

Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC



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PASTOR'S POINT

by Barry Schaefer

Lam 3:22-24 ESV The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; (23) they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (24) "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

Let us make these words of the Lord our "theme-song" for this month. News outlets are rife with every type of information possible. Truly we become "frozen" in place not knowing which "voice" to listen to. The above text is an antidote to our paralysis

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases his mercies never come to an end

God's love never ends, meaning God's love cannot be broken, no virus in the world is that strong! God's mercies never end as well, meaning God's goodness shall never cease. These are words of encouragement.

If we know that God is and will continue to be there for us, we can make decisions, and take actions that others cannot. In these times of social isolation and "social distancing" we can find ways to reach out to others, through our phones, computers, and even prayers. When was the last time that you called someone and told

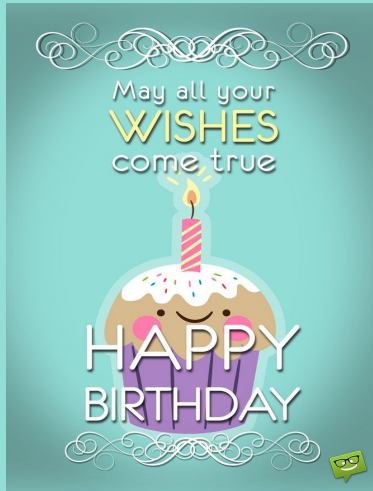
them that you were going to pray for them, and then actually prayed for them? If you do this, I believe, the outcome will be phenomenal! Just think about how you will make others feel now that they know you are praying for them...and this is without the added effect of the prayers. It is something to consider.

Verses 23 and 24 highlight that God's goodness, God's mercies will come to us new everyday. It's like finding a new Easter basket every day. Who knows what today's basket will bring us?

I know that with each passing day, we all feel a little more "closed in upon", and the walls seem to be getting closer to us. But...God's new "daily gift" refreshes us and generates a new sense of expectation within us. I just cannot wait to see what will be in God's basket for me today. This outlook generates for us a way of seeing the world, and a way to look for the new and for the unexpected. I get excited just thinking about this. Think, when was the last time that you got something new each day?

God's faithfulness endures forever. Not even a pandemic can break that promise for us. What needs now to happen is for us to live like we believe these words of scripture, and if we believe them, we need to act upon them.

Set your sights upon God's good new day. Live into it in faith!



05/02 Allan Foxwell	05/09 Darold Niccum	05/21 Desiree Harris
05/02 JoAnn Bjorkman	05/09 Vonnie Niccum	05/22 Barry Eklund
05/02 Wanda Burstad	05/10 Shanon Hayes	05/22 Hayden Leonard
05/04 Richard Wooldridge	05/10 Sheldon Betzold	05/23 Cody Leavens
05/06 Mason Henke	05/13 Breana Pitchford	05/23 Madisen Jackson
	05/13 John Stoeklen	05/24 Isabella Moody
	05/14 Kate Bevington	05/24 Warren Henke
	05/15 David Waterman	05/24 Marlene Luehman
	05/15 Elizabeth Leonard	05/26 Emily O'Rourke
	05/18 Joseph Maukstad	05/29 Tom Morris
	05/19 Sophie Koch	05/31 Robert Gordon
	05/20 Kristina Molls	05/31 Joyce Helland

MAY

FLOWERS OF THE MONTH



This month is known for flowers, but the May birth flowers really are spectacular. First, there's the Lily of the Valley, which is a symbol of sweetness, humility, and a "return to happiness." Then, there's the hawthorn, which promises hope and "supreme happiness" for the recipient.

Golden Age Manor

220 Scholl Street
Amery, WI 54001
(715) 268-7107
Kathy Picotte
Dave Waterman
Willow Ridge
400 Deronda
Street
Amery, WI 54001
(715) 268-8171
Betty Jansen

Evergreen Village

611 Harriman
Avenue
(715) 268-6640
Marian Peterson
Gussie Fennern
Memory Care
215 Birch St. W
Amery, WI 54001
Jeanne Murphy
Evelyn Monteith
Halverson
Ginny Nelson
Sylvia Utter
Bob Holms

Riverbend

475 Golfview Lane
715.268.9949
Beth Sorensen
Shirley Johnson
Baldwin Care
Center
650 Birch St.
Baldwin, WI 54002
Mary Monson Apt.
27

