

2020 FALL WEDNESDAYS: GOD, THE PANDEMIC, AND US

Using N. T. Wright's brief book *God and the Pandemic* as a foundation of our discussions, we will explore a variety of issues facing our nation, our church, and our lives.

(Reading book suggested, not required.) 7:00 - Presentation/Discussion; 8:15 – Compline

Zoom Information to Register and Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81178893121?pwd=NXBwSWNZS2Rxb0dlSmV1V09DS3NUZz09>

Meeting ID: 811 7889 3121 Passcode: 537858

October 7 - The Invisible God and the Visible Church: An Introduction to *God and the Pandemic*

with Mr. Herbert Merrill

In this first session we will set the stage for our seven week study with an overview of the questions raised by N. T. Wright in his book *God and the Pandemic*. We'll spend some time looking at theological themes such as the kingdom of God, the sovereignty of God, idolatry, and the nature and mission of the Church. We'll also pay special attention to the difficult question of "Where is God in the pandemic?"

October 14 - Being & Doing in an Age of Brokenness & Misery

with Rev. Dr. Howard Soehl

"The secret to God's saving power is the self-giving love of the incarnate Son" (Wright). The power of *Agape* love is that it overcomes evil with good. (See Romans 12:3-21, especially v.21.) Is it true that before we can know what God wants us to **do**, we must become what God wants us to **be**? Is the catharsis of lament necessary to reduce the noise of our anger, frustration, anxiety, and bitterness before we can hear the still small voice that offers us guidance as to what to **do**? Let's talk about it. Participants will be invited to write their own song (Psalm) of lament.

October 21 - God, a Pandemic, and Me

with Dr. Carrie Buist

This discussion will explore the concepts of social structures and human agency as they relate to the global pandemic, our earthly lives, and God's presence in the world. The loss of control we are experiencing (not only because of the health crisis but because of social injustice) leaves us asking many questions, among them: Where is God? Why is this happening? What can I do? Can I do anything? We will explore these questions and others as couched within Wright's book, our national landscape, and our own experiences during these uncertain times.

October 28 - Christians in a Pandemic: Using, Abusing, or Ignoring the Science?

with Mr. David Buller

How have Christian communities handled science in the midst of the pandemic? For many, science is less a source of guidance than it is a weapon to be wielded - or defended against. Conspiracies and misinformation provide many Christians with alternate realities that more comfortably reinforce polarized identities and biases. In this session, we'll explore these dynamics and highlight practical ways to counter them for a Christian response to the pandemic that values truth and scientific expertise.

November 4 - In the Midst of the Pandemic

with Rev. Tom Woudstra

We need a truth with hard surfaces to cling to and to stand under. In the midst of the storm, we do not decide to bring our lives to a point but are brought. Grace is offered to live faithfully and to remind ourselves "that God is God, Jesus is Lord. The powers of evil have been defeated. God's new world has begun" (Wright), and we realize that we are ultimately not makers but responders. Let's explore this and more together.

November 11 - Living in the Now; Building God's Kingdom

with Dr. Wendy Wenner

This week we use what we have learned to this point to look at and discuss the racial and economic disparities that the pandemic has uncovered in our country. How can we answer Wright's call to use our faith to "live and act in the now?" How do we "lament our racist past" and put our faith into action as God's agents to bring hope to those who have been and are suffering?

November 18 - The Final Frontier or Not

with The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato

Please, join us for the final opportunity to explore and tie together the many elements of Wright's book, *God and the Pandemic*, with the preceding sessions. Our time will offer opportunities to ask questions and offer comments on how this timely book has intersected many other timely justice issues facing us today. It will hopefully prompt us to put our 'faith into action' as disciples of Jesus and followers in his footsteps.