

Anchor Deep

JUNE 2020



FIRST COVENANT CHURCH + RED WING, MN

MESSENGER

Anybody remember the story of the three little pigs? If you do, you'll recall that the three pigs go off to seek their fortunes each building a house in the process. The first two little pigs quickly build houses of straw and sticks respectively in order to have time to spend playing and dancing. The third pig, however, diligently spends time and effort to build his house out of bricks. He understands that a poorly built house will not withstand the test of time or any other inherent tests of life. Well, he is right; as soon as the houses are built, they are tested by the strength of the big bad wolf. Only the house of the wise third pig is able to hold up to all the huffing and puffing of the wolf.

In a lot of ways, the Three Little Pigs is the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Mt. 7:21-29). It is this parable that Jesus chooses to end his Sermon on the Mount. An it's this parable I'd like to leave you with as we conclude our ministry in Red Wing. The storm Jesus references in the story seems fitting given the "storm" we have been walking through recently.

On a craggy ridge overlooking the Sea of Galilee Jesus has been preaching this sermon to his disciples as well as the crowds which included the religious authorities. Throughout Sermon on the Mount, he teaches his audience about Christian living, adultery, divorce, loving our enemies, giving to the poor, praying, and fasting, among other things. In doing so he challenges his disciples to examine their commitment to him, challenges crowds to respond to his invitation to the kingdom of heaven, and challenges religious authorities to consider carefully their hypocrisy all of which have eternal consequences. At the end he says, "Do what I am telling you. Don't let these just be nice little Sunday school sayings. In fact, the person who builds their life on these words is wise. Those who pack them away nicely in the closet in order to go out and play are foolish."

In his translation *The Message*, Eugene Peterson says it this way. *"These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit – but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."*

Jesus says that anyone who puts faith in me, who heeds my words, and makes them part of their life will be able to stand amidst the storm. Of course, Jesus isn't talking about constructing a house. He is talking about constructing a life. Hearing these words and *acting* on them, centering your life on them (not on *your own* moral compass) is a rock, solid foundation on which to build. No storm can shake such a basis for a life. That means knowing what God teaches us in his Word, understanding his promises, not *just* what someone else says about what's in here, but what *you* find when you go there. It also means practicing those things you find in the Bible and through prayer. It means living obediently

Anchor Deep (cont.)

to the teachings of Jesus, of Paul, the prophets, and like. Some will say, "Well, I'm a good person. I love and take care of my family. In the end I'll be alright." That is not bedrock faith that Jesus is talking about. Notice in Jesus' illustration that both the houses he describes are fine until the storm comes. Both are useful shelters, but only one is worth having. And the truth is, it is tough to begin building (a house or a faith) in the midst of the storm.

Several years ago, Sarah and I were in a gulf city in Alabama doing a mission project with high school kids. While we were there, we toured a boat yard that constructed and housed fishing boats. The owner talked about many things, but one of the things he talked about were the sudden storms that came up in the Gulf. He said when storms of hurricane force come up boats anchored in the harbor or near land are doomed. They often end up being destroyed smashing into one another or the docks to which they are tied. Many are carried up onto land where they meet their fate against rock, buildings, or roads. The man said that the best way to ride out a storm is to take the boat out into the middle of the gale and anchor deep. The boat will get battered and bruised and take on water for sure, but almost always when a boat is anchored deep away from shore the boat and its passengers will survive. In the same way when we anchor ourselves deep in Christ, we will be able to walk through the storms of life.

The truth is that when we anchor deep and I mean truly sell out for Jesus, though the storms of life will come, we will not be left alone, we will know God's strength and his promises, and we will have the power to walk the way through it. Will you make a commitment today to rebuild your life using as your foundation the truth of God? This is no small endeavor I know, but your answer has eternal consequences. The solid rock that has provided true stability, security, and hope throughout history even during the most terrible of storms is Christ alone.

Grace & Peace,

Marc

Congregational Care

We are still keeping each other safe and cared for by not being together. Can we still care for each other as the body of Christ that this congregation represents? Absolutely!

We all have made connections with people, some close and some not so. We do, however, think about one another and I have let that be the prod that reminds me to pray for them. Prayer is not something that we use as a last resort when all else fails, or a routine "thing" we do every night like a child, but what we use to connect ourselves and one another to our living Lord as we carry on with our daily "quiet" lives. In Paul's letters to the churches he let them know how much he loved them and how he prayed for them, sometimes the letters took months for the ones he loved to receive and read. We have phones, smart phones, slow mail, e-mail, messages and we can even "Zoom" and "Google meet"!!! What luxury! Spread around your thoughts and care for one another.

