



Christ • Communion • Community

CASCADIAN WEEKLY

August 27, 2021

Week 76

A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Cascade Christian Church,

I want to thank you for a wonderful summer. So many of you have adapted programs, figured out ways to make things happen at the church, and have furthered the Kingdom of God by your hard work, positive attitudes, and creative thinking. I am so pleased that Congregational Care and the Social Action/Mission Outreach Committee teamed up to provide three picnic lunches that helped expand our minds on diversity. It was a joy to see the church come together for Vacation Bible School in-person and to have Sunday School all summer. We had so many people attend camps and retreats at Crystal, and our youth group enjoyed trips to Mackinac Island and Michigan's Adventure. Our elders, deacon/greeters, musicians, bands, and tech teams have made worship happen in God-honoring and creative ways. We've had teams deep clean the chapel, other teams host funeral lunches, and still others care for the flower beds and grounds. Our 2021-2022 Church Board has met twice this summer, and they have a renewed focus on "Open doors, open hearts, and open minds for Christ, Communion and Community."

I also want to thank all of you for your faithful and thoughtful attendance, both in-person and online, as we are masking again and using precautions to protect one another and the children of the church, and thank you for your generous giving. The church is strong, healthy, and active in many ways and places thanks to this wonderful congregation. Thank you for building God's Kingdom through all of the challenges that are before us, and we know, that with God's help, we will get through this and thrive.

I hope you will be able to join us for these special Sunday that are coming up:

- August 29: Missionary Nora Leon will be with us at both 9:30 and 11:00 to update us on the situation in Haiti and what we can do to support Caribbean Children's Foundation in Les Cayes as they have faced an earthquake and hurricane. Those who can are invited to support Nora's work through a special love offering that will be taken this Sunday.
- September 5: There will be one worship service at 10:30 in the sanctuary with Reverend Armand Aronson preaching from Isaiah 43 on "Ready or Not, a new year is coming!" Please join us to hear Armand's message with traditional and contemporary music.
- September 12: We will have our Annual Unity Service followed by a picnic with boxed lunches. The service will be in the sanctuary at 10:30 with traditional and contemporary music. Being the 20th anniversary of the 9-11 attacks, we will spend some quiet time thanking those who served then and who serve now, and will begin a sermon series on courage from the book of Daniel.

Please make a reservation for a boxed lunch by calling the church office at 949-1360. A free will offering will be taken to cover the costs of the lunches, and we are serving this way rather than a potluck and cookout to avoid COVID transmission.

As we prepare for the school year classes and a new year of worship services, let's join our Board with open doors, hearts, and minds as we serve Christ, be in communion with one another, and build God's Kingdom in this community.

God bless you and keep the faith - Jill

WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday (8/29).

Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Crib Room - 9:30 AM
Worship - 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM

Monday (8/30).

Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House)

Tuesday (8/31).

Men's Group - 6:30 AM (Coffee House)

Wednesday (9/1).

Scouts - 7:00 PM (Centennial Hall)
Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House)

Thursday (9/2).

Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House)

Friday (9/3).

Men's Group - 6:30 AM (Coffee House)

Church Office Closed

Saturday (9/4).

Financial giving for
the week ending in
8/22/2021:
Budgeted: \$10,652
Given: \$5,731.98

A MESSAGE ABOUT THE CASCADIAN

If you have any announcements or events that need to be added to the Cascadian, please email them to the church office manager Caitlin Oke, at office@cascadechristian.com, by Tuesday at 9AM of the week that you need them added.

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.

A FINANCIAL UPDATE

Pledged giving for this fiscal year (July 2021 - June 2022) totaled \$368,600.

\$83,184 has been received this fiscal year toward the General Fund (pledged and non-pledged giving).

The Christian Church Foundation Endowment Fund balance is now at \$107,792.

According to the church's policy, "The Christian Church Foundation will be directed by the Gifts Committee to annually disburse a percentage of the principal amount of Cascade Christian Church's endowment when the principal balance is greater than \$100,000." More information will be provided in a future financial update for how funds will be distributed by the Gifts Committee.

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

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!

MICHIGANS

ADVENTURE

The Middle and High School youth group, 15 in all, had a great trip to Michigan's Adventure. The lines were long and the day was hot, but they had a great time in their last activity of the summer. Now the kids are starting school and Michael and Adam are getting ready for the Fall Kickoff on September 15th!



TOWNSHIP NEWS

CASCADE HERITAGE DAY

On Saturday, September 25, we will join Cascade township in celebrating the history and heritage of Cascade by having a chapel open house and refreshments, and assisting with an aid station at the village race. We have been part of the Cascade community since 1864, and are pleased to welcome the larger community to our campus as we celebrate our long church history and heritage. We will need volunteers - please call the church office to work an hour at the race, or to host the open house for an hour shift.

