



The Transformer

May 2018

717-866-4910

Friedens Lutheran Church, 301 W. Washington Ave., Myerstown, PA

Dear Friends in Christ,

At this writing, Cheri and I are in the fourth day of our holiday in Spain. Daughter Tess surprised her Mom by joining us over the weekend. We traded “how are you” stories and visited the nearby historic community of Salamanca.

Yesterday, we took a day flight to Santiago, home of the famous Cathedral whose construction began with a small stone chapel that was dedicated in 902. According to tradition, the remains of apostle James are buried at the cathedral. Hence, the cathedral and its shrine to the apostle “Saint James the Great” became a noted destination for religious pilgrimage. Over the centuries many have followed the “Way of St. James,” *O Camino de Santiago*, seeking spiritual retreat and nurture.

In the early 12th century the Pope affirmed the significance of the spiritual pilgrimage to help persons rededicate their lives to following the way of Christ. He wrote:

“The pilgrim route is for those who are good: it is the lack of vices, the thwarting of the body, the increase of virtues, pardon for sins, sorrow for the penitent, the road of the righteous, love of the saints, faith in the resurrection and the reward of the blessed, a separation from hell, the protection of the heavens. It takes away ... the appetites of the flesh (and) cleanses the spirit... It hates the reproach of those fuelled by greed. It loves, on the other hand, the person who gives to the poor. It rewards those who live simply and do good works...”

Many of you commented how the sermon series “At Home with Jesus” opened your imagination to how we live everyday following Jesus. A spiritual pilgrimage, or even a weekend retreat, is one way to step out of everyday routines and demands in order to reflect prayerfully upon our lives through the lens of scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Being at home with Jesus means we desire to grow in our love for Jesus and for persons whom Jesus loves. Once again I quote from 2 Corinthians, the fifth chapter:

The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised. So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards (2 Cor. 5:14-16, CEB).

Maturing in such love will influence how we invest ourselves, and especially our use of time and money. Many, many people, like the young man who came to Jesus wanting to become a follower, turn away from the Lord because they cannot imagine following the Jesus way of love, service, and contribution as a lifestyle rather than being an occasional donation.

On the other hand, longing to receive and show such love is the reason many embark on the *O Camino de Santiago*. It is also the reason why an Italian businessman named Erasmo went to see a priest over twenty years ago. Both he and his brother were successful, but, along with their wives, in the “Transformer.”

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Friends, I believe we are on a pilgrimage - a spiritual journey to discover how our being at home with Jesus is to extend the beauty of divine love and compassion to Eastern Lebanon County and, through our partners in the larger Church, to El Salvador, Tanzania, communities impacted by natural disaster, and many other places.

This month we are receiving donations to help with the Synod's program to eradicate hunger. On May 19, nine am to noon, many of us are going to help with spring planting at the Wittel Farm near Elizabethtown. Over the weeks to come, we will tend to the plants, help with the harvest, and take the crops to local food pantries.

Let us journey together along the pilgrim's way to discover more of what it means to live for Jesus who died for us and was raised!

A fellow traveler,
Pastor W.

The Loving Place for Children That Assumes Beauty **by David Brooks, copyright, New York Times, May 1, 2018**

COMO, Italy — Some of the people who do the most good have a willingness to be radically changed. They are sensitive to the problems around them, which a lot of us are, but they are also willing to transform their lives to address them, which a lot of us don't consider. I met many such people at a place here in northern Italy [called Cometa](#).

Thirty-five years ago, the two Figini brothers, Erasmo and Innocente, were living in Como with their wives, Serena and Marina. Erasmo was a famous fabric designer. Innocente was a prominent eye surgeon. They were successful, but along with their wives, spiritually unfulfilled, unable to understand the meaning of the suffering they saw and felt.

