



# The Shepherd's Voice

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## MINUTE WITH MIKE

*Hear my cry, O God; Give heed to my prayer.  
From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.  
For You have been a refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy.  
Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.  
Psalm 61:1-4*

My Dearest Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus,

A New Year's prayer of blessing, peace and joy as you and yours march into 2021.

Needless to say, 2020 was a very... unusual year to be sure. I have heard many say of it; "I'm glad it's over...", "There's been nothing good in it...", can't wait to return to normal...". I as well have felt those very feelings so there would be no arguing with folks that feel this way. But as I reflect on the year past and the year ahead, what I really want to do and feel is to look to Jesus and give Him my love and praise.

I have prayed Psalm 61 daily for the better part of 2020. It was a Psalm that I found "refuge" in as we all learned about and to live with COVID 19. It at first was my plea, my cry to God for sure. But as I have let this Word of God saturate my heart, I have come to see Psalm 61 as more than just a desperate cry but as a statement of faith and a confession of His glorious power and love. So, I would like to offer the first four verses of Psalm 61 as the theme verses for GSPC for 2021.

Consider, we all *cry* out and should always cry out, no matter what's going on in our world, for the earth is a fallen place. It's not our home; we are citizens of heaven. There will always be deadly pestilence and rumors of wars... Understandably then, our *heart is faint* because we are human; we are a broken and sinful people. We have become weary because we have rebelled and served ourselves, not God. Rightfully then we ask God to lead us *to The Rock* that is, of course, infinitely *higher* than we; Jesus our Christ and Lord. He has been and will continue to be our only source of strength against a spiritual enemy that seeks to devour each of us. Jesus is absolutely our *Tower of Strength!* Might we all year long then pray together; "*Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings*".

My hope is that 2021 will be a year of prayer, a year of repentance and turning and that we, the family of faith at GSPC, might urgently and sincerely seek the very face of God. May it be so.

Bless you and yours as you welcome in this New Year, understanding that every year, month, day and hour is a gift from our Most High God, *The Rock that is higher than I*.

In the love and joy of His service,

*Mike*

## SESSION NEWS

### Treasurer's Report 11/30/2020

\$ 27,969	Cash on Hand as of 11/30/2020
+ 25,548	Certificate of Deposit (Northpointe Bank) (less following committed funds)
- 28	Accrued Joyful Noise offerings
<u>- 11,000</u>	Building Fund
\$ 42,489	Uncommitted Funds Available

Note: Uncommitted funds as of the end of October were \$41,443. *Our cash GAIN in November was + \$1,046.*

### Clerk's Report

**2021 Budget** – The Treasurer submitted the 1st draft of the budget for consideration. The Session will review it and approve it at the next Session meeting. The Treasurer noted that he still expects 4-5 more pledges to be received before the first of the year. A draft Pastor's Call was also submitted for consideration.

### Pastor

- Angel Tree collections are strong and will be received Sunday, Dec. 20. Bill Keating will prepare a check to be sent via express on Monday, Dec. 22, and Mike will include a letter to Fikre.
- Mike confirmed the date for the congregational meeting as Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021. All materials for the annual report need to be submitted to Jim Miller no later than the 17th of January.
- Mike's wife Donna will be participating in Mike's medical plan at no additional expense to the church. Approved by common consent.

**Missions** – The Mission Committee met on Sunday, Dec. 13 and submitted a copy of their minutes. Purpose of the meeting was to select recipients for the 2021 Joyful Noise Offering.

## DATES

Friday (1<sup>st</sup>) New Years Day 2021  
Sunday (3<sup>rd</sup>) Worship and Communion at 10:00am  
Joyful Noise Offering – Rev. Jackson Gachini  
(Kenya)  
Thursday (7<sup>th</sup>) Bilyea Home Group meeting at  
1:00pm  
Friday (8<sup>th</sup>) Men's Breakfast – Bob Evans at M6 @  
Kalamazoo 9:30am (pending)  
Sunday (10<sup>th</sup>) Worship at 10:00am  
Thursday (14<sup>th</sup>) Session 1:00pm at CTS  
Sunday (17<sup>th</sup>) Worship at 10:00am  
Thursday (21<sup>st</sup>) Bilyea's Home Group meeting at  
1:00pm  
Friday (22<sup>nd</sup>) Newsletter deadline  
Sunday (24<sup>th</sup>) Worship at 10:00am  
Friday (29<sup>th</sup>) Ladies Luncheon

Sunday (31<sup>st</sup>) Worship and Appreciation Sunday at  
10:00am  
Annual Meeting of the Congregation

