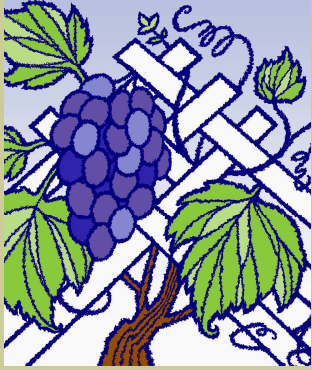


SEE, I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU TODAY
LIFE AND PROSPERITY...
DEUTERONOMY 30:15, NRSV



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The Reporter

May 2021

The Reporter

Volume 19, Issue 04

"The Idolatry of Personal Safety"

by Pastor Proeber

Last week I came across an article with the above-mentioned title. It was an interesting and somewhat informative piece. I must admit I never considered this particular perspective, but a few of the writer's thoughts made me think. While I couldn't agree with everything he wrote, I could agree with the caution he issued. I believe it is a warning all of us need to keep in mind.

The article focused on Hebrews 10:25: "Let us not neglect the meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." His basic premise was in response to people and how they handled the COVID crisis. Many chose to stay home to follow a worship service on a live or recorded stream. His concern arose over the subsequent reluctance of people to return to worship. He believed people were staying home because of the ease of following a stream rather than going to an in-person service. The rationale often used was the concern for personal health and well-being. The initial response might be, he overstated his case when he said this decision was a form of idolatry. But it does make one pause. With building limits increasing, with more people being vaccinated, and with proper protocols being followed, in-person worship is quite safe. The question which naturally follows is: why aren't more people returning to worship? The answer is already stated—a concern for personal health and well-being.

I understand there are people who have genuine health concerns (heart conditions, lung conditions, diabetes, etc) which will hinder them from returning to worship. Yet, each of us must be on our guard if what we rely on is a valid reason, or a convenient excuse. If it is the latter, then maybe we have fallen for the devil's deception and given in to the sin of idolatry. Individually we must ask this question of ourselves after prayerful soul searching.

In order to understand what we might be doing, we need to consider what our Lord deserves and demands in the First Commandment. The Lord explains his expectations for his people at the foot of Mount Sinai. The command is clear:

"²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, where you were slaves. ³You shall have no other gods beside me. ⁴You shall not make any carved image for yourself or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. ⁵Do not bow down to them or be subservient to them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God. I follow up on the guilt of the fathers with their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren, if they also hate me. ⁶But I show mercy to thousands who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:2-6)

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Personal Safety, from page 1

You could also include Luther's explanation in the Small Catechism: "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." How does this work during a pandemic?

I would never be so fool-hearty to say, "Don't worry, all we have to do is trust God." Initially, very little was known about the virus, and caution had to be exercised. Now we know more and have more options with which to battle the virus. Consequently, some of the reasons for not gathering with our fellow believers are fading. Granted, we still need to exercise caution, but consider some of the changes which have recently occurred. Attendance in places of worship has increased to 50%. In relation to our building it would be 75 people with proper distancing. Also consider about 46% of the people in Santa Barbara County have been vaccinated. There are also the safeguards we continue to follow - open doors, fans, open windows, and masks. In some ways, we have a safer environment in our church building than at the grocery store, the drug store, Costco, or the gas station. We could even include sit down and fast food restaurants.

What we also need to remember is the promise of our Lord—"never will I leave you, never will I forsake you." Now this doesn't mean we can throw caution to the wind or be reckless. It does mean we can trust the Lord to work his good and gracious will in our lives. If it means staying healthy—all thanks and praise are his. If we become sick and possibly leave this world for eternity—all praise and thanks are his.

So, we have to look into our own heart and ask, "Why am I not worshipping with my brothers and sisters in the house of God?" Before you hurriedly respond, "because I don't want to get sick and die," consider, is my decision to stay away valid before the Lord? Is it possible I might be bowing before the idol of person health and well-being? The answer is not as simple as it may seem.

