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The Church Is a Building

- Pastor Sorenson

Since the current pandemic began, a popular sentiment has been shared by countless people: the Church is not a building, it's a people. While this is certainly true insofar as we are the body of Christ, this statement has been abused and twisted to mean something it never should have meant, namely that we do not really need to be in the church building for worship. This is a misguided notion, at best, and perhaps even heretical, at worst.

First, consider how often God Himself ties worship to specific locations and specific buildings. Adam and Eve were given the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as the place where they worshiped God by not eating of its fruit (Gen. 2:17). Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham (Gen. 12:7-8), and the rest of the Patriarchs built altars at the places God directed so they and their families could worship God there. While Israel wandered in the wilderness, God directed them to build the tabernacle so they would have a place to worship (Ex. 26). Having settled in the land of Israel, God commanded the temple to be built in Jerusalem so the whole nation could gather together in one place to worship the Lord (1 Chr. 28:10). After the first temple was destroyed, God commanded His people to rebuild the temple again (Ezra 1:2, 6:3, Haggai 1:8).

Throughout the Old Testament, then, it is clear: God desires to come to His people in specific locations and in specific ways. This alone should show us that the Church is not just a people, but a building. It is impossible to have the Church without having a specific location where God's people gather to worship Him as He comes to give them His gifts.

As much as this idea is present in the Old Testament, it is only amplified in the New Testament. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus went to the temple on a regular basis to worship the Lord (Luke 2:41-46). As He grew older, Jesus would go to synagogues (Mark 1:21, Luke 4:31-33, John 6:59) and the temple (Matt. 21:23, John 8:2) to worship and to teach. The Apostles also continued worshiping and teaching in the temple and in synagogues (Luke 24:53, Acts 2:46, Acts 17:1-2, Acts 19:8). Clearly, then, God's people, and even God Himself, understood the importance of meeting in a physical location.

Understanding this, consider second, and far more importantly, how the incarnation (that is, the taking on of human flesh) of Jesus reveals that our worship is tied to a physical reality and, thus, a physical building. The fact that Jesus took on flesh and became man must never be underscored. For since Jesus became a man, He shows us that God desires to dwell among us physically, not just spiritually. Since Jesus became a man, He shows us that God cares not only for our souls, but also for our bodies. Since Jesus became a man, He shows us that God will continue to come among us physically to give us His gifts.

This is what worship is, after all. Worship is God coming to us and among us to serve us with His gifts. Of course, this is done as we hear His Word, but it is also done as God joins His Word to physical elements like water, bread, and wine. Thus, worship occurs in a physical location, but not just any location. For God has placed His gifts in a specific place and promised us that His gifts will always be there for our forgiveness, life,

and salvation. That specific place is the Church. To look for those gifts anywhere else or to deny the importance of the church building where God has specifically placed those gifts is both dangerous and wrong.

This is not to say that the Church should not use technology or that online services are wrong, but it is to say that online worship services can confuse us into thinking that worship can be done apart from the physical reality of the church building and, thus, the physical reality of God's gifts. Not only does this go against thousands of years of church history where the faithful have gathered together where God promises to be present, but it also goes against the very doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Technology can indeed be useful and should be used as appropriate, but let us never let technology separate us from the church building. For worship is not watching a service for an hour a week. Worship is God coming to us physically in Word and Sacraments in the place where He promises to bring us forgiveness, life, and salvation. So, while the Church is truly a people, it's a people who meet in and dwell with God in a building. For the Church is not just a people. The Church is a building.

WORSHIP INFORMATION

Worship Service Update:

We will continue having two services each Sunday at 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM until further notice. As we do so, we will continue to follow the state guidelines regarding social distancing and other safety measures. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we seek to return to worship in a safe and responsible way. The next update regarding services will be given on Sunday, June 7th.

Bible Studies Online! (Note the change in schedule for the Wednesday study.)

During this period when we are unable to meet, join Pastor Sorenson online for weekly Bible studies.

- On **Tuesdays**, we will be studying a book of the Bible.
- On the **first Wednesday of each month**, we will be studying the upcoming Hymns of the Day.
- On **Thursdays**, we will be reading through portions of the Large Catechism.
- Each study begins at **2:00 PM** on the church Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/StPeterEvangelicalLutheranChurch>) and is also available to view in its entirety even after the study concludes.

Sermons and Devotional Resources:

- Weekly sermons will be posted on our church website (<http://www.stpeterwaymansville.com>) on the sermon page under the "At St. Peter" tab. (Direct link to that page - http://www.stpeterwaymansville.org/?page_id=417)
- You can also find helpful resources for your home devotions on the "Devotional Resources" page under the "Resources" tab (http://www.stpeterwaymansville.org/?page_id=489). Now is a great time to begin, continue, and strengthen a home devotional pattern by yourself and with your family.
- The April-June Portals of Prayer are still available in the narthex. You can drop by and pick one up or contact Pastor or the church office to have one delivered.

Lord's Supper: If you would like to receive the Lord's Supper during this time, please contact Pastor Sorenson via call, text, or email. His phone number is 812-371-1151 and his email is pastoresorenson@gmail.com. He would be happy to meet you at the church for this purpose or to bring it to your home, making sure at all times to take the necessary safety precautions.

