

Friday, January 29, 2021

Dear Members and Friends of Desert Hills Lutheran,

Yesterday we wrapped up our two-day retreat with Kevin Ford, our consultant these last seven years. It was a terrific time of planning and conversation for the coming year. If you would like to learn more about his work, go to Leighton Ford Ministries online. We will share the insights in the next weeks and months. There were twenty people from council and staff and at large from the congregation. One of the items discussed was the transition that is upon all of us now. I'll be transitioning out and you will seek someone to transition in to join you. It is going to be an exciting time.

This weekend I'll be looking at the third of seven sermons on N.T. Wright's *Broken Signposts*. Spirituality is the broken signpost topic this weekend. I'll look at how spirituality differs from religion. It is socially more acceptable to be spiritual today than religious. Why is that? Is there such a thing as Christian spirituality? Of course.

Our Annual Meeting is this Sunday at 12:15 in the sanctuary. We need people to come so we have a quorum and can get the small amount of work done. The transition is first on the agenda, then voting on our spending plan, voting on the work of the nominating team. Our Desert Hills Lutheran Foundation will have a short report and finally remembering members who have died this past year. We will have as we do for worship, a section for masks only and plenty of physical distancing. I hope you can help with the quorum.

My devotion reading for today is *Matthew 5:43-45*. <sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous."

I've never done particularly well with these verses. I want to be a child of my Father in heaven, but loving enemies seems like too much. How about if I just love my neighbors and ignore my enemies? Last weekend I talked about love and made a case that to love is to do acts of love. What kinds of acts of love could I give my enemies? I know I can pray for them. "Dear lord, keep them far from me." "Dear Lord, please show them the errors of their ways." "Dear Lord, I pray for my enemy's conversion." "Dear Lord, help me have patience." As we move through this new year, I'm convinced that we are all going to be put in situations to practice some way to love our enemies and pray for them. For today my prayer is that when I need the love and prayers, my father in heaven will show me the way.

Blessings,

Pastor Martin