



The Shepherd's Voice

May/June 2024

PASTOR'S NOTE:

Greetings in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

As the Easter season is nearing an end, it is important for us to remember that we are Easter people. This means that every day we are to recognize that Christ is risen and because He lives, so do we.

This past Sunday, in our Gospel text from John 15:1-8, we heard Jesus telling us that He is the true vine and that we are the branches. Jesus spoke clearly, telling us that apart from Him, we can do nothing. At the heart of Jesus' words was the need to abide. Jesus said, "Abide in me as I abide in you."

I mentioned how this understanding of what it means to abide is like the vine and its branches in that the branches become so entwined with one another, and with the vine, that it is hard to tell where one starts and another ends. I believe that Jesus is telling us that living such connected and entwined lives with one another, and to Him, is what Easter people do.

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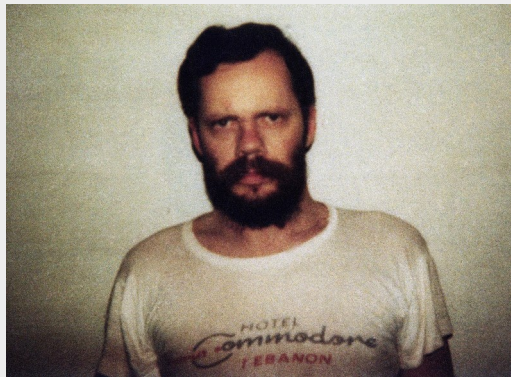
Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church

I have to admit, sometimes it is hard to see. It seems there are many places in our world today where we seem to be anything but connected to one another.

On Sunday we noted a common reason for all this disconnectedness, all the non-abiding we seem to be doing these days - it is that we forget that we are the branches and that God is the vinegrower. All too often, we think we are the vinegrower and we pick up the pruning shears and we go about pruning. We go about cutting other branches, other people, off. We cut them into various identity groups based on various characteristics: ethnicity, skin color, sexuality, gender, politics, and the list goes on and on, and so does the pruning.

Of course, that is not our job. The true vinegrower, God the Father, is the only one who is to do the pruning. And God does it with wisdom, care, and love - so that we will grow stronger and bear much fruit. What we do not recognize is that by the time we get done pruning, while we thought we were cutting other branches, cutting other people off, what we really have done is cut ourselves off such that we no longer can abide at all.

Jesus' words were echoing in my ears as I heard the news that Terry Anderson died 1 1/2 weeks ago on April 21, 2024. I am guessing that many of you recognize this name. If not, Terry Anderson was an American journalist who was taken hostage in Lebanon in 1985. He was held as a hostage for 6 years and 9 months before being released in 1991.



Now, you may wonder why I, or any of us, remember his name. And no, it is not because he graduated from Iowa State University, although in my mind that should be reason enough. The reason some of us with many years on us remember is because back then the news media identified hostages, shared their faces and names, and routinely ran stories and talked to their family, not to mention followed up with our government officials about the steps being taken to get them back. It was just one of the ways that we, as a people, seemed to abide with one another. It seemed like we were more entwined and connected with one another back then.

Interestingly, Terry Anderson was taken hostage by Hezbollah, who is still recognized as a terrorist organization today that seeks the elimination of Jewish people and continues to be backed by Iran now as they were then. Another interesting note is that post-captivity, Terry taught at Columbia University,

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which is currently, along with many other universities and organizations, is allowing anti-semitism to be openly displayed as well as protests supporting Hamas, another terrorist organization whose charter calls for the killing of Jewish people, and is also backed by Iran.

It seems troubling to me that those displaying anti-semitism are no longer calling for a two-state solution, but instead for a one-state, or final, solution. No one seems to be calling for a known terrorist organization and governing body of Gaza to release the hostages they have been holding for over 6 months now. For the most part, we do not know their names or faces, or anything about them. Terry Anderson was not forgotten, but I fear the current hostages taken by Hamas already have been.

There is another intriguing and instructive verse in our Gospel from last Sunday. Jesus said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you." I think we often only hear the part where Jesus tells us we can ask for whatever we want, and it will be done for us. That sounds more like Jesus is a genie we let out of the bottle, and possibly even better because instead of being granted 3 wishes, we have unlimited wishes, we can ask for whatever we want.