Erasmo went to see a renowned priest, Father Luigi Giussani, who saw faith not as an intellectual system, but as an encounter with beauty, a love story. Erasmo returned to his wife and reported: "God exists. I have met someone who is a witness to his reality." Serena was intrigued: Erasmo was the last person you'd call religious. But eventually both couples met with Giussani and all found faith.

One day in 1986, Innocente reported that there was an H.I.V.-infected baby at the hospital whose mother was dying. Erasmo and Serena had vowed to each other that they would never have children, but they felt a swelling of gratitude and said they would foster the baby.

Cometa has grown and grown over the years, meeting needs when they present themselves.

Soon, other children came along, and still more. Over the past three decades, hundreds of foster children have lived in the Figinis' compound, now called Cometa. If you go to dinner there you find five adult couples and up to 40 children around a long U-shaped table.

Last week Marina spent most of the meal with an infant with Down syndrome on her lap. "At first, I was afraid of disabled children," she said. "But her presence has been a revolution of love for the entire family."

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Like all of us, the people at Cometa are aware that the worldwide decline of family and community has left millions of children estranged from any experience of a loving home. Unlike most of us, they've transformed their life plans to fill the gap.

But the willingness to change did not end there. When foster children elsewhere in Como seemed unmotivated, Cometa started an after-school program, which now hosts 130 kids. Because local kids were dropping out of school, Cometa built a 450-student vocational high school on the compound. Cometa also has a woodworking facility, a parental counseling center, a mental health center and a cafe in a local park. It helps direct a hotel management school, also.

None of this was planned. Needs were evident, and the Cometa philosophy is to say yes after yes. The C.E.O., Alessandro Mele, left his life as a tax consultant and now lives on campus amid hundreds of children. The man who runs the cafe, Marcello, left his old life and now mentors disabled apprentices. "I'm the 100 percent real Marcello here. I'm talking about my life, not my job," he said.

If you or I had hundreds of kids running around there'd be general chaos. But Cometa is beautiful. The gardens are immaculate and meticulously designed. The family homes are modest but look like they came out of Architectural Digest. Every piece of furniture in the high school is colorful, elegant and unusual.

"Beauty educates," said Serena, quoting Giussani. The children who come here often feel tossed aside. One used to be awakened by her mother with the words, "Get up, you piece of [expletive]. Breakfast is ready, you piece of [expletive]." But beautiful surroundings make the children who come here feel important, welcomed and cherished. If a toy breaks at Cometa, it is fixed right away. Likewise, every child is recoverable.

The people in Cometa don't only treasure beauty, they assume it. In a world of distrust and betrayal, they assume there is beauty in each person and in every situation, so they lead with an almost un-nerving level of hospitality.

The vocational high school curriculum is built around the idea that machines will soon be doing most physical tasks, but no machine will be able to create the feeling of a loving home. Whether they are being trained as waiters, carpenters, fabric designers or pastry chefs, students are taught to understand and create hospitable experiences. "Everything is a home," said Mele. "Everything says, 'Welcome to my home.'"

The idea is to give students the power to welcome others, born out of a sense that they have been welcomed. One of Giussani's mottos resonates through Cometa: "Reality will not let you down." You can take the radical leap, because life ultimately is beautiful.

This takes stubborn determination. Imagine looking after hundreds of children across 30 years, 24/7. By dinnertime, the adults around the table look exhausted. There are children seeking attention every second. Their daily lives are tied down to this place, even while some of the adults also work full-time jobs in the world outside. The sacrifices are real.

But this village-size family is like an embodied philosophy, a belief in beauty expressed in every personal and practical way.





Considering a
"Mission" for the
summer of
2018? You
are welcome to join
several Friedens

members who have already chosen to participate in a local mission effort-Habitat for Humanity and cleanup of Camps Kirchenwald/Furnace Hills and Wittel arm. Friedens will join the Lebanon Lutheran Mission Team to tackle these locations.

Your participation can be a one day to an entire week commitment during the week of June 17-23.



