
CONNECTION

Our Savior Lutheran Church

Mesquite, TX

July 2020

A PHILISTINE FABLE

The Philistines had been warned about crowding into Dagon's Palace to worship their fish god. They had already declared victory over their ancient enemy Israel, even though the war was far from over.

It didn't matter. They wanted a party, a rally, to gloat over Israel and Israel's old, washed-up nemesis Samson. So they cheered and shouted, standing side by side, packed in like sardines. After all, Dagon was a fish god, so a sardine-like crowd was the ideal way of praising him. And Dagon loved adulation.

But crowding together was the worst thing they could do ... because it played right into Samson's hand. You see, the Philistines were so giddy celebrating Delilah's famous haircut, that they had forgotten the broken-down, aging, now long-haired hippie named Samson ... and Israel's strange God, Yahweh.

Yahweh made no sense to the Philistines because he couldn't be seen. The Israelites didn't allow idols so they didn't make statues ... like Dagon. Not only was Yahweh unseeable, Yahweh didn't make sense. The gods of other nations were modelled after creatures—or creation ... like a fish, or a bull, or a cat, or an alligator, or the sun. How could the Philistines understand this weird, mysterious God of Israel?

And Samson? Samson was so disgraced and shamed that the former Israelite strongman was nothing more than a dumb ox. In fact, ox's work was what Samson did. He was a beast of burden. Samson pulled the grindstone around and around, day after day, to the Philistine's derisive hoots and hollers.

Samson was a hopeless has-been.

No matter. The party was on! Samson wasn't invited at first ... for obvious reasons. But as the crowd got more and more raucous in their self-congratulatory euphoria, they realized Samson could provide just the entertainment they craved. So Samson was called in to the jeers and insults of the throng. An attendant had to hold his hand as if Samson were a helpless child. You see, Samson had been blinded. But, though his eyes had been put out, he could still see. Samson could see, without eyes, pride and arrogance. He could see the open defiance against Yahweh and truth. So Samson summoned one last burst of strength. He prayed to Yahweh, strained with all his might against the pillars of the palace, and the brazen taunts were silenced.

Estimates of the crowd numbered in the thousands. There were three thousand on the roof so there must have been twice that number, counting the Philistine lords and dignitaries below.

The story of Samson lives on today because it speaks against human arrogance and idolatry. It calls us to compassion instead of hate, and mercy for those broken down by life. It reminds us that our strength ... and the strength of any nation ... is to be found in humble service and an abiding trust in God. This ancient story asks us to pray—not with the smug and haughty, but with Samson and a thief on the cross: “Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.”

If you want to investigate the story further, you may find it in the book of Judges, chapters 13-16 ... or you can see it happening in our world today.

LET'S PACK THE CHURCH

Near the end of July, we're going to fill the church with as many people as we can to celebrate our return to worship. After the emptiness of church for all these weeks, we don't want any seat unfilled. We'll sing all the hymns from Easter and Pentecost and we'll connect and renew friendships. Masks are optional and no social distancing is required. Doors open at 8am and we hope to stay till noon. The main thing is for us to worship together in a full house to praise God and celebrate Our Savior Lutheran Church.

By now, I hope, you are at least upset at the suggestion of a packed building with full throated singing and no mandatory masks. If that invitation were true, I would not deserve to be your pastor or anybody's pastor. That situation is reckless, irresponsible, and even immoral. Worst of all, it would say that I really don't care about your health. It would also say that I don't take the coronavirus seriously.

Why is it, then, that this very situation is tolerated in our country... by our leaders, no less. It is truly a reckless abdication of accountability and trust. It is a crass example of those who care about votes but not the voters.

As coronavirus cases skyrocket in Texas, we must accept the guidelines that are based on science, common sense, and Christian care for our neighbor. A couple months ago, we declared this a war. Now we are waving a white flag. We agreed to go by data driven facts—not fantasy. Now, many of our leaders are ignoring the guidelines as if they never existed. We must not tolerate such callous disregard for people's health and well-being, whether it might come from a pastor or any person in power. A leader forfeits his/her position if care is not shown for the people.

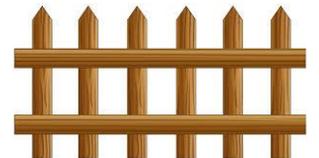
To that End...

We are cancelling our first in-person worship plans for July 12, outdoors. The numbers are too risky and our congregation is elderly. Our bishop advises congregations to wait until the numbers go down as prescribed by the CDC. They are the experts and the scientists—not us. We will attempt another drive-thru service on **July 26 from 9-10am** (if we have not returned to in-person worship by then) that will include Holy Communion separately for each car. In the meantime, we appreciate your feedback and response. We also need your preference of service time (8:30am, 11am, or 5:30pm) for when we do resume in-person worship. Pray for your church council and leaders as we try to make the decisions that are most careful and caring for our church community.



We're Fenced In!

It took hard labor in the hot sun, but John Ernst and Robert Holmes finished our new fence surrounding the education wing air conditioning units. John had to order and saw new fence panels and, although it took a lot of work, the results are worthy of the best wall builders in the United States—including on the border!



