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September, 2020

I AM FOREVER WHO I AM

With all that is going on in our nation right now, do you ever find yourselves just watching and watching and watching the news? Or if you are on your phone, do you find yourselves continually scrolling through your social media or other websites? We do this because we want to stay on top of things and informed as possible, right? But what if I told you this might not actually be as beneficial as you think. What if I told you instead of making you feel more secure, it made you feel more fearful and brought a sense of doom to things?

Well, there has been some research done that has shown this to be the case. In fact, there is a name for this behavior, and it is called doomscrolling. Now, "What is doomscrolling?" you might be asking well here is a definition from an article I read from healthline.com. Doomscrolling is "the act of endlessly scrolling down one's news apps, Twitter, and social media and reading bad news," explained Ariane Ling, PhD, a psychologist and clinical assistant professor in the department of psychiatry at NYU Langone Health in New York. "The pandemic has exacerbated these habits in many ways, including the fact that there is no shortage of doomsday news," she said.

And doing this can have a harmful impact on you, going back to the article I read, it says: "Many people think that they'll feel safer by staying abreast of the latest news. Yet, they don't realize that consumption of the negative news only leads to greater fear, anxiety, and stress," Dr. Carla Marie Manly, a clinical psychologist and author of "Joy from Fear: Create the Life of Your Dreams by Making Fear Your Friend," told Healthline. "For some, doomscrolling becomes a 'unsatisfying addiction' that promises safety, security, or certainty when, in fact, the ever-changing, melodramatic news provides the opposite."

So, if scrolling and constantly watching the news does not ease fear, anxiety, and stress, what will? Well, this is where the title of my article comes in. It is the title of a hymn I came across this week. Its words spoke to me in a deep way because it speaks of how God is, "I Am forever who I Am." This hymn text was written in 1999 by Richard W. Wiegmann and is based on Psalm 46. The words remind us how Yahweh is the one who is present and can bring peace during all things, even our current circumstances.

This then is my encouragement for you this month, instead of doomscrolling unplug and listen to more praise music or hymns. Instead of reading negative things spend more time reading devotionals speaking to the promises of our Lord. Most of all spend ample time in the God's Word, because this is the true balm of healing for our nation that is hurting so deeply. It is the Living Word that will bring us out of the doom. To wrap this up I want to share with you the chorus and a few verses of the hymn that struck me deeply:

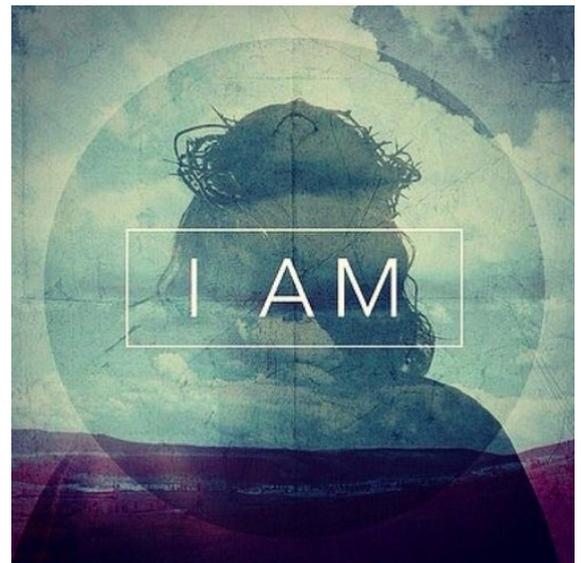
Though mountains slide into the sea
And waters rush where fields should be,
Though monuments and nations fall,
Your holy city stands through it all.
When nothing seems to stay the same,
You teach us your eternal name.

I AM, forever who I AM.
Above you, Beneath you,
Around you and Within you.
Be still...
And know that I am God.

Our lust for power wealth and land
Diminishes the earth you planned.
Prevent our crimes and futile wars;
Convince that all things are yours.
We rage and burn and kill and steal,
But you redeem, restore and heal.

I AM, Forever who I AM.
Above you, Beneath you,
Around you and Within you.
Be still...
And know that I am God.

In the name of I Am,
Pastor Matt



LCMS STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY, SEPTEMBER 2020



“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl 9:10).

God bids us to be faithful in the tasks He calls us to do. He calls us to be members of a family (husbands and wives; fathers and mothers; sons and daughters). He calls us to be members of society (those who govern and those who are governed). And He calls us to be members of His family, the Church (those who preach and teach and those who hear and learn). Each of these callings from God places a duty on us.

