

the sower

... christ + charity + community ...



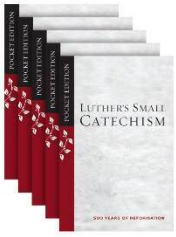
This past week, I took another look at the website for the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Clicked on [Learn More About COVID-19](#). Then, [HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF & OTHERS](#). And there it was! Just like I remembered! **“The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.”** And of course, the best, common-sense way to avoid being exposed? Keeping your distance! Staying-at-home! Wearing face masks! All the things we’ll be thinking about in order to return to in-person worship! And the more I thought about it, I realized ... love’s a lot like COVID-19! It’s infectious! Contagious! The only way to catch it – and spread it – is by getting close to people! People who already have it! People at risk of getting it!

Maybe that’s why the church has been getting smaller, the past generation or three. It’s the social distancing we practice! Sure, we do okay with people we’re already close to. Family. Friends. And there was a time when we’d done alright with neighbors ... at least, when we knew who they were! But nowadays? Living life-as-usual is a lot like living through the pandemic ... but without the virus! Separated! Isolated! Quarantined! We don’t get close enough, anymore, to catch love! We don’t get near enough to spread it! And the church grows smaller. The church gets grayer. It takes proximity! It requires closeness! The best way to prevent being loved is to avoid being exposed to it, in the first place! The best way to spread it is to get close! Side-by-side! Hand-in-hand! Face-to-face! Even if, for now, it’s only metaphorically speaking!

i Living, dying, and rising ... TOGETHER!

Bob





“IN THE MORNING, as soon as you get out of bed,” Luther advises in the *Small Catechism*, “you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: ‘God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.’” And for the past couple of months, every Tuesday and Thursday morning – at sunrise – we’ve been doing just that! Making the sign of the cross, saying the Creed, the Lord’s prayer, reciting Luther’s morning prayer, reading the words of a hymn, and then, watching the sun rise, one more time! At the duck pond!

Hogan park! Sibley Nature Center! Windlands Park! Midland College! The top floor of a parking garage or two! It’s a simple way of sharing a few moments, each week. And it’s a way of remembering that faith ... and hope ... love go on ... in spite of the changes and chances of life! Join us! On Facebook! It’s our platform-of-choice during the pandemic! [www.Facebook.com/MidlandLutheranChurch/](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandLutheranChurch/)! If you can’t make it, at the time, it’s saved as a post! to be viewed ... at your convenience!

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THE pmSTUDY CONTINUES! 7-7:30pm, every Wednesday! On FacebookLive! The topic, this go round, is “The Roots of the American Church”. Who we are! Where we came from! How we got here! The discussion’s based on a book pastor Bob used in seminary. *Born Againism: Perspectives on a Movement* by the RevDr Eric W Gritsch. If you’d like a copy of your own, feel free! But it’s not necessary! Again, with livestreaming, if you can’t be with us in realTime, join us on [Facebook](#) when you’re able!



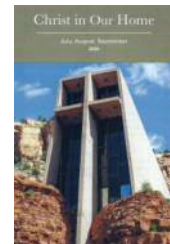
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SAFETY FIRST! If you listen to the news, lately, it sounds as if the pandemic is over. Unfortunately, it’s not. In fact, according to some of the experts, we’re not even halfway through! So, here at MidlandLutheran, we’re being cautious! So, at this moment, we have no plans of changing what we’ve been doing for the past three months. It’s just not worth the risk. Not for worship! I’m sure god understands. We’ll continue using FacebookLive for the duration. Sunday morning worship! Tuesday and Thursday Morning Blessings! Wednesday Evening Study! All videos – current and past – are posted for your convenience! For those not “online,” we’ve been sending out hardcopies via snail mail! But if you’ve – unintentionally – been overlooked or if you’d like to be included in the mailing, let us know! Also, f.y.i., the congregationCouncil’s been discussing how we might figure out ways to help the un-tech-savvy among us find their way online! We’ll let you know how that comes along!



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CHRIST IN OUR HOME – the daily devotional resource of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – for July, August, & September is now available! We've got plenty! Regular print! Large print! All at no charge! Prepared by lay people and pastors from throughout the ELCA! This month's contributors are from: Lady Lake, FL! Waconia, MN! Kirkland, WA! Littleton, CO! Lebanon, PA! And Sioux Falls, SD! So, if you'd like a copy or two or three ... for family or friends ... text/call pastor Bob @ **432.349-7407** and he'll be sure you get it/them!



