual? And which will advance policies and practices that enhance and build up God's beloved family of humankind, thus embodying love of neighbor?
- Stewardship: that is, which candidate(s) seem most likely to value and practice the responsible and responsive stewardship of God's sacred creation, including money as well precious but finite resources, for the sake of the common good?
- Inclusive hospitality: that is, which candidate(s) will seek to widen the circle of God's compassion to include all into God's family, thus leading with a spirit of invitation to extend an extravagant welcome---the hand of Christian fellowship, regardless of who anyone may be, and especially to the unwanted and overlooked "stranger in our midst."
- Deep concern for the "least" among us: that is, which candidate(s) exhibit authentic caring for the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the hungry, the vulnerable, and to all those whom Jesus referred to as the "least of these," and in so doing, translate their concern into action?
- Shalom: that is, which candidate(s) will seek to bring reconciliation and healing among us, and in so doing, carve a pathway to peace founded on justice?
- Hope: that is, which candidate(s) can express a vision for the future that is based on hope and is full of promise, which necessitates aspiring to bring out the best among us by appealing to the best within us?

This is by no means an exhaustive list of faith-based values which need to be considered when we make our decision in this pivotal election. And praying for the wisdom to discern these gifts in those who seek to lead us will help us approach this process with our faith fully engaged. Indeed, prayer is both good and necessary in this time when we face serious challenges as we feel deep sorrow."

With you on the journey, Reverend Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister

And may God go with you, Rev. Tom

From the Moderator

The church now has its own Zoom account under the ccoezoom@gmail.com email address. I have provided the login information to the Board chairpersons so they can schedule and conduct meetings. We will continue to use Zoom for Assembly and Council meetings. Sunday services will transition to this new Zoom account in the near future. We appreciate Marty sharing her Zoom account for the last few months. Thank you Marty!

Please send in your pledges. Bonnie, Jo, and I deposit any checks sent to the church office each week. This would really help to keep the church financially sound.

Board of Missions

Well, the Missions Board hasn't seen each other in quite some time, but we've been able to keep up with some of the important outreach work we do each year anyway. One of the organizations we support, as you know, is **TreeHouse**, which offers supportive programming to local at-risk youth. With the pandemic ongoing, the group hasn't been able to hold their normal meetings and suppers, but they *have* provided online programming as possible and have held special drives to replace the huge Women of Hope luncheon they normally sponsor in the spring as well as for Graduation Care Packs for seniors in the spring. We at CCoE supported these efforts with \$300 in donations, which was gratefully acknowledged by the group. Hopefully we'll be able to resume serving suppers to the youth there sometime in the not-to-distant future. Your donations are always welcome and will be passed along if you write "TreeHouse" in the memo line of your check.

You're all familiar with ICA, the local food shelf that we've supported for many, many years. With children, home from school for such an extended period this year, their needs for food and funding to provide help to clients has hit records. We've been able to donate funds to them in the amount of nearly \$1100 so far, thanks to your generosity, and we'll continue funneling money to them through your ongoing donations (to give, make your check to the church and write "ICA" in the memo line). Then there are your great food

Board of Deacons

The Deacons met outside and social distanced to catch up and look ahead. It was a good discussion about possibilities for CCOE including the winter holidays. Here's one thing we came away with--a recipe!

Blueberry Buckle

1 cup all-purpose flour	1/3 cup milk
1-1/2 tsp. baking powder	2 cups fresh blueberries
1/4 tsp. salt	1/2 cup white sugar
1/4 cup butter, soft	1/3 cup flour
1/2 cup white sugar	1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 egg	1/4 cup softened butter

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 9 x 9" square baking dish.

Whisk together 1 cup flour, the baking powder and salt. Beat the 1/4 cup butter and 1/2 cup sugar with electric mixer in large bowl until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg. Add flour mixture alternately with the milk, mixing until just incorporated. Pour batter into the prepared pan, then sprinkle evenly with blueberries. Combine 1/2 cup sugar, 1/3 cup flour, cinnamon and soft butter in a bowl with a fork until crumbly and evenly mixed. Sprinkle over the blueberries.

Bake in preheated oven until a toothpick comes out clean. About 35 minutes.

Allow to cool awhile and serve warm.

Bless you all!

The Board of Deacons,
Nancy Benson, Julie Boden, Betty Kuechle, Carolyn Leaf, Val Stuessi, Judy Wise.