ADULT MINISTRIES

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

This Sunday will be the last day to sign up for the Regional Assembly Zoom meeting on Saturday, September 11 from 10:00-1:30. We are able to have 12 voting delegates as we vote on partnering with the Illinois/Wisconsin Region and calling Reverend Teresa Dulyea Parker to be our Regional Minister when Reverend Eugene James retires in December. These are big decisions, and the 2020-2021 Board and our current church Board have studied these issues. Please contact Jill Forton at the church office if you would like to attend and/or be a voting delegate.

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. If you would like to volunteer for this wonderful picnic, please contact Gail Duchon or call the church office.

MEN'S AND WOMAN'S RETREATS AT CAMP CRYSTAL

Cascade Christian had 5 women attend the Women's retreat at Camp Crystal over August 20-22. Barb Dykhuizen, Gail Duchon, Diane VanLeeuwen, Judy Cridler, and Jill Forton were all part of the retreat, and Barb Dykhuizen will be part of a Regional team that will plan next year's retreat. Please be in touch with Barb with your ideas.

Men can still register for the September 17-19 Men's retreat at Crystal. Please go to campcrystal.org to register, and church has scholarships for those who would like to attend. The deadline to sign up is September 12.

RIPPLING HOPE

We would like to include Middle and High school students, parents, and other adult volunteers to represent Cascade Christian in this outreach event. Volunteers will help with yard clean-up, small painting tasks, and other jobs for residents of Detroit. There are also indoor tasks like organization at Rippling Hope's warehouse in the office and storage areas.

October 2nd, Leave from church in early in the morning, work from about 9:30-4:00, then return home by 6:30-7.

Bring; water bottle, bag lunch, and work gloves. If working outside wear closed toe shoes and dress for the weather. Tools will be supplied however you can bring your own yard tools if you prefer.

Contact: Diane Phelps at dianephelps2010@gmail.com, Michael Dirksen at mdirksen@cascadechristian.com, or the church office if you have questions and to RSVP.

DAYS FOR GIRLS WORKSHOP

Assembling, ironing, cutting, and stitching sustainable menstrual kits for young women.

September 18, 1-4

October 16, 1-4

November 20, 1-4

Centennial Hall

All skill levels, sewers and non-sewers alike.

Contact Diane Phelps email dianephelps2010@gmail.com, or call the church office.

8.22.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: ABRAHAM

Have you ever made a bold decision and then wondered if you did the right thing? My guess is we have all been there – maybe it was the decision on where to go to college, to break up with someone, whether to get married, to have a child, to take a new job, to risk a business venture. One of my pivot moments was when I was at Michigan State – I started out majoring in French – thinking to be a high school French teacher. Switching to youth work, mostly because of my experiences here at this church and as a counselor at Crystal Conference Center, was a big decision.

I wondered at the time if I had made the right choice. How about you – have you made a big change and then wondered if you did the right thing? Change comes to every one of us, some changes we plan for, other changes hit us out of nowhere. If you wonder how to survive change, how to even thrive in times of change, look to Abraham, the third person we have looked at this summer as we see how God gets us through difficult times. We spent a lot of time with Joseph of Genesis – and how God got him through many challenges. Last week we looked at Noah – another survivor, remembered for his obedience, for doing what the Lord commanded. And now Abraham – What do you know about him?

- Abraham's story covers the end of Genesis 11 through chapter 25, he is the great grandfather of Joseph. Briefly, here are some of the other things to remember about him
- Christianity, Islam, and Judaism recognize Abraham as a father: Abraham is a founding father, the patriarch, the father of two sons by two mothers – Ishmael and Isaac, whose descendants are still battling out their relationship and beliefs to this day.
- We first know him as Abram – God changes his name to Abraham as Abram grows in faithfulness.
- Abraham was from the line of Noah's son Shem, and was born a few years after Noah died.
- Abraham came out of modern-day Iraq – Abraham kind of comes out of nowhere. His family lived in Mesopotamia, in Ur, one of the oldest known cities of the world. It was from there that he got the call from God to leave and head to another place as God directed him.
- Abraham had a nephew named Lot, and a wife named Sarai/Sarah – There could be a sermon series on each of them – Lot's situation in Sodom and Gomorrah, Sarah's laughing at the idea of giving birth to a son in her old age. And we'll save them for another time.
- Abram moved from Ur, to Haran, to Canaan (Israel) and then to Egypt due to a famine. God told Abraham to move, and he did, many times. What is so interesting to me is that Abraham obeys, not knowing where he would end up, except that it would be the land that God would show him. That is deep faith.
- He lied about Sarai when in Egypt, saying his wife was his sister. Sarai was very beautiful, and Abram knew that he could be killed off so another man could marry her. In Egypt, Pharaoh himself took Sarai into his palace, and gave Abram many riches for her sake. When Pharaoh realized that Sarai was Abram's wife he sent them away with all the wealth they had gained.
- He and Sarai got ahead of God – Sarai and Abram were growing old and were childless, so Hagar, Sarai's servant, was sent to sleep with Abram, and gave birth to his son Ishmael. He was not the son that God had promised.

