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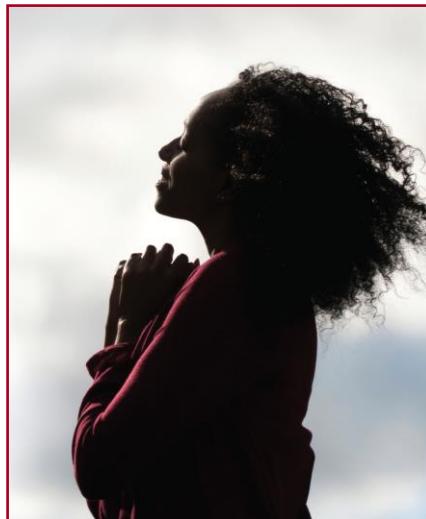
AUGUST 2018

FROM PASTOR JOSEPH

"Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say 1500, in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy but even inescapable?" That is the question at the heart of Charles Taylor's 2007 tome *A Secular Age*, probably the most important book on religion and culture in recent memory. I've been thinking about that question a lot as our next program year is starting to take shape.

One common answer to that question is that science has made it impossible to believe in God. Since the Enlightenment, science has whittled away much of religion's explanatory power. Scripture comes to be seen as fallible and rituals are derided as superstitious. Science gives us good answers to questions, the theory goes, and questions that science cannot answer aren't really worth asking.

Another answer, the one I've talked about most in our Wednesday night studies, is that the problem has less to do with skepticism of religious belief than shifting relationships with institutions. There is plenty of research on how my generational peers have a far lower rate of religious affiliation than previous generations. But when you look at questions about personal beliefs (Do you believe in God?) or spiritual practices (How often do you pray?), the gap is significantly smaller. When people describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious," they are often saying that they are "spiritual but not with other people."



Taylor's answer is that instead of filling a role proscribed by a static and stratified society (think about the feudal society the Reformation emerged from), we are now responsible for building meaningful lives on our own. Advances in the arts, philosophy, science, and literature over the past five hundred years have given us a better understanding of what it means to be human and live a meaningful life. Why is it easier to not believe in God? The short answer is that you don't have to.

Many churches do not like talking about this issue, but we can't do any kind of useful mission without having a better grasp on it. If the Taylor argument is right—it certainly has some resonance with my own experiences—then the church should place a greater emphasis on creating conversations about flourishing and our search for authenticity. This does not mean giving up liturgy or preaching or the sacraments, but it does mean enriching our conversations with the arts, the social sciences, and culture that don't use the same language for human fulfillment that we are used to using in church.

Like Jesus comparing the kingdom of God to the everyday objects around him like mustard seeds, sheep, and rising dough, we have a new need to translate the grace of God. I don't know exactly what that looks like, but let's figure it out together.

Peace and courage,
Pastor Joseph Schattauer Paillé

FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

We all grow when we share ideas and learn from each other. In that spirit, Advent recently hosted a meeting with leaders from the Lutheran churches in Allendale, Ramsey, and Saddle River. It was a fun evening as we shared our congregations' stories and talked about our aspirations and challenges. Some common themes emerged: Our desire to engage more people, of all ages, in our ministries. Our hope to serve as beacons in our communities – leaders in efforts that benefit others. And our search for new opportunities to do God's work.

All agreed the meeting was worthwhile and that our churches could benefit from continuing dialogue. For example, the folks from Zion, in Saddle River, were intrigued by our Saturday service. I want to learn more about Ramsey Redeemer's, multi-platform communication strategy, and what they describe as their "awesome" coffee hour.

We will meet again in the Fall to further explore how we can cooperate and support each other. Pastor Joseph and I will keep you informed and encourage you to join us at the next meeting.

Bill Whitney
Council President

FROM SOCIAL MINISTRY

The backpack collection is going well; last day to return a filled backpack is Sunday, August 5. There are still empty backpacks available – if you can't make it to church on the weekend, stop by during the week to pick up or return a backpack.



Please continue to support the CFA during the summer by bringing in groceries or donating directly at www.cfanj.org. Thanks.



LUTHERAN GROUPS WORKING IN THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

LIRS was founded by Lutheran churches in the U.S. to serve uprooted people

during World War II. They do detention visitation ministry, advocacy for immigration reform, legal services for survivors of torture, and provide a variety of services to refugees. (lirs.org)



Lutheran Social Services
of New York

LSS's Immigration Legal Program represents applicants seeking asylum, family-based immigration status, citizenship, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Temporary Protected Status, relief under the Violence Against Women Act, and U visas for survivors of crime. It also defends immigrants in deportation proceedings. (lssny.org)



AMMPARO

A ministry of Lutheran Disaster Relief that offers support to migrant children and adults through a variety of ELCA ministries, including pro bono legal services. (elca.org/ammparo)

ELCA RESOURCES ON IMMIGRATION

- Social Message on Immigration (1998) (elca.org)
- Social Policy Resolution "Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Immigration Reform" (2009) (elca.org)
- NJ Synod "Resolution Concerning Undocumented Immigrants" (2018) (njsynod.org)

SPREADING OUT FROM JERUSALEM: ACTS 8-12

I love the way God can take the evil that men do and turn it to his purpose. In Acts 2-7, following Pentecost, the “way” of Jesus Christ spread rapidly through Jerusalem and the local area. Fueled by home fellowships, and powered by the Holy Spirit, the “word” was proclaimed boldly and publicly. Miracles of healing brought wonder and amazement to the local people. It also kicked up resistance from the Temple leaders, who felt their authority being usurped. Additional confrontations only added, rather than diminished, the growth of this new “Jesus” sect. When Stephen told the ruling Council that they had become “ betrayers and murderers”, (read 7:51-53) and had not kept the law they snapped. Stephen was killed, and “a severe persecution began against the Church in Jerusalem and all except the apostles were scattered through the countryside of Judea and Samaria”. Rather than ending the Church, it sparked a new level of growth.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus stated, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 8 begins the “Judea and Samaria” part of the prophecy. Forced to leave Jerusalem, the followers brought their new faith with them, and began to teach others in new locations. The Temple leadership had not suppressed what will become Christianity; they had unexpectedly helped it grow.