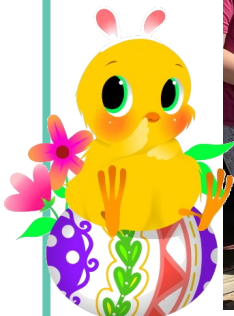
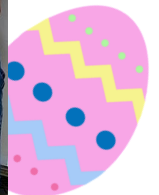
MEMBERS
AND
FRIENDS



from your YOUTH MINISTER



Easter Bunny Visits Sunday School Kids: During this COVID-19 pandemic, we were thankful that the Easter Bunny was able to visit our Sunday school kids and bring smiles to their faces with treat bags filled with delicious treats and fun crafts provided by the Board of Christian Education. Our Sunday school teachers sure do miss seeing our Congo Kiddos and look forward to worshipping together with them soon!



TO OUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION VOLUNTEERS: WE APPRECIATE YOU!! : We would like to extend a HUGE thank you to our Sunday School Coordinator Kelsey Monteith, Sunday school teachers Abby Betzold, Beth Leonard and Kelsey Monteith along with our Youth Group leaders Dave Bowman, Joyce Schaefer, Abby Betzold and bible study leaders Deb Strodhoff and Pastor Barry who have helped make a difference in our lives through Christian ministry. We are sad that the school year has come to a close sooner than planned, but together we will get through these uncertain times.



Congo Kid's Challenge: Each week during this pandemic, our Youth Director Charlotte has put our youth up to a challenge of some sort. They've been asked to create a rainbow using items from home, chalk their walk by writing inspirational sayings on their sidewalk or driveway, sending in pictures of what brings them JOY, and cardboard testimonies of what they are grateful for. It has been so fun to see the creative things our Congo kids have come up with each week during the challenge.

Youth Group: Our Youth Group will meet during the summer as soon as it is safe to be together. Please stay tuned for youth group updates.

Youth Rummage Sale Fundraiser: Please continue saving your donations for our upcoming sale. Watch for a sale date to be announced once it is safe to be together again.

Summer Stretch: Our Summer Stretch registration has been put on hold pending the Governor's decision on social distancing. As soon as the stay at home order has been lifted, Charlotte will be in touch with the youth group families on dates and activities for Summer Stretch.

Youth Director Contact Information:

Charlotte Gillen

715.268.7390; ext. 12

715.338.6929 (cell)

Youth.ameryucc@gmail.com

Surviving "Shelter in Place"

By Julie Smith

I am a people person, always have been. So with the social constraints and expectations required to help our society contain the current pandemic: the Coronavirus-2020, I am sure I am not the only one feeling anxiety and frustration. It's also interesting to note that the name of the virus seems to have morphed from Coronavirus to COVID-19. Several people still refer to it as the Coronavirus; it's easier to remember with the name of a good beer attached to it. Perhaps the folks at Corona don't like that...but hey, any publicity is good publicity. Not sure how this time period will go down in the history books: COVID-19 or Coronavirus...that remains to be seen. The thing I miss the most during this "shelter in place" and social distancing is seeing people, talking face to face and of course hugs. I am a hugger. There is something about a hug that fills up your "tank" and replenishes your soul.

So during this isolating period, since I can't see friends and family, I can do another coping mechanism: writing. So here I am at the keyboard talking about surviving the Coronavirus 2020. I promise not to tell you to wash your hands...you know that already. How many times have we been told that? What I will say is do something you love that will lift your spirits. We all must remember that this too shall pass and we can return to our "normal" lives. Maybe when we return, it will give us a greater appreciation for the simple things like a warm handshake from a business acquaintance, or a warm and comforting hug from a dear friend.

In making an effort to do all these things, we are told that our efforts help to minimize the spread of the virus and help to "flatten the curve." I really hope that is the case. It is disheartening to watch the news and hear that many of the diagnosed cases keep increasing. We like to believe...we WANT to believe that our efforts to minimize the virus do help. Without these efforts, the pandemic would be worse. Yet, the impending assault on the economy and the livelihoods of so many people is just as scary as the virus itself. Mental health professionals say to only watch the news once or twice a day; that is sufficient to obtain all the information you need without an information overload and diving into depression. I am not glued to CNN, but wow it is

very easy to get overwhelmed.

So when one is overwhelmed, it's best to pursue something that brings you comfort. I blog. I journal. I pray. So many churches, my own included, have revised their services to bring messages of comfort and some feelings of "normalcy" to their congregations via various forms of video conferencing. We viewed our Pastor's last video sermon and he did a great job. It was kind of fun to attend church in my pajamas...yet I miss the fellowship, and HUGS, of fellow worshipers.

