



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL

Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin
September 26 , 2021

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will continue to have worship services online through the Zoom platform, until further notice. You are welcome to worship with us on Sunday at 10:30 a.m. If you need information about how to join with us for worship services, please contact Mr. Vautour, minister. The contact information is at the bottom of the bulletin.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other materials are also available on our local website at www.gcine Brunswick.org

Offerings:

You can make your donation by cheque; Address: Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.

You can call 1-306-653-2705 (GCI Canada main phone number) and make credit card donation.

E-transfers to khorwood@gcicanada.ca (her full name is Kathleen Horwood). There is no need for a password as the donations are deposited directly into the GCI banking account. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. Most banks send an immediate confirmation of successful deposit. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below.

You can also donate to our GCI Canada website at [Grace Communion International - Canada \(gcicanada.ca\)](http://Grace Communion International - Canada (gcicanada.ca)); click on Donate. In the donation box detail, and under **Fund**, make sure you click on General. In the message box, make sure that you identify your church and your church member number. If you don't know your church number, please contact Mr. Vautour.

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~ **Prayer Meeting:** The next Prayer Meeting will be on Thursday October 9, 2021 @ 7:30 p.m. ~  
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To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org–under “Members Only” and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour at evautour47@outlook.com

Let us pray according to God’s will and as per his instructions: **“1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Ti 2:1-4 ESV)**

Please visit our local website www.gcine Brunswick.org under “Members Only” for a number of prayer requests.

Prayers for the Southeast September 22, 2021 (from gci.org)



I received a call from Mike Horchak and he requests prayer on behalf of his family and all those in the Southeast affected by Hurricane Ida and then again, Nicolas. He said a downpour of rain is causing additional flooding and hindering the efforts of the men and women working around the clock to restore power. Mike & Pam are still without power from Ida, with no internet service or home phone service.

Please take a moment now to beseech God's mercy and intervention.

Anthony Mullins

[GCI Regional Director](#), Southeast – Louisiana USA area

Pressing forward

From Word of Life GCI Daily Devotional (September 21, 2021)

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14, (NKJV)

I once went on a training course that, at its core, had a similar thought to the Scripture above: forget the things that are past, move forward to new things! Perhaps, right now, this is a necessity for all of us. We need to move on from the trials and restrictions of the last 20 months and focus on new beginnings.

But Paul isn't asking us to take on just any kind of new beginning; he encourages us to '...press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.' (v.14). As he later explains in Philippians: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' (Philippians 4:13). The forgetting of 'things which are behind' isn't merely about letting go of a troubled past; he is encouraging us to take on an entirely new approach to life. We are to let Christ transform the way that we go about life.

The early followers of Jesus were clearly people who believed in new approaches to life. As the city of Antioch watched this movement grow and develop, they found that they needed to give them a new name – they decided to call them 'Christians' (Acts 11:26). This group wasn't like other pagan religions, nor was it like the Jewish faith that it had sprung from. They were the group that went on and on about Christ! Take, for example, the book of Philippians, where Paul mentions Christ 38 times (NKJV).

But it wasn't just talking about Jesus that set this group apart. They set out to follow him in deed as well as word – to have the same mind as Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5). As the Apostle Paul put it: '...having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit...let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.' (Philippians 2:2-4).

Some charities and secular collectives can be like families. With a shared interest, the members look after one another. But Christians enjoy far more than that: God has set before us a new way of life, a transformed life that seeks to love in the same way that Jesus loves. So let's put aside our old ways of doing things and press onward with the new life given us in Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Holy Father, help us all through this choppy time of troubled waters. Show the world around us that we have all been given a new destiny in Jesus Christ. This new life is not just for today, but for eternity, where, in your presence, there are pleasures for evermore. We all need this transformed life. We ask this in your Son's precious name, thank you Jesus. Amen.

Study by John Merchant

An Expanded Experience of Incarnation Dated August 31, 2021

By Sam Rahberg (from <https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/> and sent to GCI ministers by Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director)

Incarnation—God in the flesh— is central to the Christian witness. The pandemic has challenged our assumptions about what community looks like and what tools we use to nurture human connection. The heart of the matter is nothing less than Incarnation. What does it mean to face this moment in an embodied way, to sense the invitations, and to practice Incarnation? For instance, consider these stories. Judy is a retired woman I see for spiritual direction who has found new freedoms in quarantine. She has relaxed her volunteer commitments, participated in online book discussions with people all over the world, and reset her well-being with morning quiet and daily walks. Jared, on the other hand, is a twenty-something who moved back home and got his parents sick after he caught COVID-19 while bartending. My student Nguyet tells me her government has opened up a "Go Fund Me" site so that citizens themselves can enable Vietnam to buy at least some vaccine. And I'm still receiving prayer requests from family members in the southern U.S. and colleagues in Malaysia as the pandemic continues to threaten and take lives.

The pandemic keeps cutting deep, so I get frustrated when I hear a preacher say, "We tried the Zoom thing, and it didn't work. I'm glad we're all back without masks—the way things should be." I am not as frustrated about politics and policies as I am when I think about Sophia and Marcus, children in the U.S. still waiting for the chance to be vaccinated in a way that Nguyet's grandparents in Vietnam may never see. I fear that when we disparage tools that served as lifelines for faith communities we are missing hard-won lessons about connecting with the Judys, the Jareds, and those all those who have embodied relationship even when we couldn't be in the same room.

I am afraid that, *if we are not thinking incarnationally, we might now exclude vulnerable and potential members of our communities.*

Embody Connection

Even though we follow centuries of Christians who have lived into the mystery of Incarnation, I wonder how many of us could have predicted the moving response of faith leaders and communities just prior to Easter 2020. Quarantine set in and worship teams worldwide lead us into worshipping together online within three days. To me, that was an example of creative leadership and embodied commitment to community.

