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# The Epistle

July 2020

## PARABLES, SURPRISE, AND UNCERTAINTY

We will be reading from the thirteenth chapter of Matthew during much of July, and all of these readings focus on parables of Jesus. It is a fascinating collection to look over because I realize that so many of them are based in an agricultural worldview. Seeds and plants come up repeatedly but often Jesus speaks of them in ways that should make us wonder. It's not just that most of us are not farmers and no longer truly understand what Jesus is talking about, but that Jesus sometimes describes things that are nonsensical.

There are farmers that scatter recklessly or that do not bother to weed their fields. There are plants that grow to enormous size. There are other images that are also surprising if we know what to look for. Maybe that surprise is the more important thing we notice in these parables.

Jesus surprised his hearers with these little stories. The first hearers probably did not know what to make of them, and the truth is, we do not fully understand them either. It seems to me that may be the point. Jesus is talking about God and how God works in the world. He is talking about the presence of evil and God's relationship to evil and righteousness. These things cannot be explained simply or cleanly.

Why do bad things happen? We would like an easy answer but of course we know that is not possible. How does God relate to the world? There some are things we can say and so much more that is beyond our knowing. We would like to have a little more certainty.

We live in a time where we have been thrust into a lot of uncertainty. When

will we be able to see each other face to face? When will we be able to sing, shake hands, talk with each other, or share a meal? Will we get sick or one of our loved ones? How will our economy survive this ordeal?

Jesus would point us to these parables to remind us that God sows abundantly, seemingly recklessly, but with purpose. Jesus would point us to these parables to remind us of God's abiding love for us, even as we face difficult times. Jesus would point us to these parables to remind us that there are things we cannot know but that does not mean God has abandoned us.

Through all of these things we are reminded that God is not done with us or with the entire world. God does not will the evil that surrounds us, but God will bring life even out of death, and God's Reign will still come into this world.

In the grace and peace of Christ,  
Pastor Clark

## ST. TIMOTHY LUTHERAN CHURCH FINANCES

St. Timothy Lutheran Church  
As of: May 31, 2020

Summary Profit and Loss				
Income	May Actual	Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Congregational Giving	\$ 10,712.62	\$ 11,465.99	\$ 50,851.11	\$ 57,331.94
Outside Groups	\$ 275.00	\$ 3,616.66	\$ 8,756.00	\$ 18,083.33
Misc.	\$ 7.60	\$ 750.00	\$ 2,017.00	\$ 3,750.00
Special Income				
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 10,995.25	\$ 15,832.65	\$ 61,624.28	\$ 79,165.27
<b>Expenses</b>				
Administration	\$ 633.09	\$ 787.49	\$ 5,726.17	\$ 3,937.46
Church Staff	\$ 2,862.59	\$ 3,435.39	\$ 13,899.13	\$ 17,177.11
Committees				
Education		\$ 58.33	\$ 24.69	\$ 291.65
Finance		\$ 16.66		\$ 83.34
Hospitality & Welcome	\$ (158.40)	\$ 37.50	\$ 55.74	\$ 187.50
Property	\$ 225.00	\$ 395.83	\$ 2,052.14	\$ 1,979.15
Service	\$ 2,652.23	\$ 1,013.17	\$ 5,711.84	\$ 5,065.77
Worship and Music	\$ 173.25	\$ 245.83	\$ 819.60	\$ 1,229.15
Total Committees	\$ 2,892.08	\$ 1,767.32	\$ 8,664.01	\$ 8,836.56
Loan Expenses	\$ 561.47	\$ 575.00	\$ 2,830.18	\$ 2,875.00
Office	\$ 287.88	\$ 337.50	\$ 2,043.44	\$ 1,687.50
Pastor	\$ 9,011.30	\$ 8,392.22	\$ 41,464.92	\$ 41,961.14
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 15,327.83	\$ 15,294.93	\$ 73,718.83	\$ 76,474.77
<b>Net Income</b>	\$ (4,332.58)	\$ 57.69	\$ (12,144.57)	\$ 2,690.50
<b>Loan Principal</b>	\$ 649.53	\$ 649.53	\$ 3,224.82	\$ 3,224.82
<b>Net Operating</b>	\$ (4,982.11)	\$ (591.84)	\$ (15,369.39)	\$ (534.32)