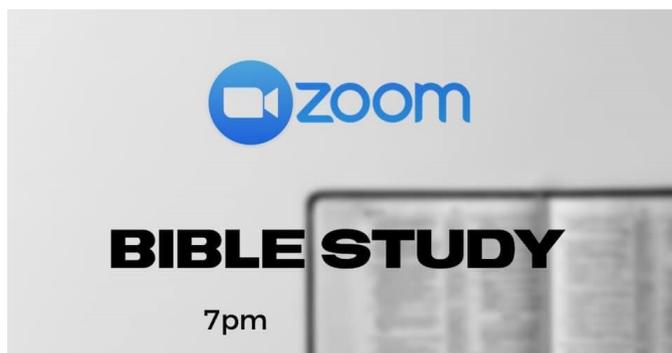
As members of a family, husbands are given the duty to die for their wives as Christ gave His life for His bride, the Church; while wives are given the duty to respect their husbands and submit themselves to them as the Church does to Christ. Fathers and mothers are to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, teaching them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Scriptures concerning Baptism, Confession, the Office of the Keys, and the Lord’s Supper. Children are to honor their parents throughout their lives, and even when their parents are no longer alive, serving and obeying them, loving and cherishing them, and speaking well of them.

As members of society, God calls those who govern to bear the sword, that is, to punish those who do evil (those who live contrary to God’s will) and to reward those who do good (those whose lives are lived in conformity with God’s will). Those who are governed are to obey their leaders as to the Lord Himself, for their leaders bear the sword of God’s temporal justice for a purpose.

As members of God’s own family, the Church, He calls those who preach and teach to do so in faithfulness to His holy Word. To preach and teach the Law of God to convict the hearts of hearers of their sin and to encourage, admonish, and exhort them to do good works in accordance with God’s will. They are to preach and teach the Gospel, the full forgiveness of their sins accomplished by Christ and received through faith, not by works. They are to administer the means of grace in accordance with the Gospel and the Word of God. They do all this for the young and old alike, for those who are near and far off. Those who hear and learn are to submit themselves to their preachers and teachers. They are support them by their prayers and their gifts.

Each of these callings from God place a duty on us. They make a claim on our presence; on our prayers; and our time, talents, and treasures. So, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl 9:10). Pray for your family, your government, and your church. Give of yourself by means of your time, your talents, and your treasures to your family, your government, and your Church. That is what it means to be faithful in the tasks that God has given us. That is what it means to do it with all your might.

NEWS AND NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER



Zoom Bible Study—Continue to join us at 7 PM on Wednesday

Zoom Bible Study continues every week on Wednesday at 7 PM. This study is following our series “Credo” by digging in depth into the Apostles’ Creed. We look forward to seeing you there! Regardless of if you join us or not, know we love you saints of the Lord in this community!

September 20th will be a Doubleheader Sunday at 8 and 10:30 am!

To celebrate our rich width of worship at RLC (and that baseball is being played again 😊) we will be having a doubleheader of services on September 20th at our normal service times of 8 and 10:30 am. We would ask that you still reserve your spot for your service of choice. We look forward to seeing you at either and to be able to celebrate the Lord’s Supper with you all!



