

# **SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

July 19, 2020

For video viewing of music and service go to:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEO\\_pAVddaeV1\\_dOvvUd5eITX0IJKxqmM](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEO_pAVddaeV1_dOvvUd5eITX0IJKxqmM)

## **\*PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray together:

**C: *Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen***

## **\*THE FIRST LESSON**

### **Isaiah 44:6-8**

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel,  
and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:

I am the first and I am the last;  
besides me there is no god.

Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,  
let them declare and set it forth before me.

Who has announced from of old the things to come?  
Let them tell us what is yet to be.

Do not fear, or be afraid;  
have I not told you from of old and declared it?  
You are my witnesses!

Is there any god besides me?  
There is no other rock; I know not one.

## **\*THE SECOND LESSON**

### **Romans 8:12-25**

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup>for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact,

we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. <sup>18</sup>I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

### **\*THE GOSPEL READING**

#### **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup>but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' <sup>28</sup>He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' <sup>29</sup>But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

<sup>36</sup>Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." <sup>37</sup>He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup>the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup>and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

## **SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE**

*Have you ever heard of "helicopter parents"? These are parents who are way overprotective of their children, who take an excessive interest in their children's lives. Helicopter parents are always hovering over their kids, doing stuff for their kids instead of the kids learning to do it for themselves. Helicopter parents don't stop at hovering; they also swoop. They swoop in to figure out what the teacher is doing wrong if their kid doesn't turn in their homework. They swoop in to talk to other parents when the other parents' kids upset their own kid. They swoop in to "fix" their kids' homework or fight their kids' battles.*

*Here are a few examples from just a couple of articles I found: The parent who went to college with their daughter, even enrolling in the same classes to make sure she did her homework. The parent who wanted their ten-year-old son to eat lunch alone in a separate room because he wasn't ready to socialize without the parent there, too. The parent who got kicked out of their son's baseball game for screaming at an umpire for bad calls. The parent who filled out a college application, including a personal essay, without their child's knowledge. The parents who called to complain that their son didn't get a job...he was forty...and a lawyer. The parent who wanted the daycare to set up a constant video feed on their child. The parent who was body-checking toddlers during an Easter-egg hunt to keep them away from their kid's eggs.*

*Granted, these are extreme. Most parents don't go to quite this extent. But, in all honesty, I'm sure I have some helicopter-esque tendencies as a parent. I may occasionally hover. I might swoop once in a while, but less so as the kids get older. They need to learn how to figure things out for themselves at some point. I don't want to swoop so hard that, like a helicopter, I start to stir things up. I want them to know that I'm there, always. That they can always come to me for help and guidance. That they are unconditionally loved. But I can't protect them from everything.*

*Over the years I have learned that God is not a helicopter parent. Unconditional love? Yes. Can I turn to God any time, for guidance and help with anything? Yes - prayer lines are always open, scriptures are ready to roll, cloud of witnesses and body of Christ are on call. Water abounds for the remembering of baptism. The body and blood of our Lord still strengthen us, even if we haven't been able to visit the table in a while - that grace doesn't expire. God is always there with me, with you, through it all, the good and the bad, the mundane and the exciting. I can sometimes feel the hover of the Holy Spirit; but God doesn't seem to do a lot of swooping. Even in the garden of Eden God would step out and let those new-born humans make their own choices. So, God is not a helicopter parent. Although sometimes I wish God was.*

*Sometimes I could really go for some heavenly swooping in. All the things we've been talking about for the last few months: the pandemic, the fighting, the factions; prejudice and racism and violence; hatred and indifference. Insurmountable problems. I find myself echoing the words in the parable we heard from Jesus today, the question the slaves ask the master after the weeds grow up amongst the wheat: "Master, did you sow good seed in your field? Where, then,*

did these weeds come from?" Any self-respecting helicopter-parent, and especially a divine one, couldn't possibly allow this many weeds to ruin their wheat's chances. Come on, God.

This parable, like last week's, gets the rare explanation given by Jesus: the Son of Man sows good seeds - that is, the children of the kingdom of God. The enemy is the devil, who sows the weeds, which are the children of the evil one and all causes of sin. But the two will coexist until the harvest, that is, the end of the age, and the angels will reap it all and sort it out, with the weeds getting thrown into the furnace and only the righteous remaining.

