

October 2024



GOOD TIDINGS FROM ZION

Most of you know that I am only a few years from retirement. My current plan is summer 2027. You also know that finding pastors to fill openings has become increasingly difficult. In particular, filling a part time call such as mine can be even more difficult.

For the last several years, Grace Lutheran in Swedeburg and the Czech Presbyterian Church near Wahoo were served by Gary Grinvalds, a seminary student. Gary graduated in May and was called by American Lutheran Church in Filley. The folks at Grace and Czech Pres loved Gary, but they can't afford a full-time pastor. Presently they are using supply pastors to cover Sunday worship, I'm teaching the Grace confirmation class, and our cluster pastors are available for pastoral care needs. I've done one funeral for Grace. There will not be a seminary student available this year and although the application was submitted to Wartburg for a Contextual Learning student when one is available, that is unlikely to be a consistent resource.

As a result, we have begun a conversation between Bethlehem, Zion, Grace, and Czech Presbyterian to form some type of shared ministry. We are very early in this discussion. There are lots of possible configurations, but all of them will depend on lay people leading the church and doing ministry. There would be one pastor serving the four churches on a full-time or near full-time basis. But no pastor can be two places at once.

In our first conversation, there was lots of energy and even excitement about the possibilities of doing ministry in different ways. It might seem new, but the reality of the very early church is that it was led by lay people – farmers, tradesmen, merchants, craftsmen, and so on. Even in our own history, there were circuit pastors who traveled to visit multiple churches, on horseback, for sacraments and guidance. The rest of the time, the churches were led by lay people – farmers, merchants, tradespeople. That's why communion in many places was only done quarterly. The Czech Presbyterian church has been doing that for years.

Our next step will be to meet again with congregation leaders and a representative from the Nebraska Synod and from the Presbytery.

What would change for us? The main thing is that there would likely be Sundays where I would be preaching and leading worship at the other churches. This depends a bit on the model we might choose, but you would be sharing me. We would also likely work to learn more intentionally how to do ministry in a model that doesn't depend on a pastor doing everything. All four churches are very good candidates because they already do that.

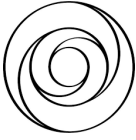
What would be the advantage of this? First, it might make a full-time call possible. Shared, for sure, but that makes this a more viable option for a pastor who needs a full-time salary. I'm also hoping we can treat this as an interim so that when I do retire, there would not need to be a long gap before the call process could even start.

We will do a trial and some listening sessions before the congregations actually formally vote on it. We will need honest feedback to help us decide.

The primary hope of course is that this gives us a way to continue to thrive and be a vibrant part of God's work in the world and in our community into the future.

In Christ,

Pastor Kris



Seeking the Spirit By Virg Unverferth

I recently started my second year of training to become a spiritual director. The spiritual practice we are currently practicing is a form of a body prayer given to us by the mystic, Julian of Norwich. I've been doing it daily and it really helps to focus my body and to be more receptive to God's loving ways.

-Await: sitting quietly, hands up on lap or out in front in a giving/receiving posture. Slow your breathing and relax your body. Clear your mind as you invite God into your presence.

-Allow: you can put your hands on your forehead (or I sit in a praying posture), resting in God's presence, receiving whatever the Spirit would offer you. It may be a phrase or a sensation.

-Accept: place your hands on your heart, open and receptive

-Attend: place your hands on your belly center, tending to God's inner movements, attentive and embodied. Be ready to act on what has been given.

Spiritual practices are important in our lives as they help to slow us down so that we can hear God through the chaos of everything else going on. If you find yourself thinking more about the people in the upcoming election than God, you might want to try this prayer practice.

Worship is at 9 am Sundays, in person or online—or you can join us later on YouTube or on our Facebook page. Links to the bulletin, Facebook page, and YouTube channel can be found on our website:

<https://www.zionithaca.org/worship>

Calendar

- October 2** 7:00 pm—Church School (If this differs from Carol's schedule, she's right)
- October 6** 9:00 am—Worship with Holy Communion
- October 13** 8:00 am—Council
9:00 am—Worship
- October 16** 7:00 pm—Church school
- October 20** 9:00 am—Worship
- October 27** 9:00 am—Reformation Worship with Holy Communion
- October 30** 7:00 pm—church school

October Helpers

Cleaners—Kyli Kouma/Jon Christo

Usher—Kouma/Christo

Lector—Ficks

Communion Asst.— Merlin

Contact Information

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