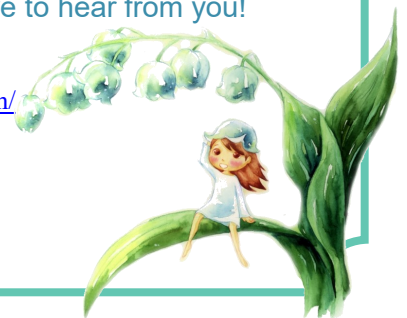
The Coronavirus pandemic came at a strange time (it's never a good time) for my husband and I because we were in the midst of a move. Our closing at the real estate office was completed without a hitch...but it was just weird. No handshakes, very few people and we even got disinfected pens that were individually sealed to sign documents with. I appreciated everyone's extra care...but like I said...weird. Now that we are in our new home, the shelter in place orders came through and I wonder if we will be hitting the top of the

bell curve soon. Hopefully on the downward curve. Since we did just move, unpacking boxes and getting settled in is a top priority and keeps me busy. But let's just say I would rather blog than unpack another box. Good thing I got my computer hooked up.

So as I look out on the bleak landscape, both figuratively and literally, I look forward to planting Spring flowers and figuring out where I am going to put tomato plants in my new yard. It will be great to watch things green up around here. HOPE springs eternal.

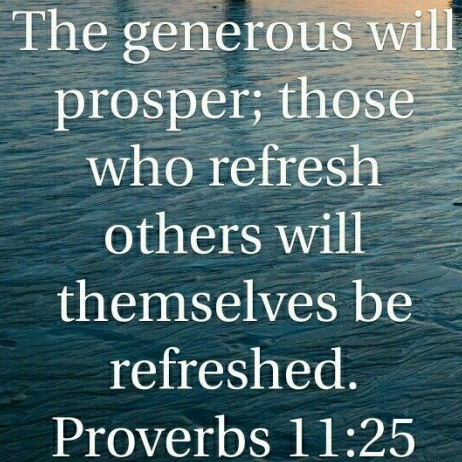
What activities are you doing to weather the "shelter in place" storm? I would love to hear from you!
Julie Etta Smith

<https://julieetta1982.blogspot.com/>



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

As we continue to live this new lifestyle of social distancing, phone calls, virtual meetings, and staying at home, we can continue to be thankful. And our church is so thankful to all of you! We want to take a moment to express our gratitude for all of you and for the amazing response we have gotten as we continue to receive financial gifts via mailed check, eGiving, and automated giving. Your gifts are helping our ministry stay active as well as helping us guarantee a thriving church life when we get back.



The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.
Proverbs 11:25

Our staff members are continuing to work in new and different ways; Pastor Barry has been creating daily devotionals, weekly virtual sermons, and Wednesday night virtual prayer meetings to keep us all connected. Charlotte has been continuing her fierce youth leadership by sending out challenges to our kids every week. These are activities our youth

group and Sunday school kids are able to do at home. As always, Rae is working as air traffic control in the office making sure everything keeps going strong and also helping get these devotionals and sermons out via emails, snail mail, and our church Facebook page.

So as you can tell the church building may be closed, but we continue to be the living body of Christ. This is why we are so beyond thankful for each gift we receive and each prayer said as we continue through this journey together. We hope you are enjoying these new ways to continue worshiping together. We ask you to prayerfully consider what you can continuing giving to the church to keep us going strong, no gift is too small, and no prayer goes unheard. Again, thank you so much for your prayers, presence, and participation. -

"The point is this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Sincerely, The Congregational Giving Committee



Should Christians celebrate Mother's Day?

Question: "Should Christians celebrate Mother's Day?"

Answer: Mother's Day—called Mothering Day in the U.K.—can be traced back to ancient pagan practices, but it has gone through a lot of changes and names to get to what we know today. The history of Mother's Day can be traced back to celebrations of ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the mother of the gods. During the 1600s, the early Christians in England celebrated a day to honor Mary, the mother of Christ. By a religious order, the holiday was later expanded to include all mothers. Mother's Day occurs in the U.S. once a year on the second Sunday of May, while Mothering Day in the U.K. is celebrated the fourth Sunday of Lent. Traditional ways to celebrate Mother's Day are to take mothers out to dinner and/or honor them with cards, flowers, or candy. Biblically, honoring mothers (and fathers) is commanded by God in both the Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2).

