



CASCADIAN WEEKLY

August 20, 2021

Week 75

A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Cascade Christian Church,

Thank you for your faithfulness this summer as we continue to live in unusual times. The news this week of Afghanistan and Haiti has been heart wrenching, and the rise of COVID variants has been frightening. This is a time to look within, and see what you can do to further God's Kingdom even in the face of such challenges. The rest of this summer I will be preaching some sermons from the Old Testament, calling this series: "Survivor Stories: or the Stuff You Didn't Learn in Sunday School." All through the Bible we read of people who faced daunting circumstances and impossible situations, but because they walked with God, they made it. Many of them made huge mistakes, and their stories show us that God does not focus on the times we mess up, God focuses on how we get back up, and how we survive and thrive, and how we build His Kingdom. I hope you'll join us in person or online to worship and learn together.

We continue to move forward with God, and have many wonderful things to look forward to because of the grace and mercy we receive in Jesus Christ. Our Christian Education staff is working on our fall programs and classes. We look forward to kicking off Sunday School on September 19 and Wednesday night classes will resume in September as well. So many of you have been volunteering at church, cleaning areas that were left untouched for 68 Sundays! The church buildings and grounds are looking great, and we are thankful to all who are getting the church ready for a great fall season. Congregational Care, the Worship Committee, the Go Team, and Social Action and Mission Outreach are also at work planning for fall classes, speakers, service opportunities, and social events.

We still have some weeks of summer to enjoy, and I hope you can take time to enjoy all of God's goodness and blessings. God is sovereign, God reigns, and God is a God of mercy, justice, and love. Take time to let that soak in as you enjoy summer's end. Keep the faith, Jill

LOCKING & UNLOCKING DOORS AT CASCADE

We have a new key system! There are a few things that you need to know about the new key system so we can be sure we are all safe and the buildings are secure:

- The traditional keys are no longer going to work for entering buildings.
- Make sure the door is shut tightly behind you. (important for the sanctuary!)
- Please **DO NOT** open buildings with traditional keys because if the doors are not relocked with those keys, the doors will remain open and not secure.
- Please **DO NOT** keep doors from locking by using special keys, fallen wrenches, or hex keys on the interior handles.
- If you need to schedule doors to be locked and unlocked, please contact the church office, and speak with Mark Langenbach, our Business Manager.

WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Sunday (8/22).</u> | Sunday School - 9:30 AM Crib Room - 9:30 AM Worship - 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM |
| <u>Monday (8/23).</u> | Soul Warmers - 2:00 PM Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House) |
| <u>Tuesday (8/24).</u> | Men's Group - 6:30 AM (Coffee House) |
| <u>Wednesday (8/25).</u> | Scouts - 7:00 PM (Centennial Hall) Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House) |
| <u>Thursday (8/26).</u> | Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House) |
| <u>Friday (8/27).</u> | Men's Group - 6:30 AM (Coffee House) Church Office Closed |
| <u>Saturday (8/28).</u> | SAMO Meeting - 9:00 AM (Coffee House) |

Financial giving for
the week ending in
8/15/2021:
Budgeted: \$10,652
Given: \$10,570.61

OTHER WORSHIP NEWS

- Armand Aronson will be preaching on Labor Day Sunday, September 5. We will have one service on that Sunday at 10:30 in the sanctuary.
- On Sunday, August 29, we will have a mission update at both worship services from Nora Leon, our missionary in Haiti. Please pray for the nation of Haiti and our missions committee will be in touch on how we can help.

WORSHIP JAM

All are invited to come to worship jam at 1pm on August 29th. Please let Jacob know if you would like to play in the band. If you would just like to worship we would love to have you here too.



CHILDRENS MINISTRIES

SUNDAY SCHOOL VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Every week at the **9:30 service** we have in-person Sunday School for children ages 4 and up. The children begin the morning in the sanctuary with their families and then are dismissed to go to class.

Students will be brought back down to church after the service. For elementary school, we are also offering a virtual Sunday School, which is mailed out with the Cascadian each week. If you would like your child added to this list, please call Adam or Michael in the church office. **Next month** -- our

Wednesday night programming will begin on **September 15th** and the Sunday School program will be kicking off for the Fall on **September 19th**. Stay tuned for more details!

