

From Our Pastor...

**THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
HAS COME NEAR**

The phrase, “the kingdom of heaven” appears prominently in the Gospel of Matthew, spoken almost exclusively by Jesus. Jesus, and before him John the Baptist, spoke thus, “the kingdom of heaven has come near.” What did Jesus and John intend by these words? One should take note that they both used the phrase, “the kingdom of heaven,” and not simply the word “heaven” that is used commonly as a directional descriptor of our faith.

That “the kingdom of heaven” has come near suggests movement, movement on God’s part in a way not experienced prior to this manifestation spoken and actualized by John and Jesus. But how were their initial audiences able to understand what the Baptist and Jesus meant by this phrase? And how are we to understand it within our faith perspective in the 21st century? Does the movement of “the kingdom of heaven” that Jesus indicated that has come near have shape and form? Is it something that can be recognized by our senses; can we see, hear, touch, and taste it? Is the “kingdom of heaven” a something that is tangible, or rather is it but an idea for which we are called to wrap our hands around it? Does the “kingdom of heaven” represent a newly formed reality or is it a call to see the present life from a new perspective gained from listening to and following Jesus? And how does this phrase “the kingdom of heaven” voiced often in Jesus’ ministry connect with our use of the word “heaven”?

In both John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ usage, “the kingdom of heaven has come near,” that is, near enough to evoke some kind of response. The invitation and/ or command from them is for the listener to repent. To repent suggests a need to reevaluate one’s perspective about all things upon hearing what had been spoken, and therefore make the necessary changes and adjustments that fit accordingly. In short, both John and

Jesus expected that the “kingdom of heaven” is something the listener is called to respond, a connection of faith and activity, of understanding and life-style. From Jesus’ perspective, “the kingdom of heaven” was intimately related to his person as well as his message. That said, are we any closer to understanding “the kingdom of Heaven” as Jesus had wanted us to?

In several references, Jesus indicated that “the kingdom of heaven” is something that can be entered into, easy for some, and more difficult and quite impossible for others. Easy enough for infants and toddlers but quite a challenge for those who are heavily invested and submerged in and of material goods and wealth; easy enough for those who see “the kingdom of heaven” arriving as a gift from a gracious God, but an insurmountable hurdle for those who strive and toil and strain for “acceptable” works and proofs. Hopefully, we are familiar with these statements, warnings from Jesus.

In Matthew 5, we hear this from Jesus: “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” And then in Matthew 7: “Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” And then in Matthew 19: “It will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” These references may imply the difficulty of entering the kingdom of heaven of one’s own accord, ability or accomplishment, maybe leading some to believe that there is little chance.

But then Jesus also says from Matthew 18: “Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Just become childlike, easy as that. So maybe recognition and participation of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven is

Parish Pastor
Rev. John D. Yost

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- **Dianne Shuck**, Treasurer
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- **Loretta Martin**, Housekeeping

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- **Jen Keister**, Vice-President Inreach
- **Barry Spangler**, Council & Recording Secretary, & Inreach
- **Kim Blyler**, Facilities & Admin
- **Sue Blyler**, Facilities & Admin
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Cont'd from page 1: somehow connected to our values and our priorities, and the manner in which we are able to see (or not) the presence of God in our lives, activities, and relationships.

In a reading from Matthew 13, Jesus provides several parables, similes, that begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like..." attempting to provide further insight into his person and mission that began by his announcing that the "kingdom of heaven has come near." This kingdom of heaven is not some distant, other worldly concept, but it's like the stuff that grows in fields and is connected to life broader than just humans, birds mind you. And this kingdom of heaven is like the stuff that expands the possibilities that occur in bread-making. And it's also like treasures and other stuff that can be discovered, at times by accident, and others after a full day of fishing.

The kingdom of heaven isn't a mustard seed; it isn't leaven; it isn't a valued pearl; it isn't a great catch of fish; it isn't even what you might stumble across in a field. But it can begin to be recognized as we engage in such activities and find ourselves in similar places. And all because the kingdom of heaven has, by God's design, come near to us, to each and every one of us. Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of heaven is not some far-off, distantly future possibility if we navigate properly through a series of hoops and hurdles. Rather, the kingdom of heaven is to be recognized and cherished in the here-and -now. But it will depend somewhat on where we place our values and our priorities, and how we get to those places, where we put our trust and our motives and our ambitions. And it may be as simple as a child who looks up to mom and dad and big sister and brother and gives a smile, indicating that it's going to be alright in this big and sometimes scary world.

Following his use of these kingdom of heaven similes, Jesus asks his followers, "Have you understood all this?" Without hesitation, they answered, "yes." Are we able to say the same? How well are we acquainted with the nearness of the kingdom of heaven? Do we see, and hear, and taste, and touch it now, or have our values and priorities taken us in a different direction? Do we see the "kingdom of heaven" with the same simplicity of a child holding onto mom's or dad's hand as they make their way through a crowd, or the child's eyes lighting up with an ice cream cone embedded across her face, or the child covered in mud who comes through the door and meets an exasperated mom who had just finished a day's worth of laundry.