The point is that we are the branches and Jesus is the vine, and without Him we can do nothing. And when we are connected to Him and bearing fruit, it is because He abides in us and we in Him. And Jesus says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you," then one can ask and it will be done. Remember, if we are truly connected to Christ, we will produce the fruits of the Spirit; kindness, patience, joy, peace, self-control, love. That is what abiding in Christ looks like. That is what being connected and entwined with Jesus and one another looks like.

I keep coming back to Jesus saying, "If my words abide in you..." all while hearing the voice of anti-semitism all around us. Jesus' words do not sound like "from the river to the sea." His words are not heard in the chants of some students and faculty shouting, "Death to Israel. Death to America."

Given that many Jewish students do not feel safe in some cities and on some university campuses, and some schools are going back to online classes for the rest of the year all due to unrest, protests, and riots, it may seem like we are farther than ever from abiding and being entwined with one another.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be different. Our hope, our faith is in Him. We are to let His words abide in us. His words are not words of hate, but words of love. His words are not chants of death to anyone, any group, any country. Instead, they are a call to new life in Him.

Now more than ever, may we stay connected and abide in Christ. And may we let His words not just abide with us, but in us. May we live by them, may we bear them such that what people see and experience from us are the fruits we bear; joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and love.

It may seem hard to do in our current culture, but just imagine how these things will stand out in our current environment. Remember, as followers of Jesus, we are called to be different. The time is now. Together may we be branches on the vine of Christ. As we abide in him and stay entwined and connected to him, let us be connected and entwined to one another. After all, that is what Easter people do.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Ted

Music and Worship

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our Lent and Easter seasons meaningful this year: singers, instrumentalists, altar ministry, worship volunteers, food preparers, and all who contributed in other ways.



Upcoming Music and Worship Calendar



- Sunday, May 5 • Sixth Sunday of Easter; 2024 graduate recognition
- Thursday, May 9 • Ascension of Our Lord
- Sunday, May 12 • Celebrate Ascension of Our Lord
- Sunday, May 19 • **Day of Pentecost (wear red);**
Farewell retirement potluck for Judy Heller following Classic Worship
- Sunday, May 26 • The Holy Trinity, First Sunday after Pentecost
- Sunday, June 23 • Reconciling in Christ recognition

Wear Red for Pentecost—May 19th

Pentecost is 50 days after Easter – this year May 19th. Pentecost is the 'birthday of the church' and a celebration of the coming of the Spirit.



Retirement Potluck for Judy Heller

Sunday, May 19 we will gather after Classic Worship with a potluck lunch to celebrate Judy Heller's retirement. Chicken (baked and fried) and beverages will be provided. Feel free to bring side dishes or dessert!

MUSIC MINISTER FOR CLASSIC WORSHIP

The Personnel Committee reports that the recruiting and selection process is ongoing at the time of this writing. They are currently in the process of conducting interviews for the Music Minister of Classic Worship.

We would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank you" to Judy Heller for serving as our Music Minister for Classic Worship for the last five years.

SANCTUARY ART

Worship involves all our senses, including the sense of sight. Besides bringing our attention to wonder and beauty, art helps illustrate the Word of God.

Are your inner artistic talents calling you? We welcome anyone that has an interest in helping with enhancing our worship space. This could be on a year-round basis or on a seasonal basis.

GSLC CHOIR

Rehearsals are on Thursdays, 7:00 – 8:15 pm. Last Sunday choir will be singing before summer break is May 26th.



Summer Music: During the summer months, while choir is on 'vacation,' we would like to encourage the congregation to share their musical gifts in the 11:00 am Classic Worship service. We have many openings for preludes, offerings and postludes, either for soloists or small groups.