Consider the life and times of the historic Christian Church. There have been a myriad of untreatable diseases. There was diphtheria, skin infections, dysentery, fevers, leprosy, and worms. There was only one which had strict quarantine requirements, and that was leprosy. In spite of these easily communicable diseases, people still gathered for worship and continued to serve their Lord. Certainly precautions were taken (Ceremonial Law), yet the opportunity to gather together to worship the Lord was a priority. You might also consider persecution as a human caused pandemic. During the First Century countless believers died without a vaccine, the hope of a remedy, and many endured horrible agonizing deaths. This harsh treatment could never keep them in their homes, or deter them from living and rejoicing in their faith. If anything, it made them more intent to serve the Lord because they knew their time of service on this earth was limited.

It makes us think, doesn't it! Here we have allowed a man-made virus to all but paralyze us and strip us of the God-given gift of worshiping together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes, we rejoice because we have been able to take advantage of video streaming. Still we dare never downplay the devil's schemes and wiles. He can take a blessing twist it, pervert it, and use it for our down fall. Relying on streaming to fill the void of in-person congregational worship must be viewed cautiously. The devil could make us think, "I don't have to go to church any more. I can just watch the television or the video monitor." What ultimately suffers is the gathering of the saints, the encouragement of fellow Christians, and the joy of growing together in the Word, Sacrament, and service.

There is a great deal at stake, and much could be lost if we become too comfortable with streaming. It could eventually lead to the idolatry of personal health and well-being. Therefore, we need to prayerfully, honestly, and humbly ask ourselves, "why am I staying away from worship?" It is also why we can never afford to forget the encouragement and exhortation our Savior supplies through his Scriptures: "Let us not neglect the meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

“The Importance of the Resurrection”

The great value of the resurrection can never be overstated. It is the foundation of our faith, and the confidence of our rescue for life in heaven. The importance of the resurrection is made clear as Paul says, “¹⁶If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then it also follows that those who fell asleep in Christ perished. ¹⁹If your hope in Christ applies only to this life, we are the most pitiful people of all” (*1 Corinthians 15:16-18*).

But Christ has been raised from the dead! This incredible truth of Scripture brought Luther to write with total confidence and unwavering boldness:

Know ye, then—sin, death, devil, and everything that assails me—that you are missing the mark. I am not one of those who are afraid of you. For Christ, my dear Lord, has presented to me that triumph and victory of His by which you were laid low. And from this very gift of His I derive my name and am called a Christian. There is no other reason. My sin and death hung about His neck on Good Friday, but on the day of Easter they had completely disappeared. This victory He has bestowed on me. This is why I do not worry about you.

(What Luther Says, Page 118, vol. 3, paragraph 3881)

For you and me there is nothing more comforting or encouraging than the resurrection of Jesus. Everything Paul writes in *1 Corinthians 15*, and particularly the closing verses, invites shouts of victory and unending praise to our risen Savior who triumphed over death, the devil, and the grave—for us!

Equally important is the never-failing motivation we receive from the resurrection to serve without hesitation or doubt. We never need to ask, “why do we have to serve our Lord if it seems fruitless to do so?” The answer is simple, we do everything because Jesus lives!

⁵⁰ Now I say this, beloved: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and what is perishable is not going to inherit what is imperishable. ⁵¹ Look, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But once this perishable body has put on imperishability, and this mortal body has put on immortality, then what is written will be fulfilled:

Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ Death, where is your sting?

Grave, where is your victory?

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.



Easter 2021

Outreach Opportunities

For the last year and one half, many of the plans of the Outreach & Fellowship Committee have been on hold. Precautions often meant canceling events or activities. Everything is beginning to change—slowly. While it would be exciting to seize every opportunity and get back to normal as soon as possible, the Committee will begin by taking a measured approach. What can we do safely, and what do we need to do to hold an event? It may begin only with coffee being served after the worship service. However, it is exciting to consider the planning process again. Please keep watch in the service folder, on the website, and in the newsletter for more information. If you have a suggestion, or would like to help, please speak with Al Todd or Pastor Proeber.

Current Activities

Wednesday evening Bible Study at 7:00 pm. The class is currently studying the topic of the “End Times” as presented in the book written by Professor Thomas Nass. There are many interesting and curious topics ahead—the rapture, the millennium, heaven and hell. All are welcome to come and learn.