What is important to note about this kingdom of heaven, that comes near to us by God's will, is that it has been brought near to us as a gift, and is to be received in the simplest of fashion. But it can be missed by all sorts of distractions, distractions brought about by the kind of human thought and activity that is more focused on human performance than God's presence, of striving after more of this or that than simply receiving graciously.

So, today, the kingdom of heaven might be like life lived in Union County in the lingering time of a COVID-19 viral pandemic, where a farmer continues to prepare for a harvest in the hot sun; where a mother kisses her children before heading off for a day's work at the local supermarket; where young college students are anticipating a return to in-person instruction; where a police officer questions the potential dangerous possibilities of responding to domestic abuse calls or street disturbances; where children, riding in the back seat, notice a playground and ask, "can we stop to play?", and where the church gathers in faith, love, and hope in times that continue to be uncertain and discomfiting.

God in Christ promises that the kingdom of heaven has come near, filled with hope and possibility, with grace and abundance, with comfort and challenge. Have we noticed? And if not, watch the birds in the fields, smell the bread, stumble across some treasure, go fishing, or better yet watch the children at play before we all get distracted by those values and priorities that can create some distance between God and us. God isn't going away. The kingdom of heaven has come near, and what will it be like today?

Pr. John

WORSHIP & SS SCHEDULES

Christ's United:

Worship: Sunday, 8:30AM

Sunday School: Sunday following worship

First Lutheran:

Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM

Bible Study Schedule

TBA

Hertha Wehr Publication

"Meanderings"

Life: A Column at a Time

by Hertha Shively Wehr

There is a suggested donation \$10.00 and Hertha's family will be giving all proceeds to the Lutheran World Relief Fund.

Hertha's words of wisdom live on in print, to secure your very own copy from our very own Hertha... contact Ann Beckley @ 570-966-0646



Terry Diehl	8/01	Ramon Beiler	9/01
Larry Sampsell	8/03	Vicki Hackenburg	9/02
Troy Smith	8/03	Brynn Umholtz	9/02
Sianah Gemberling	8/05	Elliana Girton	9/03
Libby Loss	8/05	Craig Rothermel	9/09
Michael Beckley	8/06	Blaine Dunkle	9/12
Kim Blyler	8/07	Mary Jane Feaster	9/13
Jane Moore	8/08	Sandy Sanders	9/14
Erica Boyer	8/09	Karen Zimmerman	9/14
Hannah Boyer	8/09	Aiden Gemberling	9/15
Grace Alexander	8/10	Doug Gemberling	9/15
Logan Bartlett	8/10	Gayle Zerbe	9/15
Charlotte Pirraglia	8/10	Jim Mitchell	9/16
Wesley Pirraglia	8/10	Jadyn Rothermel	9/16
Landon Auld	8/11	Grace Crossland	9/17
Susan Jows	8/11	Curt Rothermel	9/19
Carol Shipton	8/11	Forrest Showalter	9/19
Erica Hess	8/12	Beth Zechman	9/19
Eric Hull	8/12	Douglas Gemberling	9/20
Mike Shoemaker	8/12	Molly Keister	9/20
Payton Spigelmyer	8/12	Terry Kline	9/21
Brandi Zimmerman	8/12	Jacob Moyer	9/22
William Donmoyer	8/13	Jodi Marshall	9/23
Tom Catherman	8/14	Ella Montesinos	9/24
Calista Girton	8/14	Pastor John Yost	9/24
Elizabeth Loss	8/14	Mindy Yost	9/24
Ethel Schnure	8/14	Millard Boyer	9/25
June Wenrich	8/15	Michael Culp	9/25
Larry Zerbe	8/17	Eugene Hassinger	9/26
Traci Musser	8/19	Tracy Mensch	9/26
Stacey Gemberling	8/20	Max Zeller	9/26
Denise Seebold	8/21	Jason Zimmerman	9/26
Sue Blyler	8/22	Adam Hackenberg	9/27
Tim Klose	8/24	Ruth Gessner	9/28
Eric Dunkle	8/25	Andrew Schwartz	9/28
Janet Hackenberg	8/25	Brenda Ilgen	9/30
Calen Loss	8/28	Maxine Stahl	9/30
Janet Shoemaker	8/28		
Kaelex Shuck	8/28		
Barbara Grimmooris	8/29		
Jim Randecker	8/31		

