

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH



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5th Wednesday in Lent

Text: 1 Peter 2:9

From: Pastor Roger

Don't Go to Church!

We are living in strange times. We live in a time and place where your pastors, Pastor Steve and I, have told you, “don’t go to church.”

Please understand, we **never** thought *we* would *say that*. We never wanted to tell you that. We don’t want to live in this world full of sin and the Coronavirus, but we do. **So please, don’t go to church.**

I am reminded of my good friend Bruce Harer. (Many of you will remember Bruce). He passed away when he was President of our congregation. He had been Vice President before that. And before that, for 20 years (seriously, 20 years, I’m not overstating it) he was the Youth Board Chair. He led youth group. He took youth on trips. He lived his faith. He embodied the Gospel to the youth. And (more personally to me) there wasn’t anything that he wouldn’t do for someone if he could. He was a great friend. I was truly blessed to know him. I am better for it.

On one particular youth trip; to “Creationfest” at the Gorge in George, WA; Bruce and I saw a young man in the midst of thousands of people. This young man was like all the others; hot (it was over 100 degrees), sweaty (same reason), and smelly (first two reasons caused the third); but what separated this young man was not anything about him personally, but what he was wearing. It was hot, and this young man had on a black t-shirt, with words in bright red, block typeface. The words on the front of his shirt read (in red)

DON'T GO TO CHURCH

Now Bruce was mad (something I was not accustomed to). He approached the young man and said, “Why does your shirt say that?” The young man smiled wide, his pride oozing out of his pores. Without a word, he held up one finger, to pause for dramatic effect, before turning around to show us the words on his back

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BE THE CHURCH

Bruce and I were floored. We had wanted to be angry and instead this teenager had taught us something... without speaking he created change in us.

You see, Church, real church, is not just about the building, the services, the music, or the pastors (seriously!). It's about the people...it's about **YOU!** You were called Christ's child in the waters of your baptism. You are marked as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. You have been given faith by the holy Spirit. You have been set apart for work in God's kingdom.

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." **1 Peter 2:9-10**

In this crazy, new world in which we live, the one in which we cannot go to church to gather together as the body of Christ, it is necessary for us to remember that **WE ARE THE CHURCH!** So, (in the words of Martin Luther), what does this mean? What does this look like for you? Normally, (whatever that means), **BEING** the church involves **GOING** to church. Being the church means living out your faith outside the walls of the sanctuary. Living as the person God has called you to be takes longer than your trip to church on Sunday (or Wednesday). Being the church is about your whole life.

This means praying, on your own and with your family (and maybe even on the phone)...doing daily devotions...reading God's Word...helping your neighbors (making sure there is 6ft of space)...calling your friends from church...making sure that everyone has what they need...being patient with everyone you deal with (we are **ALL** in this together) and (this is a big one), **FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER**. Forgive family. Forgive your coworkers. Forgive your neighbors. Forgive old wounds and new hurts. Forgive as Christ forgave you. Live your faith. My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we live in this time when we cannot go to church, please remember to **BE THE CHURCH!**

Help each other. Love each other. Forgive each other.

"Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary use words." St Francis of Assisi