

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

July 22, 2020

Message from Pastor Fran Green

"We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps" Proverbs 16:9

I think I referred to this verse of Scripture earlier in the year, but it seems to ring more true every day. I've talked to many people who are growing weary of our restrictions/precautions in living in the age of coronavirus. We can cling to God's promise to lead us and determine our steps. We simply need to move forward in trust.

Civil unrest continues in our country as well. I have included a thoughtful and very well-written article from our District President Lucas Woodford in this week's newsletter. Please take the time to read through it. We have had two in-person worship services since reopening. It has been a blessing to gather together and worship the Lord. Everyone has been cooperating with our guidelines for a safe space by wearing masks and practicing social distancing. Thank you.

For those who are electing to continue to worship at home via our online worship service, we want to assure you that we are continually working to enhance that worship experience. Feel free to let us know if you have any suggestions to improve. We are grateful for this technology and that you are worshipping with us. Neither God's Word nor the Holy Spirit are hindered by coronavirus and social distancing.

For those who are participating in worship through our online worship service, would you be willing to please let us know the time/day you are viewing? This will be helpful for us in making our plans on the best time to record and then edit and post the service. Please let us know either by email, pastor@mthopelutheran.org, or you could simply put a comment in while you are watching such as Friday, 8:00 pm. Thank you.

Please contact the church office to get your spot to receive Holy Communion, Thursday, July 23. If Thursday does not work, please let Kim know what does and I will work you in.

We are making plans for fall. Much like schools we are thinking through various options for delivery of Sunday School, Bible Study, and other gatherings. We are only certain that we will have a virtual/online option for these events; beyond that, we will work to offer something in-person if it can be done safely and within the guidelines and restrictions of our state.

Thank you for your prayers, God is faithful!

We are Mount Hope, *Where Guests become Friends, Friends become Family.*
Pastor Fran Green

The Message

“Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” Romans 6:17-18, ESV

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

To be called a slave is not usually a desirable thing. This is especially true in our current political and cultural climate. To hear the word “slavery” in our American context brings to mind the Civil War and the fight to free black people from the oppression of being treated as property, forced against their will into a life of brutal labor and servitude at the hands of white people.

However, the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans long before our American context. At that time, “slave” did not carry with it all of today’s racist overtones. It was an institution in the ancient world and a common part of everyday life among the Greeks and Romans. In fact, in Paul’s letter to Philemon, he pleads the cause of a household slave named Onesimus. Slavery crossed all racial lines and often dealt with a person’s economic standing rather than race alone. In fact, if people had no way to make a living, some sold themselves into slavery. Yet, don’t misunderstand, being a slave in Paul’s day was an extremely oppressive life.

We are all slaves to sin

With Paul’s historical context in mind, let’s look again at his letter to the Christians in Rome. Paul is known for his complex theological explanations—and Romans 6 is no different. He breaks down the life of faith with analogies that people would easily understand. In Romans 6, he uses slavery. He does so to convey the bondage of our fallen human nature. If you are a slave, your life is controlled by someone else. And here Paul is saying each and every human being since the fall of Adam is a slave of the sinful heart. Your thoughts, desires, and behaviors are taken captive to what is wrong and sinful according to God’s commandments.

There may be no visible chains that shackle you. But as a slave to sin, weakness traps you. Patterns of behavior ensnare you. And a wicked slave master deceives you. The devil lurks behind every evil desire, every wicked thought, and every immoral behavior. He is a relentless slave master. He is cruel and unyielding, shouting lies into your ears, shoving shame into your face, and grinding guilt into your conscience. He seeks to divide countries, divide races, divide Christians, and divide families.

His sinister plan is to beat every last ounce of hope and strength out of your body. He won’t let up until he strips every last weapon of faith from your existence—he wants you to stop praying, studying the Word, and serving others in love. His every waking desire is to keep you caged in the pain of your hurt, trapped in the filth of your depravity, and chained to your sin.

That’s why Paul’s declaration that we have been set free from slavery to sin is so important. As Christians who’ve been redeemed by Christ, we’re to fight against the impulses of a sinful heart. We are called to confess our sins, fight against ungodly passions, and strive to live as the sanctified people Christ has made us to be—no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness.

Racism is sin

Over 150 years ago, slavery divided our nation. After a long and bloody war, slavery was outlawed once and for all, but the subjugation and oppression of black people continued for generations under Jim Crow laws. More recently, the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 70s pressed for an end to legalized racial discrimination, disenfranchisement, and racial segregation.