Our "Flagman"

Probably very few of you know that our loyal church flag-raiser, **Hank Graef**, comes to church each Sunday morning and raises the flag for our zoom church service and then lowers it when we're finished. Now *that's* dedication—many thanks Hank!



donations—the grocery cart is just inside the breezeway door and has been well used lately. The ongoing "give your age" food and funds drive (see Janet Holler's Christian Education article in this issue) has already resulted in a delivery of 100 pounds of goods, with more sure to come in before this great campaign wraps up! The monetary donations from this drive haven't been tallied yet, but we'll report in before long. And remember, ICA now offers fresh produce to clients, so if your garden is overflowing, contact Marty Swain for directions on how to get some over to them or for a pickup at your home.

Thank you so much from Missions!

Marty Swain (chair), Mark Krueger, Kathy Sherwood, Ross Rogney

Board of Christian Education

Hello all! Happy Fall - and Happy Halloween!! We are hoping this message finds you all well as the leaves turn and kids settle into a school routine (although nothing is routine this year!)

We got a great response to our parent survey, so we will be using that to guide our plans. We also had a nice response to the masks from the Quilters that we mailed to each kid starting school. Please let us know if you need more masks!

We had a fun socially-distanced outing to a park in Chanhassen last month for Kick It. During this Kick It, we literally kicked! Families enjoyed kickball and some time outside. We are sharing a few photos from the event. We will be working on planning an event each month, including something special for Halloween, so watch your emails!

Janet continues to provide the Children's message each week during Zoom church services.

We are sending a monthly Sunday School envelope to our families. It will have things to do, things to color and read and a monthly challenge. As part of the Sunday School program, each child will have an adult penpal. We're excited to see all the connections being made this fall!

For Christmas, we are planning a service project to adopt families in need. Also, we are working on having a Christmas program. Janet and Ben shared a great idea for each family to take video of a scene and Ben will put the scenes together to make a wonderful Christmas program. Let Janet H. know if you are/aren't interested.

Upcoming events

Please join us for Zoom church. The children's message is within the first 15 minutes, so make sure the kids are near the screen to join in!

We will keep you posted on upcoming events! Set aside 4-6 p.m. Oct. 18 and Nov. 15 for Kick It.

The CE Board is excited to walk with you in your faith journey. Especially during this challenging time. How can we help you? What do you need? God is still here and we, at CCOE, are still here. Please let us know your ideas and your needs.

Blessings and good health to all of you!

Chair Janet Holler, Janet Chambers Krueger, Carley Kregness, Abby Murray, Danielle Wishard-Tudor and Karla Wennerstrom



Pastoral Relations

As always, the committee welcomes your ideas, suggestions or concerns. Please email us at kathysherwood@msn.com. Thank you!



The quilters have produced holiday and non-holiday items for purchase starting September 14, 2020. These items were individually made during social distancing. The attached photo represents some of the items that are available.

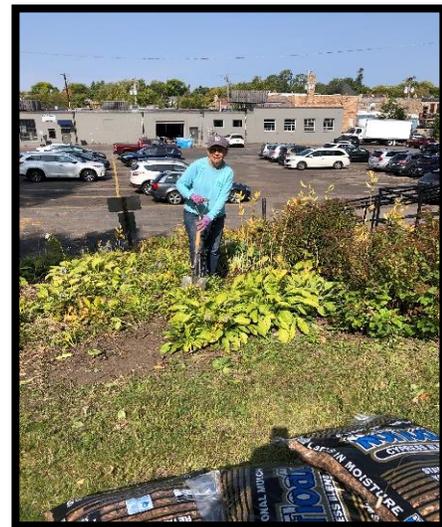
Pricing:

- Microwave cozies - 6.00
- Hot pads 5.00
- Mug rugs (coaster) 4/\$5.00
- Mug rugs. 1/1.50

Items can be purchased on Mondays 10:30-2:30 at the church, using lower door. Or call Nancy 952-913-6062 or Betty 612-597-5760 for other arrangements.

"Grounds Crew"

A hale and hearty group of workers gathered at the church on Saturday, September 19 (some returned on the 20th) to beautiful our grounds, clear out weeds and dead branches/shrubs, and add mulch to gardens. Many thanks to Kathy Sherwood, Jeff Ersbo, Margaret Demsher, MarySue Krueger, Dick McGinnis, John Benson, Mandy Little, Carolyn Leaf, and Marty Swain. Things are "lookin' good"!



Kathy Sherwood plays in the dirt behind the church.

Music Notes

"10-10-10" for October!

