



August 21, 2020

Don't Look at the Comments Section

Have you ever heard the expression, “never look at the internet comments section?” I did so this last week, to my disappointment. The Wisconsin Department of Health was holding a press conference to update the public about Covid-19 and their response to it. The comments were filled with people repeating calls for the Department of Health representative to, “take it off” because she was wearing a mask on the video. Others were talking about how they would reject vaccines, and anyone who listens to what the Department of Health says is a “sheep” that is not thinking for themselves.

I found it hard to continue to watch with the comments, but simultaneously could not look away from them, because underlying was a hurt that we as pastors struggle to address. As one who, in a sermon a few weeks ago, has confessed; there was a time when I used theology to shore up what I saw as my own failings and shortcoming. My own pain and hurt were masked by theological statements that proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that I am right and correct, righteous and perfect.

This is what I saw in the comments. This is what we have been seeing in our world.

We have the tendency to find the voices that speak to what we want to be true. I wanted justification and perfection in a life of depression and despair, so I twisted scripture to find it. When a college Intervarsity Christian group brought in a seminarian to speak about theology, I questioned them into a corner to prove my point, hammering away at them with half-truths and blatant mischaracterizations to get them to agree with me. I know I would not have accepted anything less, and were they not agreeing with me, I would have written them off. I would have condemned them as poor theologians not reading scripture and not fully believing in God.

I did the same thing in seminary. At a congregation that my now wife was a youth director at, a son of the congregation came home to ask for money to support his ministry. It was with a conservative, Baptist group, and I was still grinding on my theological superiority, so you can guess what happened. After the final service, when everyone had gone except for us, we were “debating” theology. In reality, we were talking past one another, not listening, and not considering the other to be Christian at heart. I was like that internet commentator saying, “take it off, take it off, take it off.” My basis for reasonable consideration of anything he would say was predicated on him fully agreeing with me first.

That is the other side of this all.

We want to hear our opinions spoken by other people because misery loves company. In that comment stream, people found a strange community with people as suspicious of authority figures as they themselves were.

If there is one thing that I have come to realize, I was wrong for what I did in college. I was wrong for how I shouted at that minister in seminary. I am wrong whenever I want to hear my opinions come out of other people’s mouths rather than hear them. What good is my perfection in the eyes of God, the forgiveness of sins, if I perpetuate brokenness in the world? What good is it bearing the cross of Christ if you bash people over the head with it every chance you get? I have one last thing to confess: I’m not over it.

I still do it and have the desire and the tendency to fall into those patterns of behavior where I drag the name Christian through the mud for my own self-satisfaction. This is what I confess every time we confess. This is what I find every time I practice the Examine on Thursdays.

Because God has been whispering to me: “You are better than this.”

And so are you.

Pr. Justin Smoot (he/him)

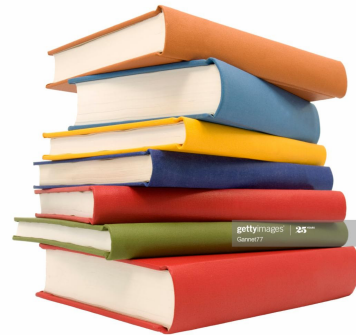
Confirmation Kicks Off!

This year Faith Formation and staff are offering four options for confirmation: in person (small group), virtual, at home with parents, or a summer intensive to take place in summer of 2021. Confirmation orientation took place this last week and was recorded for those unable to listen in and learn more. (The first few minutes are small talk while we waited for people to gather... the content begins about six minutes into [this video](#).)

8th grade students begin confirmation on **September 2** and 7th grade students begin on **September 9**. If you have yet to register your child please do so [here](#). Once families are registered, they will receive an e-mail to follow up on preference of format and how to receive resources. Contact jenna@salc-wausau.org with any questions!

The Library is Open

Thanks to Susan Paisar, the church library will continue to be open every Thursday from 4PM-6PM. Here are a couple of reviews from Susan herself of some books that are currently featured in our new South Africa section:



Long Walk to Freedom (Mandela)

Long Walk to Freedom is more than the autobiography of a great man. It's the chronicle of a son who breaks from his family and tradition; a voice for liberty who is captured, isolated, and imprisoned; a revolutionary who transcends conflict to become a peacemaker and unifier; and a rare human being who, in freeing himself of his demons, also became free to give his extraordinary leadership to his country and the world.

The Book of Forgiving (Tutu)

The quality of human life on the planet is nothing more than the sum total of our daily interactions. Forgiveness is the way we mend tears in the social fabric. It is the way we stop our human community from unraveling. This book is an invitation for you to walk with him on the path of forgiveness.