Food Collection

On Sunday, May 6, food will be collected for the Lebanon County Food Bank. All gifts are welcomed. There is a need for frozen hams, canned meats and stews, canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned soups, peanut butter, jelly, towels/wash cloths, paper towels, toilet paper, facial tissues, and reusable plastic containers, twin sheets, T-shirts, socks and underwear.

HEART, LIGHT

This Mother's Day, make a bright gift for someone special in your life.



What you need:

- Scissors
- Cardstock
- Tape
- Mason jar
- Primer paint
- Acrylic paint (3 colors)
- Paintbrushes
- Battery-operated tea light
- Paper and pen
- Hole punch
- Twine

What you do:

1. Cut out two cardstock hearts and tape them to the jar sides, near the bottom.
2. Paint the entire jar with primer paint. Let dry.
3. Paint splashes of acrylic paint over the primer. Let dry. Remove the heart shapes.
4. Place the tea light in the jar.
5. Write a note that says, "Mom, you're the light of my life!" Punch a hole in one corner of the note, thread twine through the hole and tie the note around the jar's neck.





WOMEN'S YOGA CLASS – Scott Gilbert relishes the opportunity to begin teaching a Women's class at Friedens. The one hour and fifteen-minute-long class will be taught for every "body".

***Seven Class series:** begins every **Monday** from 4/30-6/11/18

Class will take place from 5:45-7:00PM (come early to set up when possible @ 5:30)

*Seven Class series: can be purchased all at once for \$70.00 or individually at a *class cost of \$12.00 per class (Drop in, you will be welcome!)*

(No refunds for missed classes)

For those in financial hardship, class cost will be waived.

It is more important that you experience this opportunity.

"VBS 2018 News:

1. Vacation Bible School registration is now open! Please register your kiddos at www.vbspro.events/p/friedenslcmysterstown (tool bar, not Google), or call into the office. The deadline to register is July 1st. The dates are Sun, July 8th through Wed July 11th, from 6-8:00pm. Ages 3 (potty trained) thru 6th grade are welcome!

2. We are in need of volunteers for VBS 2018! Teens and adults welcome! Please see Holly Heft, Kelly Stephenson, or Chuck Bissell if you are willing to donate your time and talents!"



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

MAY 13



MEN'S YOGA CLASS - Scott Gilbert relishes the opportunity to begin teaching a men's class at Friedens. The one hour and fifteen-minute-long class will be taught for every "body". Class sequences will include

centering, warming up, strengthening, stretching, balance and relaxation. Wearing comfortable loose clothing is paramount.

***Seven Class series:** begins every **Wednesday** from 5/2-6/13/18

Class will take place from 5:45-7:00PM (come early to set up when possible @ 5:30)

*Seven Class series: can be purchased all at once for \$70.00 or individually at a class cost of \$12.00 per class **(Drop in, you will be welcome!)**

(No refunds for missed classes)

For those in financial hardship, class cost will be waived. It is more important that you experience this opportunity.

Please bring your own yoga mat & small blanket. Scott will have approximately 10 mats, if needed. (FYI-good quality yoga mats can be purchased at TJ Max., Marshalls, Ross at approximately \$13.00 each)

Inquires can be addressed by calling Scott @ 610-750-1707 or emailing at sgilbert50@verizon.net



CEMETERY

CEMETERY BOARD NEEDS YOUR HELP.

Parishoners or attending friends, every Tuesday night in May, 6 to 8 pm we will be working on the

WORK NIGHT cemeteries to make them look very presentable to relatives, friends and others. Please bring a rake or shovel.

