

A large red oval shape centered on the page, containing the text 'Community of Christ's Love' in white.

Community
of
Christ's Love

Seven Day
Devotional

Compliments of
Barnitz and Mt. Zion Churches

WELCOME

Greetings and thank you for joining our email list! To express our thanks, we have compiled this seven-day devotional for you to use as an extra tool in your faith walk.

On the right side of this page, you will notice it says, *Connecting People to Christ's Love*. What exactly does that mean? It is our focus at Barnitz and Mt. Zion churches as we yearn for people to know they are loved, they matter, and that God is at work in their lives.

Some examples of this is we go out into our community and assist local schools as needs arise; connecting with local churches to help those in need by giving them resources for assistance; we connect with the community through various connecting events; and small groups come together to dig deeper into the scriptures and encourage one another in our faith journeys.

You see, *Connecting People to Christ's Love*, doesn't just happen on a Sunday, but every day of the year!

As you read this seven-day devotional, we hope you will see how God is at work within our churches, and may you also see how God is at work in your own life.

If you are seeking a church to worship at on Sunday mornings with a community focused on living out Christ's love, we invite you to join us at one of our churches. Our locations and worship times are at the bottom of this booklet.

Thank you again for joining our email list and may the peace of Christ be with you today and in every step of your journey!

Blessings,
Your Friends at Barnitz and Mt. Zion Churches

Connecting
PEOPLE
TO
Christ's
LOVE



DAY ONE

SUNDAY

What does the word “Sunday” mean to you? I often hear: *Sunday is the only day of the week where I get to sleep in. Sunday, isn't that the one day of the week where you, the pastor, works?*

This isn't meant to be a “guilt trip” if you don't attend a church regularly. Instead, I was hoping that you might find it helpful if I shared with you some of the reasons why we gather on a Sunday morning.

What if Sunday morning is more about knowing that you are loved, you matter and that God is at work in your life?

There are different parts within the church service.

At the beginning of the service, we have a Call to Worship where there is a back and forth reading. This is to remind us that God is there. He wants to talk to us. He wants us to talk to Him.

God is present, and we matter to Him.

Throughout the service, we will sing a couple of songs. Songs help to give us words to say to God when we might not know what to say. They help us to thank God. They help us to praise and worship Him.

Songs often remind us again that God loves us and that we matter to Him.

We take time to share where we have seen God during the week. This helps to remind us that God is at work in our lives. We can see Him and what He does week to week.

We take time to pray for, and with, one another. God wants to hear what is on our hearts and minds. We take to time to read from the Bible. As in any good relationship, we take time to talk to God, and we take time to listen to God.

We then take time to wrestle with what God is saying through the Scriptures. What does it mean for my life? Where is God at work in me?

Hopefully, from the little bit of a description offered here, Sunday mornings might make a little more sense. Sunday mornings help us to remember.

God loves you. You matter to Him. He is at work in your life.

Prayer for Day One

Dear Jesus,
I come to You,
today Lord, with
so much thanks!

No matter where
I am in my faith
journey, You
are right there
by my side.

Thank you for the
time on Sundays
to worship with
You through song
and hearing from
Your Word.

Help me to
lean on You
and worship with
you throughout
my daily living
each day.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on April 3, 2019*

DAY
TWO

ENDING WELL COMES TODAY

So if you knew when you were going to die, would you want to know? I know that I wouldn't want to know. Please don't tell me.

What if you find out you only had one more year to live? My guess is your priorities would change. Things that seemed important the day before, would no longer be important.

Now, living with the end in mind doesn't have to be morbid. In fact, it can truly help you live a great life now. I was recently reminded of this when listening to Erwin McManus give an interview about his book *The Last Arrow*.

Erwin actually had the book written and almost ready to publish; then he found out he had cancer. He found this out in early December of one year. He approached that next Christmas wondering if it would be his last with his family.

The book is about living a life that truly matters, a life where you get to the end of and looking back say, "I wouldn't do anything different."

He looked at what he wrote. He looked at his life. He liked what he saw. Fortunately, Erwin seems to be doing fine now. However, it gave him a perspective on his life, and he would likely even say a gift.

This "gift" really is available for us all.

What is the story that you want your life to tell? Are the choices your making today all adding up to that story?

Ending well means living well today. The really great thing is that it's true each and every day. This isn't a burden to carry; it's an opportunity. Every day we wake up with breath in our lungs is a day where we can love those around us as Jesus loves us.

Prayer for Day Two

Dear Jesus,
Thank you for
the gift of today.

Each day Lord,
please help to
remind me who
I am in Christ
through my life
story, and to love
those around me
with abundant
love the way
You love us.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on July 16, 2018*

DAY
THREE

PLACE NEGATIVE THINKING IN THE GARBAGE

When you drive along rural two lane roads, you often find “obstacles.” These obstacles can come in the shape of farm machinery, cyclists, or in my case this morning, garbage trucks. As I was driving this morning, I saw the garbage truck ahead. As soon as I saw it, I started to look and see where I was going to be able to go around it. Fortunately, it was in an area where I could see ahead, and there were no cars coming.