The Elephant Whisperer (Anthony)

When South African conservationist Lawrence Anthony was asked to accept a herd of 'rogue' elephants on his Thula Thula game reserve in Zululand, his common sense told him to refuse. But he was the herd's last chance of survival. With unforgettable characters and exotic wildlife, this is an enthralling book that will appear to animal lovers and adventurous souls everywhere.

Coffee Talk on Sunday: Plan to Gather Updates

Why are other churches worshipping in person while we haven't yet? What are projections for the next steps in our "plan to gather"? What's the criteria we are using as we make these group decisions together? If you've wondered these things or have other questions, carve out some time to watch coffee talk this coming Sunday, about 10:30. Pastor Jenn will address these questions and looks forward to addressing other questions that you may have in the live stream.



Check out these resources to learn more:

Bishop Mansholt, East Central Synod of Wisconsin ELCA

Pastoral Message shared on August 7, 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=nEARwnMlTr8>

Covid Science for Churches

Video of conversation between Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the WI Council of churches and Lisa Allgood - Transitional Executive Presbyter for the Presbytery of Cincinnati.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OztCblggNvA>

Returning to Church – July 2020 Recommendations

Recommendations from the Wisconsin council of Churches – an ecumenical organization guiding over 40 congregations

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/07/30/returning-to-church-july-2020-recommendations/>

Resources for Returning to In Person Worship

Recommendations for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

<https://www.elca.org/publichealth>

Luther's Two Kingdoms Theology

An article on Luther's two kingdom's theory that details the history of the relationship between the Lutheran church and the state in Lutheran Theology written by Rev. Dr. Craig Nessen, Wartburg Theological Seminary:

<https://gudribassakums.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/2005-two-kingdoms-nessen.pdf>

Special Thanks: Outdoor Worship

Thanks to the Wimmer family for allowing Saint Andrew to gather safely for in person worship at State Park Speedway.

Thanks to the Stream Team for figuring out how to bring us a hybrid worship experience and the many hours of set up and take down that it required.

Thanks to the worship ministry members and the Plan to Gather Task Force for helping with logistics.

Thanks to the many volunteers who ushered, helped direct parking, taped off benches, brought communion...

Thanks to YOU for being the body of Christ through the mission and ministry we share at Saint Andrew.

Fraud Alert

Yet again, several different attempts have been made by online scammers to use Pr. Jenn's information for personal gain. These requests have come to members in the form of texts or e-mails that are similar to Pr. Jenn's contact info. Usually the scammer requests for gift cards to be purchased and submitted online for people are "sick." These messages are usually very formal and will sometimes include misspellings or improper grammar. Pr. Jenn, Pr. Justin, and the staff at Saint Andrew will never ask for personal favors of any kind that involve gift cards or individual contributions. Please be vigilant and double check with Pr. Jenn if you receive such a message. The best thing to do if you receive a text or an e-mail from a supposed scammer is to delete it right away.



Learn About tRiBe!

We are reimagining our fall programs at SALC. One of the goals of the Faith Formation Ministry is to develop Small Groups that allow self-management with faith growth, community, social, and relationship-building connections. From that idea we developed tRiBe (To Remember I Belong), a way for families to create a faith community and create a place where kids and adults can learn and experience being known, heard and seen.

We will be hosting an informational meeting via Zoom on **September 1 at 6:30 PM** to explain our ideas and expectations of these small groups, as well as offer some other learning opportunities for members of all ages

Click [here](#) to join the meeting.

Meeting ID: 871 0809 9931

Passcode: 556187

Lay School to Begin Soon

Are you interested in growing in your faith? Would you like to grow in your baptismal promises to engage in your faith? [Here](#), the wonderful Pastor Jen Hoffman of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Wausau and ECSW Lay School Coordinator gives some insight on the ECSW's Lay School. For more information, make sure to visit their website [here](#).

Final Reminder: Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Quilts and School Bags

Thank you to everyone who made quilts and school bags for Lutheran World Relief this last year! With the shipping date soon approaching in October, completed quilts and school bags will need to be **returned by September 1** so they can be prepared and boxed for shipment. Please place them in the plastic bin labeled "Items to Pick Up or Drop Off" which is located outside the north (Chapel) entrance. If your items are too large for the bin, please call the church office at 715-842-3333 and arrangements will be made to meet you at church to receive your quilts and/or school bags. Again, thank you to all who have shared their time, talent and gifts to make another shipment possible for those in need in other countries!



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Saint Andrew Lutheran Church

150202 County Road NN | Wausau, WI 54401

(715) 842-3333

office@salc-wausau.org