The first evidence of the growth came in an unlikely spot: Samaria. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews, and the feeling was mutual. In chapter 8, Phillip preached and healed many there, and “there was great joy in the city”. When Peter and John ventured there, they prayed for them and the Samaritans received the gift of the Holy Spirit. That people other than Jews could receive Holy Spirit was shocking to many followers: it became obvious it was a gift for everyone, not just some Jews in Jerusalem. The Word spread further abroad when Phillip met a court



eunuch from Ethiopia. Phillip preached to him and baptized him. To this day, Christianity is practiced in Ethiopia.

Following this success, Phillip ventured on to Caesarea, but bigger developments were on the horizon, as Saul (soon to be known as Paul) ventured to Damascus in search of Christians to persecute.

As described in chapter 9, he was blinded by his meeting with Jesus, and was attended to by a believer named Ananias until he could get around again. Saul began to preach Jesus, to the surprise and shock of the Jerusalem Temple authorities.

In summary so far, Samaria, Caesarea, Ethiopia and Damascus have heard the Word. No longer a Jerusalem “thing”, the Word continued to spread out. The growth will become exponential after the revelation Peter and Cornelius received in Joppa. As described in chapter 10, Peter says, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him”. The gentiles he teaches receive the Holy Spirit, and the world will never be the same. Jesus came for all, and the disciples begin to implement that truth. A Church is established in Antioch, which at that time was one of the greatest cities in the Roman world. A follower, named Barnabus, brings Paul to Antioch to help with the work. It was at Antioch followers of Jesus were described as Christians (11:38) for the first time. Paul was just getting warmed up. Starting in chapter 13, he will begin his apostolic journeys, taking his ministry to Europe. The word has moved over Samaria and Judea. It is time to move “to the ends of the earth”.

So, as usual, why should we care? The followers of Jesus had none of the advantages we have today. They had few financial resources, no buildings, or ministries, no full time trained staff or any tradition to fall back upon. They were the blue-collar guys of their

day. Yet, most Church leaders today are envious of what they accomplished. They were guided by the Holy Spirit, were tremendously dedicated, and used their homes rather than a dedicated building. They were also fiercely courageous, and unwilling to bow to the religious authority of the day. By studying some first century tactics, we might modify our approach to contemporary times. These folks had no more talent than any of us, yet they turned the world on its head.

Happy AUGUST Birthday to...

5 Braden Macke	19 Peter Saliu
5 Lois Salisbury	22 Eileen Scholl
7 Hunter Lightenberg	22 Bill Whitney
10 Lisa Breckenridge	23 Matt Vajda
11 Timothy Wuerfel	24 Barbara Zanetto
14 Luke Pensallorto	30 Ryan Macke
14 Kevin Weaver	30 Kevin Spector
15 Joan Grotz	31 Bethel Borgeson
17 Carl Skonberg	

Happy AUGUST Anniversary to...

5 Dick & Lorraine Freimuth
7 Peter & Christie Rutherford
8 Ed & Eileen Scholl
10 Christopher & Christina Bannan
10 Richard & Terry Carbone
10 Damon & Cathy Kirk
18 Rich & Kathy Zinn
21 Thomas & Suzanne Weir
22 Bob Thompson & Carol Brighton
25 David & Tina Miles
25 Doug & Carol Ann Wood
30 Olé & Kay Tangen

Thankful offerings to...

- Mary Pensallorto for hosting the July Council meeting at her home
- Bill Joseph and all the volunteers who helped with VBS night on June 28

September dates at a glance:

September 16: Rally Day

September 23: Christian Health Care Forum
on Music and Dementia Care

September 30: Rev. Scott Schantzenbach
Preaching and Forum on Generosity

Thanks to Those Serving this Month...

August 5

Assisting Minister	Linda Ganger
Reader	Jody Eiden
Ushers	John Havens & Chris Reynen
Communion Prep	Christine Keeler
Fellowship	<i>Please sign up</i>
Teller	Bill Whitney
Counter	Dick Freimuth

August 12

Assisting Minister	Carolyn Tedesco
Reader	Carolyn Tedesco
Usher	Mary & Frank Pensallorto
Communion Prep	Kim Salerno
Fellowship	<i>Please sign up</i>
Teller	Mary Pensallorto
Counter	Dick Freimuth

August 19

Assisting Minister	Jody Eiden
Reader	Roy Borgeson
Ushers	Gerry Lauro & George Collard
Communion Prep	Carolyn Tedesco & Christie Rutherford
Fellowship	<i>Please sign up</i>
Teller	TBD
Counter	Dick Freimuth

August 26

Assisting Minister	Bob Schoendorf
Reader	Linda Ganger
Ushers	Bill Whitney & Joe Salerno
Communion Prep	Lois Salisbury
Fellowship	Pastor Joseph & Anna
Teller	TBD
Counter	Dick Freimuth

Still time to catch up on the Book Group selections; meetings start September 17!

Miss Kopp's Midnight Confession by Amy Stewart
for September

White Houses by Amy Bloom for October

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles for November

