

About the Daily Meditations

Background

- In 2015, St. John's Windish Lutheran Church (Bethlehem, PA) was, like many other churches, seeing a decline in membership and activity among young people. Knowing how much young people use their phones, I had the idea of sending a Daily Meditation to our young members, hoping it would be a link to their church and be something they would share with friends. The first Meditations were sent out in January, 2015. Church youngsters seemed to enjoy the Meditations, but within 2-3 months, adult members were asking for them as well. So, they became Meditations for Youth and Adults. They became, simply, Daily Meditations, a few years later.
- Because I shared them with friends of mine, a wider audience grew, including the pastor and congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church in the Pittsburgh area. That church disseminated the Meditations to its members in the same way we do.

Process

- I write the Meditations, Sharon Litner proofs them for proper grammar. Two versions are produced: a print version for mailing, emailing, and hand-out, and an online version for posting on the Blessed Trinity website and on Facebook(?) The Blessed Trinity Tech Team posts them. The church office prints copies available for pick-up in the sanctuary, prints and mails copies to people who don't have email, and emails them to people who want to receive them that way.
- From 2015-2020, every Meditation was an original. In 2020, after five years and about 2,200 Meditations, I didn't know if I could keep doing this. Kathy Novak, at St. John's, made the suggestion that I begin to reissue the Meditations from five years before. While I wasn't comfortable with that idea, I did like the idea of not having to write all new Meditations every month. From January of 2020, the Meditations have been a mix of old and new, with about one-half of each month's Meditations being newly written and one-half re-issues of some from the same month five years earlier. This lessens the workload (30-50 hours per month) but keeps the Meditations fresh and available to those who want them.

Numbers

- It is impossible to guess-timate how many people actually read the Meditations each month. At this point, I know that several churches around the country use them, but I also know they share them with other churches and pastor friends. Chaplains who get the Meditations share them with other chaplains and pastors. Individuals share them, via email, with family, friends, and others. People take or request multiple copies to share with friends/family who are in care facilities or are home-bound. We know that they are read internationally, in South Africa, Slovenia, Russia, and Ukraine at least. We simply don't know where else they travel or how many people received or read the Meditations. I have no need to know these numbers.

Effect

- Gauging the effect of the Meditations is as difficult as estimating readership, but we do get glimpses from time to time, when people contact me or the church directly. Some examples:

- A group of retirees in Southern California meets every day for breakfast. They begin by reading the Meditation for the day. A few years ago, one in their group contacted St. John's to say that they had planned a day of fishing. They left before dawn, and when the sun came up and they were out on the water, one of them said, 'Hey, we didn't read the Meditation yet!' Someone turned on his phone and looked up the Meditation for the day. They sat in stunned silence when they read that the verse for the day was "I will make you fishers of men."
- A similar experience was had by a family in the Panhandle area of Florida. It is that family's habit to read the month's Meditations all at once, after dinner, at the start of the month. They had just begun to read the first few Meditations when the raging storm outside knocked their electricity out and their lights went out. A few hours later, when the lights were back on, they were back at the table to read. The verse for the next Meditation (which I can't recall) was about '... the storm passing over you and not harming you.' (It was not Isaiah 43:2.) The family said they couldn't believe the timing.
- A woman in Maryland told me that she sends the Meditations to her brother in South Africa. His wife doesn't leave the house without reading the Meditation for the day. Then she told me what her sister-in-law does: she is the head of the South African Stock Exchange and works with the International Monetary Fund.
- Several people have told me that the Meditations have become their 'church'; a church they can go to every day.
- One person said that he was in deep despair before he began to read the Meditations, which provided him light for each day.
- A church in Jacksonville, Florida uses the Meditations for their Adult Sunday School.

Records

- Before leaving St. John's, Maria Skrilec made paper copies and computer copies of all of the Meditations since 2015. I'll try to update that file annually.

Many thanks for all you do to make the Meditations possible.

Carol

Carol Henn

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