Spring and Summer Activities: In the past we have held a progressive dinner, an Ice Cream Social and Game Night, Fourth of July activities, and the Beach, Bike, Barbeque. All of these will soon be evaluated to see if we can hold them in a safe and enjoyable way. There is hope for the BBB in August, but we may do it under the oaks on the church property. As the summer months give way to the fall, we pray some of the regular activities can be scheduled—Reformation potluck, pre-Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas decoration and caroling; and others.

Last, but not least: While it helps to be able to invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to attend an activity, we should never forget what is most important. We can always invite people who do not know Jesus to our worship service, a Bible Class, or a general information class. We can also invite them to follow our live stream, or check out our website. Even more important, we need to be faithful and effective witnesses in all we say and do.

Quarterly Congregational Meeting—April 2021

The first quarterly congregational meeting of 2021 was called to order on Sunday, April 18th at 10:45 am by Chairman Greg Grunewald. Pastor Proeber opened with a prayer. Eight voting and five non-voting members were present from the congregation.

Unfinished Business: There was no old or unfinished business for the meeting.

Outreach Elder: Josh Schueler

Streaming continues without any major issues other than synchronization;
Advertising options are being evaluated to get people to the website and streaming;
Number of views remains consistent, but a slight drop due to more people returning to in person worship;
There is always a need to train and involve more people in the work of sharing the Gospel.

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Minutes, continued from page 4

Pastor's report: Pastor Proeber

Worship and Lord's Supper attendance are improving on monthly basis;
Holy week total attendance—streaming and in person worship—was up from previous years;
Easter Sunday worship was held outside and was well attended. The Lord's Supper was also offered;
and many members took advantage of the opportunity.

Alice Grunewald was called into eternity, and Wilma Hiedenrich was admitted to the hospital; our
prayers go with the families;

Activity is starting to pick up in a number of areas of ministry. Bible Class is being held every Wednesday evening; Sonja Todd is holding Sunday School in her home for the younger children; the handbell choir continues to practice and play for services.

Pastor's role as Circuit Pastor for the Los Angeles Circuit will require a little more time. Calvary, Canyon Country is currently calling for a new pastor. Pastor Proeber will be conducting the Call meetings.

There is a long list of projects which need to be completed; one will be addressed each month over the summer.

A heartfelt "thank you" was given to the congregation for the prayers and expressions of sympathy at the passing of Pastor's father in February.

Property: Jim Brown

Throughout the Quarter general maintenance was done on the tractor; a new microwave was installed in the parsonage; a new parking lot light was installed; a new timer was installed for the church lights; and materials were purchased for the bathroom remodel in the church;

Mowing, trimming, and weeding were done on a regular basis; a sprinkler supply line was replaced on the west side of the church;

A work day is being planned for interior and exterior work;

The Committee will begin the process of getting bids to resurface the parking lot.

Financial Secretary: Jim Everson

General fund 1 st quarter offerings	\$ 38,751.71
Cleaning / mowing / pass through	452.00
Total offerings	\$ 39,203.71

Treasurer: Al Todd

General fund Balance January 1, 2021	\$ 33,939.00
1 st quarter offerings*	\$ 38,752.00
1 st quarter expenses	\$ 36,059.00
General fund Balance March 31, 2021	\$ 36,631.00

* Less "pass-throughs" (e.g., extra Synod mission offerings)

Endowment Fund: Al Todd

Beginning Balance January 1, 2021	\$433,926
Change in Value	\$ 11,333 (2.6%)
Fund Market Value March 3, 2021	\$445,259

New Business

There was no additional business to conduct this Quarter.

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Minutes, from page 5

Announcements:

Next Council meeting Tuesday, May 4th at 7:00 pm

Next Outreach meeting will be determined as needed

Next Voter's meeting Sunday, July 18th following worship service

The meeting adjourned with the Doxology at 12:05 pm

Editor's note

Congregational meetings are held quarterly after the Sunday worship service for attendee convenience. The Council invites all our members to participate: just raise your hand to be recognized and offer comments, suggestions or questions for the Council regarding our ministry, property issues or concerns and recommendations. Please consider setting aside time this July 18th after Sunday service to attend. You'll still probably be able to have lunch not much past noon!