In Our Prayers

Winifred Aikey	Linda Gingrich
Maria Anderson	Bev Kauffman
Kim Blyler	Keaton Herb
John Bowersox	Donald Moyer
John Dunkle	Laurie Steenstra
Roger Dunkle	Shut Ins:
Mike Flickinger	Jim & Jan Beckley
Doug & Pearl Gemberling	Jim & Florence Boop
Gary & Barb Gemberling	Pearl Culp
Dave Janaes	Barbara Grimmooris
Janet Meyer	Doris Moll
Harry Moyer	Ethel Musser
Wendy Norton	Helen Pirone
Diane Reamer	Meda Struble
Kim Roberts	Ronald Ulrich
Gerry Shively	Connie Wagner
Ken Smith	In Our Military:
Miranda & Caleb Stroik	Brandi Gemberling
Rita Tinnes	Thaddeus Miller
Ron & Darlene Ulrich & family	Zachary Miller
Tom Watters	

*If an effort to keep the prayer list current, CULC is going to clear the current list on a quarterly basis. *A new list will begin in January, April, July & October. If you want to continue an existing prayer request or have a new prayer concern, please contact Margie.*



Ron & Darlene Ulrich	8/07	56 Yrs.
Steve & Becky Forcheskie	8/11	31 Yrs.
Don & Erma Hower	8/20	71 Yrs.
Larry & Gayle Zerbe	8/20	54 Yrs.
Brian & Debbie Dauberman	8/29	23 Yrs.
Andrew & Jennifer Keister	8/31	8 Yrs.
Jed & Elizabeth Loss	9/06	13 Yrs
Cliff & Diane Valentine	9/06	52 Yrs
Tom & Evelyn Rice	9/09	49 Yrs
Chip & Beth Zechman	9/09	12 Yrs
Kris & Carla Ruhl	9/16	43 Yrs
Ryan & Cortney Klose	9/17	16 Yrs
Zach & Abi Harvey	9/18	17 Yrs
Brad & Courtney Snyder	9/23	4 Yrs
Joe & Sherry Zimmerman	9/25	45 Yrs
Jeffrey & Vicki Hackenburg	9/26	23 Yrs
Ken & Patty Emery	9/29	48 Yrs
Eric & Gwen Hull	9/30	26 Yrs
Max & Trena Zeller	9/30	32 Yrs



Notes of Appreciation....

Four Bell Congregation:

Thank you so much for the flowers for our little girl! We really appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Bryanna, Zach and Avery

First Lutheran Congregation:

Thank you so much for the flowers for our little girl! We really appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Bryanna, Zach and Avery

FELC

Thank you for preparing and serving the lunch following the service today.

The Glen Van Dyke family

FELC

"Thank you so so much for your generosity and support"

Haley Herman



FELC

Youth Sunday: August 8th at the 10:30 AM worship.

The youth will lead all aspects of the service. Logan Bartlett, a 2021 graduate will provide the sermon and will also be presented with his "senior quilt". Logan is a National Merit Finalist and graduated in the top 10% of his class. He has completed 24 college credits his senior year, is a member of National Honor Society, French National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, 8th Place State Medalist in PIAA Wrestling and 4 year varsity letter winner. Logan is a viola player in the school orchestra, a founding member of the Lewisburg FFA Chapter, former FELC church council member. He has attended numerous Group Workcamps and mission trips. Logan was the Edna M. Cole Lutheran Scholarship recipient. He will attend Lycoming College with a Presidential Merit Scholarship and be a member of the Lycoming Wrestling team. Congratulations and best wishes, Logan!

CULC Communication from the Council:

A one-day Vacation Bible School for children in 3rd grade and under with fun activities, lessons is set for Saturday, October 2, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Council is looking for people to plan and help out with this community outreach. A planning meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 10, at 7:00 p.m.

A joint Parish worship and ice cream gathering will take place on Sunday, September 12, at the Mifflinburg Community Park. Worship will start at 10:00 a.m. with ice cream and snacks afterwards. More information will be coming.

Christ's United will be selling gift cards from Weis Markets and Wenger's Grocery Outlet. Proceeds from these gift cards will go back for our church's ministries. Contact Sue Blyler for more information.

A "drive through" benefit turkey dinner benefiting Hope's Haven will be held on Saturday, September 25. Help will be needed for this event. Check with Kim Blyler for details.

We will also be holding our late-fall pot pie sale on Saturday, November 6. It take a lot of help to make this event go smoothly. More information will be forthcoming. Contact Kim Blyler for details or to volunteer.

During Penn State Home football game Saturdays, we are going to be selling donuts and sticky buns. For September 11, 18 & 25, we will be selling donuts for those people traveling along PA Route 45. During October 2 & 23 and November 13 & 20, we anticipate in selling Mr. Sticky's sticky buns for travelers as well as possibly taking orders from members. Stay alert as more details come out.

Council is still looking for congregational members willing to be appointed to serve on Council for the remainder of the calendar year. If you are interested, please contact Council President Lee Spangler or any other Council member.

