



The Shepherd's Voice

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MINUTE WITH MIKE

*For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us;
And the government will rest upon His Shoulders...
Isaiah 9:6*

Dearest brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus,

A warm Christmas time greeting to you and yours. I'm praying the Lord Jesus is on the top of your Christmas list again this year and that the excitement of gifting Him is lifting your heart.

As I write this letter, the outcome of our National Election is not yet decided. Like you, I know who I am praying for and why, but all that aside, it is comforting to know that The One who governs all matters is our Savior, Christ Jesus our Lord. What an amazing reality to think that He would set aside His glory and the inexpressible joy of the heavenly courts to come fellowship with us. And further, to come and redeem us by giving His own life for ours. What a Christmas gift!

Because now all government rests upon His shoulders, we have peace; the very peace that surpasses all understanding as we live out our lives. We trust Jesus because He is trustworthy. He will never disappoint, and we know that all He does is for our good. I pray that you are praying prayers of thanksgiving and praise to the One who is the greatest Christmas gift ever!

Blessings to you and yours, now and forever more.

In the love and joy of His service,

Mike

SESSION NEWS

Clerk's Report

Next Communion will be observed on Sunday, December 6, 2020; the last communion was observed Sunday, November 1, 2020.

Funerals – On October 27, 2020, Pastor Mike presided at a funeral for his father in Trenton, Michigan; Stephen E. Baynai, age 93.

Membership

Active Membership as of 10/8/2020	54
No Change	
Active Membership as of 11/12/2020	54

Worship Services

Attendance	10/11/2020	21 Adults	0 Children
Attendance	10/18/2020	27 Adults	0 Children
Attendance	10/25/2020	23 Adults	0 Children
Attendance	11/1/2020	27 Adults	0 Children
Attendance	11/8/2020	24 Adults	0 Children

Treasurer's Report –

\$ 26,937	Cash on Hand as of 10/31/2020
+ 25,506	Certificate of Deposit (Northpointe Bank) (less following committed funds)
- 0	Accrued Joyful Noise offerings
<u>- 11,000</u>	Building Fund
\$ 41,443	Uncommitted Funds Available

Notes: Uncommitted funds as of the end of September were \$42,965. *Our cash LOSS in October was – (\$1,522).*

Pastor – Following events and dates were discussed:

- Consecration Sunday – Nov. 29
- Church birthday observance – Dec. 6
- Angel Tree collection – Dec. 13. It was decided that, due to the virus situation, no gifts will be collected and sent to Fikre's family this year; we will ask for cash contributions instead.
- Christmas get-together of Elders and spouses at Baynai's home; date/time to be determined.
- Annual meeting of the Congregation – Jan. 31

Other Business –

- Purchase of Advent Devotional books are being solicited; Mike arranging from Baker Book House.
- Advent Wreath being prepared; Mike will select families.
- Stewardship – letter and pledge cards mailed Nov. 9.
- Missions – committee will meet after church on Dec. 13 to plan program for 2021. It was noted that the Jan/Feb Joyful Noise offering will be matched with mission funds and contributed to Henry's brother Jackson.

Personnel/Nominating –

It was noted that Jim Miller will go off Session next June. In lieu of finding a replacement, Mike suggested we might drop back to three Ruling Elders and Jim would continue to attend Session meetings as the non-voting Clerk. Jim advised that he'd like to retire as Clerk during 2021 so that he would still be in a position to train an incoming Clerk. The Pastor and Session will consider suitable replacements.

Next Presbytery Meeting – TBA

Next Session Meeting – The next Session meeting will be **Thursday, December 10** at 1:00 PM at the Seminary.

Closing Prayer – Pastor Mike closed the meeting with prayer; adjourned at 2:20 PM.

DATES

Thursday (3rd) Bilyea's Home group meeting at 1:00pm

Friday (4th) Men's Breakfast – Bob Evans (M6 @ Kalamazoo) 9:30am

Sunday (6th) Second Sunday of Advent: Worship and Communion at 10:00am; Fifth Birthday Celebration, Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Thursday (10th) Session 1:00pm (at CTS)

Sunday (13th) Third Sunday of Advent: Worship at 10:00am; Mission meeting following church

Thursday (17th) Bilyea's Home group meeting at 1:00pm

Friday (18th) Newsletter deadline

Sunday (20th) Fourth Sunday of Advent: Worship at 10:00am

Thursday (24th) Christmas Eve Service at 4:00pm

Friday (25th) Christmas Day

Sunday (27th) Worship at 10:00am

Friday (31st) New Year's Eve

BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

6	Seamus Adams
9	Jim Miller, Marv De Young
14	Al Schumacher
16	Scott Gipe
20	Linda Van Heuvelen
24	Lucy Barrett

SERVING THIS MONTH

Musicians: 6 & 13 Marjorie Boerema, 20 & 27 Maureen Sweet

Preaching: 6, 13 & 20 Pastor Mike, 27 Dr. Laura
Liturgist: 6, 13 & 20 Henry Gachini, 27 Pastor Mike

