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## ARTICLES

### **The Scattered Church: It's Not a Bad Thing**

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

Some are arguing that separation of church and state, and that the instruction to "not forsake meeting together" in Hebrews 10 calls the church to continue meeting on Sunday mornings. This response to COVID-19 rejects...

- Paul's mandate for Christians to obey governing authorities (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17);
- Biblical teaching that the Church is people, not a building (1 Peter 2:5);
- Jesus' call to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12); and
- Jesus' command to love our neighbors (Matthew 22:39).

Continuing to meet physically together also rejects our understanding of suffering. As Christians we believe God permits Satan to cause suffering (Job 1), but that God promises to bring good out of these difficulties for those who love God (Romans 8:28). This may be the difficult teaching (John 6:60) which caused many

to turn away from Jesus. (At least in part, the idea of eating the body of Christ and drinking his blood implies sharing in his sufferings, yet continuing to obey by faith.) **Living in physical isolation is a form of suffering.** The earlier church experienced this and has a valuable lesson to teach us.

In Acts 8 we read about the persecution of the believers following the martyrdom of Stephen. Thousands of believers were driven from their homes, businesses, and home-churches into other communities. They did not go into hiding, but boldly stepped into a new reality: dispersion into the world. Check out what Luke says...

***“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” Acts 8:4***

We are in much the same situation. (Well, very different too.) Our new reality does not permit carrying on as usual. **There is no more crying out, “but we’ve never done it that way before.” This is a new day and God is calling us to go and preach the good news of Jesus.** I urge everyone to step up intentional efforts to love our neighbors.

**Call a neighbor;** someone next door, a shut-in, a mom with kids at home, a friend you’ve not heard from lately, a healthcare

worker, a college student, a kid... Every one appreciates a call! I recommend you ask them how they are doing, share a fitting bible verse, and/or pray for them.

**Don’t wait for people to call you!** Take the initiative!

Check out what Luke says happened when the churches dispersed...

***“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” Acts 11:21***

Lord, may your hand be upon us too. May you instill in us a faith that crushes fear and a love for others that casts fear from others. Use us in this time of need to bring people from fear to faith! Amen!

## **Clay in His Hands**

By Pastor Doug Shotsky

Jeremiah 18:1-6 - This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” 3 So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. 4 But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me. 6 He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel,

as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.

Here’s an excerpt from a recent devotional (This Day With the Master, by Dennis Kinlaw) that I was reading:

“We often regret the time God uses in training us. We become impatient under it...We dare not despise the time he takes to prepare us or the place he puts us to accomplish our training. For Moses, it was quite a jump from prince to shepherd, but in the solitude of the wilderness God trained this man. We must know something of solitude if we are going to know God’s ways, which cannot be learned in the rush and hurry of life. We must know a quiet time. No days are wasted when we are in God’s will. All things serve His purpose.

I look back through my life and know there have been difficulties, hardships, times when I’ve been in complete rebellion, times when I’ve been down and out, times I’ve made bad decisions, times I’ve hurt



others, and times I’ve wanted to give up.

But at some point, God took a marred and unlikely vessel and with the touch of the Master’s hands, He began molding this vessel into something for His use and purposes.

Since I have begun following Jesus I spent a year and a half in a drug rehab ministry, worked for 7 years as a waiter, 5 years owning a landscaping service each summer, 4 years of college, 3 years of graduate school, 1 year of counseling internship, 3 years as a professional/crisis counselor, 3 years as a director of the same drug rehab ministry I went through, 1 year as a high school counselor, 1 year pastoring in Alto, 4 months trying seminary, 3 months of substitute teaching, back to pastoring in Alto, 13 years of marriage, 10 years of parenting, and am finding out more than ever how very little I know!

The beauty of all of this is that God was, and is, molding me through it all! I know there is more to come, but I wouldn’t trade a day of it for anything because of who God is creating me to be for His Kingdom and His purposes. Sure, I’ve made mistakes, but the learning in all of it has been so valuable.

So, take heart today as a child of the King.

He is the potter and you are His. Relax in His hands and allow Him to do the work necessary to continue making you a vessel useful for His purposes. Do not despise the days of trials, hardships, and learning; God will use it. Look back today at your story and recommit once again to allow God to do with you as He wills, and pray as Jesus did: “Not my will, but Yours.”

