

Letter from Pastor Taek

for May 9, 2021

Dear Carleton Church Family and Friends,

As I think of and remember each of you, know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. I know most of you who are reading this cannot attend worship services or watch it online, and/or need to stay home for one or more reasons, including staying safe as we continue to go through this pandemic with COVID.

This week I'm writing you a letter since this Sunday, May 9th, and Mother's Day, the youth are leading the worship service. We are so blessed to have the youth lead most all of the worship service each Mother's Day, a tradition my wife, Jamie, started years ago as the youth leader.

Along with the youth leading the worship service, I will be baptizing one youth and confirming a total of 8 youth who have completed Confirmation Class. 6 of the confirmands will be confirmed this Sunday, and 2 will be confirmed on May 23 since that was the only Sunday those two could attend.

Our church continues to be blessed in so many ways. And it's always wonderful to have children and youth actively involved in our church. A special thanks to Karyn Vaughn who has been our wonderful Christian Education director. She goes above and beyond in making sure all the children, youth, families and adults have ways to grow in their faith.

Though these times are difficult in so many ways, it surely is most difficult because we cannot spend time together in person as we used to. However, with prayer and more and more people getting vaccinated, there is much hope for things to begin going back to normal, even though it will be a new normal.

I and my family have been experiencing how hard these times are, especially with preparing to move due to my new appointment. As I keep you in prayer, please keep me and my family in your prayers also.

God says in Ephesians 6:18, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

Therefore, when it seems like there is not much we can do or there is little hope left, remember and find strength, courage and hope in God who gave us the Holy Spirit, God's very Spirit, who lives within us and helps and empowers us. Our prayers are not powerful just because we pray, but rather because of God and us placing our faith in the One who created us, saved us, and calls us to live a life of love for Him and everyone.

Ephesians 6:18 reminds me of how my parents prayed for me and my siblings every day. They taught us to pray for our family, friends, our church family, and everyone we could possibly

pray for. By their examples we were taught to pray in similar ways. And as parents of three children who are growing so fast, we are also teaching them to pray as they grow in their faith and walk with Christ.

It always touches my heart when our children pray to God with gratefulness in their hearts, with concern for those who need prayers, and for family and friends. We no doubt pray for our world, for peace, for health, and for so many issues and challenges that are before us each and every day.

When we are happy, joyful and feeling blessed, as well as when we feel lonely, struggling through difficult times, and in anguish, we are told to pray in the Spirit at all times with prayers of every kind and of requests. God wants us to ask on behalf of others as well as ourselves.

So pray for what you need, what you desire, and most of all for God's will to be done in your life and in the lives of others. And look back at your life and see how God has answered your prayers. One thing I like to do, and encourage others to do, is to think about all the things you never prayed for that God provided. That always makes me so amazingly grateful and in awe of God.

Though I never prayed to move to Carleton nine years ago, in July of 2012, I truly thank God for leading the Bishop and the cabinet of District Superintendents of the Michigan Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. I never prayed to have been blessed by you and honored to be your pastor, yet God granted such gifts to us.

I continue to trust in God with thanksgiving, even when things happened that I did not pray for, which includes me being appointed to another church. With mixed feelings, let us have more hope and joy in God because we know He loves us and will always watch over us, in life and when we journey into eternal life.

We have been and continue to be blessed by God, even during the most difficult of times, because of the promises we have in Christ for life and for the life to come that of eternity with God and all who have gone before us.

Speaking of praying, let me end this letter with a prayer.

Gracious and loving God, we thank and praise you because you are our God. We know you created us, provide for us, bless us, love us, and call us to an abundant life lived for you. We lift up prayers for our family and friends, those in great need today, for our country and world as we battle COVID, and for so many other requests that are constantly before us. Lead us by your Holy Spirit to pray on all occasions and with all sorts of requests as we seek your will to be done more than anything else. We seek to love you all the days of our lives. We ask you to help us continue loving others, including those who sometimes make it difficult to love them. And we pray that you will work in and through our lives to share your love and salvation in whatever ways we can to all who you put in our paths. With grateful hearts we pray. Amen.