So looking at that list – how was Abram, or Abraham, a strong, faithful survivor, a man who made a bold choice and changed for God? His story is still very early in the history of our faith – when people were not doing so well, Adam and Eve had been kicked out of the garden of Eden for choosing to go their own way and disobeying God. The earth had been flooded, with the exception of Noah, because every intention of the heart of all people was towards evil, and then there was the tower of Babel – where people again try to get ahead of God and tried to build their own pathway to heaven. Sin and pride are all over the beginning of the Bible, and each time, God takes corrective action, later through the law and the prophets, and ultimately in Jesus Christ. Out of all of the people of his day, Abram caught the eye of God, and was chosen by God. Abraham was a survivor, and he had such deep trust and faith in God, even in times of great pain, uncertainty, and chaos. And throughout his life, Abraham witnessed the faithfulness and goodness of God. Let's see what Genesis says about this faithful survivor in chapter 12, starting at verse one.

8.22.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: ABRAHAM

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Imagine being asked to start over at age 75. Maybe that happened to some of you. Imagine being asked to move, without a clear direction of where you are supposed to go, imagine hearing you are going to have a huge family, that you will be a great nation, that God Himself will curse those who mess with you, and that through you, God will bless everyone, ALL the people of the whole world of all time. I think most of us would be overwhelmed, would feel inadequate to the task. But not Abram. Scripture says Abram went, that is his first big change and choice. He immediately gets up, takes his family, and leaves home, setting out for Canaan, the land God promised that to give to Abraham's yet unborn offspring. Friends, that is faith, and more – this is trust – trusting in a God who speaks, who guides, who asks big things of us, and then blesses us in bigger ways than we could have imagined. After Abram's trip to Egypt, and then getting his nephew Lot out of some trouble, God came to Abram again. God had not forgotten his covenant, his promise to Abraham. Genesis 15:1-4 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."

This is the cry of the heart of a man hurting. The years are piling up on Abram, he has been on the move as God told him to do, he has already survived some huge challenges. The pages of the calendar are going by – and there is no child, no son. God said there would be – and there isn't, Abram is old, Sarai is just a bit younger than him. A servant is his appointed heir – and now God says God will be Abram's shield and very great reward. But what about the rewards of fatherhood? Some of you can relate to Abram and Sarai – infertility is not just a current problem, throughout scripture childless women have been labeled as barren – a hard word – as if she is a desert. And there are men beyond being able to father a child – and that was hard – no one to carry on the family name to, no one to inherit the estate. Childlessness, then and now – hurts.

That Abram cries out speaks to Abram's relationship with God. He is able to question God and be fearful about his future. But God addresses Abram's fears. First, He tells Abram that He is his shield. He is going to protect Abram from any physical harm that others might try to inflict upon him. Second, God promises that He will be Abram's reward. God Himself is the very great reward that is promised to Abram. In the Bible we find that there are basically two ways of approaching God with our questions and our doubts. One way is to do that with a defiant heart. And when that is done, God usually imposes some kind of consequence. The other way is the way Abram approaches God here with a heart that is more confused than defiant, a heart that is genuinely seeking to understand God.

There are a couple of things that could be easy to miss in this passage – this is the first place where we see the phrase – "The word of the Lord came to". This is the first place where Abram calls God – Sovereign Lord – which is YHWH Adonai – or the mighty covenant making God. And this is the first place where the terms "believe", and "righteousness" appear.

8.22.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: ABRAHAM

To believe is to accept God's word as reliable and act accordingly. The word of the Lord came to Abram, and Abram questioned, got his answer, and believed God. Yes, he made a detour with Hagar, and the consequences for that lack of trust have been many. But Abraham believed. **Righteousness is the state of being right with God.** Abram was not sinless, he did not always stay on God's path – but he never gave up on God, and he kept coming back to God over and over because he trusted God's promises. God's promise is beautifully stated in Genesis 15:5-6 **He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**

This is Abram's second bold decision. This is his no turning back moment, certainly the journey had been a walk of faith and trust, but this is Abraham's all in moment. He believes God, and both Sarai and Abram, come to believe God when three men come to visit them. The visitors appear as men, but they are two angels and the Lord Himself – and they tell Abram that within the year Abram and Sarai will be parents. Sarai laughs when she overhears this- scripture says she was thinking about how she is worn out and how Abram is so old, he is 99 at this time, but they believe God, and about a year later, Isaac is born – and his name means laughter. They have made the bold decision of faith and belief, and there is no turning back, they are parents, and from Isaac will come Jacob, from Jacob will come Joseph and the 12 tribes of Israel. Abraham is the father of this great nation, which includes you and me.

