

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
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VALPARAISO, IN 46383

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Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing



The Gathering Church

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to gather and meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb. 10:19-25)

The Christian Church is a gathering Church! This is a fundamental part of who we are, but when, where, and with what are we gathering? One gathering that I think all Christians look forward to is the day, which is drawing near, when Jesus will gather the believers of every time, tribe, and nation to Himself so that we might live with him as God's renewed and restored children, praising God for all eternity. This is certainly a harvest to look forward to, but it is not the only gathering we have to celebrate and participate in as the gathering church. From Christ's call to be fisher's of men, to His references to the abundant harvest that is ready and in need of workers to gather it, to the passage above from Hebrews 10, there are all kinds of important interconnected gatherings going on right now in the church.

Let's go back to those four words now featured prominently in the gathering area right outside our church sanctuary: Welcome, Care, Gather, and Grow. Two of these words: Welcome and care we have already talked about, but now let's see how they relate to gathering.

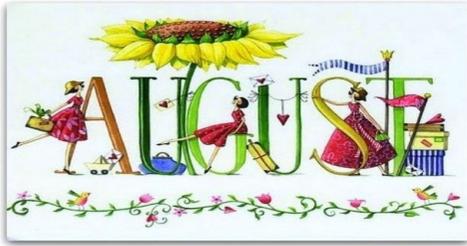
You can hardly have a crop to gather, if no seeds are ever planted. You may not feel very confident in building the kind of relationships with unbelievers that could result in their becoming a part of the church. However, without continuing to welcome others into a growing relationship with you, you probably won't ever see any gathering take place, or at least have much of a part in it. Similarly, care is vital for any ongoing crop, or the fruit that goes with it. Last month's newsletter talked about the heart of God and some of the things we care about when our hearts are connected to His: God, people, the Truth, genuine love and compassion. All of these are part of caring, but where does that caring take place?

It takes place when we gather. Jesus says, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." (Matt. 18:20). In the context in which Jesus is speaking, He is talking about the power of prayer and forgiveness that takes place among God's gathered people. In such a gathering, the washing of baptism takes place. In such a gathering, the Word of God and forgiveness are spoken, and the body and blood of Christ strengthens believers. Such gatherings allow us to *draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, be cleansed, and hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful*. No wonder, God calls us not to neglect gathering together. In fact, whatever the circumstances we face, we are called to gather all the more, not less, as the day of Christ's return draws near. After all, this is also where encouragement and stirring each other up to love and good works takes place, especially as we face the challenges and suffering. Faith, Hope, and Love are not things that grow in a vacuum. They grow in relationships, and our relationship with God and others grows in gathering.

Now many of the things I just mentioned, we often think about as taking place in the context of worship and/or within the walls of a church. They do. However, the power and presence of Christ in the gathering church hardly stops there. The encouragement and stirring up to love and good works we just mentioned, is what leads us to gather with both believers and unbelievers, in all kinds of different places. Remember that welcoming people into your life, receiving their welcome, and pouring our God's care and love on others, often won't begin within the walls of a church. Considering that most of us spend most of our week outside the church walls, that is where most of our opportunities to welcome, care, and gather will also take place. It is also in those places of gathering that the initial gathering of people into a relationship with you and with Christ will take place. The gathering church has far more to do with people, hearts, and the one in whose name they are gathered, than it does with a specific location.

No, we should not neglect gathering together in the church for worship, in the kind of good order a church building can help facilitate, but we also should not neglect all the other ways in which we have been called and blessed to be able to gather. So, as members of the gathering church, let's continue to gather, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Eric Schoeck



HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAYS!

Alicia Frank Cooper	August 1
Barb Kehe	August 4
Mary Dunlap	August 5
Karen Stingely	August 9
Myrna Chambers	August 11
Marcy Hassel	August 12
Kathy Kreps	August 13
Travis Dunlap	August 16
Melodie Nord	August 22
Kent Eichstaedt	August 24
Patty Nicholson	August 25
Jackie Allwardt	August 26
Dorothea Price	August 29
Elizabeth West	August 31

Stay informed.....

