

RELIGION

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?



JAMI GOETZ
GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, SPIRIT LAKE

When I was a child, I would lay awake in terror imagining the afterlife. Sometimes I was afraid of not being good enough for God; other times I got overwhelmed trying to comprehend eternity. What would I do for forever? Would I get bored? Heaven is a mind-boggling enough concept for a fully developed mind, but for a developing one? I just couldn't wrap my head around it. But I also couldn't stop trying. It's no wonder I'm medicated for anxiety disorder these days.

My obsession with the afterlife was part of the catalyst for studying religion and becoming a pastor. I figured more time in Scripture and learning from smarter, holier people would help me make sense of what comes next. Ten years and two degrees later, I can confidently say I know less than when I started. But along the way, I discovered a verse that helped me find peace with my lack of concrete answers.

The Book of Acts was written as an epilogue to the Gospel of Luke. It tells of the, well, acts of Christ's Apostles after Jesus had risen again, and it begins with a story of Jesus' return to heaven. Before saying goodbye, the Apostles ask Jesus, "Is this the time

when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus replies, telling them to be patient. It's not up to them to know when he will return and set things right, but, in the meantime, the Holy Spirit will guide them as they witness to the ends of the earth.

After saying this, Jesus is lifted up to his eternal home in a cloud. Naturally, the Apostles' eyes follow him heavenward. Until two men in white robes appear and ask, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

"Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" When I first read this verse, these words stopped me dead in my tracks. So much of my faith formation was spent looking up, projecting into the future, worrying about heaven. So much of my life was spent forgetting about the world in front of me. The robed men's words were a calling to the Apostles: to let God do God's thing and, in the meantime, try to be the kingdom on earth. Or to quote the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Now I will be the first to admit that the world in front of me does not always look like my hopes for the world above me. I am

writing these words days after the tragic shooting at Annunciation Catholic School, begging God with tear-stained eyes to put an end to senseless violence; asking, like the Apostles, "Is this finally the time when you will restore the kingdom?"

How long, O Lord, must we wait? But just as God hears the prayers of my lips, feels the longings of my heart, and sends God's comforting presence to all who suffer, so too does God tell me, and all of us, not to wait for justice. Like the Apostles, we have acts to tend to in this brief, beautiful, heartbreaking blip of time we get to spend in this life.

My prayer, dear reader, is that we may all lower our gaze from heaven to earth. That we may trust in God's restorative work and salvific intent for all God's children, especially those taken from us all too soon. And in the meantime, with the help of the Holy Spirit, do what we can to help earth mimic heaven.

At best, this world will only be a flawed fragment of the world to come. But with God's help, perhaps we can find the strength to believe that Jesus will return to set things right. And while we wait, perhaps we can worry less about tomorrow and act today to make this world a little kinder, a little gentler, a little more inclusive, and a little more like heaven.

For us, and for all God's children.

AREA CHURCH LISTINGS

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Foundation Church, Spencer
Rev. Nicholas Hanges, Senior Pastor
1410 W. 18th St.
712-262-6292
foundationspencer.com

- Sunday School K-12, 9 a.m.
- Sunday Prayer/Fellowship, 9 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.
- Kids Church Sunday, 10 a.m.
- Wednesday All Ages, 6:30 p.m.

BAPTIST

Baptist Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. James Marshall

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

First Baptist Church, Spencer
Rev. Tim Smith
1200 Grand Ave.
712-262-1325
firstbaptistspencer.com

- Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.
- Sunday Upward Look — KICD 1240 AM, 10 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday AWANA, 4 p.m.
- Sunday FBC Youth Group, 6 p.m.

CALVARY CHAPEL

New Life Worship Center, Spencer
Rev. Tracy Baugh
1217 Fourth Ave. W.
712-262-3125

- Sunday Bible Church, 10 a.m.
- Wednesday Prayer, 6:30 p.m.

CATHOLIC

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Hartley
Rev. Kevin Richter
260 N. Fourth Ave. W.
712-928-2626

- Primghar St. Athony, Sunday, 8 a.m.
- Hartley St. Joseph, Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Milford
Rev. Brian Hughes
1305 Okoboji Ave.
712-338-2274

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Ruthven
Rev. Paul Kelly
1801 Rolling St.
712-852-3187

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Spencer
Rev. Kevin Richter
1111 Fourth Ave. W.
712-262-3047

- Saturday Service, 4:30 p.m.
- Sunday Service, 11 a.m.