May these resources assist you as you continue to hear the Word of God and cry out to Him in prayer.

EVENTS & NEWS

Cancelled Events:

The June Book of Concord Study, Youth Group Night, and Game Night have been cancelled for this month.

Library:

In an effort to build up our library and provide good theological resources for the congregation, we will have a special Book of the Month. The Book of the Month will be available in the Parish Hall library for you to look through and read. You may take the book home to read as well, but we ask that you please do not hold onto it for too long so other people can enjoy it as well. The June Book of the Month is *A Martyr's Faith in a Faithless World* by Bryan Wolfmueller. Here is an excerpt from the book: "Christians need heroes who die.... Our heroes are those who have fought the good fight and kept the faith, and who have finished the race. Our heroes are those who have stood against the wiles of the devil, who have stood against the wild beasts (see 1 Corinthians 15:32) of the world and the flesh. And having stood, our heroes are those who have died the blessed death.... Dear Christian, your heroes are strangers, wanderers, exiles on earth. Your heroes have a discontent with this world, knowing that there is something better. They have their eyes on the resurrection, the life and the world to come."

Letter from Pastor Beabout:

To Our Dear St. Peter Family,

Since I retired as your Pastor two years ago, I've enjoyed teaching at Trinity Lutheran High School for a year, being the Columbus Circuit Visitor, and doing pulpit supply for a number of churches. During these two years, God has blessed me with good health and no further episodes of my Meniere's disease. But during this time, I've also truly missed the parish ministry that I had grown to love serving you.

About this time last year, we were getting ready to put our home up for sale and moving to Tennessee. We thought God was calling us to become a part-time associate pastor for Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Crossville, Tennessee. The plan was to wait until our home sold before moving. But for the next six months, our home didn't sell. And so we took it off the market at the end of last November.

Although we were unsure of what to do next and questioning if God was telling us to stay put, the Pastor and congregation at Shepherd of the Hills never wavered in their desire to have us come down and be a part of their church and ministry. In February, the church put together a small committee of church leaders to pray and see what the church might do to make our coming happen. As ideas were being discussed, Covid19 hit and everything was put on hold.

But God wasn't on hold. Their prayers were answered. A furnished two bedroom condo was made available to the church to use as a parsonage for the next four to six months. Stella and I feel that this is God's timing and doing. That God is truly calling us to go now and serve the people of Shepherd of the Hills. So we're stepping out in faith and moving to Tennessee and into our temporary parsonage on Saturday, May 30th. We pray our home will sell quickly here while we begin searching for a home there.

What a wonderful opportunity our Lord is providing for all churches! Although the Covid19 pandemic has been a lethal and devastating worldwide event, it's also been a perfect storm for religious revival and renewal for people throughout the world. It has isolated people. But it has also forced people to face death. People are realizing that sustainability is not in their hands...that they're neither in control of their lives nor this world. And more importantly, people are recognizing that they need God...they need a Savior! This is why for such a time as this, I am joyfully and excitedly leaving retirement and re-entering church ministry to serve and take the "Good News" of the Gospel of our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ to the people!

It's been an incredible privilege and honor to serve you, and care for you, and love you as your pastor and friend for 14 years. With my duties as a Circuit Visitor and doing pulpit supply, we haven't seen you as

often as we would have liked on Sunday mornings. As our journey to serve our Lord and love His people continues, we wish all of you, our church family, God's riches and continued blessings for the ministry of St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church! We look forward to returning and joining you for the Church's 150th Anniversary celebration next summer. Until then, may God bless and keep you and grant you His everlasting peace!

In Christ,
Pastor B & Stella

FROM THE OFFICE

Electronic Donations:

During this time of absence from our services, if you would like to make contributions to the church through your personal online banking, it is very easy!

- Call the church office to get the church's bank account number. You **do not** have to give the church any of your personal banking information. Amy can be reached at (812) 342-4921 or (812) 390-2318.
- Use your own bank's online banking system to set up a transfer to the church account. Most systems will walk you through this set-up process step-by-step.
- This can be a one-time payment, something you do each week/as you can, or a recurring debit. Your online banking program will allow you to choose if the payment is recurring or not. This method of payment **does not** have to be something that is automatically deducted from your account. You can control when and how often you make a contribution.
- To assist in tracking and recording contributions to the correct contributor numbers, it is recommended that you send Amy an email (amy@stpeterwaymansville.com) indicating the date and amount of the contribution. When online contributions are posted to the church's banks account, there is no identifying information about the sender.
- Don't hesitate to call Amy with further questions.

Contact Information:

Once we are able to join together in worship again, we would like to be able to contact everyone in a quick and timely manner. If you could please contact Amy or Pastor to update your contact information, especially phone number and email, that would help us tremendously and be greatly appreciated. Keep an eye on the church Facebook page for the most up-to-date information and help spread the word when that joyous day comes when we can come back together. Thank you!

Out of Office:

Amy will be out of town from May 31st through June 7th.

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