The Bible does not command us to dedicate a special day to honor our mothers, nor is there anything in the Bible to condemn it. So the question is whether, considering the pagan roots of the holiday, Christians should celebrate Mother's Day. The key is found in Romans 14:5-8: "One man considers one

day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we

die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

As Christians, we should be fully convinced that we are doing what God wants us to do. If we choose to celebrate Mother's Day and we see nothing wrong with it, then we should celebrate with a clear conscience. If, however, celebrating

is against one's conscience, then celebrating is not appropriate. On the other hand, if one does not celebrate Mother's Day or any other holiday for reasons of conscience, that is fine, as long as he/she does not become prideful, looking down on those who do celebrate. As with all issues not specifically addressed in Scripture, we have the freedom to celebrate or not celebrate Mother's Day, according to personal preference.

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<https://www.gotquestions.org/>





Council Meeting: April 5, 2020 (Video conference via Zoom)

ATTENDANCE: Pastor Barry Schaefer, Sheldon Betzold: Moderator, Barry Tulkki: Diac-nate, Virginia Ormsby: Treasurer, Sandy Morris: Clerk, Richard Wooldridge: Financial Secretary, Charlotte Gillen: Youth Director and Christian Education, Chad Leonard: Trustees, Abby Betzold: Congregational Giving, Rae Wooldridge: Congregational Giving, Julie Smith: Recording Secretary

Pastor Barry opened the meeting with prayer at 11:08 am. Sheldon thanked all Council members for participating in the video conference in light of the current circumstances and the need to maintain "social distancing".

Barry Tulkki discussed some of the items that our church is doing at this time in an effort to keep in touch with all our members and keep everyone feeling "connected". A phone tree was estab-

lished to keep in touch with all church members. It is used not only to keep in touch, but also to field any prayer requests and needs of the congregation. Barry also reported that as of this date, no cases of COVID 19 have been reported in Amery or Polk County. Most of the reported cases are from the Twin Cities area. However, we still need to take precautions for the prevention of future cases.

Virginia Ormsby feels we should follow Governor Evers recommendations (at this point and moving forward) for closure of public facilities, churches included. The Council was in agreement on this recommendation.

Pastor Barry brought up concerns about the June Mission Trip and if we will be able to move forward with it. It was determined that by the May Council meeting we should have enough information to know if we can proceed with the Mission Trip. Pastor Barry said he would contact Habitat for Humanity and find out more information; then a decision will be made in May.

Abby expressed concerns about incoming donations to the church and how those are being processed. Rae explained that Duane has becoming regularly to the church office and getting the checks deposited to the bank.

Sheldon suggested that our next Council Meeting also be a Video (Zoom) meeting. Chad made a motion for such and Sandy seconded the motion. It was approved by the Council and scheduled for Sunday May 3 at 11:00 am.

Chad asked about usage of the church building and how often church staff is entering the building. Rae said she is in her office every day, Monday thru Friday for a few hours. Pastor Barry says most of his work is done from home and he comes to his church office about once a week. Sheldon confirmed that the staff is practicing social distancing to keep us all healthy.

Sandy brought up a concern about contacting church members via the mail with devotions for those that are unable to receive Pastor Barry's email devotions. Some ideas for this were discussed.

Barry Tulkki closed with prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am

Respectfully submitted, Julie E. Smith, Recording Secretary

Council Special Meeting March 15, 2020

The Church building will be closed effective March 15 to April 6, 2020 all church building activities will be cancelled; youth activities (onsite and offsite), bible studies, and committee meetings. The following exceptions are:

Church staff will have limited access to the building

Polk County will have access to the kitchen and spaces they occupy for food related items - Food prep and deliver pick-up will continue to happen

Worship and connect with the congregation will need to continue, ideas to make that happen

a phone bank to be created - Barry and Rae will figure out logistics and get the masses to assist in the execution

Online worship will take place for Youth (Charlotte) and the congregation (Barry) Likely online - phone

Ruby's Pantry will not occur in April

Dinner Theater will be postponed until the fall

Cleaning will take place one more time on Saturday and will not happen again until April 19th

Council will meet again April 5th by teleconference - Connection information will be sent out at a later date.

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Thanks to John LeBlanc

IF YOU CAN'T PROPHECY ANYTHING NICE,
DON'T PROPHECY ANYTHING AT ALL