

The Shepherd's Staff

Monthly Newsletter of

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church at Swan's Trail

swanstrail@outlook.com www.swanstrail.org

5511 64th Street SE, Snohomish WA 98290

Pastor Thomas J. Rohde

Church Phone 425-334-1220

MARCH 2021

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear people of God at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,

Hope you are safe and well today and all days for that matter.

Last month we talked some about grace and what it means for our life, both now and forever.

How about we talk some about faith and what it means for our life, both now and forever?

Just like grace, we hear a lot of talk about it in church and in the context of Christian life and meaning is all important. What I mean when I say the word faith is trust in, reliance on, God, as best as we can as flawed human beings. Our faith is never up to snuff, never good enough, to think we can do anything to move God's hands or will or favor towards us. Remember the grace discussion from last month? If we believe our faith moves God, then God ceases to be gracious towards us or anyone for that matter. Our faith earns us God's favor or decision making towards us and we are no longer in the realm of grace but reward. So, when I hear of faith healings or "my faith moved a mountain", I wonder about such connections. Since God is gracious towards us, God would act on our behalf in any given situation out of graciousness not because of our faith or anything else. I wonder about my flawed faith and its ability to move an unflawed God.

What I believe faith does is comforts us in times when we need to be comforted and it challenges us in times when we need to be challenged. And I am not sure our faith gets us anything when it comes to God, remember grace? The things on which we rely, the things in which we trust are the things that get us through the dark valleys of life. The things we believe about God, e.g. God's care, God's love,

God's holding us and walking with us, are all meant to see us through whatever it is that is confronting us. Many times if not most of the times, faith does not remove it but allows us to live through, due to the things we believe about God.

Finally, faith does not "save" us, now there is a loaded word! Faith does and can "save" us from despair, from hopelessness, from dejection and isolation, from a host of places in which we might find ourselves. But we are not "saved" with God by faith. We are not "saved" by the depth or strength by which we believe. We are finally and ultimately saved by, you guessed it, GRACE! We trust grace to be true for us and all of humanity, we rely on grace to be true for us and all of humanity, and the depth and strength to which we believe that might just make a huge difference in the way we live each day. But the depth and strength of our faith, even in grace, does not change its truth for us and all of humanity. Grace is true for all, simply because that is God's eternal nature. When we believe and rely on it and rest in it to be so, it becomes true for us. But truth be known, it was for us all along.

God's peace on your days.

THANK YOU TO all who have hung with us through this last most trying year. It was on March 15, 2020, that we suspended worship in person and all church related activities. We have opened up the building to some but not for worship.

I want to thank those who have chosen to watch our worship service on line, those who have accepted the ministry opportunities to read and send music and Thank God at the end of the service; thank you for your continued ministry outside of walls of the church building, your own faithfulness in caring and showing compassion as best as you can; thank you for your prayerful support of me and the leadership of the congregation as we try to move forward and keep everyone safe at the same time; and finally, thank you for continued financial support for the church. It shows me that you have confidence and trust in what we are doing, even if you can't see it in person; in all these ways and more, when we are able to be together again, while we might have lost more than year, we did not lose heart or our sense of community. God's peace on your days, Pastor Tom

Prayer Requests

**Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus
and for all people according to their needs:**

Pastor Tom and Family on the loss of his Father, Emery Rohde

For health concerns:

Bob Amberson

Erica Farmer's twin sister Erin, concerning a cancer diagnosis and treatment

Richard McCutchan's sister

Heidi Ferria, Pat Heifort's daughter

*Bo Henderson
Juli Reed, who is struggling with MSA
Karla Kloes' sister, Fara Schwencke
For all others who are in need of healing and wholeness, especially those affected by
COVID 19
For peace all around the world,
For Pastor Tom and our Congregational Leaders and for all people according to their
needs.*

**Into your hands, Oh, Lord, we commend all for whom we pray,
trusting in your mercy through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*Prayer Requests should be submitted to
Pastor Tom pastor@swanstrail.org 425-334-1220
Pat Pehling pehling@frontier.com or 360-568-4047*

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

Remember that Daylight Savings time begins on March 14 so set your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed on March 13.

CHURCH WEBSITE is at www.swanstrail.org Take a look when you get the chance. It has some good links to other church related websites that might be helpful to you. It also has the Sunday readings for those who like to look ahead or want to practice before reading on Sunday morning. Suggestions of what to include in the site are most welcomed.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY SERVICE – Marilyn Errey

Please help Good Shepherd build community! Good Shepherd provides regular support to the community throughout the year (School Supplies, Holiday Baskets & Christmas Gifts, Food Bank Support, & McDonald's Gift Cards to the Community Kitchen). Please consider what other community service possibilities there may be in our surrounding communities and feel free to contact me.

MINISTRY OF YOUTH & ADULT FELLOWSHIP – Marilyn Sheppard

The definition of Fellowship by Webster - Companionship - A community of people sharing the same interest, looking for the fellowship of friendly people. That's what we're missing and looking forward to at Good Shepherd as soon as it's safe.

MINISTRY OF WORSHIP – Pat Davis

As we begin the month of March it is difficult to imagine that we have been having online church services for a year!! The past year has presented us all with challenges. However, our church

services have inspired us, refreshed us for challenges of each week and reminded us with thankfulness of all those who make our online services so wonderful.