Notes & News

✝ Music Update

We are grateful for the dedicated effort of the "ringers" to provide additional music for Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Even though the choir is smaller than previous years, the chosen accompaniments offered a "fuller" sound. As always, there is an open invitation to ring. The only requirement is a willingness to serve the Lord, and a commitment to make Monday evening practices.

If you are interested in ringing, please speak with Debbie regarding the bell choir. The choir will continue to practice and play through Ascension (May 16th), Pentecost (May 23rd), and Trinity Sunday (May 30th).

✝ Bible Class

The Wednesday evening class continues to meet at 7:00 pm. The current topic for study is the book "End Times." It is a thorough treatment of what the Bible says will happen when our Savior returns in glory. Topics to be covered are: Heaven, Hell, Millennialism, Dispensationalism, the Tribulation, the Rapture, and the anti-Christ. It is possible you have had a question regarding one, or any of these topics. It is not too late to come and join in the study.

God-willing the Sunday morning class will begin during the month of May, or June at the latest. Last time we met we were studying the book, "God, the Ultimate Humanitarian." Extra books are available if you would like to read the book on your own.

✝ Sunday School

Plans are being made to restart Christian Education for children on Sunday mornings. In the past classes were held on the first and third Sundays of the month. We will attempt to keep that schedule. There will again be two classes for younger and older children. Please watch for more information.

Also being planned for the near future are Confirmation Classes for the youth, as well as a children's message during the worship service. Both of these will aid parents in their training of their children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord.



Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck—gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy or email Pastor with your submission:
(pastor.orlcsb@gmail.com)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

There is always a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have really made every issue more interesting. We pray that every member will provide an article throughout the remaining months of 2021. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for May

Church Council	Tuesday, May 4 th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday, May 4 th at 8:00 pm

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to supply you with the information you need.



We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly. Also, sincerest apologies for not recognizing the April Birthdays.

Editor's Note: If there are dates which are incorrect or overlooked, please share them as soon as possible—emailing, texting, or calling the church office.

May

21st - Kelsey H.
23rd - Wilma H.
27th - Wyatt D.
Joshua S.
29th - Dale K.

April

1 st - Margaret B.	18 th - Caroline P.
4 th - Pat F.	19 th - Jessica J.
6 th - Daniel G.	24 th - John F.
Lance S.	25 th - Penny G.
13 th - Pam S.	26 th - Ian S.

Devotional Corner

Great Expectations

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory.”
John 17:24

People tend to have great expectations for themselves. They want to be happier, healthier, wealthier, and more popular. Sometimes these expectations materialize, sometimes they don't. What follows is critical. How does one respond when these expectations remain unfulfilled?

It is an important question, and it is especially important in my relationship with Jesus. He too has great expectations for my life. These he first shared with his disciples on the night before his crucifixion, death and resurrection. He specifically told them, "I want you to be with me where I am." Jesus wanted his disciples to be in heaven with him. This great expectation remains the same for me. Jesus wants me to be with him in heaven. He also wants me to see him in his glory.

Unfortunately, like the person who fails to meet their expectations, I fail to meet the expectations of my Savior. I sin, and as a result, I fall short of his glory. Whether it is because of weakness or willfulness, I fail to live up to Jesus' expectations for me. In the end, I will never enter heaven, nor will I see him in his glory.

Unlike those who experience only disappointment at their unmet expectations, Jesus not only knows my failures, he acts to reverse them. The requirements for heaven and to stand in his glory he secured on my behalf by meeting his Father's expectation for perfection. He, then, credits these to me through faith in his precious work.

As a result, I no longer find myself failing to meet Jesus' expectations, they have all been met for me. Now I can live with the confidence of heaven, and the certainty I will see my Savior in his glory.

Prayer

O gracious Lord, I know I daily disappoint you. At the same time, I know you have declared me not guilty. Give me the strength of faith to trust in your forgiveness, to grow in your grace, and to rejoice in your great expectations for my life.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as “podcasts.”