

Pastor Kris—402-499-4993

krisbo90@gmail.com

Church Website—bethlehemdavey.org

Council president—Jeff Atkinson—402-432-6212

Council members—Mike Unverferth, Judy Hornung,
Jerri Daugherty, Curtis Olson, Gabe Allen



[Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Davey](https://www.facebook.com/BethlehemLutheranChurch-Davey)

Zoom log in information and the worship bulletin for each week can be found on our website on the “Worship in the Pandemic” page

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
PO Box 96
Davey, NE 68336

Bethlehem Star



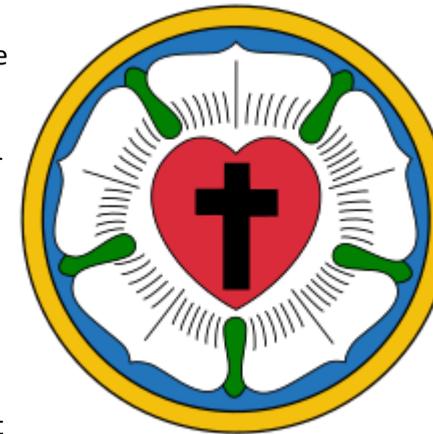
November 2020

Reformation of Love

Tomorrow, October 31, is Reformation. We actually celebrated it last weekend. On Saturday evening, I “attended” my daughter and son-in-law’s church in Chicago via their livestream. The pastor preached on the great commandments—Love God with your whole, heart, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Like literally every preacher who preaches on Reformation, she talked about the church’s ongoing need for reformation. She said “We need a reformation of love.”

That has stuck with me...because boy do we need a reformation of love. Sometimes when I see social media posts by people who claim to be Christian, I feel like they’re about as far from what Jesus was about as you can get. We simply can’t claim to be the church Christ envisioned and spew the vitriol we sometimes see now.

This is Martin Luther’s seal— Each component stands for some stands of course for Christ’s to signify that we are saved hearts. The white rose stands for faith. The blue represents the now and in the age to come. The



often called the Luther Rose. aspect of faith. The cross death. It’s inside the heart through faith in Christ in our the joy that comes from promise of heaven, both yellow ring represents eter-

nity itself. What isn’t really represented, at Luther described it, is his call to love our neighbor. But I can also represent that. We trust we’ve heard the good news of his love for us. In turn, we take up our own cross and love our neighbor. We love and protect our neighbor, even if it causes us inconvenience, or even suffering.

least according to the way emphasis on vocation: our think the cross in the heart Christ in our hearts because

A truly ugly election season continues to wreak havoc in our already stressed hearts. Maybe the Luther Rose can remind us that Covid and ugly politics don’t get the last word...that ultimately love does. Christ’s love for us should spill out of the rose and out of our hearts into the world around us.

The election will soon be over, although the period after may still be tense. Covid will likely be a factor in our lives for months yet.

How can we practice a reformation of love in the midst of that reality? How will you love people whose political stance you hate? How will you love people who seem themselves very hateful?

Christ’s peace,

Pastor Kris

Church and Covid Update

As colder weather approaches, congregations that have been doing outdoor services in some fashion are now needing to decide whether to go back to all online, or move inside. Some congregations began in person worship in the summer and never stopped. Some have been all online the whole time. A couple have returned to online only with the recent spike in Covid numbers.

Most churches who offer in person worship also offer online. Larger churches require registration. Some churches are offering more services than normal to accommodate more people who wish to attend in person, but most pastors I've talked to report in person attendance that's roughly half of the previous normal.

I'm not aware of any significant Covid outbreaks connected to in person worship at any of the local churches, but I don't necessarily have access to info from all churches.

Now the scepter of Advent and Christmas is looming.

Our outdoor communion services have worked out pretty well. Most people who are able have either attended worship by Zoom or have come to the communion services or both.

I think we can safely move the communion service indoors. It's short, there's no singing, and masks are worn. I'm beginning to think about Advent, and wondering if during Advent we could make those services a little longer—maybe 20–25 minutes—with scripture, prayers, a short message, some recorded Taizé style music, silent reflection, and communion. We would still do Zoom every Sunday. We will discuss this possibility at the November council meetings.

Christmas Eve is a whole other thing. It will simply not be possible given the current Covid situation to have the numbers of people in the sanctuary we typically do on Christmas Eve. We'll also discuss this at council, but I suspect Christmas Eve worship will be online only. Most of my colleagues are feeling the same way in their places.