In the parable, the master tells the slaves in the field not to pull up the weeds, because in so doing they would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together, he says, until the harvest. Weeds are a part of life. This is kind of the assumption through all of scripture: nowhere is there a promise that, by following God or being a disciple of Jesus, your life will be easy and free of problems or pain. The weeds will be there. The promise is that we won't be alone. That God will be with us, weeds and all, and will always try to work good for us, even out of the weeds.

In today's reading from Isaiah, God keeps saying through the prophet, in effect, "I'm God - down't sweat it. I've got this!" This happens to be in the midst of war and exile, God's people being carried away from Jerusalem. But God says - don't be afraid. Is there any God besides me? I am the first and the last. Despite all earthly evidence to the contrary, nothin' but weeds, God says: it's all going to be ok. Trust me.

Paul says in today's passage from Romans that all of creation is groaning, and so are all of us. We are groaning, waiting and longing for an end to futility. We are groaning, waiting and longing to be set free from sin and decay and pain and trial. We cry out, "Abba! Father!" Daddy! Mommy! Help us! Because we live among weeds, and they choke out our hope and vision, and we pray for, are desperate for, some swooping in. Come on, God! Paul writes, "we suffer with Christ so that we may also be glorified with him." Suffering is assumed. It's just a part of life.

As a parent, I want to swoop in. I want to fix things for my kids, I want to make things better for them. If another kid is being a jerk to them, I want to make that stop. If they are making a mistake, I want to nip that in the bud. I want to save the day before the day needs saving, and spare the pain. And sometimes I do swoop. Sometimes I need to swoop. Sometimes swooping in is just what the doctor ordered. But the more I do that, the longer I do that, the less they'll be able to handle the weeds. And that breaks my heart sometimes.

Instead, as parents, my wife and I teach them that such weeds are a part of life. We tell them and show them that we will always be with them through it all. That they can always come to us for help and guidance. That they are unconditionally loved. We teach them how to handle things instead of doing it for them. If you give a person a fish, they eat for a day. If you teach a person to fish, they eat for a lifetime. If you helicopter in and catch every fish for them, no one is learning anything.

*But we still cry, "Abba! Father!" Daddy! Mommy! And we do that because we are indeed children of God. Whether our heavenly parent is of the helicopter variety or not, God is still always there for us, unconditionally loving us, and we can always call on God. And, as children of God, we are also heirs, with Christ, of all of God's grace and goodness and strength in the midst of a weedy life. And we can hope for things unseen, things obscured by the weeds sometimes, We hope for things like the last days when the weeds will be gone. We ask God to help us set aside our fear and to trust that, indeed, God's got this. That God has us. In the palm of God's hand.*

*Because God is with us, even when we don't always sense the hovering, we can work in the field and help each other grow and bear fruit. We can work to make things better, to cultivate the Kingdom through the work of the Holy Spirit, until the day of the harvest comes. And when I hear Jesus say that the angels will be reaping out all causes of sin and all evildoers, I also think he's talking about our hearts - internal weed-clearing.*

*We once led a series where we answered people's faith questions, and one night we ended up talking about purgatory. We invited the Catholic priest from the parish across town to join us that night. And we talked about how, whatever purgatory is or isn't, whether it's place or a process or how long the "purging" really lasted, that the point of the teaching was that God would purge out all sin and heal all brokenness as you entered God's presence. As scary as I've always found the "furnace of fire with weeping and gnashing of teeth" lines, that purifying quality of how God prepares us for God's presence, until we're shining like the sun, has helped me understand it. God pulling all the weeds of our souls.*

*Either way - back to God the non-helicopter parent. Because God is our parent, and we are children of God. God is going to look out for us and be there for us. God is going to teach us how to make it through this life, and God will help purge out the weeds of our souls even as we cope with the weeds of the world. God will do all of this and more because, to God, we're still kids. We still need help. And just like kids don't always understand what their parents are doing, we might not always understand why God is - or isn't - swooping in at any given time. But we do know that God did come down - in Jesus - who was born, lived, taught parables, healed, died, and was raised, for us. We know that God has got this, that God loves us unconditionally, and that God's cruciform swoop in Jesus' death and resurrection is the only swoop we truly need. Thanks be to God. Amen.*