Yet racism has continued. We must confess all racism as evil and wrong. To judge someone as inferior and less worthy of life and opportunity based upon the color of their skin or their ethnicity is vile and reprehensible. And this applies to everyone. Just as we confess that racism is wrong, we also confess that assuming someone is prejudiced because they are white is wrong. Contrary to a prevailing secular narrative, there is no biblical foundation for saying those who are white are automatically guilty of racism and therefore obligated to confess their sin of whiteness. Every human being, regardless of skin color, is a precious creation of God the Father almighty and is made in His image.

We embrace our identities as slaves of righteousness

In the midst of our extremely emotional times of unrest and dissatisfaction regarding the treatment of people of color, we in the Holy Christian Church must strive to speak with the love and compassion of Christ during these difficult days. To be a “slave of righteousness” means we live and act in a distinct way—one that flows from the life of Jesus at work in us, one that moves us to act in defense of and to care for one another in the name of Jesus. It means we see all people through the eyes of Jesus and therefore confess every human being as precious and beloved, as one for whom our Lord Jesus bled and died.

Whether Chinese or Indian, Russian or Middle Eastern (like Jesus), black or white, there is one race that God has created, and that is the “human race.” The blood that each of us bleeds is the same color our Lord Jesus Christ bled when He suffered and died on the cross for the sins of our whole “human race.”

We fight to build unity through humility and love

Yet we recognize that the passions of a fallen people are at work in our society today, just as they were in Paul’s day. The devil is working nonstop to divide and conquer. Right now, his goal is for you to think politically rather than biblically—to think only in terms of being right rather than in terms of humility and love. He delights at the political animosity we have.

The devil doesn’t want us to consider life in the skin of someone else. He wants us to live in fear and resentment of each other. He doesn’t want a white person to take the time to think about what it would be like to be a black person in a country with a racist history. Nor does the devil want a black person to take the time to think about what it would be like to be a white person in a country where engaging in conversations about racism can imply inherent and automatic guilt and turn into a blame game. The truth, you see, is that no matter what our skin color, we are all slaves to sin. And what hope is there for slaves to sin?

Jesus fought for our freedom—even as we fight for each other’s freedom now

On September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued an executive order known as the Emancipation Proclamation. It was a declaration that freed all slaves of the Confederate states and paved the way for the Thirteenth Amendment to end all slavery in the United States.

This is what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ. He has issued an Emancipation Proclamation! He has set us free. Christ Jesus unlooses our shackles. In His dying breath at the cross, He decreed that the bonds of sin, death, and hell are shattered: “It is finished!” The devil has been defeated. You are free from your slavery to sin.

Jesus fights for you!

The fight Jesus wages is with His very own flesh and blood. The Son of God came into the flesh—into our variously pigmented skin—so that He might intimately know this life of ours, sense all its burdens in our human skin and bones, and yet cast off the bonds that bind us and the sin that enslaves us. Jesus knows what it is to live in a land where different races are at odds with each other. He knows what it is to be oppressed by those in power. Yet He remained obedient and faithful to His Heavenly Father, even unto death on a cross.

At Calvary, Satan threw everything he had at Jesus. And he thought he had won. But three days later, Jesus stood victorious. The wicked slave master was decisively defeated. Jesus came to right wrongs, free the oppressed, forgive sins, and inaugurate true justice.

Hear the Good News: Jesus has redeemed you!

Risen from the dead, Jesus destroyed sin and death's hold on you. When you are baptized into Christ, you are no longer a slave to sin. He has redeemed you. By faith, His holiness now cleanses you. By faith, His righteousness now covers you. Whether black or white, brown, red, or yellow, the blood of Jesus covers every believer with the red of His righteousness. We are made one in Him. We are no longer "slaves to sin" but are now "slaves of righteousness."

Our times may be tense and chaotic, but we are a confident people who have been redeemed by Christ. We are controlled not by slavery to sin but by Christ's love and His life at work in us for the good of the whole human race and the growth of God's Kingdom.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Lucas

Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford
President

Retrieved from mnsouthdistrict.org

Announcements

Thursday - Communion

Pastor Fran will continue to offer in person communion at Mount Hope in the sanctuary. Make your appointment beginning at 11:00 am. Appointments are 20 minutes apart allowing for a visit of approximately 10 minutes. Please call the office at 952-888-5059 between 9:00-3:00 to set an appointment. You can also email your request to church@mthopelutheran.org.