## Golden Lifers Update

By Roxy Schouten

No doubt the world is suffering from an array of maladies – pandemic, financial upheavals, famines due to crop failures from locust and floods and drought, more and more evil being exposed, warring factions, etc. Even the Word of God is being attacked more and more and even by those in leadership in denominations. Just recently I heard two attacks on Psalm 91 insinuating that this Psalm should be taken with a “grain of salt” because that is not what Christians are experiencing amid all these world maladies. But let us examine this Psalm briefly to find the gems within that can bring comfort and peace amidst the storm.

Pivotal and initially we must take a good look at verse 1 – “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty”. (NIV) “He that

dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (KJV)

1. **“Whoever”** – All of us are a “whoever”. No matter if you are Chinese, African, Russian, American, man or woman, rich or poor, young or old each of us is a “whoever” so this applies to all who read this Psalm.
2. **“Dwells”/“Abides”** – Recently or soon a Census will be taken and you will be asked to verify what your address is. You may work at another address or visit in a short or long duration a place far from your “dwelling place”. Our bodies dwell at times in many different locations. But where does your soul and spirit dwell?
3. **“Shelter/Secret Place”** – Most of you may be familiar with an old hymn “I Come to the Garden”. This hymn has been a comfort and loved by many. I will admit that for a long time I thought the phrase “none other has known” was rather arrogant implying that the writer of this hymn had something that no one else could experience. How wrong I was. I now see that each of us must have that “secret place”

of a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit. It can not be inherited from our parents, the church or any other way than by personally coming to and dwelling in this personal relationship. This is the “Secret Place”.

4. **“Shadow”** – This word picture brings back to memory the cloud that sheltered the Israelites during their 40 years in the desert. During the heat of the day it was a cloud and during the night it was a fire to warm them during the cold. They dwelt in that Shadow at all times. That can be a comforting picture but from our knowledge of clouds and fire we know that sometimes that can be disconcerting. Clouds can sometimes be low hanging and you have fog and when really bad it is hard to see your hand in front of your face. Sometimes we go through experiences that leave us in a “fog” and we don’t know how things are going to turn out or what to do. Sometimes fire can be destructive. Think of the wild fires in California or in Australia. Fire can sometimes burn away the debris in our lives also. Looking back at experiences in our lives we

have sometimes been in a “fog” or experienced “fires” but we see the necessity of it and the good that came from it as we trusted God to see us through it.

In the interest of time let us skip down to Verses 14 and 15.

**“I will be with him in trouble”** All those troubles that are listed in previous verses are real dangers and situations we face in life – terror, pestilence, arrows, plagues. Thank You Father that we do not navigate this alone! Sometimes we are taken out of the situation, sometimes we walk through it but we are never alone. We can only find comfort if we “dwell/abide” in the “secret place”. We may never know the full “why” of troubles but we can trust Our Heavenly Father that He will equip us for what is happening now and will happen in the future as we “dwell in the secret place” for His honor and glory.

We have 3 purposes in life. 1.) Go into all the world to preach the gospel, 2.) Equip the saints 3.) Glorify God. Going into all the world includes going through what the world is experiencing. Equipping the saints means that sometimes we will be labeled as “straight-laced” or “intolerant”. Glorifying God may mean that we trust Him through good times as well

as those challenges that are really, really tough.

“The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance to you and give you peace.” Num 6:24-26

## MESSAGES

We want to thank everyone for their prayers, cards, texts, and visits while I am recovering from my work accident. Thank you for the visits, Phil Loomans and Doug Shotsky. They meant a lot.

Bless You for Your Kindness in God’s Love,  
Justin and Jaime Straks and family

Thank you for the prayers, cards, and words of encouragement we received from you. My son, Justin is getting better everyday from his work accident. Words can’t express the love of our church family when prayers are needed.

Christ Be With All of You,  
Harlyn and Susan and family

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:  
Cindy & I wanted to extend our gratitude & thanks to all of you who have been keeping us in your prayers.  
I’m finally home after a long hospital stay.

We praise God daily for answered prayer and His faithfulness. My healing is truly a testimony of the prayers of the family of God. We felt His presence at every turn. In life we may not feel strong enough or well prepared enough for the battles we'll have to fight, but we can all be assured of Who is fighting them with us.