So why on this August day are we thinking about an old man becoming a dad at age 100? Because we too live in seemingly impossible times, where the challenges are many, as we discussed last week these are P-U-C days – PUC where there is pain, uncertainty, and chaos. Abraham shows us how to survive, to believe God's promises, and be right with God. Later, and for another sermon, we'll talk about how greatly that belief was tested when God told Abraham to sacrifice what he loves the most. Abraham passed that test of faith, that nothing of this world could outweigh his love and obedience to God. So often in Abraham's life, the future was uncertain, and we feel the same. It is hard to know where we are headed today. Hebrews 11 – the faith chapter of the Bible, describes how Abraham survived his day in verse 8: **By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.** So what does this old survivor mean to you? What can you learn from his story? In the good days and the rough times, let faith in God guide you as God guided Abraham. Abraham trusted God, even when he did not know where he was going, even when he did not know where God was leading.

To survive and thrive like Abraham, let faith in God's promises conquer your fears and uncertainties. Here are four ways to handle your pivotal moments, your big decisions, four ways to move forward:

First, Take your doubts to God. Do you doubt some of the choices you made, some of the turns you made at the crossroads of your life? Do you doubt God's promises when you can't see God's plan for you? When Abram began to have doubts, he took those doubts directly to God. And he honestly shared those doubts with God. But he did that with a heart that was honestly seeking God's answers, not questioning God's trustworthiness. God delights in those who seek answers to their doubts with an honest heart, and God consistently answering those who approach Him in this way.

8.22.2021 SERMON: SURVIVOR STORIES: ABRAHAM

Second, Listen for the "Word of the Lord." Abram did that. Once he laid his doubts before God, he listened for God's answers. And sure enough, as we saw earlier, "the word of the Lord came to him". Fortunately for us, the word of the Lord still comes to us today in the Bible. That is the primary way that God communicates His promises to us today. And God can speak to you spirit through His Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will never give any revelation that is not consistent with God's written word. So the main way to hear the promises of God that might apply to whatever situation you are in, is to listen to the word of the Lord by spending consistent time in the Bible. **Third, Trust in what God says rather than what you see.** Based on what Abraham could see with his own eyes, there was little reason for Abraham to believe God's promise. It took about 25 years for that promise to come about. But Abram made that bold choice to trust in what God said rather than what he could see. Now that doesn't mean that Abram did that perfectly, his relationship with Hagar hurt all involved the hurt is here yet today. But when given a second chance to do things God's way, Abram and Sarai obeyed God and have the son that God had promised - Isaac. And God changed Abram's name, which means "exalted father" to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude", so that even his name becomes a testimony of a God who fulfills His promises. There was no way Abraham could have foreseen all of this - but he trusted God in the uncertainty, and he came back to God when he had walked away. That is worth remembering - trust God in your uncertainty, and come back to God when you have walked away. God will still be there - and all of God's promises to bless you will be there too. **Finally, Be patient.** Abram didn't exactly excel here and tried to make God's promise come true through his own actions. But ultimately, Abram did wait for God to carry out His promise. Many of the people in the Bible who received God's promises never got to see those fulfilled in their lifetimes. Most of the great heroes of the faith died without ever seeing the promises of God come to completion in the person of Jesus. And yet they are all commended for their faith, and like Abram, were declared righteous by God because they trusted in what God had revealed to them at the time. I know it is hard to wait, so hard. But be patient, and let God be God.

Who is Abraham? He's you and me. He's every man and woman. He's anyone who struggles a little to believe the promises of God in the teeth of a reality that seems designed to make life difficult. Thankfully, God's faithfulness towards us is more constant than ours towards God! What made Abraham a survivor and the Father of Many is that he said YES to God, no matter what. Do you have a faith like that? It was Abraham's faith that pleased God, not necessarily his works, and the same goes for us. No matter who you are or where you're at in life, no matter how far or fast you have run, God is EVERY bit as close as He has ever been. You are worth so much to Him. You mean everything to Him. Can you believe that and grow in faith?

So what do we take from Abraham's story? I would suggest you think about saying yes to God and trust God when the big decision is in front of you. We sometimes act like God is so distant, that He is beyond the farthest stars, that we are insignificant, and we don't really matter. But God is not far away, not far from you. You are a son or daughter in the family of Abraham, you are like one of those billions of stars shining in the night sky, God is saying yes to you, start saying yes to God - even when, like Abraham, you're not perfect, even when you feel like you are light years away from God. Remember Abraham, to believe, and to get right with God - and then you'll find God is not distant, God is right here. Amen and amen.