### **\*NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God,**

**the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

**the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten not made,**

of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen

### **\*PRAYERS**

A: Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *(A brief silence.)*

A: God of the harvest, you sow the good seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ into your field. Help your church throughout the world to be both diligent and patient, full of resolve and gentleness, that our witness may be faithful to your intentions. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: God of all space and time, your whole creation groans in labor pains, awaiting the gift of new birth. Renew the earth, sky, and sea, so that all your creation experiences freedom from the bondage of decay. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: God of the nations, teach us your ways, that we may walk in your truth. Mend the fabric of the human family, now torn apart by our fearful and warring ways (regions and nations in conflict may be named). Guide us by your mercy, grace, and steadfast love. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: God of hope, you accompany those who suffer and are near to the brokenhearted. Open our hearts to your children who are lonely and abandoned, who feel trapped by despair, and all who suffer in any way (especially). Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: God of the seasons, in the midst of summer, give us refreshment, renewal, and new opportunities. We pray for the safety of those who travel. We pray for those who cannot take the rest they need. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as they face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of love ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the Hatfield , Honan and Hubert families. For the talents and good things You have given each of them. Keep them united and faithful to You and each other. Guide them, protect them and equip them to do Your will. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

A: In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

### **\*THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven,**

***hallowed be thy name,***

***thy kingdom come, thy will be done,***

***on earth as it is in heaven.***

***Give us this day our daily bread;***

***and forgive us our trespasses,***

***as we forgive those who trespass against us;***

***and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.***

***For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,***

***forever and ever. Amen.***

## **\*BENEDICTION**

P: Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

C: **Amen**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **PASTOR RYAN'S 'OFFICE' HOURS**

While Pastor Ryan is not physically here yet, he will be available by email at [messiahmechpr@gmail.com](mailto:messiahmechpr@gmail.com); and by phone at (507)-360-7276 . His 'office' hours will be 11am – 8 pm our time since California is three hours behind Virginia. This is such an exciting but strange time for us as we continue to worship from afar. We wish Pastor Ryan and family a safe transition to Virginia when they are able to do so. Pastor Ryan will continue to provide updates to the congregation as moving details are finalized.

### **PASTOR RYAN'S WEEKLY UPDATE**

Here's the latest on our housing progress. We had an offer on the house, and then we didn't - it was withdrawn. Quarantine rules mean no open houses, but we have had almost a dozen showings and lots of folks checking us out online. We are getting all positive feedback on the house, but we just haven't found that perfect match yet. In the meantime, we're doing a little bit more work from the lovely termite report we received, we are packing more and more, and we are working with our realtor in Mechanicsville to find a house. The pieces are all coming together; please keep praying for an offer that sticks. ~ Pastor Ryan

### **WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Beginning March 8<sup>th</sup>, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2949 through July 12<sup>th</sup> (up from \$2840 on July 5<sup>th</sup>.)
- We are \$12,381.11 behind the year-to-date budget needs (up from \$13,490.21 behind the budget the week prior).

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT – IT'S SUMMERTIME!**

Summer is upon us! We hope you continue your faithful giving! Please mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See [messiahmech.com](http://messiahmech.com) for more details.

### **REOPENING SURVEY**

A reopening survey from Church Council will be coming to you in the near future. It will be sent from **Survey Monkey**. Please take the few minutes that it will require to complete and send back. Your feedback will be used to help determine our next steps. If you do not have an email address, a hard copy will be sent to you with a self-addressed stamped envelope. We appreciate your time and participation in this important task.

### **PHASE 3 STATE GUIDELINES FOR SAFER AT HOME**

Wednesday, July 1 began Phase 3 of Virginia Forward and the Governor's office released their Safer at Home guidelines for stage three. The section on Religious Services begins on page 32. Go to this website for guidelines that are being considered in the planning of the reopening process of our building: <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/Forward-Virginia-Phase-Three-Guidelines.pdf>.

### **KAIROS IS ON-LINE TODAY!**

Since in-person Kairos has been canceled for 2020, we are hosting Virtual Kairos 2020! Join us July 19-23, 2020 (Sunday evening to Thursday morning) for Virginia Synod rising 9th through 12th Graders. We are going to try and squeeze as much of in-person Kairos into this online event as we can! with large group, small group, daily prayer, t-shirts, CLIPPS, Open Talent Mic Show, faith testimonies, comic relief, reflection time, prayer around the cross, speed friending, songs, t-shirt fashion show, and more! Cost per participant: \$25 and payment is required at time of registration. For more information about registration, and to register online, visit [www.vasynod.org/event/kairos](http://www.vasynod.org/event/kairos).