## A WORD FROM OUR SYNOD STAFF ABOUT CONGREGATIONAL VISITS

Dear Rostered and Congregational Leaders in our Sierra Pacific Synod,

Members of our synod staff have recently received requests for being present with congregations as they begin worshiping in person. As previously shared with you, we are encouraging congregations not to begin in-person worship before July 31st. That counsel stands, and will likely be extended into at least September, given the latest reports of the rising number of cases of COVID-19 being diagnosed in both California and Nevada and concerns being expressed by health officials for limiting public gatherings. For the time being, synod staff members will only be available for online greetings or sermons. Should you wish to arrange for such a visit, please contact the synod office.

Peace,  
Bp. Mark, Pr. Katy, Pr. Tita

## UPDATES AND REMINDERS

**Service Commission**— Providing a meal for I-Help for Women July 1st. Meeting in the church parking lot at 5:00pm to gather food. Thomas Carmen Food Bank—Tuesday, July 21th, 4-7pm .

**Game Day**—July 10th, 1:00pm. We will be outdoors playing Croquet. Hosted by Cheryl Plaskett. Please call Cheryl if you need directions @ 383-9052. Please join us!

**St. Tim Bookclub**—Meeting July 18th at noon. Reading *The Eighth Day* by Thornton Wilder the 1967 National Book Award winner. In 1962 and 1963, Thornton spent twenty months in hibernation writing this murder mystery and philosophical story. What did you do during this Shelter in Place order?

**Property Committee**—Meeting July 9th at 9:30am.

**Council Meeting**—July 13, 3:30-5:30pm via Zoom.

**Foundation Meeting**—Scheduled for Wednesday, July 22 @ 2:00pm.

**Guardian Angel Relief Fund**—St. Timothy's Foundation is pleased to continue to provide a measure of assistance to those in the St. Timothy Community who are impacted financially by the pandemic and may now, or in the near future, be in unexpected crisis. If you, or someone you know may need assistance in this manner, please contact Pastor Clark via email at: [pastorclark@stim.org](mailto:pastorclark@stim.org) or call 831-375-2042.

Information provided will remain confidential.



## WE ARE CHURCH, WE ARE CALLED JUNE 29TH MARKS 50 YEARS!

*“The Church of Christ in every age, beset by change but Spirit-led, must claim and test its heritage, and keep on rising from the dead”* (Fred Pratt Green, 1969).

Dear church,

Words matter. Words matter in our Scripture, in our hymns, in our governing documents, and beyond. Fifty years ago, on June 29, 1970, the Lutheran Church in America voted to change the word “man” to “person” in its bylaws and opened the door for the ordination of women. The American Lutheran Church achieved the same thing by resolution a few months later. The church was led by the Spirit to change. At the time it was scary for some. Fifty years later, it is now part of our heritage.

In recognition of this 50th anniversary on June 29th, I invite you to express gratitude to a pastor who is a woman for how she has influenced your life. It could be by letter or email, or by other means. If you post on social media, please use the hashtag #thankyoupastor. If you would like more resources for celebrating this year, go to [elca.org/50yearsfordainedwomen](http://elca.org/50yearsfordainedwomen), which has an adult forum, Bible Study, video, and worship materials.

Fifty years after 1970, we also live in a world beset by change. I am grateful for the Spirit who continues to lead us and for the women God has called to minister to us.

I thank God for all of you who minister so faithfully.

In Christ,  
*Elyahiu A. Eaton*

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### BLACK LIVES MATTER.

Black voices matter. I’ve been listening to those who can share from their experience how dangerous, challenging and fearful a place America has been for them and for their families -- for a long time. I want to listen so I can speak when called upon to do so. I want to speak because I believe it is crucial for all people to add to this conversation. Yet I feel inadequate (see words above) and unprepared to do so. Thankfully, I have been blessed to read words of Black colleagues and friends who are opening to me the world of their experience that I only thought I knew. Links to two of those voices are below. I encourage you to read the words of Bishop Yehiel Curry of the Metro Chicago Synod and Elena King-Garret, a longtime friend and co-worker of Debbi’s. They embody words and feelings that I can barely begin to understand. And so I read and re-read their words. Please take the time to read what they are saying.