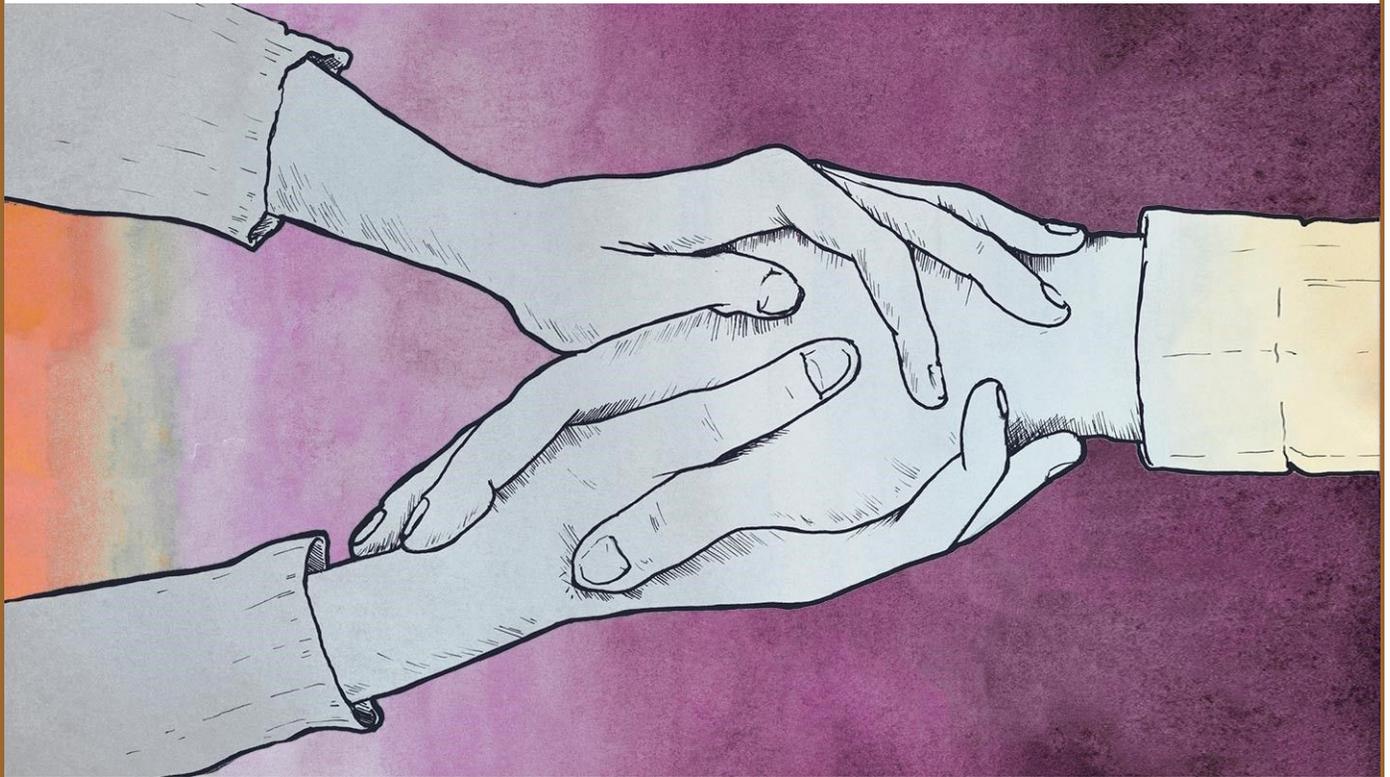
Voting Has Concluded—The Slate of Officers is Affirmed



Thank you to everyone who voted! We rejoice in the good news that our slate of officers for 2020-2021 has been confirmed. We sent out 61 ballots and received 34 in response. Please pray for us for continued guidance and wisdom on how to best move RLC in the will of the Lord to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Robin Thomas – President
 David Reese – Vice-President
 Alex Lindeke-Treasurer
 Bob Rothwell-Head Elder
 Jerry Thomas-Property Manager
 Lori Scheeler – Secretary

CARING FOR THOSE WITH DEPRESSION By Todd A. Peperkorn, STM



Introduction

“Why is it that every little thing takes five times more energy than it should, pastor?” The congregation member lamented further, “I’ve had problems with depression before, but this is worse than I’ve ever experienced it. It’s all I can do to even get out of bed in the morning.” Is this scene familiar to you? All of us have been feeling it to some degree or another, but during this time of pandemic, every bit of work, every emotion, sometimes even every interaction with other human beings takes so much more work. Why is it that simple things have become so hard? Why is it that we see our loved ones struggling so much with what really should be easy things? In this study we are going to try to answer some questions which I hope will be helpful. Here are some of them: How do we as a congregation try to first of all understand what is going on and why it is so hard? Why does this pandemic make these things so much harder? What can we do as a congregation, and what can we not do? And finally, what do we do when it seems like nothing is working?

What are the key elements of depression?

Clinical depression is an all-encompassing low or severe mood that is often accompanied by a loss of self-esteem, interest in the outside world, and interest in pleasure or any regular activities. We often lump numerous things under the larger category of “depression,” but this definition helps us to gain some key insights. Depression has to do with our emotions or moods. These moods can express themselves as extreme emotionalism, as anger or resentment, or even as a complete numbness to the outside world. In many ways, the overarching theme of clinical depression is shutting off the outside world, because the synapses in our brains aren’t connecting as they normally do. Outside stimulus becomes difficult to handle, and so we become curved inward, lost or trapped in our own thoughts and feelings. Clinical depression can have many causes — physiological, situational, psychological, spiritual. Usually it is some combination of all four. It is that combination which makes depression so difficult and even weird for us as Christians.

Why has the pandemic exacerbated depression and other mental illnesses?