Be sure to attend the *"What's Happening"* on Sunday, August 14 to stay up to date on events going on at Faith Lutheran. It will be held immediately after church service (around 10:15am) in the Narthex.

MINISTRY TEAM MEETING

Ministry Team Leaders—we will hold our annual planning and scheduling meeting on Sunday, August 7 at 12:00 noon (after church service and Bible Class)

If you have dates to include on our planning calendar, please bring them so we can begin to schedule our year.

Any activities or special announcements from your team should be presented at this meeting.



CHURCH PICNIC

Come join us for the annual Faith family picnic at the Kirchoff Park Miller Shelter (same as last year) from noon to 4:00pm on Sunday, August 21. Burgers and dogs will be provided, along with tableware and soft drinks. Please bring your favorite sides, chips, or desserts to share. There will be games for the young and young at heart and plenty of shade for the rest of us to enjoy. And bring a friend. We always have plenty to eat!



VCA NEWS

Valparaiso Christian Academy is currently hiring for a full-time position in the infant room. If you or someone you know would be interested, please contact Angie Reyes at the school phone number: (219) 548-5799

THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

Transition to Full Retirement

Beginning August 1, I will start a transition to full retirement. Pastor and the Board of Directors have given their approval to my request. My hours will be cut in half to 8-10 each week and salary will be appropriately cut. My plan is to be in the office on Wednesdays and Thursdays. There will continue to be an empty chair in that office for anyone who wants to stop in and chat. Those days may change now and then, depending on the heat (my MS is very unhappy during the summer), on Pastor's and Deb's needs, or vacation. But, as always, you can call me at home (477-5833).

Some of my duties will be added to Deb's list (with the addition of extra hours and pay), some are no longer needed, and others may go to volunteers. But there are several, i.e. preparing the bulletins, that no one else is trained to do. So, during this transition to full retirement, I will be training those who will be doing those tasks.

I have been in church work for over 40 years – 27 of those at Faith. After the pneumonia, MS exacerbation, and rehab in February and March, I knew it was time to slow down. While the MS is progressing slowly (thanks to God for answering many prayers – yours included), it still limits my energy and also controls my schedule. I may plan, but the MS may say “No”. My focus needs to be more on my health and enjoying the time that I have before the MS may completely take over the body.

This corner of the newsletter will now be filled with other news from the congregation. And, maybe, some of you would like to share thoughts, a prayer, a poem, etc. If so, just send it to office@faithmemorial.net. Deb will be glad to place it in the newsletter. Deadline for the newsletter is always the 15th of the month.

Thank you for your past and continuing support with the MS. Thank you, too, for reading these meandering thoughts and reflections.

In the One who loved us first!!

SEWING SEEDS OF LOVE

On July 7 we started our sewing lessons. We have three students, Lucy and Dayla Fryman and Amelia (Mary Dunlap's granddaughter). The girls are busy making sleep pants. They made their own patterns and are in the process of sewing them together. Amelia will make a top to go with her pants and Lucy and Dayla will make curtains for the youth room (old scout room) to cover some shelving.

The women of the sewing group have made over 30 pillowcase dresses and are working on boys shorts which will be blessed and sent to Appalachia. Our local hospice honors veterans with handmade blankets and the ladies have also been working on these.

Regular sewing will resume in August.



SCHOOL/BACKPACK BLESSING

During church service on Sunday, August 7 we will be blessing backpacks,

We will also be blessing Sunday School teachers and VCA teachers and praying for all children as they start their school year.



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FAITH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, August 7, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 14, 9:00am Non-Communion Service
The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 21, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, August 28, 9:00am Non-Communion Service
The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 4, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 11, 9:00am Non Communion
Service
The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 18, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 25, 9:00am Non Communion
Service



Wishing you a blessed summer!

My presence will go with you,
and I will give you rest.

EXODUS 33:14