

Moving Forward in New Ways



At first glance it might look like the church has everything on hold until we get back to normal, but that would be inaccurate. Yes, it is true that many gatherings are curtailed, but many positive responses are also emerging. The moniker of “church without walls,” simply highlights what we already knew - that the church is its people, and not its buildings and programs. If we think about it, this is where the early church began, and where much of the fast-growing world church is today.

So what positives are emerging? First, we are seeing great effectiveness with our TV and on-line presence, and some are telling us they are watching the services multiple times or from distant locations. It's not like being together, but expanded use of technology is one of the positives we will continue utilizing when the pandemic subsides. We can be thankful for our innovative and responsible volunteers, staff, and pastors who are making all of this possible.

Secondly, we see the positive ministry of phone calling, and very good ministry is happening through those conversations. Granted, it's mostly the isolated or vulnerable who are receiving these weekly calls (since many of us are still out and about), but they are giving us a new pattern of care even when we can't be together. Pastor Ed and his half a dozen callers are providing a great ministry.

Thirdly, we are in a positive place financially, which not only allows us to meet our obligations, but to extend generosity to others. In April our offerings exceeded our budget every week, which enabled us to give fifteen hundred dollars to the twice weekly community meals served at Backus, and to extend support to several other ministries and benevolent needs. Additionally, we received joyous news that we have exceeded our seventy thousand dollar mission goal which supports our missionaries around the world. This spirit of generosity is allowing us to be generous with others, and for this, the leadership team says a big “thank you” to the church.

Finally, it's a positive that we are learning what really matters, and are coming to new understandings that only this pandemic could teach us. Sure, the cracks have been exposed, but we are also discovering new strengths we will carry with us when all this ends. Together, we affirm the faithfulness of God who is sustaining us and will see us through to the other side.

Alan Johnson, Chairman



VBS at Home is for kids who have completed K-5 Grade. You must pre-register at ifallscovenant.org/vbs-at-home. VBS at Home packs will be available for pick-up Wednesdays from 11am-1pm. At 2pm, go to the church's website or Facebook page to join the online experience.



- **Preschool**— 2-4 years
- **Primary**— 5-6 years
- **Elementary** — 7-10 years
- **Middle School** — 11-13 years



Worship in June

With President Trump's announcement that churches are “essential,” you might be wondering if we are going to reopen the church building. The short answer is - not yet. The church is maintaining a closed door policy on non-essential building activities and we will continue to have in-home worship services online, on TV, and on the radio until further notice.

From the beginning, the church leadership and staff decided to follow the guidelines from the government and health experts as well as considering the care and responsibility for our most vulnerable people. If you remember at the beginning we cited as a guiding Scripture Philippians 2:3, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” We have the freedom to choose to meet for worship in our church building, but we also have the freedom not to do that until we are sure that we can do so safely.

As I am preparing myself to endure another month of this season of life, there are a few things I am telling myself to remember, and hopefully they can be things that will encourage and give you strength as well.

- **Remember that the church is not the building.** OK - we always say that, but right now we are being tested as to whether we actually believe that. The building is closed but remember not to confuse that with the church being closed. The church has never been closed! The church is alive and active and can be found sharing the good news of Jesus, calling in to check on people, delivering groceries to the most vulnerable, and on our knees interceding for those who are infected. It is nice to hear the President publicly call churches “essential,” but that is for other ears. We already know the church is essential, and we know the church has never been closed.

- **Remember that the enemy we are fighting is a virus.** It is not our elected officials. It is not the medical and scientific community. It is not our church leadership. It's easy and even typical of our human behavior to want to focus on someone to blame. Being a pastor I can certainly relate to how it feels when someone says hurtful things when I am making difficult decisions to protect people. So let's remember that the virus is the enemy. Let's direct our prayers and petitions on behalf of our leaders, medical people, scientists and against the spread of this awful virus.

- **Remember that God is not being hindered.** Sometimes I need to remind myself that God doesn't need my help. From the very beginning God has used what was meant for evil and turned it for good. That is what redemption means. Look how he turned death on a cross into the way of eternal life. He WILL redeem this time. He WILL be worshiped. For right now that is in our homes. Let's remember that God's purposes are being accomplished and pray for revival in our homes, community, and churches. Come, let us return to the Lord.

Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.
Pastor Seth

June 1: Dan & Debbie Griffith Philip & Missy Ruelle	June 10: Josh Baumchen Tyler Baumchen	June 18: Dale Boyum Howie & Carol Hauge
June 2: Claire Zika Kristy Hufnagle Pete & Carol Anderson	Gene & Judy Pierce Chadd & Kim Boyer Jeff & Vickie Bernard	June 20: Dee Olsen Gladys Napper Preston Benedix
June 4: Kimberly Nyborg Chad Shoberg Tom & Jennifer Holm Ron & Char Ruelle Will & Sixta Davies	June 11: Mikaela Hultstrand Megan Clarity June Henrikson	June 21: Ryan Todd June 23: Dan Johnson Derek & Christina Dowty
June 5: Eric Hall Dixie Worth Roger & Betty Williams David & Polly Hebig	June 12: Wayne & Renae Bahr June 13: Olnick Hultstrand Mary Shoberg	June 24: Emma Morgan Olivia Jones Caleb Levene
June 6: Rodney & Judy Lofgren June 7: Brian Keeney Walter Kelly Darren Baumchen	June 14: Kris Morgan Tom & Dixie Worth	June 25: Bailey Bernard Valerie Peterson Joel & Michelle Maxwell
June 9: Karlie Gustafson	June 16: Dave Herrly Jim & Betty Peterson Tom & Melanie Clarity	June 26: LaVonne Hasbargen June 28: Tess Vollom June 29: Marcia Ohlquist Jim Ohlquist Marg Holm
	June 17: Joan Lofgren Don & Kim Schmidtbauer Dan & Sharon Zika	June 30: Jase Veert



June Reading Schedule

New Testament		Old Testament	
▶ LUKE	▶ EPHESIANS	▶ PSALMS	▶ 1 KINGS
1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:1-8	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:26-38	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:15-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:9-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-3
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:39-56	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:17-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5
4. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:57-66	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:11-22	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:25-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-7
5. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:67-80	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:33-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
6. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:14-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:41-48	<input type="checkbox"/> 9-10
7. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:21-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:49-56	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
8. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:41-52	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:17-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:57-64	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
9. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:25-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:65-72	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-14
10. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:21-38	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:73-80	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-16
11. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:22-33	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:81-88	<input type="checkbox"/> 17-18
12. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:13-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-9	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:89-96	<input type="checkbox"/> 19-20
13. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:31-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:10-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:97-104	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-22
	▶ PHILIPPIANS		▶ 2 KINGS
14. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:38-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:105-112	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3
15. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:12-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:113-120	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5
16. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:12-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:21-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:121-128	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-7
17. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:17-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:129-136	<input type="checkbox"/> 8-9
18. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:27-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:12-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:137-144	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-11
19. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:33-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:19-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:145-152	<input type="checkbox"/> 12-13
20. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-9	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:153-160	<input type="checkbox"/> 14-15
21. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:17-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:10-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:161-168	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-17
22. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:27-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:15-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 119:169-176	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-19
23. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:37-42	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-7	<input type="checkbox"/> 120	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-21
24. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:43-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:8-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 121	<input type="checkbox"/> 22-23
25. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:14-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 122	<input type="checkbox"/> 24-25

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From the Desk of Pastor Dan ...

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Philippians 4:4

I don't where you are in your life right now, but to be honest, I am feeling a bit weary dealing with all the COVID-19 stuff day after day. It's not that I am doubting God and deeply depressed or anything, but I find myself being distracted by a virus rather than living a life full of vitality and joy. I don't like that. I don't think that God wants me to live this way either.

That's why I especially appreciated reading a Bible verse recently that stopped me in my tracks with its utter simplicity and truth. I am talking about the above verse, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" I have read the above verse over the years, but have rarely spent the time needed to really understand what those words mean. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? And how can I do it always? Is that even possible or realistic? And why is Paul repeating the message? Whatever it means, it must be important.

As I began to research the meaning of the word "rejoice," I discovered that the word is not simple at all. It is actually profound. In the Greek text, the word is *chairete* comes from the word *chairo* which comes from the root *char* meaning "favorably disposed, leaning toward." But what are we favorably disposed or leaning toward? Our problems? Our pain? Our circumstances? No. If we do that, we will never rejoice. Interestingly enough, the word translated "rejoice" also comes from a form of the word *charis* which means "grace." Thus, we are not favorably disposed and leaning toward our circumstances; we are favorably disposed and leaning toward God's grace. Literally, to rejoice is to experience God's grace (favor) and be conscious (glad) for His grace.

Therefore, the reason that we as God's people can experience joy is because of God's grace. We can, and should, rejoice in the Lord always, because God deserves our praise and we need to give him praise. We need to focus on the Lord and celebrate his grace even in the bad times. Even in the hard times. Even in the dark times. We don't rejoice because of what we're enduring; we rejoice in spite of what we're enduring.

And so let me ask you, even as I ask myself, what are you leaning toward in your life right now? When you lean toward something, you begin to move in that direction. Are you moving toward your problem or toward God's grace? Is your inclination to focus on the negative or the positive of who God is and what He has done for you? The Christian faith does not deny the reality of pain and struggle, but it doesn't wallow in it either. When you lean into the Lord, you can rejoice in Him always in spite of circumstances.

Now that is a message that I need to hear today. How about you? Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

In His Grip,
Pastor Dan