### **THE PATH TO ZERO DASHBOARD**

Harvard Global Health Institute, Harvard's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Rockefeller Foundation, CovidActNow, Covid-Local, CIDRAP and many others joined forces, launching a new COVID Risk Level map and COVID suppression guidance for policy makers and the public. The map provides statistics by state and by county. Go to: <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/> to find information for Virginia. This information was provided by the Virginia Synod office.

### **VIRGINIA SYNOD HUNGER TEAM**

The Synod is excited to announce the re-formation of a World Hunger Team! This team provides visioning and resources for hunger ministries around the Synod, around the country, and around the world. The Team works as a partner with ELCA World Hunger, ELCA World Hunger supports projects in 43 U.S. states and territories and 62 countries, including the United States. So far, there are three people sharing their gifts through the Virginia Synod World Hunger Team: Betsy Liljeberg (Apostles, Gloucester), Chuck Hays (Trinity, Moneta), Rebekah Schennum (Emanuel,

Woodstock). If you would like be part of this new team, please contact Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick ([bayerderrick@vasynod.org](mailto:bayerderrick@vasynod.org)).

### **CAROLINE FURNACE UPDATE**

Summer Camps have been ordered by the state of Virginia to remain closed for now. However, Outdoor Ministry is so much more than Summer Camp. Here is what we are offering this summer:

- Family Rentals - The Farmhouse, Cabin Village, and Sukkah Village are open for Family Rentals in July and August. 14 days of pre-screening are required for all participants. Both the Farmhouse and Sukkah Village are optional no-contact retreat spaces. We can host a maximum of 5 family groups (of 10 or less) on property at once, so spaces are limited and first come, first served. 2020 Summer Camp families get priority booking until June 30. Regular booking now open.
- Adventure Weekends are scheduled for this fall/winter, September 18-20, October 30-November 1, and February 5-7. Until further notice, lodging is limited to one group per cabin. Tent camping is also available. Contact Julie at (540) 449-0012 or [julie@carolinefurnace.org](mailto:julie@carolinefurnace.org) to reserve your Adventure Weekend cabin.
- Camper families who registered for Summer Camp 2020 will get priority registration for Summer Camp 2021, from October 1 to 15. Payment options will include 'pay now' and payment plans that can be scheduled for later. Stay tuned for our Summer Camp 2021 schedule to be released by September 15!
- Contact Julie at 540-449-0012 or [julie@carolinefurnace.org](mailto:julie@carolinefurnace.org) to sponsor Camp at Home for your kids!

### **PRAYER LIST HAS BEEN RESET**

The current prayer list has been reset to begin the third quarter. Please contact Davina if you have names you wish to be added. Email her at [MessiahMech@gmail.com](mailto:MessiahMech@gmail.com) or phone 746-7134 with your requests.

### **BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Those who would like to place announcements in our Sunday 'ebulletin' please send them to Donna Shaw at [dmshaw70@gmail.com](mailto:dmshaw70@gmail.com) by Wednesday for inclusion.

# Prayer List

## WE PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

**Kenneth Deere**  
**Adam Dworak, Sr.**  
**JoAn Firebaugh**  
**Bill Fulop**  
**Elisabeth Gardner**  
**Werner Gardner**  
**Steve Gilnett**  
**Geoffrey Honan**  
**"Doc" Kondaki**  
**Mac McAllister**  
**Roberta McMillen**  
**Nathan, Ruth Schroeder & family**  
**Judy Schwerdtfeger**

## WE PRAY FOR OUR EXTENDED FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

**Dee Schroeder**, sister-in-law of Roger.  
**Tim Schroeder**, nephew of Roger.  
**Elizabeth Zimmerman**, Karen Morris' daughter-in-law's aunt  
**T.J.**, grandson of the Whirleys.

**Pastor Ryan, as he begins his journey with us**  
**Our veterans, their fellow soldiers & their waiting families**  
**All law enforcement, firefighters & first responders**  
**The people and pastor, Rev. Katherine, of All Souls Episcopal & our shared ministry**

**Hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities**  
**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
**The World Health Organization Medical researchers and scientists**  
**Schools, workplaces, government institutions and municipal agencies**  
**For all who travel**