Blessings to each of you as Prayer Warriors for the "King of Kings!

In Him who is our Strength & Deliverer,  
Rod & Cindy Henning

## EVENTS

### Facebook Premiere Schedule:

#### Sundays

Sunday Service – 9:30am

Youth Group Lesson – 6pm

#### Mondays

Munchkin Mondays – 4pm

#### Tuesdays

Tough Question Tuesday – 7pm

#### Wednesdays

Worship Song – 1pm

Worship Message – 6:30pm

#### Thursdays

Thankful Thursday – 8am

#### Fridays

Fun Friday – random times

#### Saturdays

Super Saturday Bible Trivia – 2pm

**Zoom Prayer:** We encourage you to join Pastor Kevin for prayer on Zoom each week. We spend time sharing prayer concerns and then praying for them, but don't worry, you can pray silently. You will be blessed J

·To attend the Tuesday prayer meeting: Click <https://zoom.us/j/596095017> or call +1312-626-6799 and input the Meeting ID: 596 095 017.

·To attend the Wednesday prayer meeting: Click <https://zoom.us/j/570484327> or call +1312-626-6799 and input the Meeting ID: 570 484 327.

## NEWS

### Profession of Faith

Kassandra De Jager - 3/1/20

### Baptism

Harrison Myles, son of Mitch & Amanda Badtke - 3/8/20

### UPDATES:

**Church Services:** We intend to follow the recommendations of the governor and CDC. Thus, we will not be meeting in the same physical location through April. Some anticipate this may continue into August, but we pray that is not the case.

**Staff:** How is the staff responding to COVID-19? Alto has amazing staff! I have

been blessed to see them responding quickly in crisis to find solutions to problems. They've gotten creative with providing meaningful worship services online, encouraging the congregation through daily devotionals and videos on Facebook, and initiating personal contacts through every possible option! We are slowly shifting from a day-to-day response to a more long term approach to being "Safer-at-home." Please pray for continued health, direction and strength as we navigate these new waters.

**Care:** The staff has been very blessed to hear how caring the congregation has been in encouraging others in the church. Others have offered support and help before needs have even arose. Thank you for loving others!

**Opportunities:** It is certain needs will arise and we are discerning ways in which we should prepare. One of the ways we are aware of that you can help is by donating gloves, gowns, face shields, goggles and by making masks for the healthcare workers. To donate items to Marshfield Medical Center in Beaver Dam, please call (920) 887-4066 or email [jkaufmann@bdch.org](mailto:jkaufmann@bdch.org). To donate items to Agnesian HealthCare, please call (920) 926-4959 or email [shawn.fisher@ssmhealth.com](mailto:shawn.fisher@ssmhealth.com).

[Sewn Mask Template](#)

[Tutorial](#)

[Material Suggestions](#)

**Sunday School Guide:** The Sunday School Guide Class will try meeting via Zoom after church this week. So if you are interested and able, you should register in advance at this link:

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYudeysqDkrT5H7fW\\_ULhg8w4hFdamQZA](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYudeysqDkrT5H7fW_ULhg8w4hFdamQZA)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. On Sunday morning you will click the link, join the "Virtual Coffee Hour," and then be moved to a specific "room" for your class. Please be patient as we learn how to do this with you. Feel free to call staff for help.

**Offerings:** Thank you for your generous giving! The deacons emailed information earlier this week with offering details. Please continue to mail your offering in through the month of April.

**RCA/The Denver Collaborative:** About 50 households joined me on Zoom calls last week to get complete updates, but I'll give a simplified update.

- Gospel Alliance is no longer functioning, but its' leadership has

joined with several others to form the Denver Collaborative.

- The Denver Collaborative is recommending the Vision 2020 team propose an "immediate and amicable negotiated birth of something new [a conservative association/denomination] from within the RCA with the goal of empowering every church to fulfill its mission while taking care of the people and denominational institutions in the transition." While the negotiations will take us into 2021, this is a way to not abandon RCA staff and institutions to the progressive minority. While a few present wanted to "renew" the RCA, there was little hope that this would be possible or with the effort, as that has been tried for many years.
- Alto's 2020 Task Force will meet in the next month to review all denominational options along with the Denver Collaborative option.
- Randy Bresser is a classis representative going to General Synod 2020. It is scheduled for June 11-16, but there are discussions of delaying this gathering.