Lifting Up Those Who Grieve

On Friday, June 12, Cherry Dodds died as did Elaine North's mother, Evelyn Christian, in Ohio. Bonnie Folkmann's twin brother in Iowa died on June 16. Joyce Barabas' mother in Missouri died on March 18. The Barabas' have had quite a year as Greg's mother, age 97, survived surgery and is recovering well. We continue to mourn with Patti Preas the death of her husband, Gerald.

Stay Safe and Stay Healthy

We say those words for everyone during the coronavirus, but we especially remember in prayer those who are going through difficult diagnoses. Shari Murphy continues treatment for kidney cancer. Sally Nelson begins treatment for aggressive leukemia. Gordon Johnston is dealing with bladder cancer, while Bonnie's sister, Becky, deals with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and leukemia. Kathryn Utroska will be at MD Anderson for several days for even weeks to pursue a different cancer treatment. Louis Williams was involved in a serious car accident and is in critical condition. Mary Lang is making a remarkable recovery after a brain aneurysm. Eleanor Adix fractured her femur and is recovering. Clara Sandback is back at Bradfield Place after a similar break. Victor Hunter also is back home after recovering from a broken bone in his foot. Lila Johnson is having a pacemaker replaced. Mike Williams will have extensive oral surgery. And the greatest news of all is Suzanne York beat the coronavirus and remains at Edgewood Rehabilitation. This list is far from comprehensive, but please call the office on any updates or additions... and in the meantime, stay safe and stay healthy.

THE CORONAVIRUS WON'T STOP...

SO WE WON'T STOP TRYING OUR BEST TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH EVERYONE IN THE OUR SAVIOR FAMILY.

After having had a pen pal for over 3 months, we're going to match everyone up with a new prayer partner. You may send this person/household a card or even give them a call, but be sure to pray for them as we lift up each other for safety and support. Let's not let social distancing keep any of us distanced from the friendship we share in Christ Jesus.

Here is your new partner:

Please call the office or Pr. Schelter if you are uncertain about who the person is or if you have any questions about how to make this work. We hope that having a prayer partner will remind each of us of the treasure that we share in our family at Our Savior.

A Zoom Bible Study/Discussion Group may restart, but only if enough express interest. Please call the church office or Pastor Schelter if you would like to Zoom in on a topic/bible study of interest.



A suggestion for all those medals the Olympics won't be needing this year



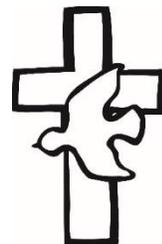
July 2020

Birthdays

| Date | Name |
|------|-------------------|
| 1 | Penny Fortenberry |
| 2 | Ashlee Morton |
| 3 | Denise Keller |
| 6 | Travis Salvato |
| 9 | Jonathan Enright |
| | Joshua Enright |
| | Gerald Hare |
| | John Mangham |
| 11 | Ella Ranta |
| 12 | Drew Castilleja |
| | Becky Williams |
| 17 | Gabriel Ramirez |
| 18 | Simon Belz |
| 19 | Jaeden Freeman |
| | Adama Ndomahina |
| | Dawson Spindle |
| 21 | Stephanie Priola |
| 25 | Jimmy Stovall Jr. |
| 26 | Lisa White |
| 27 | Tania Helm |
| 28 | David Anderson |
| 29 | Ken Hester |
| 30 | Mackenzie Reggia |
| 31 | Aimee Hillegas |

Baptism Birthdays

| Date | Name |
|------|-------------------|
| 5 | Brynna Williams |
| 13 | Penny Fortenberry |
| 24 | Nicholas Zaragoza |
| 25 | Kyle Furr |
| | Michael Furr |
| 26 | Denise Bartosh |
| 29 | Carson Williams |
| | Andrew Williams |



Wedding Anniversaries

| Date | Years |
|------|----------------------------|
| 30 | Melissa & David Zaragoza 4 |

Nancy's Health Notes

I have said before and will continue for a long time to come. Health care is changing every day. Physicians used to make house calls. This still occurs on rare occasions but more frequently Nurse Practitioners have become the health care providers who make home visits. Now a new dimension is in place.

We have access to telemedicine. This is not the ideal but due to the isolation caused by the coronavirus, this has become a vehicle to provide care. The physician you see in the virtual visit may be new and unfamiliar with your history.

Recently, I had my first encounter with telemedicine and I have to admit it was better than I anticipated. There are no hands on exams but the history the physician is able to obtain will determine the necessary follow up--labs, x-rays or medications.

The following are some ideas that might help to optimize your virtual visit:

- Keep a written list of all medicines you take, Rx, over the counter including supplements.
- Write a list of your medical history including allergies, diagnosis, and major surgeries.
- Write your vital signs including current weight, temp., and blood pressure if available.
- Write out your complaints reflecting the reason for the call. Include when it occurred and limitations that result from the complaint.

An example: right ankle hurts, is swollen and bruised starting yesterday when fell, cannot put weight on right leg. Include what you have done.

Have a pen and paper with you to record instructions.

As I said before, I had a good virtual visit and the one part that stood out was having a face-to-face visit. He was facing the computer so I talked directly to his face and not the back of his head as often happens in the office. The electronic age requires everything be recorded and reviewed but patients often complain that the interaction is blocked by the computer.

Hopefully this information will help you remain healthy—body, mind, and spirit.

Thoughts:

"Grace is kindness, compassion and caring."

"Communicate sacredness: build it, share it, and spread it."

"Develop the power of listening"

"Let us be kind and compassionate to remove the sadness of the world."