

Ephesians 2:13-22 ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

There are two types of walls in the Bible. Walls that divide and walls that support. Walls that divide (think of the Berlin Wall of the past or the Bethlehem Wall of the present) are boundaries that separate. They serve only to increase animosity. Walls that support (think of the load-bearing walls of a house or a church building) are walls that hold up what is good, for the benefit of the whole.

I preached July 19th on this text from Ephesians, speaking on the walls that divide us. We grieve these walls whenever we find them, whether in our families, in our congregation, in our sister congregations, or in our society.

We are, of course, especially grieved for Pastor Margaret Ashby, her husband Gerald, and the congregation of Pleasant View Lutheran Church at the abrupt ending of their time together. Unfortunately, almost all of us know what it is like to be in conflict. Those who are interested in the Bishop's recommendations for them will find a copy posted on our bulletin board outside the office. Please keep them each and all in your prayers. We ask God for healing, humbling, and wholeness for them.

In times of hostility, we take hope in Ephesians 2:14, "For he [Christ] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us."

The **Christ** event has removed the barriers that would separate and divide. The **Christ** event will continue to remove the barriers that divide us. God in **Christ** is a wall breaker! We can find peace in the fact that **reconciliation** belongs to **Christ**. We can ask **Christ** for forgiveness and we can forgive, as **Christ** has forgiven us, and if **reconciliation** never happens in this lifetime, we can still find peace in the fact that **Christ** is at work **reconciling** us all to himself in one body. He will accomplish that **reconciliation**, whether we want it or not (see vv.15-16).

The other type of wall is the wall that supports. The Bible itself is this kind of wall, as is worship attendance, Christian education and daily devotion. We should make every effort to discipline ourselves in these areas, and to encourage and even cajole one another to be better.

Sometimes the wall that supports is the sustaining wall of the community of faith, buttressing us in times of personal trial and shoring us up – with Christ as the cornerstone (v.20).

But sometimes the wall that supports really is a literal, physical building. On July 19th we approved our revised building plans for an addition. We approved the start of a capital campaign fund and drive. Our prayerful hope has been that God would bless this process only if it is what we are supposed to do. A new building would support some current ministries of the congregation and would open up the possibility for numerous other ministry opportunities, some that we already have in mind and some that we have yet to dream of. God alone knows.

Contingent upon a successful capital campaign, we will soon be able to establish a timeline for construction. If it is God's desire that we move forward with building, then it is no doubt that the funding will come. God will provide. As we plan to build on the foundation of those who have gone before us, let our prayer be that Christ Jesus himself be the cornerstone.

Peace,
Pastor Chris