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WE'VE NEVER DONE IT THAT WAY BEFORE! Of course, in this day and age,

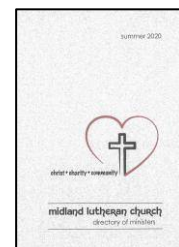


most of what we're doing is new! Not by choice, but out of necessity! And frankly, it's kind of exciting! Here's another ... an online book discussion! There's interest in getting a group of people together – on Zoom – to talk about [*Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US*](#) (for more about the book and the author, just click on the link). Lenny Duncan is the pastor and his "love letter" is written to us – the

ELCA! If you'd like to join in, call/text me @ **432.349-7407**, message me on [Facebook](#), or [email](#) me! I've, already, ordered a few books ... just in case! But feel free to get you own copy. The conversation begins early next month!

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT ... A new directory-of-ministers is now ready and will be in your hands next week! Names! Addresses! Birthdays! Anniversaries! Land lines! Cell phones! Emails! Of course, directories are notoriously out-of-date, pretty much, the moment they're finished! So, if there are any changes we need to make or mistakes we need to correct, let us know! The contact information for Midland Lutheran Church is located on the inside front cover! And if you need more than one copy, let us know that, as well! Thanks for all your help!



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IF YOU'RE INTERESTED ... Unfortunately, staying-at-home and sheltering-in-place have come to be linked to inactivity! And so, the past few months have taken a toll on us! (I'm not talking just about a few pounds and inches!) Anyway, I was wondering if any of you would like to join Sherice and me, sometime, for a walk around Midland College. Social distancing doesn't mean seclusion. It means staying six-or-so feet apart! And being outside – epidemiologically speaking – is a whole lot healthier than isolating



inside! Especially when you're exercising. So, if you need to break out and get away ... even if only for a mile or two, call/text to **432.349-7407**, [message](#), or [email](#) if you're interested! We'll go from there ... TOGETHER!

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LOOKING AHEAD ... Like I said earlier, "**SAFETY FIRST!**" So, in case you're curious, the congregation Council doesn't have any **immediate** plans to get back together for "in-person" worship. At least, not on a regular basis. First of all, it's the safety issue. But secondly, we wanted to make sure – especially here and now – that we aren't simply **GOING BACK**, but **MOVING FORWARD!** God called us – "to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown" – long before the pandemic began. And we want to make sure we don't get sidetracked or distracted along the way. Those two concerns – safety and progress – remain our focus. And we're using the time we've been given to become a congregation ready to confront but the new world that awaits on the other side! Now, that doesn't mean we won't be getting together. The best option, of course, remains online. In addition to what we've already been doing, we've been thinking about how we might be able to do it is an online hymn sing! Unfortunately, we haven't been able to figure out how to do it together! We'll let you know how that ends up! Until then, musically-speaking, you'll just have to make use of [YouTube.com](#)! Just search for 'ELW,' or 'Evangelical Lutheran Worship'! There's a lot there! Another possibility is meeting outside! Anything in the open air lowers the risk by almost 20X! Maybe an evening in the park? Like we did last summer? Lawn chairs? Evening prayer? We'll let you know about that, as well!



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NOW, ABOUT THE OFFERINGS ... Don't panic! I still stand by what I said, last month! Offerings – especially at times like this – are for the sake of neighbor! Pandemic! Unemployment! Unrest! God doesn't need what we have. But our neighbors do! The neighbors we know and the neighbors we don't! The ones we see and the ones we can't! So, first things first are things like [WestTexasFoodbank](#)! And the [COVID-19ResponseFund](#)! And [WorldHunger](#)! And [DisasterResponse](#)! You might be aware of others like them! God doesn't give so that we can give back to god! And god doesn't give so that we can give to church! God gives so that we can give to others! However ...

One of the things our neighbors need is the opportunity to hear and receive gospel! They need to know how much god loves them! How much their lives matter! And that's why we give to a congregation! Not for the building! Not for the budget! We give so that the gospel can be proclaimed and that the good news can be administered! To help us do that, the congregation Council has decided to try going digital financially! Here's a letter prepared by Fred Behnken, treasurer of the congregation ...

COVID-19, Social Distancing and Offering Donations

Not knowing the future of on-going social distancing and restrictions on gathering assembly sizes due to the COVID-19 virus, our Congregational Council remains committed to the health and welfare of each of you. We will continue to suspend in-person worship and midweek class gatherings until such time as medical experts relax restraints on assembly and social distancing. If we follow current social distancing guidelines for worship, the distancing would allow about 15 members to gather. Council will continue to meet via Zoom or using FaceBook Messenger. You can catch the worship live via Facebook Live video on Sundays, Tuesday and Thursday sunrise devotions and Wednesday evening classes on our FaceBook. You can also catch up on saved video presentations.

Some of you have found numerous ways to share, serve and comfort your neighbors, friends and strangers by calling, messaging, donating your time and goods to help those in need. This is as it should be.

The May church newsletter alerted you to continue to look for information on alternative means of making donations to our church and its mission in Midland and beyond. Of course, there has always been and continues to be the physical check and envelope delivered by the postal service to the church.