For your safety and for the safety of the Center families and the staff, we will be using the East door. There will be hand sanitizer available at the entrance. We also ask that social distancing practices are followed and that masks are worn if at all possible. You will be able to drop off your offering and LWML Mites offerings and pick up a Portals of Prayer as well. You will not have access to the rest of the building at this time. Thank you for respecting these guidelines. Pastor will follow safety protocols when preparing the wine and wafer for communion.

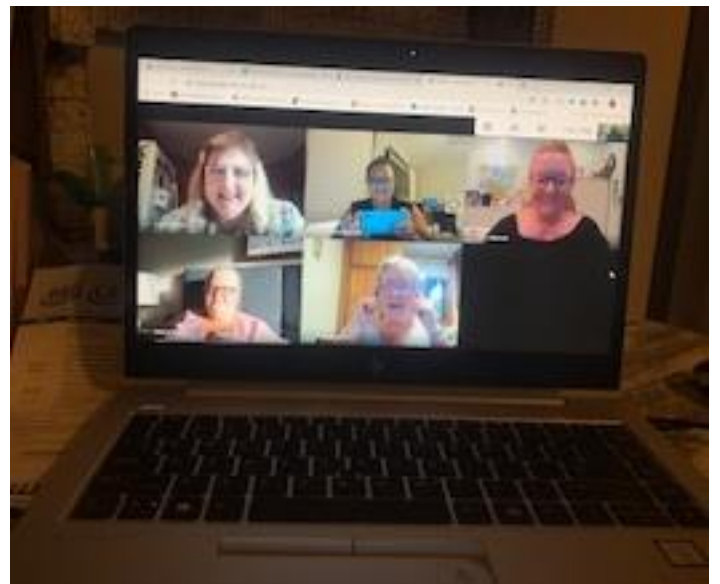
If you fall into a high-risk group, please make the best decision for yourself and your health. We care about you and look forward to a future when we are able to worship together again.

LWML-Lutheran Women Missionaries

Give this summer to the purple MITE BOX on the East door entry table. The MITE BOX is used to receive gifts of gratitude to support mission grants of the LWML. Anyone who wishes to contribute to the missions may give. These offerings are collected and sent to the MN South district on a regular basis. The district keeps 75% of all MITE offerings for district grants; 25% is sent to the national LWML for its mission goal and programs. Thank you for supporting missions here and abroad.

Joy Bible Study

Our Joy Bible Study continues using Google Meet technology. We met in June and July and had a great time seeing each other again and studying Paul's instruction to the church of Philippi. The Bible book of Philippians is Paul's joy letter. The author of this Bible study, Deb Burma's videos are available to watch on YouTube. Type in "Deb Burma Joy" in the search bar and you can see all 8 weeks of the condensed version of this study.



Back to School Supplies

VEAP and SAMARITAN'S PURSE SHOE BOX MINISTRY Back to School Supplies are being collected in collection boxes place in the entry way to church and at the Thursday communion table entry. School items are on sale now. The Dollar stores have many items. You can ship to your home from Target and Walmart.

Thank you in advance, Carrie Newton, and Karen Mueller

Help Needed

Mt. Hope member, Ramona Duncan is looking to hire someone to do snow removal this coming winter. Her number is 952 888 7664 and she live on 1211 W 106th St in Bloomington.

Life Line Screening

Life Line Screening, a leading provider of community-based preventive health screenings, will offer their affordable, non-invasive and painless health screenings at Mount Hope Lutheran Church on 9/28/2020. Five screenings will be offered that scan for potential health problems related to: blocked arteries which is a leading cause of stroke; abdominal aortic aneurysms which can lead to a ruptured aorta; hardening of the arteries in the legs which is a strong predictor of heart disease; atrial fibrillation or irregular heart beat which is closely tied to stroke risk; and a bone density screening, for men and women, used to assess the risk of osteoporosis. Register for a Wellness Package which includes 4 vascular tests and osteoporosis screening from \$149 (\$139 with our member discount). All five screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. *In order to register for this event and to receive a \$10 discount off any package priced above \$129, please call 1-888-653-6441 or visit www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle <<http://www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle>> or text the word circle to 797979*

Mount Hope's Staff

Sunday Worship Schedule

Services online during COVID19 shutdown

9:30am In-Person Worship

Phone: 952-888-5059

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Website: www.mthopelutheran.org

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