Let Thad know if you're interested in playing or singing. (785-556-0333 or tjreist@yahoo.com)

Kelley Witmer, Worship Committee Chair, kelley@wheatfieldtechnology.com, 785-760-0155
Judy Heller, Music Minister – Classic Worship, hellerjudyw@gmail.com, 785-843-9521
Megan Ebke, Worship Leader – Worship 2.0, megan.ebke@gmail.com, 785-844-1830
Thad Reist, Organist/Pianist—Classic Worship, tjreist@yahoo.com, 785-556-0333

Hospitality Committee

GSLC Member Spotlight

We spend time together in worship and other events, but how well do we really know our fellow GSLC members? The Hospitality Ministry Team would like to help us all get to know each other better, make connections and grow relationships by finding out more about each other. In the near future, you will have an opportunity to fill out a questionnaire and answer up to 20 get-to-know-you questions. You don't have to answer them all.

Each week, starting in June, we will spotlight someone by displaying their answers to a selection of the questions in the narthex. You may find you have something in common with someone that you didn't know about. Or, someone's answer to a question may be so intriguing you will want to find out more. Watch for the Member Spotlight questionnaire in early May.

Summertime Coffee and Fellowship



During the summer months, we enjoy a time for fellowship and refreshments between worship services. Stay a little after Worship 2.0 or come a little early before Classic Worship to enjoy coffee, treats and conversation.

If you would like to serve as host on a Sunday by making coffee and providing simple treats, please sign up in the entry. You may wish to join a friend or two to serve as hosts together. Guidelines are available near the sign-up board. Rather than provide treats yourself, you may also choose to “sponsor” a Sunday by providing funds for the Hospitality Team to purchase treats.

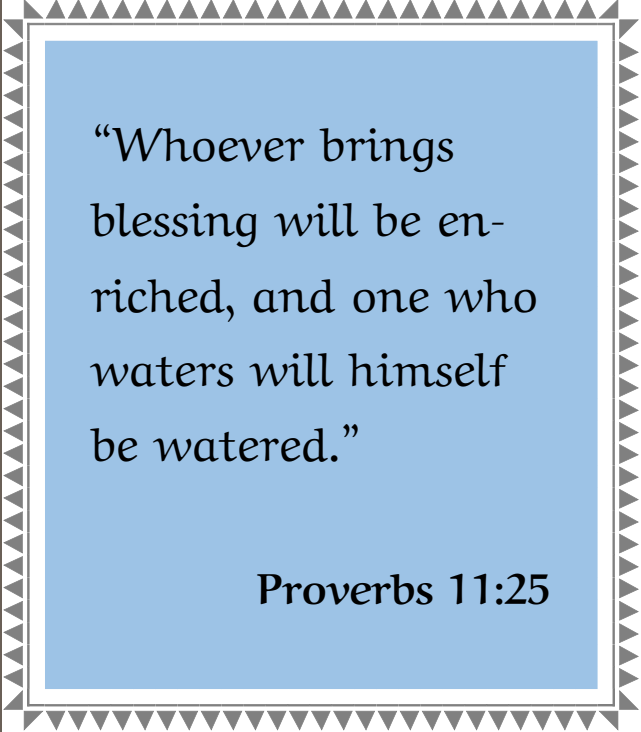
If you have questions, contact one of the Hospitality Ministry Team members.

Caring and Sharing Meals

The Caring and Sharing Meals Team needs your help! If you would like to join the team and help with meal preparation or delivery, let Faith Friesen know (see contact information below). Meals will be coordinated using the Meal Train website to assure scheduling and dietary needs are met.

When someone is asked if they need help during a significant life event it is often human nature to say “I’m fine” or “I don’t need anything”. It once was said that “To be fully human, is to accept we are weak, we need help, we need support, and we need community.” The Good Shepherd community is here to help in time of need and the blessings received are a two way street.

If you or someone you know in our Good Shepherd faith community would benefit from the support the members of our Caring and Sharing Meals Team can provide by preparing and delivering meals, please contact the coordinator, Faith Friesen. (faith.friesen76@gmail.com or call 785-764-6947).