Livestreamed at:
spencersacredheart.com/onlinemass

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Trinity United Church of Christ, Hartley
140 N. Fifth Ave.
712-728-2889

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Spencer Family Church, Spencer
Rev. Larry Neiderhiser
905 Fifth St. SW
712-262-7298
spencerfamilychurch.org

- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday Kid's Church, 10:30 a.m.
- Wednesday Life Group, 7 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Spencer
1701 W. 11th St.
712-262-6172

- Sunday Sacrament Meeting, 10 a.m.
- Sunday School; Primary and Youth Meetings, 11:10 a.m.
- Sunday Men's Priesthood Meeting and Women's Relief Society, 12:10 p.m.

CONGREGATIONAL

Grace Congregational Church, Greenville
Rev. Tonna Parsons

- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

EPISCOPAL

The Way Station, Spencer
Rev. Beth Preston
120 W. Fourth St.
712-580-5463
revbethpreston@gmail.com

- Sunday Service, 3 p.m.

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Spirit Lake
Rev. Carolyn Tuttle
23rd and Zenith
712-336-1117

- Sunday Mass/Eucharist, 10 a.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church, Storm Lake
Rev. Stacey Gerhart
121 W. Marina Road
712-202-6624

- Sunday Eucharist, 10 a.m.

EVANGELICAL FREE

Riverside Evangelical Free Church, Linn Grove
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

- Ignite: 6:30 p.m.
- Salt Youth: 7:15 p.m.

CrossWinds Church, Spencer
Campus Rev. Jordan Gowing
Rev. Dr. Kurt Trucksess
1900 Grand Ave, Suite A
712-584-3151
spencer@crosswinds.tv

- Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN

First Christian Church, Spencer
(Disciples of Christ)
Pastor Interim
915 Fourth Ave. SW
712-262-2945

- Sunday Service, 9:30 a.m.
- In-House and Facebook Live
- Wednesday Kids Sunday School: 4:30 p.m.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

First Congregational Church, Peterson
712-295-7150

- Sunday Worship, 8:45 a.m.
- Sunday School, 10 a.m.

First Congregational Church, Spencer
Rev. Shazzy Britz
1212 First Ave. W.
712-262-4392

- Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Livestream on YouTube

LUTHERAN

Hope Lutheran Church, Everly
Rev. Dan Taylor
206 N. Washington St.
712-834-2767

- Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
- Sunday School and Adult Education, 9 a.m.

Services livestreamed on YouTube at "Hope Lutheran Church — Everly, IA"

Lost Island Lutheran Church, Graettinger
Rev. Peter Morlock

- Sunday Service, 8:45 a.m.
- Fellowship, 9:45 a.m.
- Sunday School, 10 a.m.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran, Hartley
Rev. Christopher Nitzel
60 N. Central Ave.
712-728-2711

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
- Sunday School 10 a.m.
- Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.
- Confirmation, 11 a.m.
- Choir Practice, 11 a.m.

Harbor of Joy Lutheran Church, Milford
Rev. Tim Voth
1204 L Ave.
712-338-2355

- Sunday Fellowship,

- 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday School, 8:30 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

First Lutheran Church, Milford
1525 Three Cross Road
Rev. Perry Aalgard, Senior Pastor
Rev. Brian Jack, Associate Pastor
712-338-4514
3cross.org

- Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.
- Sunday Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.
- Education/Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Royal
Rev. Dr. Mark F. Wilms
207 Church St.
712-933-2229

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven
Rev. Eric Patten

- Sunday Service, 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

First Lutheran Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. Tonna Parsons

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Bethany Lutheran Church-ELCA, Spencer
15 W. 14th St.
712-262-2327
bethluthspencer.com

- Worship, 9 a.m.

Christ the King Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael McGinley
500 Fourth Ave. SW
712-262-2244

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
- Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.
- Services on Facebook, 9 a.m.

Podcast" released Sundays

Faith Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Ben Unseth
2912 Highway Blvd.
712-580-4316

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
- Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

Services are streamed on YouTube
flcspencer.org

First English Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Paul Kaldahl
1311 E. 18th St.
712-262-5598
spencer-church.com

- Divine Worship, also broadcast on 1240 AM and 102.5 FM, 8 a.m.
- Fellowship, 9 a.m.
- Child care in the nursery, 9:15 a.m. to Noon

Spirit Life Fellowship, Spirit Lake
Rev. Eric Holdeman
2504 Enterprise Ave.
712-336-0114

- Sunday School, 9 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

- Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
- Bible Class, 9:40 a.m.
- Divine Worship, 10:45 a.m.
- Communion on first and third Sundays.