CRIB ROOM REOPENED

Our crib room has reopened for infants and toddlers through age 3 at the 9:30 service. Parents must make a reservation for this kind of childcare. Call the church office by Wednesday to make your reservation.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING - FALL 2021

We are in full preparation mode for the Fall! We have been cleaning, decorating, and updating classrooms over the summer, and we're looking into a few great curriculum programs. Our aim is to maintain a Biblically-based, Community-aided, Missional, and Christ-centered program for both Sunday School and our midweek program. We want kids to be engaged with fun activities, crafts, and community - all while digging into God's Word and learning about who He is and how to live as believers. Please continue to pray for God's continued work in the lives of our children and leaders.

VOLUNTEERING WITH YOUTH

WE ARE RETURNING TO OUR REGULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM. That means we need Sunday School teachers. Over the summer we are going to continue to do a combined class, but in the fall we will once again continue differentiated learning. Whether you have a kid in Sunday School or not, we need your help! Contact the church office for more details.



MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP



FALL YOUTH GROUP BONFIRE

We are going to have a bonfire at Michael's house (739 College Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503) on September 20th. Come over from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM. We will have pizza, games, and you'll get to help us plan for the upcoming school year. If you would like a ride, please meet at the church at 5:30 PM (and we will be back at the church by 8:30 PM.)

MISSION TRIP 2022

We are going to have a meeting about Mission Trip 2022 on **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH** in High School Room immediately following the Unity Service. Bring your questions, comments, and get excited for a lifechanging trip!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT YOUTH GROUP

Wednesday Night Youth Group will be starting up once again on September 15th. Come ready to learn more about God, play some wacky games, and have a good time with all the people here in youth group!

FALL SUNDAY SCHOOL

We are splitting up Sunday School in the fall! Starting on **September 19th** come and worship with everyone at 9:30 and then join us for Sunday School at 11:00 AM (come right to the youth room!) We will be going through the whole bible this year in Sunday School. We hope to see you there!

TOWNSHIP NEWS

CASCADE HERITAGE DAY

We will be joining Cascade Township in celebrating the history and heritage of the village of Cascade on Saturday, September 25. There will be more information out soon on the fun events of the day, and we are looking for volunteers to help with two things:

1. Running an aid station during the Heritage Day Marathon
2. Being a host/hostess at the open house for our historic chapel. We will have some history displays, refreshments, and would love to have volunteers so come for an hour or two to welcome people to our church. Cascade Christian was established in 1864 or 1865, and the chapel was built in 1880, so our roots are deep, and our history is long. Please call Jill at the church office if you would like to work the aid station or be a history host in the chapel. Hours will be announced.

ADULT MINISTRIES

THANK YOU TO THESE AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

Our beautiful chapel has been completely cleaned – with Murphy's oil soap on the pews, the cushions vacuumed, the walls washed, and the memory room and coat rack cleaned up. Thank you to this amazing group of volunteers: Marsha Steensma, Pam Dykhuizen, Susan Mozley, Denise Pray, Peggy Boelkins, and Darcy Hartley. Thank you for making the chapel shine!

Thank you to the Bereavement Team for the lovely lunch they hosted for the family of Guy Chandler. This crew has 4 co-leaders: Pam Bertram, Ann Early, Susan Mozley, and Margaret Sharp. Last week a team of eight others joined them for serving and clean-up, and truly were a blessing to all who came to honor and remember Guy Chandler.

Thank you to all who are mowing the lawn and looking after the grounds while Mel Behm is out sick. Special thanks to Danny, Bill Weston, Evan Langenbach, Diane Phelps, and all others who are keeping the grounds so beautiful.

POWER INTERRUPTIONS AND INTERNET DOWN

Last week the church was impacted by the storms that rolled through West Michigan. We did not have phone service or internet for part of last week, and are so sorry that we may have missed your phone calls. We did not have internet on Sunday, so we could not live-stream the service. We hope to have a recording of the service on the church website soon.

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

A Virtual Regional assembly will be held on Saturday, Sept. 11 from 10:00AM-1:30PM. Cascade Christian can have 10-12 voting delegates attend this important Zoom meeting, and if you would like to be a voting delegate please contact Jill at the church office. We will be voting on our new Regional Minister and on partnering with the Illinois and Wisconsin Region. Sign up is due by August 31.