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

On Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup> immediately following  
worship we will hold our sixth Annual Meeting of  
the Congregation. The purpose of this meeting is:

- To present the congregation with Annual  
Reports
- To present the congregation with 2021 budget
- To present and vote on Pastor's compensation  
package

- To elect three members-at-large to serve on the 2021 Church Officers Nominating Team
- To entertain any other business related to the church and her mission

## **BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES – JANUARY**

- 1 Peter Kenyi
- 1 Natlina Kenyi
- 7 Roger Zoerner
- 11 Andrew Kenyi
- 11 Gary and Dana Lehmann (Anniv.)
- 16 Dani Schumacher
- 17 Anne Vanderberg
- 31 Marie Zoerner
- 31 Robert and Cammi Adams (Anniv.)

## **SERVING THIS MONTH**

Musicians: Marjorie Boerema – 3, 10 & 31  
 Maureen Sweet – 17 & 24  
 Preaching: Pastor Mike – 3, 10, 24 & 31  
 Dr. Jul Medenblink – 17  
 Liturgist: Henry Gachini – 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31  
 Sound: Team Lehmann – 3, 10, 17, 24, 31  
 Communion Bread: Rachel Wahome  
 Servicing: Henry Gachini and Rachel Wahome  
 Special Music: Pastor Mike – 3,  
 Henry Gachini & Racheal Wahome – 10  
 Adams Family – 17 & 31  
 Dana Lehmann – 24

## **MEMBERS/FRIENDS IN NEED OF PRAYER**

In need of healing: Bettye Kay (heart and 2 daughters dealing with cancer), Linda Van Heuvelen, Jean Bailey (cancer), Barb Bailey, homebound members Joan Walstrom, Pat Doorn, Cathy Jo Wolters, Wally Leffel

## **JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING**

The Joyful Noise Offering for January/February will benefit Rev. Jackson Gachini. Jackson (Jack) is the older brother of our Elder Henry Gachini. Jack lives and pastors a church in the village of Theika, in central Kenya. Jack loves to preach and teach and is very good

about providing pastoral care for his congregation. Your coins will help Jack both personally and professionally. If you have further questions or comments, please speak with Henry Gachini.

## **5 SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

In continuation of the newsletter's series on the Spiritual Disciplines by Michelle Rabon, the fourth discipline is **4. Journaling**. Regarding Journaling she says:

The practice of journaling may sound daunting, but there is great freedom to be found in pouring out what is in our hearts and minds onto paper. We can empty our worries and pains. We can write out the wonderful things we know to be true of God. We can process the things that are going on in our lives.

I have found great comfort in keeping a journal and writing how God is working in my life and in the lives of my friends and family. I write out the things that seek to take up space in my mind and cause me to worry. I keep track of the things that I am thankful for and how God has blessed me. Journaling is a tactile reminder that God is still working and taking care of our every need.

## **ANGEL TREE Thank You One and All**

Fikre, Alem and the children wish to thank everyone who so generously gave to this year's Angel Tree Christmas Gift Program. A special word of thanks to Anne and Dan Vandenberg who initiated the event again in 2020. More than \$1,000.00 was sent and gratefully used! Thanks again to everyone!

## **CHRISTMAS IN FEBRUARY?**

The Corona Virus has had a big impact on all phases of people's lives. Everything seems topsy turvy at times. Worship and activities in our church lives are no different. We have to wear masks, keep social distancing requirements, miss coffee hour after church, limit or hold meetings differently, etc. Unfortunately, the Personnel Team allowed Christmas to pass us by without collecting our annual staff Christmas gift collection. Therefore, we have decided to make it a Valentine's gift to show our love for all they do for the church. January 24-

February 7 we will be receiving donations to express appreciation for their faithful service. In making donations, please earmark them for Staff gifts.

## MID-WEEK BUMP

With the ongoing social restrictions and the concerns many of us have regarding getting out and attending worship, Pastor Mike and Jim Miller have decided that a second mid-week announcement would be helpful. You are all accustomed to getting the mid-week Blast on Wednesday, prepare for the mid-week Bump on Friday. Pastor Mike will send the prayer page out and a short devotion intended to stimulate us all in our faith in Christ Jesus and our walk with Him. If you have any ideas, comments or questions, please let Pastor Mike know.

## SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

Many of you know that Fikre Norcha, our dear brother and pastor in the Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia, is working on a Ph.D. program in systematic theology at the Mid-western Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. He is currently taking a class in theology and has just one more

class to take after this one. He will then write his dissertation. In the course of his studies he writes many position papers. He has recently written one on the Biblical position of Women in Ministry. If you would like to read this paper, please let Pastor Mike know as he has an e-file of the paper. (Because of its length it is not being printed here.)

## WELCOME TO JUL MEDENBLINK

The Elders are pleased to welcome Jul Medenblink, the President of Calvin Theological Seminary, to our pulpit on Sunday, January 17. Jul has been a dear friend and constant support to us here at GSPC. Trained in Law and after practicing in Florida, Jul came to CTS and completed his seminary training. Before being called to Calvin to serve as president, Jul church planted and pastored churches in Canada. It will be a thrill to have him bring a Word from the Lord on Sunday, January 17.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

My efforts are always valuable to God.

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## IMPERFECT BUT USEFUL

This devotional below was written by Peter Veugelaers (Wellington, New Zealand) and was taken from *The Upper Room*. **Read 2 Timothy 2:20-25**

**Those who cleanse themselves...will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.**

**--2 Timothy 2:21 (NIV)**

Sometimes it seems unlikely that God would use me in God's divine plan. How could someone as insignificant as me be of use to the Creator of the universe?

Yet because of God's grace for me, I have wanted to serve God above all else. As my faith has grown, I have felt that God has a purpose for me in different situations—like being of help to someone who has no one else to turn to.

At times we may think it's unlikely that God could use us to accomplish God's will. We may expect someone more kind, gentle, or loving to be God's instrument in the world—and in our neighborhood. Yet God can use us—whoever and wherever we are. The apostle Paul writes that Christians are “instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”

We are imperfect, and we live in an imperfect world. But God will use us even if we feel unworthy and unlikely. Our value to God's work may not be apparent to us, but it's always clear to God.

**Prayer:** God of the universe, thank you for using us for your kingdom's work. Encourage us by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

### **Prayer Focus: TO ANSWER GOD'S CALL**

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## **THE NEWEST BANNER**

Thank you again to Diane Solomon for the newest banner. In late November she got the feeling that she should make an Advent banner this year. After searching all her banner books, nothing looked like what she was thinking of. The new banner is the result of her personal thoughts. It took a lot of moving pieces around before it all came together. A lot of help from her family helped in the process. She has provided the following explanation of the symbolism of it. *The word ADVENT means we are waiting for the expected Jesus. The four candles represent the four themes of Advent: Love, Hope, Joy, and Peace. The banner is a reminder to us each week.* Diane stated, "I really enjoyed making this banner during the busiest time of the year for me." The congregation really appreciates Diane's sharing of her talents as we worship and praise God this Christmas season and throughout the year.



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## **A CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM FIKRE NORCHA**

Dear Pastor Mike and the Good Shephard family,

Christmas Greetings in the Lord.

I grew up in southwest Ethiopia farmers village. Until today there is no electricity, and people are using wood fire and kerosene to get light. The darkness is very thick, and hard to visit neighbors at nighttime. There are also dangerous wild animals such as hyenas and wolf around in the dark. So, people, especially children, are not advised to go outside at nighttime because of the darkness and the invisible dangerous animals. Yet, though the darkness is so dense when we lift our eyes, we can see bright stars in the sky and gives us a glimpse of hope that the darkness will pass, and a tropical zone bright sunlight will come in the morning.

I think 2020 was a kind of dark year for world society. Specifically, many families and friends have lost their loved ones and suffered from the pandemic and war for example in Ethiopia. As believers, we should remind that when Jesus entered the planet earth two thousand years ago, he came as an incredible light himself and called us to follow him and walk in the light. Scripture says, "when Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk-in darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12). Jesus speaks for spiritual light that those who follow him never walk-in darkness and never follow the way of disobedience or sin. When we follow Jesus, He is our light and empowers us by the Holy Spirit to see the darkness around us and the danger in the darkness. Also, as his children, he protects us and “guide our feet into the path of peace.” (Luke 1:79). He not only called us to walk in the spiritual light, but also, he called us to be “lights” to the darkness around us (Matthew 5:14-16). Physical light is necessary for physical life, especially in my birthplace, but there will be a time where there is no daylight. Jesus (the Lamb) will be all in all, and the glory of God will be the light, and the savior will be our eternal lamp (Revelation 21:23). God is on the move for the second advent of Christ. So, despite the darkness and the invisible danger in it, let us continue to walk in the light to see our Great Hope and Savior in his glory.

We wish you a very blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

With our love and prayers

Fikre

