

Saturday June 6, 2020

Dear Members, Friends, and Guests of Desert Hills Lutheran Church,

Good morning! You are receiving this in the afternoon but I'm writing early in the morning. I woke up just before 4 am because the Lord was shining a flashlight in my eyes. We have a west-facing window in our bedroom that is at the perfect angle for a full moon. It was really bright. I woke up grateful; there is always a part of me that is grateful to God for waking up. Today is June 6 and I'm remembering a historical day: D-Day, 1944. D-Day was one of the most profound world-changing events in our history. On that day, 156,000 U.S. and Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy and ultimately liberating western Europe from Hitler and Nazi control. To the soldiers who both fought and died, I'm so grateful. They died fighting evil.

I'm excited to see many of you on July 4/5 for live worship. It is true that we can't make everyone comfortable with our protocols, but it is a start. I read an article in the WSJ yesterday about the persecution of Christians in China titled *The Gospel According to Xi*. In China, online worship is banned and churches are being defaced, with the largest target being crosses. The communist party hates Christianity for three reasons. First, Christianity is an international religion, linking Christians around the world. Second, it is congregational. "You have the ability to mobilize a stable, reliable community." Christianity helped bring down dictators in South Korea and Poland as well as helping bring down the wall in East Germany. Third, Christianity provides "transcendent vision, transcendent values." Christians are a moral and ideological opponent to communism. Christians never want to make the State (government) our God. Interestingly, Christianity is the fastest growing religion in China. In the 1950s there were four million Christians in China; today there are sixty million. The latest attack is to transform Christianity, and so the Chinese government is beginning to work on a state-sanctioned translation of the Bible. Change the text, change the Christians. I'm so grateful that we are able to do both live and online worship. Please pray for our brothers and sisters of our Christian faith around the world.

Finally, as Julie and I were enjoying the early morning outside, our quail family showed up. First came Papa walking along the top of the wall (to scout out danger, it seemed) and then from the other side, Mom and babies appeared like magic. They walked down the wall in single file and then all jumped down to eat the birdseed except for one remaining baby. He just stood there looking terrified. We urged him to jump and finally Julie said, "I'll give you a dollar," and he jumped. We laughed because 20+ years ago, when Alex was four years old and taking swimming lessons at the indoor pool, he stood at the end of the diving board, afraid to jump in the water. He would get to the edge then go back. We yelled encouragement. Finally I yelled, "Alex, if you jump I'll give you a dollar." Boom! He jumped.

I hope you have a wonderful Saturday. This weekend's sermon is about the Holy Trinity being a Dance. Please keep praying for our country.

Blessings,

Pastor Martin