UNITY SERVICE AND ALL CHURCH PICNIC

The church will have one worship service on Sunday, September 12 at 10:30 for our annual Unity Service. This will be followed by a boxed lunch, catered by the Nighthawk. More details will be out soon, but if you would like to volunteer for this wonderful picnic, please contact Gail Duchon or call the church office.

WOMEN'S AND MEN'S RETREATS AT CAMP CRYSTAL

Four of our church women are attending the Disciples' women's Retreat this weekend, including: Barb Dykhuizen, Diane VanLeeuwen, Judy Cridler, and Jill Forton. We are looking for women who might like to serve with Regional Women's Ministry – and if this is something you'd be interested in, please contact Pastor Jill at the church office. The Men's Retreat is September 17-19. For sign-up information please contact Jill at the church office.



8.15.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: NOAH

For decades I had the joy of running the children's programs in the church, and it was always fun to teach the story of Noah. I think it reads like a fable for children – Noah is a little old man, God tells him build a boat, animals come on the boat, it rains, the animals get out of the boat, God sends Noah a rainbow. And while all of that is true to scripture, there is so much more to Noah's story. But this is more than a story for children – Noah is a survivor in a time of great evil, and there are wonderful lessons to be learned from his ancient story, **and some of them include:**

1. **Don't miss the boat**
2. **Remember that we are all in the same boat**
3. **Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.**
4. **Stay fit. When you are 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.**
5. **Don't listen to critics, just get the job done**
6. **Build your future on high ground**
7. **For safety's sake, travel in pairs**
8. **Speed isn't always an advantage; the snails were on board with the cheetahs**
9. **Remember the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic was built by professionals**
10. **No matter the storm, when you're with God there's always a rainbow waiting.**

For the remainder of this summer we are going to look at survivors of the Old Testament, people like Noah, and find out what we didn't learn in Sunday School. These Old Testament survivors show us how to tackle the challenges before us in this day and time. Noah's story is very early in scripture, and I invite you to **check out Genesis 6:5-8 with me.**

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

That is hard for a child to hear – that people were so bad, that that they had made the world so awful, that God decided enough. The Creator regretted creating people. Let that sink in a minute – the God who made all things good, who created perfection and then set it free – regretted doing so- and the heart of God was deeply troubled! I think we skip over that too quickly – every inclination of the hearts of people were toward evil – all of the time, and God's heart was deeply troubled – and God chose to end things. With the exception of Noah.

Why Noah? If you look at chapter 5 in Genesis there is a family tree, and Noah is just 10 generations after Adam and Eve, and things were not going well with people. Our early history shows our human nature, brother Cain kills brother Abel in chapter 4 – we still see sin today – murder, jealous, envy, violence, selfishness, brutality, and we still see the results of sin in prisons, emergency rooms, in women's shelters, in broken people. So why Noah? Out of the mess of our early history, one man and his family stand out – Noah found favor in the eyes of God, because of faith.

GENESIS 6:9 This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah was the exception, and his faith made him a survivor. I want to pause here a moment ask, do you live by faith or fact? We like facts, they can be very straight forward. But think about this, every day we run our lives on faith. You don't do a brake check every time you get ready to go somewhere, you have faith that the brakes will work. When you come up to a green light, you have faith that others will stop at their red light. You have faith that pilots knows how to fly a plane safely. Have you ever watched a commercial and then bought the product? If you did, you had faith that the commercial spoke at least a little truth. Noah, in a time of great evil, somehow kept the faith and believed God.

8.15.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: NOAH

He was blameless – and he walked with God. So God came to Noah, and spoke to him **Genesis 6:14-17: So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.**

One time I paced the size of the ark out with kids here at church, and we ended across the street at Jamin' Beans. A cubit is about 18 inches, so the ark was 450 long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high – with three decks, ventilation, roofing, a side door. To grasp how big this is, it was as longer than a football field at least 50 feet past each of the end zones, as wide as a football field, and taller than a brachiosaurus. Big.