To augment donation checks delivered by the postal service (aka snail mail), we are rolling out an electronic donation program called GivePlus by Vanco after considerable Investigation and trial runs. Using this platform, you have several choices to support the on-going ministries of Midland Lutheran by on-line web, mobile or text donations.

GivePlus offers an exclusive ELCA-wide discounted giving program. There is no up-front cost. Donations may be made on the on-line web, your smart phone or mobile giving, as well as by text app from you cell phone. The service charges transaction fees for the donations based on the type of payment by credit/debit or ACH/echeck draft on your bank account.

Mobil App or Web Pay Donation Fees

are an added charge per each transaction

Debit/Credit card transaction fee * 2.35% + \$0.35/transaction.

AMEX EXPRESS fee * 3.5% + \$0.35/transaction

ACH/echeck bank draft fee * 0.8 % + \$0.35/transaction

Text Donations are paid by a single Flat \$5/month payment per monthly for all text transactions.

For those with internet access, WebPay is an option. An internet link is set up for donations on our FaceBook page. Soon it will also be on our church web page. The WebGivePlus link will take you to a secure donation page. The first time you can set up an account ID and password. You can then sign on and fill in some additional information about the donation amount to selected accounts and select the donation as a one-time or recurring donation and its frequency. Your donations can be drawn by charging a debit or credit card or by ACH/echeck drawn on your bank account. Any future donations will simply require you going to the website link, logging in and entering the donation amount and frequency. You will receive an email confirmation of your donation and at any time you can see a report of your on-line GivePlus donation frequency and total giving.

WebPay Link: https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?appver3=wWsk24ZWJSTZKsGd1RMKlg0BDvsSG3VlWQCPJNNxD8upkiY7JIDavDsozUE7KG0nFx2NSo8LdUKGuGuF396vbYN9M10rZr_gOCRHy0WzroQiYnTg5dP4O6rpX5QvPEWIBhHDN59kLZFFwKfYERpQq3vigDDEXejkkZ1OhizIEQ=&ver=3

If you find it's easier donate on-the-go you can do so using a secure mobile/cell phone GivePlus app or text a donation.. You can find tutorials on our FaceBook Page for Mobil GivePLus and Text GivePlus options or see the tutorials below:.

Get started with GivePlus Mobile and GivePlus Text today!

[GivePlus Mobile App](#)

[GivePlus Text](#)

GivePlus Text Phone Number: (855) 938-4165

These tutorials are helpful!

If you have any questions or you need some help, please call ...
Fred Behnken at 432-212-1496. .

AND FINALLY ... We tried it, last time, without the virus! So, we figured we'd try it, again, this year, in spite of it ...



10:30am

the last sunday of the month

june 28th

the pavilion @ hogan park

unfortunately, it won't be a picnic

but we will get to see each other,

sing, & share the Supper

the particulars coming, soon!



the PROPERs for june

the HOLY TRINITY, june 07

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

the **READINGS**: Genesis 1:1--2:4a + Psalm 8 + 2nd Corinthians 13:11-13 + Matthew 28:16-20

the SECOND SUNDAY of PENTECOST, june 14

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

the **READINGS**: Exodus 19:2-8a + Psalm 100 + Romans 5:1-8 + Matthew 9:35--10:8 [9-23]

the THIRD SUNDAY of PENTECOST, june 21

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Teach us, good Lord God, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

the **READINGS**: Jeremiah 20:7-13 + Psalm 69:7-10 [11-15] 16-18 + Romans 6:1b-11
+ Matthew 10:24-39

the FOURTH SUNDAY of PENTECOST, june 28

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

the **READINGS**: Jeremiah 28:5-9 + Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18 + Romans 6:12-23
+ Matthew 10:40-42



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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midland lutheran church

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facebooki: www.facebook.com/GospelCrossWords/

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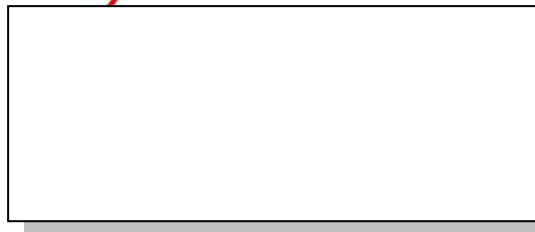
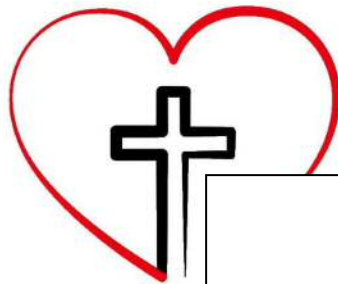
sunday morning schedule: **learning hour @ 9:15 *worship @ 10:30**

office hours: monday-thursday, 9am-noon & by appointment

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midland lutheran church

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June 2020