Looking ahead to Palm Sunday and Easter:

There will be palms available just prior to Palm Sunday. Pastor Tom will let us know how that process will work.

Even though we will not be together in person for Easter services, we do want to have lilies in the sanctuary. In this newsletter you will find the section to indicate how many lilies you would like to donate, cost etc. as well as indicating to whom those lilies are in memory or honor of or those you hold dear.

Once again...thank you to all who make our services so meaningful.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN OUR CONGREGATION:

(If we don't have your family's special dates, please write them down and pass it along to Pastor Tom or Pat Pehling - we'd like to include everyone!)

BIRTHDAYS

March 1 Pat Davis
2 Marge Griffiths
4 Ashley Holten
9 Ron Walther
12 Jane Melnyk
13 Cormac Fox, Aiden Flynn
16 Chris Reed
17 Jenny Toutonghi, Brian Melnyk
18 Cathy Karlsen
20 Jeff Day
21 Eli Fox
22 Mark Martina
26 Jeff Taylor
29 Leif Flynn

ANNIVERSARIES

18 - Paul & Jenny Toutonghi
29 - Alton & Nancy Moen
29 - Brian & Jane Melnyk

EASTER LILIES FOR THE SANCTUARY

I will donate _____ Lilies at \$10 each to decorate the Sanctuary for
Easter

In Memory
of _____

In Memory
of _____

In Honor
of _____

Please mail form and check for \$10 each to

5511 64th ST SE, Snohomish WA 98290

Notice of donations will be in the April Newsletter

Donated
by _____

Lutheran Counseling Network

Faith and Everyday Life, 2021

January

I fell in love with the story of Naaman the first time I heard it. It didn't appear among the Bible stories I hear as a child, which made it clearly stand out when I heard it as an adult. In 2 Kings 5, there is an experience of healing that starts with a girl from Israel who was taken captive and was Naaman's wife's servant. The girl shared about a prophet in Samaria that can heal leprosy. Naaman, a commander of the army of the Aram King, had such a skin disease. To fast forward, Naaman ended up seeing Elisha, the prophet, who gave him the instruction to bathe in the river Jordan seven times and be healed. Naaman was frustrated by this instruction and he went away angry. A servant who was with Naaman suggested to him that if Elisha had asked him to do something difficult instead, he would have done it to be healed. The servant talked Naaman into trying the simple thing, in spite of his reservations, and wash in the Jordan. Naaman came out of the river after his seventh dip and his skin was restored to the skin of a young boy.

I wonder how often it is in our life that the ones that can and do speak healing and restoration come from unlikely places. It is the two servants in the story who Naaman ultimately believed. A young servant girl spoke about her God who heals. Another servant speaks of letting go of the anger and trying Elisha's instructions. Who do we listen to? Where do we get our instruction? What healing has happened in your life?

February

Have you ever struggled with highly resisting doing what makes most sense for you to do because you either don't want to or believe that you can't do it? I know a lot about that. When I was about to head off to college, I had made one vocational decision, I would not become a pastor. Math was easy for me in school, so I would become an engineer or a math teacher. Eight years later, I was ordained as a Lutheran Pastor and eleven years after that I started what I believe was my real calling to be a Pastoral Counselor.

God's spirit who lives in me and in all of us kept leading me in other directions. This is very much like the struggle that Moses was having with God, when God met him in the Burning Bush. Moses had become well educated and trained in the best Egyptian schools and was the very best person to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

BUT, Moses was very resistant to God and came up with a reason that he simply was not capable of taking on such a huge assignment. He had an impediment in his speech that was so bad that he feared the people would not

be able to understand him.

God reassured Moses at the very height of his anxiety by telling him that He would be with him and help him with his speech, tell him what to say and the ability to be understood. To me, the promise of God to Moses and the promise of Jesus to be with us always are the greatest reassurances that we can have. The fear of abandonment and the shame of our incompetence can be so strong. Knowing that we are not alone, that we are loved and that we are capable of what God has put before us can help us to go forward each day. We can be confident that we are moving in the direction that God is leading and helping us.

March

PSALM 23 (NKJV), “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake.”

Who is this Shepherd? At the outset, He is the One who does not leave his sheep in lack. This wonderful Shepherd Lord knows intimately the sheep over which he has charge and what their needs are. In the vernacular of the counseling profession, I liken this to parental “attunement”, that special attentiveness of a mother to her child, who comes to not only anticipate her baby’s needs, but to know from her baby’s cries and behavior if the baby is hungry, tired, upset or content. And what parent doesn’t know the satisfaction that comes from soothing and providing rest for an upset child?

The same is true of our Shepherd God who desires peace and rest for each one of us. It may have been a long time for some of us to consider this Shepherd as concerned for our needs. Or perhaps life’s road has been rugged, and we learned long ago to shelve our needs, or have little expectation of them being met. Having needs is being vulnerable, and being vulnerable can be risky.

Consider this Shepherd Lord who cares that we be able to lie down, to rest, who gives restoration to our very *soul*. God gives leading and guidance, and provides righteousness.

Meditate on this Psalm; soak in this revelation of our Provider God in verse after verse. Open your heart and mind to hear God’s heart speaking to *you*.

Written by a staff member of Lutheran Counseling Network