Imagine being asked to build this. Imagine the engineering, designing, cutting the trees, seasoning the wood, sawing the boards, forging the nails, making the tools. Imagine you and your family have found favor with God and are being asked not just to build this huge boat, but that you alone will be the survivors, God is going to flood the earth, everything is about to change. We can only use our imaginations to think about how long this took, but we know Noah did it, he followed and obeyed God's commands, as we read in Genesis 6:18-22: **But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark-you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."** Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

So there was building, working, planting, harvesting, storing, preparing – most likely for years. And when did the animals begin to arrive? What sense did God place in them to migrate and find their way? What did Noah think when penguins arrived in the desert, when he first saw a rhinoceros, when pythons slithered in, when Monarch butterflies arrived? Noah did everything just as God commanded him – this is faith with obedience. This is more than an "ok – I'll get the job done". Noah trusted God and obeyed God – well ahead of the flood, on blue sky mornings, hot sizzling desert afternoons, clear starry skies nights. Noah obeyed even where there was no sign of rain, no sign of disaster, obeying when he has never seen or conceived of a vessel like this. And he built in a culture of depravity and evil. How did his neighbors react? Noah must have been harassed, ridiculed, questioned – but none of them wanted to hear the explanation, no one changed and joined him to help in building the ark. Did Noah pity them, knowing what was coming for them? God describes Noah as a righteous man, and it must have troubled his heart, knowing his neighbors' fate, but he wasn't swayed, he completed the task, he obeyed – even when it was hard to do so. **And then the clouds began to gather...**

Genesis 7: The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.

And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the flood waters came on the earth. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and all creatures that move along the of ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after seven days the floodwaters came – On that very day Noah and his family and all of the animals entered the ark...

Then the Lord shut him in. Imagine loading the completed ark, with all of the provisions and food, imagine the animals being sorted and brought to their areas in the ark, the sounds of hooves, bleats, calls, and buzzes. And then another sound, the creaking of the door as it is shut, a door big another that a giraffe or an elephant can pass through, that door is closed, not by Noah, but by the hand of God. The rain had begun, the door was closed, God shut them in. Noah and his family, the only righteous people, were spared by God.

8.15.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: NOAH

Genesis 7:17,20-21,23, 24 For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished – birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all humankind. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

We are tired from a stormy week, imagine having it be continuous rain, and for 35 more days. Water came from the sky, from under the ground, from the springs of the deep – all as God had said. The water kept coming, and at first Noah's neighbors may have delighted in rains for their parched land, water for their wells and crops, but that soon turned to dismay, and fear, and then terror, and death – and all due to the evil that people had chosen. God washed the earth clean, and it must have been horrible for those who died. I almost said horrible as they watched their loved ones die, but if every thought is towards wickedness and evil, there is no love, there are no loved ones, even among the youngest or oldest people – there was no concern for another, no pity, no compassion, nothing that we value in human relationships. All was washed clean, and only Noah and those in the ark were spared, they were the only survivors.

We so often think it was 40 days of rain and then a rainbow, but there were an additional 150 days of floating, waiting, watching, wondering, caring for the animals, cleaning up the ark, 150 days. If that storm started today that would be like us all being here until the end of February. One hundred and fifty days to wonder what would God do next?

But God remembered Noah, that is the beginning verse of Genesis chapter 8 – God remembered Noah, his family, and all of the animals – and God sent a wind that started to dry up the earth, the waters receded steadily, the tops of mountains became visible, and the ark rested on Mt Ararat. Noah released a raven to see if there was dry land – it found none. Later he released a dove, and it found no place to rest because of all of the water, and the Bible describes how carefully Noah brought the dove back on to the ark, then a week later he released the dove again – and it returned in the evening with a leaf in its beak – a leaf from an olive tree, the tree we think of as the tree of peace – an olive tree was growing somewhere. In another week Noah released the dove again, and this time she did not return, she had found a place to nest. The earth was drying out – and Noah had not been forgotten.

God told Noah and his family to come out of the ark, and release all of the animals, so they could be free to roam and multiple and bring life back to the earth. And Noah thanked God with a sacrifice, which is why seven pairs of sacrificially clean animals were brought on board, and their lives were given as an act of thankfulness to God.