Sound: Lehmanns and Adams

Communion Bread: Rachel Wahome

Serving: Henry Gachini and Rachel Wahome

Special Music: 6 Pastor Mike, 13 & 27 Adams family, 20 "Danas"

MEMBERS/FRIENDS IN NEED OF PRAYER

In need of healing: Bettye Kay (heart and 2 daughters with cancer), Linda Van Heuvelen, Jean Bailey (cancer), Barb Bailey, Elaine Miller, Leroy (brother of Richard Soward); homebound members Joan Walstom, Pat Doorn, Cathy Jo Walters, Wally Leffel, and Bob/Bev Schaafsma

JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING

The Joyful Noise Offering for this month continues to benefit the work and ministry of the Forgotten Man Ministry (FMM). FMM is a Christian outreach ministry that provides spiritual counseling and direction for those incarcerated in county jails around the state of Michigan. The Kent County Jail team is especially diligent in love and sharing the good news of Jesus to those who are in very desperate places. Please pray for FMM and support them through the Joyful Noise Offerings. Thank you!

LOCAL CHURCH SIGN

*The church is those who worship,
not a place to come.*

ADVENT DEVOTIONS

You are invited to join Pastor Mike and others for this year's Advent Devotions. We will all be issued our own book, God Is in the Manger, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. We will study on our own at home. Cost of the book if you order it through Pastor Mike is \$7.00. Money should be given to Jim Miller or Bill Keating. If you have not signed up for the book on the entry table, please see Pastor Mike.

5 SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Earlier this fall we started a series in the newsletter on "5 Spiritual Disciplines" by Michelle Rabon, a contributor for "iBelieve." The first two were Prayer and Memorizing Scripture. We neglected to include Discipline 3 in the November issue so are resuming it in the December issue. Discipline 3 is: Bible Study.

The practice of daily Bible study, specifically as a means of starting off your day is a beautiful and simple practice that puts God's words into your heart before the world has a chance to say anything. Before you pick up the phone or interact with others, open your Bible. Whether it be ten or fifteen minutes as soon as you wake up, or longer. Give God the offering of the first fruits of your day. Make His words the first thing you want to consume each morning. It will be fuel to step outside and face the day. It will drive how you interact with others.

ANGEL TREE

Our world is changing. The last two years our church has shopped and sent Christmas gifts to Fiekre and his family. Thank you to Anne Vanderberg for volunteering to organize that again this year. However, at the November Session meeting the decision was made that there are so many unknowns and other issues that that may not be the most practical approach to helping them this year. Shopping in this pandemic year is not that easy and is difficult for the elderly in the congregation. Life is difficult for the Norcha family with children growing, two in the family facing college costs, and shutdowns affecting employment. Therefore, instead of purchasing gifts the Session decided it would be more expedient to take a

collection and help them financially in the manner that they determine best suits their needs. It's unknown if we would be able to have the gift wrapping pot luck so this plan resolves that issue as well as the cost of shipping. If you would like to be a part of helping the Norcha family having a Merry Christmas, please give your donation to either Jim Miller or Bill Keating by December 13. Please designate that it is for the Norcha family Christmas.

PRAYER NEEDS FROM FIKRE

Greetings in the name of the Lord.

How are you doing these days? You are always in our thoughts and prayers.

Despite the COVID-19 surge in the USA, we are okay thus far. The virus situation is awful. As you may remember, before the pandemic, I was leading a small group of Ethiopian diaspora community Bible study fellowship. Some of the families are infected and sick with the virus. I could not visit them, but I was continuously praying on the phone with them. Thank God; they finally recovered. Our children's schools are overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases, and schools are considering switching the in-person classes to online. The Seminary is also pondering changing online after the Thanksgiving holiday. Alem is still working. But 15 out of 25 co-workers are sick with COVID, and this week one of them died.

You may hear the news. It is everywhere on the news once again. There is a terrible civil war in Ethiopia north part of the country. People are dying and displacing to the neighboring country, Northern Sudan. The former ruling government was from the Tigray people group. The current government is the Oromo people group majority and some other people groups, and the Tigrayans refused to concede, and both parties made a wrong decision and were involved in the war two weeks ago. As a result, innocent people are dying and displacing. There is no peace in the country, and thousands are dying because of war and ethnic revenge. Additionally, despite COVID-19 challenge, massive locusts are damaging farms and destroying the ecology. Our heart is bleeding, and we are praying may the Lord intervene. Your prayer is appreciated more than ever.

