

Choice to play comparison game is ours to make

First off, a little introduction. I am the new pastor at Grace United Methodist Church in Pequot Lakes. To be fair, not so new anymore as I’ve been in the area since the end of June.

One of the things that I hear often from my congregation members is how sorry they are that coming to this position at this time has to be so hard. It has become such a common conversation that my automatic answer is, “It’s fine, times are hard for everyone right now.” It’s true, and it may be the one thing that everyone can agree on. In these uncertain COVID



PASTOR JEN MATTHEES

times, everyone has faced some hard days. I can’t even fall back on the “woe is me” card too much, because every pastor I know is in a challenging season. There are a ton of resources for every situation that might occur in the church, but a primer on pastoring in a pandemic isn’t to be found on Amazon (although I am sure that someone is working on one now).

There are churches that are able to worship in-person, some that can only do so online, and some that have not been able to offer any type of worship service at all now that the weather has turned colder. On the outside looking in, it is too easy to play the comparison game. We all know someone who is attending church somewhere, in a way that you wish that your church was doing it. It’s hard. We have to remember that every situation is not identical, not equal, and we rarely know the whole story. This is the problem with comparison – we see only the surface,

forgetting that success is shared more than struggle. Last week, I awoke to news that a historic church in New York City had been destroyed by fire. Last month, I learned of a small church in western Minnesota that had worshipped and closed their doors for the last time, as too many older churches have. It is in these moments that I am so grateful for my own church that, while not open for in-person worship, is still alive and will be here on the other side of the health crisis. If I compare the difficulties of maintaining a sense

of community and creating meaningful worship experiences remotely to the death of a church through cycle or crisis, I will take the situation that many of us are in. There is a verse from Romans 8 that is cited often during times of hardship and struggle. From the Message Bible, “That’s why I don’t think there’s any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times.” Paul is speaking of the suffering that all of us endure throughout our lives here on earth. It is not meant to diminish suffering, but to remind us of the glory to come.

Although there is a great deal that is out of our hands, the choice to play the comparison game is ours. I pray that we make wise choices. I pray that this time of struggle may bring us a sense of value, strength and most especially wonder. We are in the season of Advent. This should be a time of wonder and anticipation for the joy to come! May we be wary of comparison stealing our joy in a time that it is needed the most. Be the light! Spread joy! Jen Matthees is pastor at Grace United Methodist Church in Pequot Lakes.

SENIOR MEALS

The Senior Nutrition Program still offers a nutritionally balanced meal at 11:30 a.m. Monday-Friday in Pine River and Crosslake, but people must pick them up at the door at Heartland Apartments, 445 Snell Ave., in Pine River, or have meals delivered by Meals on Wheels. To order a meal or Meals on Wheels in Pine River, call 218-587-2921. To order a meal by noon a day in advance or for Meals on Wheels in

Crosslake, call 218-692-4271. The suggested voluntary donation is \$5 per meal for those over 60 and \$7.15 for those under 60. Menus are subject to change. Meals are served with bread, margarine and low-fat milk. **Dec. 14-18 Monday** Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, roasted tomato, cinnamon apples. **Tuesday** Hamburger with bun,

potato wedges, green peas, raspberry dream cake. **Wednesday** Chicken and noodles, roasted beets and carrots, fruit, dinner roll, ice cream. **Thursday** Pot roast with gravy, mashed potatoes, green and wax beans, breadstick, pudding. **Friday** Baked pork chop, mashed potatoes with gravy, mixed vegetables, mandarin oranges.

Virtual presentation on avoiding COVID-19 scams, fraud set Dec. 9

Cuyuna Area Connections will present a virtual learning opportunity “Avoiding COVID-19 Scams and Fraud” from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9. Presentation topics include why the coronavirus pandemic presents an opportunity for scammers, the most common types of scams they will engage in and how to protect oneself and loved ones. To watch the Zoom online presentation, visit <https://bit.ly/33UdiG3> starting at 11:45 a.m. Wednesday; or join by dialing 312-626-6799, meeting ID 890 1092 5809, passcode 579429.

Any adult who has experienced, or knows someone who has experienced, stress and anxiety during the coronavirus pandemic is encouraged to attend the online event. The Federal Trade Commission warns scammers will use fear during the pandemic to deceive consumers and steal their money or sensitive information. Cuyuna Area Connections is one of four pilot programs in Minnesota of the Silos to Circles Age Well Initiative. For more information, contact Cassie Carey at 218-821-6975 or careyconsulting34@gmail.com.

Support Faith in Action by donating to Angel Tree

People interested in supporting Faith in Action for Cass County’s services to people in need can make a donation and have an ornament placed on the Angel Tree in the office in Hackensack. Donations made to Faith in Action before the holidays can be dedicated “in honor of” or “in memory of” someone. These dedications are written on angel ornaments that decorate the tree. Faith in Action for Cass County continues to make a difference in central Minnesota during this COVID-19 pandemic. To date in 2020,

94 volunteers have served 331 people in Cass County, primarily the elderly, disabled and families in need, according to a news release. These volunteers provided more than 2,200 rides, delivered more than 4,000 home meals to rural areas, and spent more than 450 hours building ramps and helping with chores and home modifications to help people stay in their homes and communities. For more information, to share a name of someone in need or to volunteer, contact Faith in Action at 218-675-5435 or cassfia@uslink.net. Visit faithinactioncass.com.

Essentia Health allows patients to initiate COVID-19 test

Essentia Health has launched a new feature making it easier and more convenient to schedule a COVID-19 test. Patient-initiated testing, which means a patient can determine for themselves that they want to be tested for COVID-19, can be accessed through the COVID Testing icon in MyChart/MyHealth on any smart device. MyChart/MyHealth is a secure web-based

or mobile application tool that provides convenient, 24/7 access to an individual’s personal health. It allows patients to communicate with their care team, access portions of their medical records and more. Patients must have a MyChart/MyHealth account to access patient-initiated testing. If you do not have a MyChart/MyHealth account, you can sign up at EssentiaHealth.org by

clicking the MyHealth button in the upper right corner, by downloading the mobile app, MyChart, from your app store or ask for assistance at your next appointment. Not only is it easier to initiate a test, it also shows a patient’s results as soon as the test is done in the lab. An E-Visit is another option to easily access a COVID-19 test. For more information, visit EssentiaHealth.org.

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