With a loving prod,
Char Hayes
Congregational Care

With Gratitude

Dear First Covenant of Red Wing,

Garrison Keeler is known for his story telling which highlights aspects of Minnesota life. One of those aspects which found it way into many stories was the good-by ritual. It begins with the guest saying it's time for us to be going. That is followed by more conversation. Then a move is made towards the door which is followed by more conversation. Finally, after 30 minutes or so, the door opens and the guests exit and stand outside for a few more thank you-s and good-by-s and at long last the departure actually happens.



Well, that pretty much describes the last three plus months. Pastor Marc announced his departure, continued his ministry until Easter at which time the good-by was extended. More ministry was done and he moved closer to the door. Now some six plus weeks later his departure is imminent. June 7 will be his last Sunday with us and we will say good-by. As we say good-by we also want to say thank you. I have invited the two chairpersons with whom Pastor Marc worked to share a word of reflection and appreciation. Pastor Mike has also contributed to this thank you.

A word from Cory Doden, church chair 2017-2019

Troublemaker. Yes that's you Marc! As I came on as chairman I expected maybe a new ministry or mission on the horizon. Or possibly a nice, safe discipleship program. Well that lasted about 2 months and you started talking about this "cultural competency" concept. I started getting uncomfortable. Then before the fires of cultural competency cooled, you started talking about a homeless shelter. In our church. Staffed by our members. My comfort level tanked again! Kidding aside, I trusted you because I knew you trusted the Lord. And you were leading us to be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus. Thank you and God bless, troublemaker!

A word from Jim Larson, church chair, 2014-2016

I was fortunate to be on the leadership team and the call committee when Marc interviewed and was called to First Covenant. When I first met Marc I noticed right away, we had a lot in common- we grew up in the same generation (both almost 50!), we both love sports, we are competitive (at times), we have similar kids ages, our wives are both teachers, and we both like a "good deal" or a "bargain". I learned a lot through my conversations with Marc about leadership. "Leadership involves the ability to communicate a compelling vision and equip others to perpetuate the vision." Marc shared that his leadership is characterized by the verbs: pray, consider, adjust, and act. These are great words of wisdom that I can use in my life when I'm faced with challenging situations. Marc is genuine, community focused, and has a love for Christ. It has been fun and a true pleasure walking along side of Marc during these 4 + years. I only hope he will always cheer with great pride for our Minnesota Twins, Gophers, Wild, and VIKINGS! Marc, you are a good friend and a loving shepherd that knows and cares about each one of us. We love you and your family and we feel blessed to have had you lead our church family. We know God will continue to direct your passion to grow and lead others to Christ!

So LONG....Marc & Family

A word from Pastor Mike

These past few years working with Marc has been an absolute joy! Not only is Marc a solid leader and pastor, but he continues to encourage us and support us to the best of his ability. As a young pastor, I have highly valued getting to work alongside Marc to learn from his expertise in ministry. But the greatest thing we have valued from Marc is his heart for people and dependence on Christ. We will greatly miss his energy, encouragement, and leadership; but we know that God is doing great things in and through Marc! So we look forward to seeing the great things that will happen out at Portage Lake Bible Camp through the vision and dreams the Eix family has for that amazing place.

In Closing

Pastor Marc is standing at the door and in a few moments he and his family will cross the threshold and we all will wave our final good-bye. We will cherish our memories of time together, wonder how the years could have gone by so fast, and ponder how we will move ahead from those many places he has brought us as a congregation. In all these things we are thankful for who you have been, thankful for how you have lived out your faith before us, thankful for how you encourage and challenged us to go further in our faith journeys, and thankful for your faithfulness to your call to ministry.

Only God knows where our paths will take us from here. No matter where that may be, we are thankful to God that for this time we have been able to journey together. Thank you Pastor Marc and family. God be with you all as you move forward with the next chapter.

Roger Johnson
Church Chair

On **Saturday, the 6th of June**, is a Drive-Bye for the Eix family at the church. There will be two parts to the afternoon. The Drive-Bye will begin at 1:30 and go until 2:30 p.m. for those of you who want to give greetings and blessings from your car. At 2:45 p.m. we will have time slots to sign up for to see the Eix from a "socially distanced" place to give a more personal send off. We will have a basket out for you to drop off cards and messages from the car. To sign up for a time slot call Char Hayes, 651-388-1804.

