



August 7, 2020

Uncomfortably Christian

American Christianity has always been a bit comfortable.

Integral to the settling of this continent was the understanding that people were free to practice their own religion. Free from the specter of national churches in Europe and the Church of England's restriction, colonial religious life was a breath of fresh air. Each colony had their prevailing, mainly Protestant, Christian group.



While there were incidents of persecution, generally there was enough space for people to move away and keep one another at arms length to practice their religion. Evangelism, spreading the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, became a matter of changing practices and clarifying confessions of faith. This caused joy at the “finding of a lost sheep” in the receiving denomination, and the despair of

the “losing of a little lamb” in another. Depending on the culture of those faith communities, individuals may have been shunned by community and family, but that was about the worst of it.

The creation of the “Christian Flag” (1897) along with its associated pledge was an early attempt at ecumenism. But its display alongside of the American flag served to reinforce the status and the uniformity of Christians, especially Protestants, in this country. This may be a reason, for many both inside and outside the Church, that “Christian” has become a term associated more with social and political positions than with faith in Christ. This may be why it is hard for American Christians to accept there are faithful people who disagree with them on social and political issues.

This assumed uniformity and easy transition between communities is what has led to the comfort we feel. This comfort has led to complacency because the freedom we have in Christ is lifted up, but the sacrifices we are called to make are not. Being a Christian becomes a reason that people should accommodate us rather than a reason to serve, which may explain why I’ve heard restaurant servers lament Sunday lunch because, “Christians”, they say, “are horrible tippers”.

We have liberty in Christ, freedom from sin and death. We also are bound to the cross in service that calls us to hold those freedoms lightly, lest we cause our siblings in Christ to stumble, to feel rejected, or even come to harm. The reality of the cross is is not comfortable, but not because we are engaged in a war with an increasingly pluralistic culture. The cross is uncomfortable because it reminds us that we are imperfect. The cross is our salvation and the reminder of the reality that we, daily, need it. There is a standard of personal integrity to which we are called, held, and fail to live up to.

The cross is also a reminder of injustice: Jesus was innocent. False witnesses and mob mentality led to the lynching and death of Jesus, to protect their community. Jesus was the scapegoat for the religious leaders, the one thing they they pointed to: “Get rid of this one and everything will be better.” When paired with the empty tomb, there is a message of hope that the injustices of this world will not have the last word. Christian faith, centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus, once and for all, is a call that no one else needs to suffer injustice, and that Jesus does, when we don’t want to, stand with, suffer with, and die with all those under the boot-heel of callous authority.

The cross also calls us to make peace. God became incarnate in the world to bridge the gap between God and humanity. Jesus’ death is the ultimate reminder of God’s connection with the human condition. This is our call to enter into the lives of others, not just hold them at a distance, un-judged but unknown. A messy process that roasts

us from comfort and complacency and offers to carry their burdens, to share their yoke, to know their pain and their dreams. The cross is our call to be incarnate with others, present and shaped by their lives.

These three: integrity, justice, and incarnation are the same as the faith, hope, and love Paul writes about to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13). It is a sign of comfort and complacency that we can relegate this passage to romantic love, being fully present in the life of our beloved, drawing them near to us, and making accommodations for them. This is the path that our Christian faith has set us on. A path that does not lead us from the cross of Christ into glory, but one that leads right to that cross, bringing us a discomfort that transcends nations, cultures, and people, and leads to incarnation in the lives of those who are not us, but personal sacrifice for their benefit alone.

Pr. Justin Smoot (he/him)

Supply Drive to Benefit Aspius Family House

Saint Andrew is organizing a supply drive in support of the Aspius Family House as part of the VBS lesson on Service. The Family House is looking to stock up on their basic necessities such as: paper goods, cleaning supplies, and prepackaged snacks.

View their full wish list [here](#):

Donations can be placed in the plastic bin outside the north (Chapel) entrance labeled "Family House Donations" through ***Saturday, August 15.***

From the Desk of the Communications Coordinator

To my siblings in Christ,

I send you my warmest greetings! Although we cannot physically be together at this time, I want to send you all a big thank you-my joining the SALC staff has been an unexpected blessing, and I feel all of the love and light you have been sending my way. The Holy Spirit has worked in the strangest of ways, yet this opportunity to serve all of



you is exactly what I needed during this time of incredible uncertainty.