If we understand depression as cutting off the outside world, a numbness to outside stimulus and a curving in upon oneself, then this pandemic is even worse than we thought! Because we have been forced to cut off our direct interaction with the Body of Christ in so many ways, we are even more vulnerable to attack from the Evil One. The lack of physical contact with others, and lack of spiritual contact or connection with the Word of God and the Sacraments in church — well, that is dangerous business for us sinners who need the Gospel all the time. Deliverance from evil always means that we are delivered from the clutches of sin, death and hell, and we are delivered to Christ and His Word of comfort for troubled sinners. Read Isaiah 40:28–31. Our strength never lies in ourselves, but in the Creator who loves us, who gives Himself to us, and who will never grow weary of giving us His mercy and care.

What can we do as the church to care for members in this time?

PRAY. Read I Peter 2:9. By praying for all those in need, we fulfill our vocation as the church of being a royal priesthood. A priest intercedes before God on behalf of others. This connects us to the people we pray for, and connects us to God, who exhorts us to pray with “boldness and confidence, as dear children ask their dear father” (Small Catechism, Explanation of the Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer). Because someone with depression may not be able to pray for themselves, we pray for them.

COMMUNICATE. Read I Peter 3:13–17. Be ready to give a defense for the hope that is within you. We will talk about hope more in a minute, but the key part for us here is to communicate God’s love and mercy at all times to those who are in need. Sometimes people with depression have a difficult time hearing good news. They are not wired for it at the time. But be patient and gentle, and give hope where it is possible. God’s mercy does not disappear because things are hard.

SUPPORT. Read I Peter 4:7–11. Notice here that Peter does not call us to do high and lofty things for one another. He calls us to show hospitality without complaint, and to use the gifts God has given us for the sake of one another. What does that support look like? It will depend on the person and the situation. Maybe it means a note of encouragement, maybe it means a meal, maybe it means caring for another’s children for a little while. Be creative! Support doesn’t mean solving everything. It means giving relief where you can.

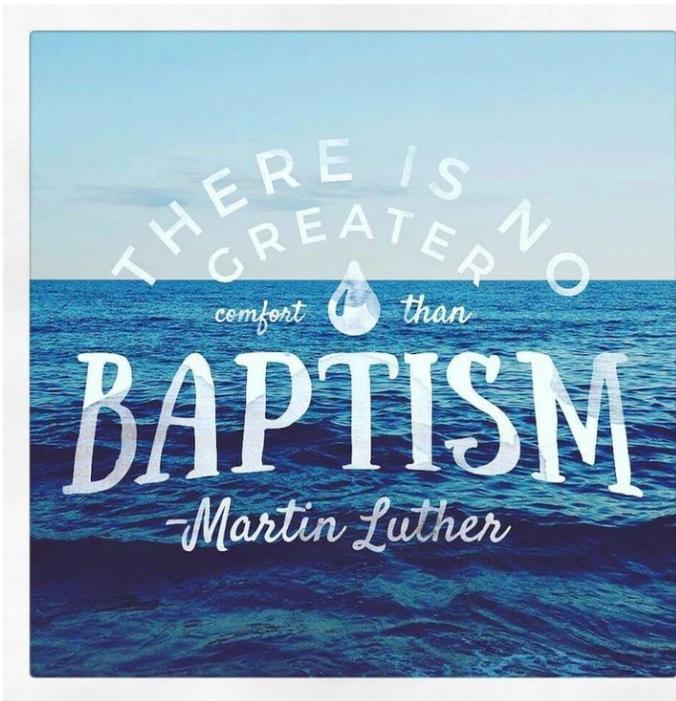
What are the limitations of what we can do as the church?

As with all things, we must remember our vocations. The church’s vocation is to proclaim the Gospel, to comfort those in sorrow and need, to lift up the weary, and to hold up the gifts of God to a dying world. It is not the church’s vocation to diagnose diseases. We would never expect a pastor visiting someone in the hospital to do open heart surgery, unless the pastor also happened to be a heart surgeon. One of the greatest gifts that we can bring to our people is the acknowledgement that we don’t do everything. God uses many different people with lots of different skills to care for and love the world. The more we are able to recognize that, the more clear our own place in a person’s healing and care will become.

What is the most important thing that we can do?

Read Psalm 130. Perhaps more than anything else, people who suffer from depression need hope. Hope means looking to the future, because God has taken care of your sins at the cross, and takes care of you now in the forgiveness of sins. We have a future because God is always present for us, no matter what may come. We have a future because with the Lord is steadfast love. As the psalmist says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:26). God’s mercy does not depend on my attitude, or how well I am doing “during these difficult times.” God’s mercy is His very nature, and He never abandons His people. Period. This is not always easy to communicate, but never give up on those whom God loves!