Services & Bible Class livestreamed via website

Riverview Terrace Chapel, Spencer
1501 St. Luke Drive
712-262-5932

- Sunday Worship, 10:45 a.m.

St. Luke Home and Services, Spencer
Rev. Perry DeGroot
1301 St. Luke Drive
712-262-5931

- St. Luke Lutheran Home Worship, 10 a.m.
- Riverview Terrace Worship, 10:45 a.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Renae Behrends
900 11th Ave. W.
712-262-1287

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

NONDENOMINATIONAL

Faith Community Church, Milford
805 Okoboji Ave.
Rev. Jennifer Hesebeck
faithcommunitymilford.com
fcc@milfordcomm.net

- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

The New Light of the Lakes Friends Church, Okoboji
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.- Sunday Service, 10:30 a.m.
- Group Bible Study, 5 p.m.

Living Word Outreach Ministries, Spencer
Rev. Barb Dean, Lead Pastor
Rev. Mark Feauto, Associate Pastor
905 10th Ave SE
712-262-9545
livingwordspencer.org

- Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.
- Livestream id also available on the website, Facebook and YouTube.

River's Edge Church, Spencer
Rev. Tim B. Frasher
Pastor Joseph Leggett
701 E. 18th St.
712-580-3013

- Sunday School, 9 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Spirit Life Fellowship, Spirit Lake
Rev. Eric Holdeman
2504 Enterprise Ave.
712-336-0114

- Sunday School, 9 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Maple Grove Church of God, Sutherland
Rev. Michael Hyde

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday School, 11 a.m.

PENTECOSTAL

Faith Pentecostal Church, Spencer
1700 11th Ave. SW
712-262-3368
fpcspencer.com
Rev. Brad Wallace
Rev. Dale Hodges

- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
- Wednesday Bible Study, 6:30 p.m.

REFORMED

Good News Community Church, Okoboji
Rev. Brandon Morrow
1010 Julia St.
712-332-5698

- Sunday Worship Services, 9 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.
- Fellowship. 10:15 a.m.

Hope Church, Spencer
Pastor James Runcorn
919 Grand Ave.
712-262-3016

- Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m.
- Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Spencer
1910 10th Ave. E.
712-262-5766

- Saturday Sabbath School, 9:45 a.m.
- Saturday Worship, 11 a.m.

UNITED METHODIST

Calvary United Methodist Church, Arnolds Park
Rev. Chris St. Clair
209 N. Okoboji Grove Road
712-332-2447

- Saturday Worship, 6 p.m.
- Sunday Lakeshore Worship, 7:30 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Dickens United Methodist Church, Dickens
Rev. Donna Gray

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Everly
Rev. Michael Eeten
301 N. Ochededan
712-834-2501

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Community United Methodist Church, Gillett Grove
Rev. Donna Gray

- Sunday Worship, 10:15 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Hartley
361 Eighth Ave.
712-928-2649

- Sunday Church School/Confirmation Classes, 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday Worship Service, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Langdon
Rev. Chris St. Clair

- Sunday in-house and Facebook Live Worship, 11 a.m.

First United Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. Dr. Mike Currier
Rev. Karen Currier

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

Church of Christ, Spencer
Contact Jeff Cookinham
1304 St. Luke Drive
712-262-2294

- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday Bible Study, 11:15 a.m.

First United Methodist Church, Peterson
Rev. Tyler Thomsen
103 E. Third St.

- Sunday Worship, 9:15 a.m.
- Sunday Fellowship, 10:15 a.m.
- Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

First United Methodist Church, Royal
Rev. John Battern
408 Church St.
712-933-2489

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Ruthven
Rev. Kris Hackbart

- Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

First United Church, Sioux Rapids
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Grace United Methodist Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael Slininger
311 Second Ave. W.
712-262-5970

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

Zion United Methodist Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael Eeten

- Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday Worship, 10:45 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Terri
Rev. Terry Luiken
302 S. State St.
712-853-6549

- Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Trinity United Methodist Church, Webb
Rev. Kari A. Etherington

- Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
- Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

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