MAY 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:00 PM—Cemetery Work Night	2 5:45 PM—Men's Yoga Class 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band	3  7:00 PM—Choir	4	5
6 9 AM—Contemporary Service 10:45 AM - Traditional Service	7 5:45 PM—Women's Yoga Class	8 6:00 PM—Cemetery Work Night 7:00 PM—Life Group 7:00 PM—Property Committee	9 9 AM—Women Sew 1:00 PM—Life Group 5:45 PM—Men's Yoga Class 6:00 PM—Life Group 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band	10	11	12
13 9 AM—Contemporary Service 10:45 AM - Traditional Service MOTHER'S DAY	14 5:45 PM—Women's Yoga Class 6:30 pm—"3—B Night" at Quentin Tavern	15  6:00 PM—Cemetery Work Night 7:00 PM—Life Group 7:00 PM—Vision to Mission	16 5:45 PM—Men's Yoga Class 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band	17	18	19 
20 9 AM—Contemporary Service 10:45 AM - Traditional Service	21 5:45 PM—Women's Yoga Class 6:30 PM—Finance Committee 7:00 PM—WELCA 7:30 PM - Endowment Comm.	22 6:00 PM—Cemetery Work Night	23 9 AM—Women Sew 5:45 PM—Men's Yoga Class 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band	24 7:00 PM—Church Council	25	26
27 9 AM—Contemporary Service 10:45 AM - Traditional Service	28 	29 6:00 PM—Cemetery Work Night	30 5:45 PM—Men's Yoga Class 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band	31 5/31—6/2—Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly		

DID YOU KNOW????

Every year, in the fall, Friedens participates in **Lutheran World Relief**, sending “kits” throughout the world to aid natural and man-made disaster victims.

Read on to find out how **you’ve** been a part of God’s hands and feet-or can begin to witness-in this effort.

Quilts—probably the best “relief” a disaster victim might receive, is a quilt, lovingly made by Church volunteers. Friedens has a dedicated sewing team that meets every other Wednesday and has produced quilts that serve as beds, tents, knapsacks for their recipients.

Guess how many quilts Friedens Sewing Group has sent in the last 5 years. **290**

Fabric kits—assembled by WELCA, Friedens’ Women’s Group, kits with needle, thread, and fabric help destitute victims begin a simple, but valuable trade to support their families. **84** in the last five years.

School kits—For two years now, Friedens’ Children’s Church has produced beautiful backpacks containing school supplies. Children, guided by women of our church, cut and sew fabric on actual sewing machines (!) creating sturdy backpacks so displaced refugees can continue their Education wherever kits are sent. **23** sent.

Personal care kits (formerly called Health kits)-Friedens’ Children’s Church and Youth assist a Worldwide effort by helping assemble individual kits, a toothbrush, comb, nail clippers, and soap, bundled and bound with a bath towel. **308** sent in the last 5 years.

See below the places where Friedens’ kits and quilts have traveled.

OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS		
March 31, 2018		
	<u>March 2018</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Current Giving		<u>3/31/2018</u>
Goal	\$ 33,856.67	\$304,710.00
Received	26,106.35	214,227.79
Percent of Plan	77%	70%
Spang Crest		
Received	\$ 45.00	\$ 286.00
Hunger		
Received	\$ 80.00	\$ 1,330.00

Item	Date Shipped	Notes
Quilts	4/3/2014	Tanzania
Quilts	5/19/2014	Georgia
Quilts	1/29/2015	India
Quilts	5/28/2015	Djibouti
Quilts	12/7/2015	Georgia
Quilts	2/4/2016	India
Quilts	1/26/2017	India
Personal Care Kit	1/23/2014	Philippines
Personal Care Kit	1/24/2014	Iraq
Personal Care Kit	4/3/2014	Tanzania
Personal Care Kit	2/13/2015	Angola
Personal Care Kit	2/13/2015	Yemen
Personal Care Kit	3/10/2017	El Salvador
Personal Care Kit	3/16/2017	Jordan
Personal Care Kit	3/21/2018	Tanzania
Fabric Kit	4/3/2014	Tanzania
Fabric Kit	2/25/2015	Georgia
Fabric Kit	6/24/2015	Mali
Fabric Kit	3/10/2017	El Salvador
New School Kit	3/10/2017	El Salvador