BAPTISM AS MY COMFORT by Delwyn Campbell from 1517.org



Paul writes, regarding the Scriptures, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:3-4). Thus, not merely for the sake of knowledge, nor for use in warfare, but for comfort, God has graciously caused men to take his word and record it in written form rather than simply leave it to be shared orally.

For me, one of the Scriptures that gives me comfort does so because it grounds my relationship with God in Christ outside of myself. Romans 6:3-4 takes what might seem to be a grisly and demanding subject and, because of its connection to who I am and because of the topic it discusses – Christ’s death and its meaning for us, makes it a great comfort when I am attacked by the enemy’s efforts to separate

me from Christ and from the Church so that he might devour me. For this to make sense, it might be helpful for me to introduce this passage to you: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3–4).

Many Christians seem to prefer to pass quickly over Christ’s death, preferring to park at the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. I understand that, especially when we consider the illustrations that we see of Christ after the resurrection. His wounds, though present, are no longer bloody, his face, no longer marked by the fists and whips of Roman and Jewish torturers, is restored to the calm, serene strength that we are accustomed to seeing. But it is Christ’s death to which I am united in holy baptism: the rite and ritual that establishes, by the very word and promise of God, that “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13).

It is this power that God has committed to baptism, expressed in this passage, that comforts me as I go through life in a world that is fixated on death and destruction. Daily we receive reports regarding the continued presence of the COVID-19 pestilence. Daily, we hear about the continued unrest and demands for transformation related to the issue of race-based slavery and its aftermath. Daily, we hear about protests for liberty on both sides of the political spectrum which call not upon the gracious benevolence of our Heavenly King, but upon the ability of humans to remove all sources of pain or discomfort, even verbal ones.

The fact that baptism specifically unites me to Christ in his death means that I share in his sufferings in my identity, not in my activity. I don’t have to suffer to share in his sufferings; I only have to be his, which is what he promises in Holy Baptism.

In baptism, Christ's payment of body and blood, given for you, is applied to you, the individual, as it brings you into the household of faith, the communion of saints. Baptism makes being "in Christ," one of the ways that Paul loves to describe our relationship to God through faith in his beloved son, the reality that both defines who we are and shapes what our lives should be. We can look to this fact when the storms of life rage about us, and we are tempted to sink beneath its waves, surrendering to the maws of Satan as he does his best to convince us that he has the lion-like power to devour.

Because even the little children can come to Christ, or more accurately, that he comes to them, in the waters and words of Holy Baptism, means that Christ truly is sufficient for all. This passage puts my safety in Christ's nail-scarred hands instead of my strength, either of will or character. It gives me an anchor that truly is steadfast because I do not control it. Christ's death and burial are not subject to my ability to believe in them, feel them, or even articulate them. His death and burial are not the stuff of legends; they are the naked truth of the cost and penalty of sin. His crucifixion shows how truly God took flesh and dwelt among us, how completely he "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7).

"As Christ was raised from the dead," so now we look forward to death, not as the end of life, but as the end of the threat of destruction. Because he is risen, life has meaning and purpose. Romans 6:3-4 tells me that my life is included in that great, divine-human purpose. In our better moments, we long to be connected to something greater than ourselves. To some of us, our contemporary history gives us the opportunity to live through a time of heroic focus like World War II or the Civil Rights Movement. Yet this will fall short, because "this too shall pass," one way or another. We cannot sustain this kind of anxious pressure for change, if for no other reason than the fact that "it is appointed to man once to die." Whether by the hand of pestilence, violence, accident, or the simple claim that the dust has upon our mortal bodies, we will die.

Because Christ died for us, and baptism unites us to him in that great and holy sacrifice, I am comforted today, tomorrow, and always. Every day, he reminds me of my baptism and the power of his word to bring into being the things that the world, the flesh, and the devil say are not, to the praise of his glorious grace.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Delwyn Campbell lives and works in his hometown, Gary, Indiana. He received a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University and a master's degree in theology from Christ College at Concordia University, Irvine, Calif. He serves as an LCMS Missionary in Gary.

SEPTEMBER 2020



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Brian Nicholson	9-12
Karen Tiffany Burgess	9-18
Steven Kaehler	9-19
Marlene Wright	9-21
Sharon Wright	9-23
Matthew Owens	9-26
Joe Thomas	9-26
Hallie Berlage	9-27
Aaron Peatow	9-27
Karen Kaehler	9-29

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Frank & Ann Lindeke	9-14	68 yrs
Tim & Kathryn Gerken	9-20	29 yrs
Jerry & Robin Thomas	9-21	24 yrs