Please share with the church so they can pray with us, Fikre

THANKFUL FOR A CRAYON

(Contributed by Cammi Adams)

Melon orange, blue violet, ruby red, grassy mound green...oh which one to choose! When was the last time you sat down with a box of crayons to color? Perhaps your coloring utensil of choice is a set of markers or freshly sharpened colored pencils. But truthfully, when did you last sit and create a masterpiece like in your childhood days of yore?

What is it about the simple act of coloring that so many around the world find appealing? For many people it's a time to be still, think, and to create a colorful masterpiece. Not all of us are gifted with the ability to draw or paint, but the majority of people can color. Often we colored as children in groups, proudly showing off our abilities to stay in the line or create a new color scheme for everyday objects: purple with pink polka dot cats, rainbows with non-rainbow colors, or my favorite, food colored in direct opposite colors to how they appear in real life!

As children we treasured having that time to explore, to create, to be validated by our friends and peers. We all enjoyed the exhilaration of having our coloring page placed on the schoolroom wall or hung proudly by our parents on the refrigerator. It was in these simple gestures that our confidence grew, that we were thankful that someone noticed our hard work!

Yet thankfulness does not always manifest itself with large achievements or public affirmation, but often it is found in the simple everyday actions and experiences we have. Faywen and I discovered this to be true as we sat Sunday afternoon side by side at the kitchen table...coloring...she with her freshly sharpened pencils and I with my good smelling box of Crayola Crayons. I know you can smell the crayons now...oh and a freshly sharpened pencil also sends one's senses into a blissful state of ecstasy! Just sniffing a crayon proves that it's the little things in life that bring us pleasure and we are ever grateful for such experiences.

As Faywen searched her colored pencils for that perfect shade of orange, she chatted away about school, church, her friends, music, and her beloved Shakespeare. I listened like only a mother could, ears pricked for pertinent information as I took to heart all my youngest child had to say. She asked me once, "Mum, why are you so quiet?" and I replied, "Because I'm listening to you and thinking while I color." A smile crept across her face and she continued coloring in the pumpkin pie on her coloring sheet. Moments like these are the ones we should be thankful for, but often miss in our busy lives.

We spent over an hour coloring various Thanksgiving pictures for family and friends. The icy rain pelted against the window outside. As the storm raged and the wind blew, I thought to myself, "That's how the outside world seems to us right now. The Coronavirus rages in the community and tries to pelt its way into our private sanctuaries." A feeling of gratitude and thankfulness swelled in my heart as I sat in my warm house, crayon in hand, by my healthy daughter. "Let the storm, wind, rain, and virus rage just outside my window. For I am thankful and content here." I ruminated to myself, "God is good. Let me not forget that He is in control." I realized that as I sat coloring. He has provided safety and love for us all. We should listen to His Word and give Him thanks and praise for the little things in life. The Lord whispered in my ear, "Do not worry about the storm outside."

Like a potter who spins on a wheel, the Lord molds us into the people He needs us to be, and sometimes that means the wheel may spin too fast or be out of control slinging clay all over the room. However, the wheel is grounded and the clay pot is ultimately safe from destruction. Why? Because the Lord is the potter, and his foot is on the wheel pedal. He is in complete control, though it doesn't always seem that way to us. We are the pots, the slung clay is the virus and the chaos of life, and the Lord the Potter.

During these times of uncertainty, I urge you to go and color. Coloring forces us to sit down, connect with our inner child, think, reflect, and also helps us to relax. Perhaps color with someone you love and share your masterpieces with each other multiple times throughout your coloring session. Coloring is something that can even be done with someone you love over a Zoom or Google Meet call!

This Thanksgiving pick up a crayon, or marker, or colored pencil. Exam it. Smell it. Use it. Remember that it is a gift from God to be used to bring joy to ourselves as well as others. Be thankful you can stop and take the time to color a picture!

A Blessed Thanksgiving to You.

20 SIMPLE WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE *(FOUND ON THE INTERNET)*

With Thanksgiving just past and Christmas just around the corner, it's a great time to reflect upon all the reasons we have to be thankful...

Even more powerful than being thankful is practicing gratitude, but how?

I'll be the first to admit that I've missed more opportunities to show gratitude than I can count. But with practice, I've gotten better at it.

Sometimes the simplest compliments or phone calls can mean the world.

