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July 2020 Newsletter Pandemic Month Four: The Tension Mounts

In my ministry newsletter last month I spoke of the season of Trinity as a time for learning and growth. Even as my part of the world has endured isolation, many of us have learned to use social media, web sites, and text messaging, along with old-fashioned phone calls and letters to engage in training and discipleship. I recently met with a friend for coffee and discussion at an outdoor coffee shop. Our regular Friday coffee and philosophy group last gathered on March 6. Yes, it's been four months.

Our discussion repeatedly turned to two conflicting values - safety and freedom. My friend and I, both in high risk groups, agreed that a Christian should care for the lives and well-being of those around us. But we also agreed that Scripture does not treat our earthly safety as the ultimate good in any way. Our society, as a whole, however, has shown signs of treating safety in terms of freedom from illness as the do-all and end-all.

This concern for freedom from illness has led to many regulations on our daily lives, some of which we almost certainly consider to be good and wise practices. Not many people would object to smoke detectors in rental properties, seat belts being standard equipment in cars, and elimination of some environmental and health nightmares of bygone generations. But at the same time, the Christian realizes that this earthly life is not the permanent good state of the believer. Many would also say that decisions about how to protect our health and welfare are best left up to individuals, rather than being imposed by a government.

The current pandemic has brought this debate into focus. Not only do we find ourselves considering how to avoid contracting an illness which is quite serious and sometimes deadly, we also want to love and serve our neighbors by helping them guard against it. At the same time, though we would reject being driven entirely by financial motives, a realistic view of life says we need to be at work, carrying on commerce. Employers not only want to make a profit and keep their businesses in operation, they also want to provide a livelihood for their employees through wages, and they probably think they are providing a useful service to the community through their occupation. Meanwhile, we have a variety of governmental demands which often conflict with one another, as well as a wide range of data from medical providers and commentators, also conflicting with one another.

When we put all these elements together we realize we are in a very complex world. Who are we going to trust? The pieces of information before us, as well as our motives and those of our communities, are truly bewildering. Where do we find stability?

This is an opportunity for the Church to speak, as well as to show by our actions that the almighty God is able to keep those who are trusting in Him. We have a chance to live out the principle of Romans chapter eight, the realization that nothing at all can separate Christ's people from his love. This is the time to show the confidence we have that even though heaven and earth pass away, the Word of God will remain. This is the time to show that God is the God who is there with us, in Christ, and that we will not perish.

Now, if only someone would help us know how to do that when governmental orders are suspending face-to-face gatherings. It's a perplexing matter, but by God's grace, this too can take place. We can and will work through these challenges, finding good ways to love and serve our neighbors. Christ's kingdom will be strengthened, not torn down. We can trust the Lord will provide.

Wittenberg Door Financial Update

For June and the first portion of July, expenses for the ministry remain relatively low and giving is still increasing. I recently heard from a church congregation that they planned to make regular support for this ministry part of their plan, especially because we are willing to help and serve those who would not have the means to help themselves.

For the last two months I have spoken of a job at a grocery store, which has closed the gap in my family's budget. Very recently I was contacted by a rural Lutheran church in a nearby community, in need of a vacancy pastor on a part time basis. I'll be taking up that work in the near future. It provides more money than the store does and provides very concrete ways to love and serve neighbors. My prayer is that the congregation would grow in numbers and in grace, and that when they are able to call a permanent pastor they will have gained from our time together.

We still need additional contributors. Our goal remains to have a total of about 300 monthly individual contributors or about 30 churches or organizations, each representing about the equivalent of 10 monthly donors. We are realistically a little over 60% of the support we need to be fiscally responsible in the long run. We've made it thus far, by God's grace, for which we are thankful.

If you or people you know want to support the work of bringing on-site, face to face, pastoral care to our academic communities, please consider making Wittenberg Door a part of your regular charitable giving. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at www.wittenbergcomo.com and click on "about" and "support us."

Uganda Update:

Our friends at Eleos Ministries have continued providing information about some of the particular situations in the areas where they are active in Uganda. There are several different groups of people in different areas. Here are two needs that Eleos has identified, along with specifics of their work. They would love to pair a church congregation up with a community in Uganda. Even a small congregation could make a huge difference in the lives and opportunities available to the Christians in Mayuge or Muguluka.

Mayuge

Because Mayuge is a primarily Muslim town, it is ripe for evangelical ministry. It is a great opportunity to share the love of Jesus with others through caring for physical needs. Needs: food assistance, educational scholarships, some medical assistance, *lots* of prayer and dedicated outreach, people interested to go help with a VBS



Muguluka



Muguluka is unique because its school, called “Echo for Hope,” also serves as a boarding school for true orphans (children who have lost both parents). Its teachers are hard-working and on the clock 24/7 to care for the children.

Needs: mentors for the children (to share Jesus), food assistance, friends with a heart for orphans, occasional medical assistance

Upcoming Activities:

Thursdays at 1:00 pm – Lunch and Learn Bible discussion live and via Zoom

Saturdays 11:00 am Matins service via Zoom

Watch the calendar for times and places where Pastor Spotts can be found around campuses in coffee shops or restaurants!

Sunday, July 26 10:00 a.m. Pastor Spotts at Hope Lutheran Chapel, Osage Beach MO

Sunday August 2 and following Sundays, 10:00 a.m. Pastor Spotts at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Centralia MO

We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/support-us.html> to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!