And then God made a covenant with Noah, that never again would God curse the ground because of the evil of humankind. God said He would never again destroy all living creatures as He had done in the flood. But things would now change – the animals would have a natural fear of Noah and his descendants, and could be used as food for humans, just as God had given humanity green plants for food, God now gave them everything.

But there was another change- there would be an accounting. People are made in God's own image – and there would be an accounting for anyone who took the life of another. Other rules to love God and love people would later follow, but for now God provided rules, food, and a place for life to flourish, good life, the kind of life God has for His people. To mark this new season, God gave Noah a sign of His presence and His promise – the rainbow. Rain and rainbows had existed before the flood, but now the rainbow took on a new meaning. Think of an archer drawing back his bow, in a rainbow the bow is drawn back towards the heavens – aimed at God Himself, meaning God remembers His promise, God doesn't forget His covenant – the rainbow points to Him, and God remembers to never destroy the world again.

So why Noah, why care about this Old Testament survivor? Hebrews 11 is the list of the faithful in scripture, people who walked with God, even when it was hard to do so. Hebrews 11:7 says this of Noah, thousands of years after his ark came to rest – **By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built the ark to save his family. By his faith, he condemned the world and became heir of righteousness that comes by faith.**

8.15.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: NOAH

In faith, Noah heard God, believed God, obeyed God. And in the end, he was proven right, he listened to God rather than his critics, he stayed true to the truth. He didn't join the sins of his culture, and was the one man who was righteous in his generation. We live in such strange times – there is so much hurt and pain out there, and there are so many ways to sin. A clergy sister of mine put it this way – she said remember the letters PUC. We are all dealing with P- pain, U- uncertainty, and C – chaos. PUC. Then she added so pucker up and lead, lead for Christ, be the righteous one in your generation, your office, your household, your school. In the end, being right with God is all that matters. Every day we are getting closer and closer to being with God, either when He calls us home or when Jesus comes back and takes us with Him.

Jesus spoke of Noah when he talked about His return: **Matthew 24:35-42 – Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in a field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**

So why Noah? Because we need his reminder. Because here we are – eating, drinking, going about our business, living our lives. Do you realize what is coming? The return of Jesus is closer than it was yesterday. Are all of the troubles of the world, the wars, fires, earthquakes, pandemic, pain, uncertainty, and chaos signs that the end is near? I don't know – the angels don't know, even Jesus doesn't know – but we can be sure that God does. God's plans are to save the world, to bring about the paradise that He plans for all who seek Him and believe. God is in the survivor business, most certainly – planning that none should perish but have everlasting life – through Jesus. Friends, don't make the story of Noah a children's story – it is our story, a story of pain, uncertainty, and chaos, but a story of a protecting God who spares those who believe, who cleans what has been polluted with sin.

Our God is a God of Second Chances who let the world start fresh. It can be seen as logical to dismiss Noah's story as a myth – and I hold on to three things that tell me this is truth: first there are many flood stories throughout the multiple cultures of the world – there is a common theme here. Second, I hold on to the genealogy of Jesus in the New Testament book of Luke chapter 3, that traces back Jesus family tree – to include Noah in verse 36. Either Noah really lived and his story in scripture is based on a historical event, or at least part of Jesus' human ancestry is a myth. And third, hold on to the fact that Noah shows up 8 times in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of Noah not as a story or myth, but as a man, and I do not doubt Jesus. Noah reminds us that God's words are true – right back to the beginning. God created beauty, life, and gave humanity the freedom to enjoy it all, then when wickedness reached a certain point, God cleaned the world with a flood of water, finding grace and righteousness in Noah. Noah wasn't perfect – later, after the flood is over, he plants a vineyard, gets drunk from the wine he makes, and passes out naked in his tent. But he is still called righteous; he still is a man of God. Our takeaway? I don't think God focuses on the times we mess up, God focuses on how we get back up, and how we survive and thrive, and how we build His kingdom.

So, how will you survive these PUC days of pain, uncertainty, and chaos? I hope you'll keep looking up, and seeing God's rainbows after you survive your storms. And what will you build, even when things are uncertain, or not seen? A legacy of fear or hope? Love or hate? Generosity or greed? I hope you'll build like a Noah. Keep the faith. Amen and Amen.