In the last couple of weeks, I have been preparing to begin my ministry with lots of impatience and excitement. In waiting for my first official day in the office, I have been in a state of busy reflection: as a recent college graduate, I have been able to slow down, to sit and collect my thoughts, as I am finally standing still after four years of continued commotion. Oftentimes, I forget to count my blessings, as the monotony of a life in quarantine can take a toll on one's sense of hopefulness. Shifting to a whole new lifestyle and day-to-day routine post-college bears that same weight.

Due to COVID-19, I found myself moving back home from the city of Chicago. Though being back home with family has provided some much-needed support, I have felt disconnected from the communities I had once felt a part of, and isolation began to close in during unexpected moments. There seemed to

be no sun on the horizon; nothing but a hazy cover of mist, a fog that would not clear from my mind. Leaving the city I loved, having the opportunity to chase my dream career was no longer in the near future; my plan for my life had seemingly unfurled, and the passing days felt bleak. Until one afternoon, a ray of sunshine made its way into my world-

A greeting card.

In came a message from a thoughtful woman, almost one hundred years old, who has attended the church I was baptized at for many decades. A small reminder that someone, perhaps the most unexpected someone, was thinking of me, praying for me. I decided to write her back.

I had wanted to make her something personalized just as she did for me. I hopped onto Pinterest (an app with collections of many different things) and an image of a

verse wrapped in some beautiful calligraphy foliage stood out to me. I started to copy it down. I set the image as my phone background so I wouldn't have to continue to refresh the page. As I eventually sealed the envelope and addressed it to my thoughtful friend, I dropped the card in the mail and went about my week, not thinking to change my phone background to what it had previously been. Yet, as I received hundreds of notifications per day, I was shown this verse: James 1:17.

"Every good and perfect gift is from above."

I had been thinking about this verse randomly through the week and knew that it wasn't nothing- I wanted to get to the root of what God was trying to tell me. Cue me diving in head-first to the book of James on my first day in the office. Largely, I was reminded to serve humbly and love freely, and reminded where all the gifts I have been given originate; from above.

I was reminded of God's unwavering consistency. Of God's faithfulness. Remembering and recognizing all the love God has for me.

"16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

God, in all God's ways, has chosen us to live in love, to serve one another, and gives us the gifts he believes we can use for the good of the kingdom. This gift of ministry within the SALC community, one I have come to know and love, is something I would have never imagined doing. Yet God led me back. Although I may not understand the timing, I know that God has something incredible in store. I could not be more excited to serve you, my family in Christ, and I ask that you keep me in your prayers as I take God's hand that is leading me down this new and exciting path of ministry.

Light, love, and blessings sent your way.

Michelle Tlusty (she/her)

Confirmation Parents Meeting

We will be hosting a zoom meeting for parents of 7th and 8th grade confirmation students on **Tuesday, August 18 at 6:15 pm**. This meeting will be to go over our plans and expectations for hosting in-person confirmation classes this fall and to answer

your questions. If you still need to register your student for confirmation, you can do so [here](#).

Zoom Meeting Details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84831366348?pwd=S0lzNWRUZWxTUFhgSTUra1BPRkJOQT09>

Meeting ID: 848 3136 6348

Password: 574493

From the Archive

“Consider With Me” August 1982 - Pr. John Roseth

A guest preacher in a rural church arrived early and went into the narthex where he noticed a little box affixed to the wall. He thought it was one of those boxes to receive offerings for the poor, so he put fifty cents into it.

At the close of the service at which he preached, his host took him out to the narthex and explained to him that the church was so small and poor they didn't have any money to pay the guest preacher, so they put that box on the wall for people to make contributions.

“You’ve done better than most,” the host said. “There’s fifty cents in it today.”

The preacher went home and told of the incident to his children at the dinner table.

“But just think, Daddy,” said one of them, “If you’d put more money in you would have gotten more out!”

Sunday mornings, all through the week, we constantly look for God or someone else to do it for us. Each of us needs to look at our church, our lives, and our families and begin to invest more in what really counts. *For we only really have in life what we give away.*

About

Worship

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Contact Us

Saint Andrew Lutheran Church

150202 County Road NN | Wausau, WI 54401

(715) 842-3333

office@salc-wausau.org

www.salc-wausau.org