So, it was rather easy to go around the garbage truck, and it was not frustrating at all.

I continue driving a short distance. I come to a stop sign, and I make a left. As soon as I turn left, guess what I saw? Yep, another garbage truck. OK, so one was likely a garbage truck, and the other one was likely a recycling truck. Those are details that aren't important. The important part was that there was now another obstacle in my way. I just had this. I thought I was in the clear. Now, to make matters worse, the guy running the garbage truck was out in the clear lane of traffic getting the garbage can.

I confess. I started to become frustrated.

Fortunately, I thought. “Stop it!” Stop getting frustrated. What is the big deal that it might take me a few extra minutes to get where I'm going. Here he is working hard. Did I mention it was raining a little too? Here he is working hard in the rain to help us. I then started to realize how stressful his job is trying to stay out of the way of vehicles all the time.

Soon after this exchange in my head, he took the time to politely wave me by. I don't always get these types of choices right. I'm thankful today I did, and I'm thankful for the men and women serving me, serving us, in so many ways today.

Prayer for Day Three

Dear Jesus,
Why is it that
when obstacles
arise, and throw
off my routine,
that I become
easily frustrated?

I'm sorry Lord for
the choices I make
that are not
pleasing to You.

I pray for
guidance, when
these situations
arise, to stop
and listen to
what You would
have me do.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on August 22, 2018*

DAY FOUR

HITTING PAUSE

Did you ever watch the movie Click with Adam Sandler? Here is a guy who gets to control his life with a remote control. You have to admit, it does sound rather cool to be in control of your life this way. He is able to rewind, pause and fast forward.

He found himself fast forwarding through a lot of his life. If it took too long to get ready for the day, he would just *fast forward*. If he didn't want to take time and do something boring, yep, he would *fast forward*. If he got sick, you guessed it, he *fast forward*.

Sounds tempting.

The remote had a feature where it started to adjust for his preferences. Before he knew it, he missed his life as he fast forwarded through it. Eckhart Tolle in *The Power of Now* writes that anxiety comes when we focus too much on the past, and worry comes when we focus too much on the future. It is best to be present in the "now."

*The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:4 (CEB):
Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad!*

Instead of fast forwarding, what if we took this verse into our lives at the present moment?

What if we paused for a minute to lift up praises or thanks right now? What a joy that would bring. Let us practice each day to take a moment to seek something that we are thankful for in our lives.

Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad!

Prayer for Day Four

Dear Jesus,
Being in the
here and now
is a great gift
You bring to
each of us.

Just like in the
movie mentioned,
there are times
when things in life
come my way
that I would like
to fast forward.

But I know that is
not what You want
for my life as you
created it with a
purpose in mind.

If I were to
fast forward
moments that
I felt weren't
needed, it
would hinder
the opportunity
to see the story
you have for
my life.

Thank you for
each moment
of each day.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on March 29, 2018*

DAY
FIVE

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Jesus didn't die on the cross so that you would go to Heaven when you die. Go ahead. Read that sentence again.

"But, wait," you say. "What about John 3:16?"

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life.

"It says it right there. Jesus came so that I can live forever. Isn't that about Heaven?"

Jesus also says in the same conversation that we must be born again. We must be made new. His life, death and resurrection destroys the power of sin in our lives. When we trust in His work, we are transformed. Our hearts are made new. We are born again. We go from death to life.

Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

We know that we have transferred from death to life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The person who does not love remains in death.
(1 John 3:13-14)

Jesus died on the cross so that the power of sin would be defeated in your life NOW. He died on the cross so that you can love as Jesus loves NOW.

Some of our favorite hymns we have grown up singing make this really hard to understand. Consider "I'll Fly Away," by Albert E. Brumley.

*Some bright morning when this life is over, I'll fly away
To that home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away*

*I'll fly away, oh glory, I'll fly away in the morning
When I die, Hallelujah by and by, I'll fly away*

When you sing this hymn, do you think of Heaven, or do you think of your life now? I can almost guarantee that you think of Heaven. And yet, I think Jesus thinks of our death now. We are called to die to ourselves.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God's Son, who loved me and gave himself for me.
(Galatians 2:20)

Our lives are to be over when we trust in the work of Jesus now. We are called to die to ourselves daily. It is no longer about my life but the life of Jesus living through me. It is about me loving as Jesus loves.

Do you see what can happen? The more we do this. The more we love as Jesus loves. The more other people will do this too, loving as Jesus loves.

Heaven becomes a reality here on Earth.

Prayer for Day Five

Dear Jesus,
I come to You today to seek how to die to myself daily.

Help me, O Lord, to know that I am not in control of my life, but that You are.