With that in mind, I found a great list of ways to practice gratitude:

1. Keep a gratitude journal and add to it every day.
2. Tell someone you love them and how much you appreciate them.
3. Notice the beauty in nature each day.
4. Nurture the friendships you have. Good friends don't come along every day.
5. Smile more often.
6. Include an act of kindness in your life each day.
7. Avoid negative media and movies with destructive content.
8. Don't gossip or speak badly about anyone.
9. Spend quality time with your kids or your lover.
10. Remember to compliment your friends and family when they look good.
11. Write a card to someone you haven't seen in a while and tell them something nice.
12. When you think a negative thought, try to see the positive side of the situation.
13. Commit to one day a week when you won't complain about anything.
14. Try to take note when people do a good job and give recognition when it's due at work.
15. Reward effort. If someone does something nice for you, do something nice for them.
16. Thank the people who serve you in the community – the shopkeeper, the bus drivers, etc.
17. Say thank you for the little things your loved ones do for you, things you normally take for granted.
18. Embrace challenges and turn them into opportunities to grow.
19. See the growth opportunities in your mistakes.
20. Help your friends see the positive side of life.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GOOD SHEPHERD

On November 15, we had our church's fifth birthday, which we'll observe with a small-scale celebration on Sunday, December 6. What an interesting five years it's been!

The occasion makes me think back to when we started the church in the fall of 2015, and particularly to remember those who worked so hard to get it going and sustain the church during its early months.

Our founding elders were Betty Rittersdorf, Dana Bilyea, Bob Brooks, Cindy Cook and Jim Miller. They were almost immediately joined by Diane Solomon, Marie Zoerner, Henry Gachini and Joyce VanderLaan. These nine elders met every week in the early months to plan each worship service, develop the structure of a church, find preachers to fill the pulpit every Sunday, look for a worship site, develop plans for moving forward, and a myriad of other details.

We were helped immensely in the early months by those who volunteered their services to our fledgling church: Dr. Laura Smit who preached many times without recompense, Bob Brooks who found us guest preachers every week (with a little help from a friend), Eileen Davis and Arlene Koenes who volunteered to play the piano each Sunday, the young mothers who rotated in the children's room, Jim Miller who rounded up hymnals from an ECO church in Southern Ohio (with Dr. Laura's help), and so many others who pitched in to make it all work.

We were so blessed by God throughout the process – the elders began to refer to our “miracle of the week” to acknowledge His hand at work, as it seemed to us that we could discern His presence in everything we were doing.

By March 2016 we were ensconced in the Seminary Chapel and our beloved Pastor Mike joined us on Easter Sunday to make our start-up complete. Bless and thank the Lord for all His gifts to us.

.... Jim Miller

ANGEL TREE

(From Anne Vanderberg)

Greetings everyone!

We miss you all terribly and send our love. Hoping you are all healthy and had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

I was planning to organize our Angel Tree event like usual this year. But like everything else has been different this year, I find that it only makes sense to deviate from our usual plans. It simply isn't safe (or feasible for many due to being on quarantine) to do Angel Tree shopping this year. And we probably shouldn't gather together as a group for a "wrapping party" and luncheon. This saddens me greatly as our family has SO LOVED our wrapping parties. And yet, while I was praying yesterday lamenting and otherwise whining to God about losing this time with you all, our Lord took a moment to humble me ... instantly my mind was flooded with all the blessings we've been given. It was a good reminder to me to focus on my blessings.

I know in my heart that this is only temporary and that we will be able to gather again. But for this year's Angel Tree, I'd still like to do what we can for Fikre, Alem, and the kids. It won't be as fun as usual (all my excuses to go shopping are gone) but we can still do some good. Fikre and his family still need their Christian family to help them out ... money is very tight and they are struggling with the basics that many of us take for granted. So instead of shopping this year, I'd like to request that you take the money you would have spent on shopping and instead give a check (with Angel Tree in the memo line) or cash to Jim Miller. Pastor Mike or Jim may also have a special collection basket on the table as you come in. Then Jim will write a check on behalf of the church and send it in the mail.

The last day to donate to the Angel Tree will be December 13th. This way they will get our gift before Christmas and have it in time to pay the heat bill, get some extra groceries for a Christmas dinner, etc. I am confident that some of the money will go towards clothes and shoes for the kids also because, as we all know, they just keep growing! So in this most strange year, please consider donating to our "Angel Tree" and hopefully next year we can go back to shopping, our wrapping party, and luncheon!

With love,

Anne

*A Thanksgiving Prayer
By Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*“For each new morning with its light ...
For rest and shelter of the night ...
For health and food ...
For love and friends ...
For everything Thy goodness sends.”*