I know there is a lot of fatigue surrounding all this...and some real sadness. I'm feeling that fatigue and sadness, too. The politicization of Covid is immensely frustrating. We would all just like it to be over. But it's not and likely won't be anytime soon. It's difficult to balance the ongoing desire to worship and gather with the need to keep people safe. My best friend's father is dying of Covid as I write this—this makes the third friend or acquaintance of mine who's lost a parent to Covid. This isn't just media hype.

I continue to be thankful to all of you for your ongoing support and patience. I pray for your continued well-being, and for a safe return to gathering for worship.

Calendar

- November 1** 10:00 am—**All Saints Sunday.** During our Zoom Worship we'll have a photo remembrance of those we have loved who died in the past year. That will include John Dahl from Bethlehem who died this past year, and Sharon Banks, whose funeral was at Zion.
11:30 am—**Communion** service at Zion—inside if weather does not permit outdoor service. Masks are required indoors
- November 8** 10:00 am—Zoom Worship
- November 15** 10:00 am—Zoom Worship
11:30 am—Communion service at Bethlehem, likely indoors
- November 22** 10:00 am—Zoom worship
- November 29** 10:00 am—Zoom worship. Instead of a sermon, the message that day will be a chance for folks to share what they are grateful for. You can either chime in on Zoom or send it to me and I'll read yours.

Also a reminder, I do a midweek devotion—a **Midweek Moment**—every Wednesday evening at 6:30 on Facebook Live. Join me! I also send the link out in my weekly Thursday email. You can access that even if you're not on Facebook. The script for Wednesday the 28th is in this newsletter.

Church offerings can continue to be mailed to:

Mike Unverferth
2800 W. Branched Oak Rd.
Raymond, NE 68428

Both churches also have an online giving option through tithe.ly. The easiest option is to download the tithe.ly app on a mobile device. Then just search for either church. You can also give from a laptop or PC – go to this link and instead of downloading app, click on “give online.”

<https://get.tithe.ly/download-tithely-app>

Here is the log in information for worship at **10:00 am**

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81665346843?pwd=dKhXWG54REh4QnA3Um5mQ05GOUJJQT09>

Phone—1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 816 6534 6843

Passcode: 787545



Midweek Moment—facebook live October 28



This picture is a pretty familiar site in Nebraska this time of year. As I drive in the country, I still see an occasional field with harvesting equipment up and running, but for the most part the harvest is done.

This time of year is always a little melancholy for me. In just

a couple of months, the fields have gone from a lush green aliveness to what looks to be dead. The last of most gardens have been harvested and put to bed. Mine has not been yet, but after temps down in the low 20's, it's looking awfully sad.

The green of summer has given way to the browns, rusts, orange, yellow, and the occasional splash of red of autumn. There is beauty in the fall, but to me, the fall is also a sign of something that is passing away. Nature is passing from vibrant life to what appears to be dead. The days are growing shorter and my soul misses the light.

Coming is the cold and dark of winter. I am not a winter person. Partly it's the cold, but I'm not sure that's mostly it. I think a lot of it is this sense of time passing...creation passing from life to death. And for those of us in the northern latitudes, light is fading to darkness.

This year for many people, myself included, winter could be even harder. The pandemic will likely be a factor for much if not all of the winter. The political landscape has left us all battered – I don't know if that will get better or worse after the election.

Isolation and cabin fever, always a risk in the cold winter months, have already been taking a toll on folks for 8 months now.

Life can sometimes feel as barren as those harvested fields.

The good news, is that It seems that God delights in creating life where there was once barrenness. Multiple times in scripture, women who have experienced the pain of infertility...of what the Bible calls barrenness...have suddenly found themselves expecting a child...a new life. In the Psalms and the prophets, God brings to life barren deserts.

Here's our scripture reading for the week from the prophet Isaiah:

⁷When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,
and their tongue is parched with thirst,
I the LORD will answer them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
¹⁸I will open rivers on the bare heights,
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water.
¹⁹I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;
I will set in the desert the cypress,
the plane and the pine together,
²⁰so that all may see and know,
all may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

God delights in bringing life to the barren. Underneath those barren-looking fields I drive by in Nebraska, there is more going on than meets the eye. God is still in the business of life beneath what we can see.

In those fields and gardens, roadside ditches, forests, and prairies, underneath the surface, organic stuff is breaking down and nourishing the soil, getting it ready for the next year. Roots are still living, waiting. Seeds that have fallen from grasses and trees are waiting for their moment...that moment in the spring when green shoots start poking through the soil and what once looked dead and barren bursts to life.