"I want you to know that since the pandemic, I do a daily practice I call 10-10-10. I've chosen three things that I devote 10 min. to each day. Those three things are piano, knitting or spinning, and reading. I've found such joy again playing the piano. Thank you for planting that seed in me all of those years ago. The music is blossoming here once again. :)"

My former student Kristen Kellor Anderson wrote these words to me after my visit to the Norway House with her mom to see her amazing felted art inspired by The Baldishol: a medieval tapestry found wrapped under floor boards near an old organ in Norway. (Maybe it was used by the organist in a drafty stavkirke! The tapestry I saw is a copy of the original from the Versterheim Museum in Decorah, Iowa.) Go to norwegiantextileletter.com/baldishol-norway-house-exhibit-2020/ to see history and textiles by 26 living women artists and what Kristy's "10-10-10" philosophy can do! You might enjoy the new Norway House and old Mindekirchen on Franklin Avenue!

Thank you for those who have passed their gifts to us - like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Joe Truitt, and for those living - like Kristy A. and Amelia W., Janet H. and my Lorie - who remind us to live day by day and use our gifts in this new month of October.

Lydia

CCoE Survey—September 29, 2020

Context: The Church Council and Safety Committee continue to evaluate on a monthly basis whether and when we can re-open the church for on-site services. In order to help us in our efforts, we would like to ask you, the members of the congregation, a few questions. It should be noted that even if/when we do move to on-site services, we will still have Zoom video for those who would prefer to be remote and view the service from home.

Q1

Are you eager to attend church services on site, even as the pandemic continues? **Yes No**

Q2

If no, please explain when you would be comfortable attending onsite services? (e.g., when a vaccine is available, when the COVID case/death rate falls below a certain threshold, etc.):

We are considering two options for on-site services when we go back:

1. Having a pastor lead the service on-site from the pulpit. If this were the case, we would need a substitute/replacement for Tom due to his health concerns, which of course raises budgeting concerns for the church.
2. Having Tom lead the service remotely from his home but with a projection system in the sanctuary so those who wish could attend and view him on a large screen in front of the church. This would require investment in a large monitor or projection system.

Q3

If you are interested in on-site services, would you prefer to have a pastor on site (option 1)?

Yes No

Q4

If you are interested in on-site services, would you be open to having Tom provide the sermon remotely and view it on a screen from the sanctuary, and would that be worth being on site for the service (option 2)?

Yes No

Or would you rather stay home and use Zoom, as is possible now? **Yes No**

Comments (use other side/add more sheets as you wish):

NAME (optional):

PLEASE RETURN by OCTOBER 15 (mail/drop off at church, call church office with answers, or email your answers to church)

For the Interim Time

When near the end of day, life has drained
Out of light, and it is too soon
For the mind of night to have darkened things,
No place looks like itself, loss of outline
Makes everything look strangely in-between,
Unsure of what has been, or what might come.

In this wan light, even trees seem groundless.
In a while it will be night, but nothing
Here seems TO believe the relief of dark.

You are in this time of the interim
Where everything seems withheld.

The path you took to get here has washed out;
The way forward is still concealed from you.

“The old is not old enough to have died away;
The new is still too young to be born.”

You cannot lay claim to anything;
In this place of dusk,

Your eyes are blurred;
And there is no mirror.

Everyone else has lost sight of your heart
And you can see nowhere to put your trust,
You know you have to make your own way through.

As far as you can, hold your confidence.
Do not allow your confusion to squander
This call which is loosening
Your roots in false ground,
That you might come free
From all you have outgrown.

What is being transfigured here is your mind
And it is difficult and slow to become new.
The more faithfully you can endure here,
The more refined your heart will become
For your arrival in the new dawn.

– from: "To Bless the Space Between Us" by John O'Donohue.
Pub in 2008 by Doubleday.

Poem submitted by Lydia Holsten

Zoom Notes

Please join us for Sunday services from the comfort of your own home. Just think—you can have your coffee *during* rather than after church if you'd like! Directions for joining the service are included in the Friday emails from church, or you can call the office. You can participate from a computer, an iPad or other notebook device, or even your smart phone! There's chat time before and after the services, music by Lydia and often other musicians, a children's message from Janet (it's *great* to see and hear the kids participate!), Pastor Tom's sermon, prayers for the people, and even communion on the first Sunday of the month. It's pretty slick, and lots of fun to see each other. We've consistently had a core group of up to 30 members on the zoom calls and would love to have more. Consider contacting a friend from



church and encouraging them to "come to church," either from their home or together with you.

We're training a handful of members in hosting the zoom services and would love to have some more volunteers. Please contact Lisa Walsak or Marty Swain if you're interested, and many thanks to those who have already stepped up.

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