Our condolences....

We extend sincerest condolences to Rick & Darlene Endy following the death of her mother, Edna Emery, 90, on June 10, 2021.

CULC August Volunteers

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lay Reader</u>	<u>Comm. Asst.</u>
8/1	Maurice Clouser	Bev Catherman
8/8	Janet Hackenberg	Janet Hackenberg
8/15	Glenn Spangler	Glenn Spangler
8/22	Barry Spangler	Barry Spangler
8/29	Greg Shuck	Greg Shuck

MONTHLY:

Sound System:

Lee Spangler

Altar Guild:

Sherri Klauger

Usher:

Cliff Valentine

Jim Zimmerman

FELC August Volunteers

Ushers:

8/1: Sue Jows, Libby Loss, Tom Orren, Jim Schwartz

8/8: Youth Sunday

8/15: Harry Boyer, Cindy Harvey, Hull's

8/22: Linda Lewis, Liz Loss, Marianne Motto, Jeannie Sawyer

8/29: Jeff Mensch, Sherri Neece, Craig & Sally Rothermel

Chief Usher: Jane Moore

Lay Reader:

Tom Orren

Sherri Neece

Linda Lewis

Jeff Mensch

Offering Envelopes: Trena Zeller

CULC September Volunteers

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lay Reader</u>	<u>Comm. Asst.</u>
9/5	Maurice Clouser	Janice Wagner
9/12	At the Park	
9/19	Barry Spangler	Glenn Spangler
9/26	Glenn Spangler	Barry Spangler

MONTHLY:

Sound System:

Dave Bickhart

Altar Guild:

Barb Clouser

Maurice Clouser

Usher:

Dave Bickhart

Greg Shuck

FELC September Volunteers

Ushers:

9/5: Nicole Gessner, Shirley Heasley, Jane Moore, Don Seebold

9/12: At the Park

9/19: Crossland's, Jeff Hackenburg, Andy Long

9/26: Harry Boyer, Ilgen's, Dave Weaver

Chief Usher: Kim Sawyer

Lay Reader:

Shirley Heasley

Andy Long

Harry Boyer

Jim Schwartz

Offering Envelopes:



Apple Dumpling Time!!

Volunteers are needed for the annual apple dumpling fundraiser!

If you can volunteer to help make apple dumplings in October
(Thursday nights or Fridays during the day)
please call Linda Lewis (570-238-5058) or Sue Jows (570-452-4287).

The Apple Dumpling Committee would like to hold the fundraiser again this year;
however, we need to know if there will be enough volunteers.

Depending on how many people respond to this notice,
we may limit the number of dumplings that are made each week
or the fundraiser may be canceled all together.

We know it has been a difficult year for everyone
but do hope that we can come together once again to bake and experience fellowship!

CULC Address Changes:

Joe Dressler
325 N. Tenth Street
Ste. 400
PO Box 260
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Doug & Pearl Gemberling
820 Lisburn Road
Apt. 314
Camp Hill, PA 17011

AUGUST 2021

PARISH CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:30 AM: Worship/HC -CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC -FELC	2	3 FELC 9-2	4 10AM:Hope's Haven- CULC 7PM: FELC Council	5 FELC 9-2	6	7 George Linke Me- morial
8 8:30 AM: Worship/HC -CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC -FELC	9 FELC 9-2 7PM: Parish Council - FELC	10	11 10AM:Hope's Haven- CULC	12 FELC 9-2	13	14
15 8:30 AM: Worship/HC -CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC -FELC	16	17 FELC 9-2 7PM: CULC Council	18 FELC 9-2 10AM:Hope's Haven- CULC	19	20	21
22 8:30 AM: Worship/HC -CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC -FELC	23	24 FELC 9-2	25 FELC 9-2 10AM:Hope's Haven- CULC	26	27	28
29 8:30 AM: Worship/HC -CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC -FELC	30	31 FELC 9-2				

SEPTEMBER 2021

PARISH CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 10AM:Hope's Haven-CULC 7PM: FELC Council	2 FELC 9-2	3	4 Wedding
5 8:30 AM: Worship/HC-CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC-FELC	6 LABOR DAY <i>FELC Office Closed all week - Vacation</i> 	7	8 10AM:Hope's Haven-CULC	9	10	11
12 10:00 AM: Worship at the Park	13	14 FELC 9-2	15 10AM:Hope's Haven-CULC	16 FELC 9-2	17	18
19 8:30 AM: Worship/HC-CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC-FELC	20	21 FELC 9-2 7PM: CULC Council	22 FELC 9-2 10AM:Hope's Haven-CULC	23	24	25
26 8:30 AM: Worship/HC-CULC 9:45AM: SS-CULC 10:30AM: Worship/HC-FELC	27	28 FELC 9-2	29 10AM:Hope's Haven-CULC	30 FELC 9-2		