This persistence and resilience inspires hope. Communities embraced circumstances they could not avoid to bring bodies into some mode of proximity. Week after week these same leaders refined and refreshed their processes based on feedback, which is what I witnessed from

Pastor Joy McDonald Coltvet at my home congregation of Christ Lutheran on Capitol Hill (Saint Paul, MN). We experimented our way forward.

In the last year I have seen an incredible tolerance for experimentation from participants in retreats, one-on-one sessions, classes, and family gatherings. This is a witness to the Incarnation. People have embodied patience with process and a willingness to co-learn. These tests of connection are helping us practice ways of being together that we will need in the future to which God is calling us.

Sense the Invitations

After living through a crisis (which we are not yet out of completely), it may be tempting to look back nostalgically and grasp for what we remember as a “better time,” but I believe God is calling us to reflect on where we have been with an eye to the future.

- Who has become part of our community that wasn’t before?
- Who was left out and how can those excluded be welcomed in?
- How has our community expanded or reshaped itself?

Each of us has a role in the next chapter, contributing to *the unfolding of lived theology* that wonders concretely about Incarnation. Our connections are richly blessed by shoulder-to-shoulder proximity, *and* they still persist across cities, states, and continents. It might be tempting to conclude from God’s act of becoming human that physical proximity is paramount. But there are other implications of Incarnation, as well. We worship an incarnational God who uses radical means to prioritize relationships. If we want to follow that example, we must consider what limits we need to surpass to practice love and inclusion with Judy, Jared, and Nguyet’s grandma. We must consider how our experiences of sacramentality during the pandemic have begun to reflect and refine our notions of divine presence.

Practice Incarnation

As I am living into these times with my communities of faith and vocation, one of the most concrete questions relates to *how* we bring people together. What modes are best for connection and formation? Some argue that people must meet in the same physical space in order to be “real church.” Others have grown accustomed to participating remotely and expect to continue in that mode. Both the need for physical connection and the challenges to those possibilities will continue to affect our choices.

Recently, I bristled when a colleague declared, “We are people of the Incarnation! The only way to experience community is through physical closeness.” A couple years ago I might have agreed with him—mostly—but today something in me strongly resists. Now I cannot dismiss my recent experiences of genuine prayer, holy conversation, and immediacy of God’s presence even beyond my assumptions about physical nearness. My sense of the Incarnation is stretching beyond time and space much like the act of God becoming human in Christ. We need to be practicing a more robust understanding of Incarnation moving into 2022.

Matter of Practicality

The simple fact is that *some people will not participate in our communities without online means*. Limitations of health, disability, or transportation exclude some. Others have the expectation that a strong community finds ways to incorporate modern technological tools. As we look to the future, let us remember that we are now 2021 people—people who have been embodying connection in new ways. This time has formed and reformed our sense of connection. We must ask ourselves what best reflects our values and helps us reach people wherever they are, and what might we have to set down or let go in order to embody those values.

Matter of Relationship

God went to extreme measures to reconcile our relationship, which means *the Incarnation was not simply a matter of moving into closer proximity with humanity*. When God pitched a tent among us (prologue to the Gospel of John), it was to convey the fullness of grace and mercy and love. Do we recognize and receive God as this love continues to be made known? How open are we to the unexpected ways this love might appear? In what ways are we being invited to extend that love for the sake of relationship?

Matter of Calling

As we look forward, *we are no longer determining back up plans until our preferences are restored*. We need to listen closely for our callings and discern what we have learned about how we are being called to serve differently, love differently, and practice incarnation differently. What's more, we need to remember that our callings are interwoven. So, what helps us embody God's love in concrete ways with actual people—in our own unique circumstances?

Thank God for Humanizing

The danger in this chapter of ministry, as I see it, is underestimating or forgetting the many and mysterious ways God has become present to us in any and all circumstances. We have been living into a working theology of Incarnation for which we may not yet have just the right words. What have we seen that we must carry forward as we live into and embody incarnational ministry into the future?

This summer I invited Sr. Virginia Matter OSB to facilitate a session for a class I was teaching. Mark was in tears by the end, saying, "I have never experienced God so present in my own body before." Virginia was a woman in her eighties, 100 miles away, leading prayer by Zoom. Similarly, I met offline with my own spiritual director just once in the past year, and I told him then that I was amazed that we had not skipped a beat. Even speaking of spiritual things online, I felt engaged and "caught up" when we eventually met in the same building. Whatever held us together was more important, it seemed to me, than the vehicle we used to interact.

This season of ministry has been and continues to be about more than just making do. We are being molded and shaped for the next iteration of ministry, one that will rely on a robust theology of Incarnation to use the technologies of this era. Hold on to the moments when a Zoom window fell away and you were brought to tears or laughter. Remember the gratitude that lingered with you long after a live-streamed conversation. Picture those with whom you experienced connection—even from afar. These are all hints of the divine in-breaking that surpasses all understanding and that persists in, through, and beyond our best hopes for ministry.

About the Author

Sam Rahberg is a spiritual director and supervisor of spiritual directors who serves as Director of the Certificate in Spiritual Direction at Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary (Collegeville, MN). He is author of "Enduring Ministry: Toward a Lifetime of Christian Leadership" and a collection of poems called, "Ice Break". Online and offline, with individuals and groups, Sam accompanies Christian leaders as they discover and re-discover the sense of calling and giftedness at the heart of Christ-centered ministry. In his spare time, you will find him tending his family's small tree farm or fly fishing for trout in Southeast Minnesota.

GCI principal website and Moncton Websites—a) www.gci.org, b) www.gcine Brunswick.org,
c) www.gcicanada.ca;

*For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—
evautour47@outlook.com*