<https://www.facebook.com/yehiel.curry/posts/10157828357186633>

<https://www.facebook.com/elena.kinggarrett/posts/3169030246507167>

It is also important for us to acknowledge that Black voices cannot be the only voices that are calling out for justice. That is the job of all of us who say we live by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel that was first proclaimed as good news to those who were living on the margins, to those whose lives were relegated to the lowest places of society by those who enjoyed power and prestige. A Gospel that calls us to see everyone is made in the image of God and how that unites us to stand with those who are being killed because of the color of their skin. Can there be any doubt where our voices need to share that Gospel now? One way that might happen is offered elsewhere in this newsletter by the Racial and Ethnic Ministry Strategies Discipling Team – resources for commemorating the Emanuel 9 who were murdered at Mother Emanuel AME Church on June 17, 2015. There are many ideas in what has been shared that provide an opportunity for listening in our communities. There is also a link to the resolution (below) that was passed at our Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee and a link to the resource page on the ELCA website that could assist you in planning a commemoration service in your community. It would be a helpful beginning if we connected with other leaders, especially leaders of multi-ethnic and ethnic-specific congregations, leaders with whom we perhaps not have connected before, to plan such a service together. And not to stop there. To continue the conversations – hard conversations – that will lead us to keep speaking, to keep advocating, to keep working until true equality is realized in this country. To work for reform in local police departments and other agencies that will end the killing of people who are black and brown. To keep saying **Black Lives Matter**.

Come Holy Spirit, Come. Call us. Empower us. Enable us. Wake us. Move us. Cause us to be your justice, mercy, peace and hope. Amen.

Peace,  
Bp. Mark



## PRAYER VENTURES July 2020

- 1** As this time of stress and uncertainty continues, pray that we will be persistent in our generous support for the mission of the church: comforting and caring for our neighbors, responding to the global impact of the pandemic, providing food and basic necessities for people in need, reaching out to the isolated and lonely, and aiding organizations that work for the health, well-being and restoration of our communities.
- 2** Give thanks for God's ever-present love and care, and for the message of the psalmist who proclaims, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."
- 3** Ask the Spirit to help us express our gratitude and concern for first responders, nurses, doctors and hospital employees, and to show us how to serve as God's hands and voice in caring for their spiritual, physical and emotional needs.
- 4** Ask God to help us cherish and not abuse the blessings of freedom and liberty, work to change our society where there is injustice and oppression, and accompany our global neighbors and companion churches striving for freedom, justice and voice.
- 5** Give thanks that God's love and truth are revealed to us through faith in Jesus Christ and that the Spirit is at work inspiring and equipping us to share the good news, spread truth and invite others to believe.
- 6** Pray for wisdom and patience as we navigate how to gather as congregations and discern what is appropriate, safe, caring and respectful of the ongoing concerns of our members, communities and nation.
- 7** We understand well Paul's struggle between the inclinations of human nature and following the ways of God and teachings of Jesus. Pray for forgiveness and strengthened faith when we are weak or make poor decisions; pray that we will be guided and encouraged by the Spirit of God that dwells within us.
- 8** Thank God for our special relationship with the Episcopal Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1999. Pray for the church, its diverse ministries and its members and leaders, and pray that together we will find mutual support, new partnerships and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.
- 9** Give thanks that "the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made." Pray that our joy and thanksgiving will move us to be witnesses to God's presence, grace and mercy in the world for the sake of all people.
- 10** Pray for the 120 ELCA companion synods that connect our congregations with Lutherans and ministries worldwide. Give thanks that together we participate in God's mission, support each other, share our joys and sorrow, and use our gifts and resources to respond to human needs and grow the church.
- 11** Remember in prayer refugees and immigrants throughout the world and at our borders who hope for and seek welcoming, safe communities where they can reestablish their lives and raise their families. Pray that they will have access to health services, food and resources to meet their daily needs during this time of heightened vulnerability and isolation.
- 12** Pray that we will sow the seeds of the good news of Jesus Christ without bias or judgment as to how people will receive it, and that we will trust the Spirit to accomplish what God intends through our witness and service in the world.
- 13** Pause to reflect on the significance of the 50th anniversary of a Lutheran church choosing to ordain women in the United States. Give thanks for the leadership, ministry and gifts of women who have served the church throughout history and for those women who endured the hardships and work leading to the ordination of women.
- 14** Pray for Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, that God will sustain her faith and strength and guide her leadership and decisions, particularly during this difficult and uncertain time in our church and society when we are looking to her for guidance and vision.
- 15** Give praise to God, for God's word is powerful, clear, true and trustworthy.
- 16** Pray for businesses that are struggling or reopening or have shut down, and for their owners, their employees and all the other people and businesses they impact. Ask God to help them make decisions and implement new health precau-