Each day I yearn to love as You have taught us to love.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on May 16, 2019*

DAY
SIX

A THRIVING CHURCH IS A DYING CHURCH

What? How can you be a thriving church if you are a dying church?

First, we must consider what it means to be a church. Let's look at Jesus' conversation with His disciples in Matthew 16:

13 Now when Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Human One is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." 15 He said, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Then Jesus replied, "Happy are you, Simon son of Jonah, because no human has shown this to you. Rather my Father who is in heaven has shown you. 18 I tell you that you are Peter. And I'll build my church on this rock. The gates of the underworld won't be able to stand against it. Peter proclaims that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus is thrilled by this answer. He says that God revealed this truth to Peter. On this truth, on the truth of who Jesus is, He will build the church. Whose church is it? It's His church, and Jesus is defining church as a group of people who all believe that He is the Christ. Jesus is the One coming to bring life. Later, Jesus and Peter have another conversation. Jesus tells the disciples He is going to die. Peter doesn't want to hear this. 22 Then Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him: "God forbid, Lord! This won't happen to you." 23 But he turned to Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a stone that could make me stumble, for you are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts."

Jesus is telling Peter to stop focusing on what you want. Stop thinking about this in a way that makes sense to you. Trust me. Trust my plan. Remember, it's "My church, and I am going to build it."

What makes this hard is that Peter thinks he is doing what is best for everyone. Peter thinks it is best for everyone for Jesus to not die. Yet, Jesus basically tells him, "No, you're being selfish."

How many times do we, like Peter, offer up suggestions, ways to make church "better," thinking that what we want is best for everyone? We make suggestions about order of worship, music, and length of worship service. We talk about starting new ministries. We discuss whether or not to stop current ministries. When we have these discussions, how often are we really saying, "I want what I want."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. 25 All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will find them. 26 Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? What will people give in exchange for their lives?"

Jesus carried His cross to His death. Now, we know He didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave, defeating death! He came to bring life, not death. However, for us to live the life God is fully calling us to live, it means being willing to die to our wants and desires. Too often, they are more selfish than we realize. Instead, we are to put Jesus first. When we do this, and only when we do this, can we love as Jesus loves.

So yes, a thriving church is a dying church.

Prayer for Day Six

Dear Jesus,
I come to you
today to say
thank You for Your
forgiveness in my
being selfish and
doing what I feel is
right instead of
seeking You first.

Guide me to not
thrive on my own
wants and desires,
but to thrive on
Your love.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on January 10, 2019*

DAY SEVEN

GOD LOVES YOU

All you need is love. These are very familiar words. These are words we wish our news headlines and stories would share more of instead of what we typically see. Headlines are filled with stories of war, hatred and violence.

All we need is love? Does this imply that we are not loved?

Over and over again, we are reminded in the Bible that we are loved. You are LOVED. This is not a love that we earn. This is not a love we get when we put a certain number of hours in going to church. This is not a love we receive after helping the stranger who needed some money.

You cannot say that you have committed too many wrongs. You cannot say that if God only knew, He would not love you. God does know, and He loves you.

None of us are perfect. We get this. The Bible calls this sin. Listen to these words that Paul, one of the first leaders of the Christian church, wrote to Christians in the city of Rome.

6 While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. 7 It isn't often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. 8 But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. 9 So, now that we have been made righteous by his blood, we can be even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. 10 If we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son while we were still enemies, now that we have been reconciled, how much more certain is it that we will be saved by his life? (Romans 5, CEB)

It says here that God died for ungodly people. He died for sinners. He gave His life to save His enemies.

GOD LOVES YOU

Here at Barnitz and Mt. Zion we talk about *Connecting People to Christ's Love*. Why? We want everyone in our community to know they are loved. We believe this changes you, and we believe it changes the community we all live in.

Yes, God loves you.

Prayer for Day Seven

Dear Jesus,
Before the day gets busy, Lord, I just want to say thank you.

Thank you for loving me unconditionally.

Thank you for all that You are and creating each and every one of us.

Help me to share Your love with others in the community, for them to experience Your presence in their lives.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

*Blog written by
Pastor Matt Plant
and was posted
on March 14, 2018*



Our
Churches

Barnitz United Methodist Church

23 Church Lane, Carlisle PA 17015
717.486.0060

Worship Service at 10:30am

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

420 Park Drive, Carlisle PA 17015
717.486.4280

Two Worship Services

8:45am (Traditional)

10:45am (Non-Traditional)



Our
Staff

Pastor

Matt Plant

Worship Leader (10:45am)

Marlin Herr

Office Coordinator

Wendy Bream

Connecting Coordinator

Tammy Eads

Children's Coordinators

Jake Wilson, Dawn Mitten

Youth Coordinator

Bette Newcomer

Missions Coordinators

Barb Wilson, Ruth March

Worship Coordinators

Ronda Goodyear, Bill March