The earth in fall and winter is pregnant...pregnant with possibility for the next season.

In what looked dead and barren, God's creating work has been happening all along.

Barrenness gives way to life...and to the promise of something new.

I think that this will be a hard winter for many of us. The promise of life bursting forth again offers hope, but what about in the meantime? Maybe your soul is feeling like a barren field and spring seems awfully far away.

Mental health issues have already been increasing for many. God gives people gifts to nurture and care for creation and each other. Counselors, psychologists, and physicians have been given the gifts of healing of our bodies and minds. There is no shame in getting help when the barrenness is too much.

But it's also important to trust that underneath what feels like barrenness even right now, there's still life. Along with the melancholy of this time of year, there can also be a sense of coziness and comfort and warmth. The Scandinavians called it *hygge*. It's things like hot chocolate by the fire, curling up with a warm blanket and a book, light and candles.

Connecting with other people can be very life-giving in a barren time. Connecting can help us tap in to the life that's all around us, even when we feel barren. Connecting is a different thing now during the pandemic. But even if we can't connect in person, we can still connect by phone, Zoom, and old-fashioned letters with those who nourish our soul and bring it back to life.

Moving our bodies – outside if possible – connects us to the life within us – the blood circulating, heart beating, lungs breathing, muscles and bones and joints moving us.

Even in barren times, there will still be flashes of joy. We can still go outside and look for beauty – it's a different beauty than when the flowers are bursting with color, but it's still the beauty of creation.

If you don't have any meditative practices, now might be a good time to learn some. Contemplative practices can help you tap into the life that is inside you...the life of God...the life that even the worst winter can't extinguish. Contemplative practices can also help us stay in the present when we're tempted to look into the coming months with despair.

God is in the business of bringing life where there has been barrenness. That cycle repeats with the seasons...but it also repeats with each day. Each day brings us to a new awareness of life, life which can surprise us at any moment, bursting onto the scene within and around us, even when everything looks dead.

Church for the Sake of the World

We have typically done a couple of service projects in the fall. Covid has changed this and it looks to me like the Center for People in Need is not going to use volunteers for their Thanksgiving give away, or their Toyland Christmas project in which we have participated as a group.

BUT...organizations and agencies are if anything busier than usual due to the economic hit from the pandemic. That economic hit has hit low income workers disproportionately, and most agencies report increased requests for assistance.

Here are some things we can do:

Little Free Pantry



A suggestion arose for Bethlehem to build a little free pantry at our church. The church council is in favor and the Village Board has OK'd it and felt it would be a good idea. Larry and I will be visiting about constructing this. I'd like to get it in before the school holiday break when families won't have school lunches to depend on. We will be asking for donations for this in the near future.

This is the basic version – some are much fancier.

Local Agencies

Here is info about how to help some of the local agencies we have worked with in the past. Literally all of them right now will say the **best thing to donate is money**, but there are some other ways to help.

Center for People in Need - \$\$\$ and Diapers

At this time they are not using outside volunteers and for the most part aren't accepting in kind donations. The only exception is diapers. The best thing to do is to purchase them online and have them delivered to the Center for People in Need. If you want to purchase them locally and deliver them yourself you will need to call and set up a no contact donation time - 402.476.4357

Peoples City Mission – Amazon Wish List

They are still taking donations at their Help Center on 70th and O (next to the old Laser Quest.) But they also have a well curated Amazon Wishlist so you can go to their wish list and click on items you want to donate. They will be delivered straight to PCM. They also have a list of needed items on their website.

Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach – Hope is Contagious Too!

Matt Talbot is looking for volunteers to sanitize the dining area after meals. Check the website for details. They also indicated a need for gift cards to grocery stores, Walmart, Target, etc. Mail them directly to Matt Talbot: PO Box 80935, Lincoln NE, 68501



You can also write a **“Note to Go”** on a blank index card. Write a message of hope or encouragement, or draw a picture. Mail them to Matt Talbot for inclusion in their box lunches to go. Great project for kids!

Lincoln Food Bank

Lincoln Food Bank is accepting food donations. They have a bin outside their office - 4840 Doris Bair Circle. They can also be taken into the building from 9 am – Noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Virg checked with them about volunteering and it seems they are most interested in groups of volunteers. If anyone is interested in doing this, let me know and we'll pursue it.