tions that take into consideration the well-being and needs of their employees, the people they serve and their community.

**17** Pray for voting members of the Western North Dakota Synod gathered for a special meeting and elections, and for members throughout the synod who will participate through livestreaming. Ask that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

**18** Give thanks that God's word is a light to our path throughout life that guides us in our baptismal journey, fills us with hope and joy, and illuminates truth and justice.

**19** It is a painful, nagging reality that there are both good and evil in the world. Pray that the Spirit will renew our faith, trust and patience that God's righteousness, judgment and mercy will reign when the end of time comes.

**20** Give thanks for rostered ministers [in our church who are](#) active in call, on leave from call, awaiting call or retired. Praise God for their faith, gifts, caring leadership, example and sacrifices in response to God's call to a life of ministry and service.

**21** We are church together, many members of the one body of Christ. Pray that the Spirit will unite us in our commitment to condemn sexism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy and racism against indigenous people and people of color, whenever and wherever these sins occur.

**22** Pray that, like God, we might be "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

**23** Pray for our ELCA colleges, universities and seminaries and their faculties, staff and students as they work to adapt to and overcome the disruptions and difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pray that faculty and staff will find effective ways of caring for students, continuing educational experiences both in person and from a distance, enriching faith and helping students discern and prepare for their vocations.

**24** Pray that we will be filled with and led by the Spirit so that our actions, words and faith reveal who we are — children of God, followers of Christ.

**25** Remember in prayer the leaders, voting members and others gathered for the [South Carolina Synod Assembly](#), that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

**26** How do you envision and understand the kingdom of heaven? Pray that we might stay well-rooted in Scripture and the teachings of Christ to better understand the kingdom of heaven, and to be cautious in embracing cultural myths, traditions handed down and false promises about the kingdom of God.

**27** Pray that we will continue turning to and prayerfully studying Scripture — individually and together. Pray that doing so will strengthen and deepen our faith, comfort and encourage us, guide us in loving our neighbor, and be a source of joy and thanksgiving.

**28** What gives you cause for happiness and hope these days? Give thanks and praise to God for desiring joy, healing, renewed life and freedom for us and all humanity.

**29** Praise God for the joy and reassurance of knowing that there is nothing — absolutely nothing — that can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ.

**30** Give thanks for the special gifts, skills and minds of scientists, researchers and explorers who strive to better understand creation, improve the human condition, solve complex problems that cause us suffering, and restore and steward creation with a long view of sustaining future generations. Pray that they will make wise, responsible and just use of their research and discoveries for the well-being of all people and our planet.

**31** Lift up in prayer our neighbors who are unemployed or underemployed and seek safe, meaningful work that will help them develop self-sufficiency and confidence and meet the needs of the people for whom they provide care, assistance and support.

# HAPPY 90<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY!



## DOROTHY KIRK'S 90th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

I would like to thank June Pedranti for organizing a Happy Birthday "Sing-a-Long" at my home on the 19th of June in honor of my 90th birthday. All twenty-six sounded good enough to sing in the church choir. "Look Out All." Thank you for the wonderful special surprise.

90 WOW!!

Dorothy Kirk



Happy Anniversary!

Clark Brown 7/6

Dee Holland 7/26

Barbara Grace 7/29

Ida & Tom Barber

7/12