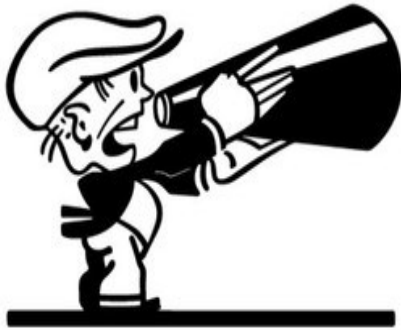


“Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”

Proverbs 11:25

HELP WANTED

***The Christian Education Ministry Team
is in immediate need of a new Team Leader.***



We give much thanks and appreciation to Monica Rethman who has served on the team for many years. She is stepping down and seeks to serve in new ways.

Christian Education plays a vital role in the life of Good Shepherd for children, youth and adults. We would like to have a new leader in place this summer to begin preparation for fall Christian Education activities. Please contact Pastor Ted if you have an interest in serving or if you have questions.



Justice Matters Update

“What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8

Our dedicated team of Good Shepherd Justice Matters Network Members, along with Good Shepherd congregants, our families, neighbors, friends and co-workers attended the Action Assembly on April 28th. Our voices joined with other Justice Matters congregations and neighborhood networks to speak with ONE VOICE for Justice.

Elder Care service providers in Douglas County cannot find enough quality care for everyone

who needs it. Dwyer Workforce Development is a proven solution.

County Commissioner Patrick Kelly, representative on Heartland Workforce Development’s Chief Elected Officials Board, appeared at the Action Assembly. He answered “**Yes**” to the following questions:

“Will you voice support to Heartland Workforce Development in having a Memorandum of Understanding signed between Heartland and Dwyer by June 30, 2024?”, and “As an Executive Chief Board member representing Douglas County will you urge the continued implementation of Dwyer’s program during Heartland Workforce meetings, even if or when other county’s chief elected board representatives say no, so scholars will be enrolled by 2025?”

The number of people experiencing homelessness on Lawrence streets has increased every year. The proven solution is Built for Zero.

County Commissioner Shannon Reid and City Commissioner Brad Finkeldei both answered “**Yes**” to the following questions: “Will you vote to approve the ‘A Place for Everyone’ strategic plan?”, and “Will you ensure the upcoming budget includes the funding that is necessary to implement the ‘A Place for Everyone’ plan and vote for said budget by July/September 2024?” Also, “Will you use your role as a city/county commissioner to champion the on-time implementation of the ‘A Place for Everyone’ strategic plan to reach functional zero by 2028?”

We learned shortly prior to the Assembly that “A Place for Everyone” strategic plan will be placed on the City and County consent agenda as soon as the first week of May!



Hello from the preschool!

Spring has sprung and our students continue to learn and grow. We are so happy to see the positive influence our little preschool is having in these families' lives, it's truly a blessing. The younger students are becoming more mature and ready to learn as the stability and routine of school has solidified. The PreK kids are already beginning to talk about kindergarten next year and prepare for this change. Our teachers continue to work hard to be a positive influence on these little people and I am so thankful to have such a wonderful team!

Enrollment has opened to the public and we are thankfully in a pretty good spot going into the summer. I'm sure we will get a few more students but we have a good group so far. My goal for last year was to grow our enrollment so that I wouldn't have to be worried during this time, and I think we are achieving that goal. We have a new website that I was lucky enough to partner with a Bishop Seabury student to create. I think this will help draw many new families into the Green Pastures family.

We've continued our Mystery Reader program and it has been a big hit with the kids! We have also enjoyed our Valentines' Party, Kansas Day and Easter Celebration- hopefully creating some special memories for our students. We invited a KU baseball alum and "the basketball boss" to come during sports week and the kids loved it. Coming up soon we have our spring field trip to the Baker Wetlands, a visit from some police officers and our favorite meteorologists (Kirsten and her husband Dave) coming in to teach the kids about weather. We are also starting to prepare for our annual Caterpillar and Butterfly Tea party which is a highlight of the year. Graduation for our PreK students will take place the morning of May 15th, it's hard to think the end of the year is fast approaching!

We continue to be thankful for the church's support of the preschool. Talking to other preschool directors in Lawrence they are all saying the same thing, enrollment is down. I know we couldn't continue to encourage and grow these families and our students without the support of Good Shepherd. This year especially I have seen a tangible impact on student lives, and I am SO grateful to be able to continue this work!

Day Beck