Pastoral Search Committee Update

The lead pastor search process continues.

Since receiving pastoral profiles from Superintendent Stromberg, the Pastor Search Committee has sifted through numerous profiles, conducted Zoom interviews, and have spent long hours together via Zoom discussing and prayerfully seeking God's voice. We continue to receive new profiles during this time. This process especially requires patience, because of COVID-19 we have had to adjust how we communicate and interact with potential candidates as well as each other. This process has taught us all the importance of trusting God and relying on His timing.... not our own. We would like to thank everyone for the prayers and support during this search process. Please continue your fervent prayer for guidance and wisdom in the search process. We know that God is going before us in preparing the way and ultimately bringing HIS choice to lead our body of believers.

From the Church Chair

Well another month has gone by and I am still in my “everything” chair. With somewhat better weather I have found a few more things to do away from here. I have been able to keep busy with projects at my son’s house and the Habitat build in Lake City since I am one of the invited few volunteers who they are permitting to work these days. For me these things have made life seem a little more “normal.”

As good as that has been, with the news and our life so dominated by covid19 one still wonders about what to make of our current situation. In my devotional reading I came across these words by J.I. Packer.

“The same wisdom that ordered the paths that God’s saints trod in Bible times orders the Christian’s life today. We should not, therefore, be too taken aback when unexpected and upsetting and discouraging things happen to us now. What do they mean? Simply that God in his wisdom means to make something of us that we have not yet attained. Perhaps he means to strengthen us in patience, good humor, compassion, humility, or meekness by giving us practice in exercising these graces under especially difficult conditions. Perhaps he has a new lesson in self-denial and self-distrust to teach us. Perhaps he wishes to break us of complacency, unreality, or undetected forms of pride and conceit. Perhaps his purpose is simply to draw us closer to himself, for it is often the case that fellowship with the Father and the Son is most vivid, and Christian joy is greatest, when the cross is heaviest. Or perhaps God is preparing us for forms of service which at present we have no inkling.

...How are we to meet baffling and trying situations if we cannot for the moment see God’s purpose in them? First, by taking them as from God and asking ourselves what reactions to them – and in them – the gospel of God requires of us. Second, by seeking God’s face specifically about them.

If we do these two things, we will never find ourselves wholly in the dark as to God’s purpose in our troubles.”

Good words for our troubling and trying times. Be safe, stay well, pray often.

Roger Johnson
Church Chairman

Volunteer and Service

What is normally a busy time for the church and those who graciously volunteer to assist with special events has been very quiet over the past couple months. The next few months look to be the same as we continue to limit gatherings. While it is disappointing to to cancel those events that help us mark the passage of our church year, I hope that this has also been a time of rest for those who normally put in so much effort to supporting the various church ministries, such as Awana, VBS, and luncheons. As we move towards progressively opening the church back up, I am looking forward to the opportunity to once again see everyone and be able to share the fellowship that we are accustomed to. This has been a trying time for many, and it isn't made easier as we bid farewell to the Eix family. The many activities of our church will be very different without all of them and what they have contributed to all of us. We wish them well as they start a new chapter in a familiar place!

Rob Keehn

Remembering Our Birthday Friends with Prayer

1st	Glen Mehrkens, Gail Devery Louise Erickson	18th	Jim Larson
2nd	Leanne Sikkink, Don Overlander	21st	Ruth Resel
3rd	BJ Danielson	22nd	Dianne Mehrkens
6th	Barb Rutschow	23rd	Don Hoffman, Ken Sherrard, Morgan McCann
7th	Steve Carlson, Marjean Johnson, Roger Johnson, Sarah Eix	24th	Heather Gadiant
9th	JoAnn Dammann	25th	Brad Kimball, Judie Maybach, Tom Loquai, Ed Watzl
11th	Lynn Sibert	26th	Lauren Buck
12th	Amy Van Loon	29th	Bev Sander
13th	Ian Dawson	30th	Justin Carlisle, Preston Carlisle

Prayer is a vital part of the life of our church. In order to help us focus on praying for one another, please use our list of birthday friends in each month's Messenger to pray for them and their families. There will be enough names to pray for someone throughout the month. Let's make praying for one another a means of encouragement to us all!



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