

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews facing a sanctuary. The sanctuary features a large, colorful stained glass window and a wooden altar. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams with several pendant lights hanging from it. The date "JULY 29, 2020" is printed at the top center of the image.

JULY 29, 2020

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD
FROM
PASTOR
JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. *-Pastor Jill*



The scripture for this week is Genesis 32:22-31. We continue to follow the story of Jacob. Jacob has finished his work for his uncle and is now moving his entire family back to his homeland. When he takes a break on the journey, he spends the entire night wrestling with an unknown entity. Jacob refuses to surrender until he receives a blessing from God. Jacob eventually receives the blessing and also a lingering limp as the result of the struggle.

Take some time to reflect on Genesis 32:22-31 on the following pages.



Read the passage:

Genesis 32:22-31

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.



Reflect:

1. Who do you think Jacob was wrestling with: a man, an angel, God, or an aspect of himself?
2. Jacob wouldn't settle until he received his blessing from God. What are your most pressing questions for God??
3. How do the scars (physical, mental, emotional) that resulted from struggle impact your life today?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

Holy God, give us the persistence of Jacob to struggle for what we believe we deserve. Also, give us the courage to fight on behalf of others so that they may receive a blessing, too. Amen.



In two weeks on Sunday, August 9, we will have a test run of in-person worship with all the appropriate procedures in place to make the experience as safe as possible. Fifty people (including staff & volunteers) may gather in the sanctuary, another 50 people may watch the service live-streamed in Hatfield Hall. Worship will continue to be available online to watch from home.

Before Coming to In-person Worship:

1. If you have any symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with Covid within the last 14 days, we ask that you watch worship from home.
2. A link to an online pew pad will be emailed on Fridays. Filling this out will help us plan for attendance and know who is in worship.
3. You may access the bulletin on your device ahead of time or print it out at home and bring it with you, so you can follow along.

Arriving at Worship:

1. Doors will open at 9:45. You may not enter until then.
2. You must wear a mask covering your mouth and nose.
3. You must sanitize your hands before entering the building.
4. To maintain social distance, you will be directed when to enter the sanctuary or Hatfield Hall and will go directly to your seat and be seated.
5. Seating in the sanctuary and Hatfield Hall will be socially distanced and will be filled from the front to the back.
6. Members of the same household will be seated together.

During Worship:

1. Worship will be 30-40 minutes long.
2. Music will be instrumental and there will be no congregational singing.
4. Children will remain with their families and have activity bags to take home.
5. Offering will be collected by the doors.
6. Worship responses will be call and response or viewable on the screen.
7. Dismissal at the end of the worship will be by household.
8. Restrooms will be available, but to maintain social distancing only one person may occupy the restroom at a time.

After worship:

1. Congregating in the building will not be permitted.
2. Weather permitting, outdoor coffee hour may be held.

With this being a test run, we ask for patience as we adjust to a different way of gathering. We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward. While worship will look different, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too.

What I am reading:

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy

What I have been watching:

Radioactive on Amazon Prime

What I have been

listening to:

Abbey Road by the Beatles

Please reach out to a staff member if you need financial, emotional or spiritual assistance. As always, we are here to help!

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