

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

Early Summer 2020 Newsletter

From Pastor Tim - Part 1

Right now, we have two pressing layers of widespread challenge: doing justice, and dealing with COVID-19. For our brothers and sisters of other races, the layer of social injustice, of course, has been present all along. The layer of racial injustice continues to be there, as it has been for hundreds of years.

Micah 6:8 says, “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you - but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” I think it helpful to notice that the verse is not saying to “do kindness” and “love justice.” It says to “do justice” and “love kindness.” The action is placed in doing justice. Yes, we are to love kindness, and this can guide our actions, but the action, the critical action, is to be on “doing justice.” We are to be on the side of bringing about what is good and right, what is just, for all. So what can we do?

1. Listen

I hear that it's helpful, critical, that we take time to really listen. To listen for the sake of learning. To listen to the voices of those who are experiencing injustice based on race. On our own, we can't know. Really, how could we? When we do experience injustice in our own lives, we feel it immediately. Deep inside we know it: “This is not right.” But for those of us who are part of the dominant culture, we don't experience racial discrimination, so we just can't know it, fully, from our own experience. But we can listen.

We can listen to learn. Doing justice must include hearing the experiences of our black and brown and indigenous neighbors. Doing justice calls us to be silent (in the beginning), to hear, to listen, to work on understanding something that we have not, ourselves, experienced. Listening includes learning about things that make us uncomfortable. It includes reading books that might make us uncomfortable, and watching movies that teach about the experiences of our neighbors of other colors. It can include being open to doing things like spending some time down at the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial. It can include going to our church's national ELCA website, to learn how our church body has been focusing on this over the years, including a major piece voted in at the church-wide National assembly just this past year.

So the first thing, in our attempts at doing justice, is to listen, to learn.

2. Speak

The second thing, then, is to speak. The time to be quiet is when we listen to our brothers and sisters of other races. But we can't stay quiet. We can't. Doing justice means we speak. This can be hard – it can be so uncomfortable for us. But we need to do it. In the best ways we can, in the most effective ways we can – we need to speak. (But in the moment, just speak - don't worry about getting it just right; God seems to have a habit of taking our messy attempts and having them make a positive difference.)

It might be in a moment that catches you by surprise. Somebody says something and you know it's not right. It might be at work, it might be among friends, it might be with family gathered around the Thanksgiving table. These are times to “do justice.” So, with “love of kindness” in mind (if possible), our Lord's guiding force leads us to speak, to say something, to do justice.

In addition to these individual conversations, our voices are needed in the public forum. And in a democracy, our voice includes our vote. It includes our communications to our elected officials. I pray that you never underestimate the impact of your voice.

All of this might feel insurmountable. And it would be, if we were left on our own. But the promise is that nothing is impossible for God. The promise is that Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. The life-energy to do justice comes from our Lord. The power, the power to really do justice – this come from our Lord. So we move forward: we listen, we learn beyond ourselves, we enter into tough conversations, we read, and we speak out. This is the life of Christ coming into us, leading us, guiding us. To do justice.

From Pastor Tim - Part 2

I give thanks to God for the internal strength of our congregation. It is so heartening to see all the ways that ministry continues to flow, including online worships, family-sized Graduation Milestone celebrations in the Outdoor Chapel, people connecting through phone and email and Zoom gatherings, many making masks, many attending the online LSS Benefit for Youth, many looking out for their neighbors, small group (social distancing) parking lot gatherings, Sunday School to-go bags, Zoom Bible fellowship times, Confirmation and Peer Ministry alive and well in new ways, alternative Vacation Bible School opportunities of food drive and photo challenge, . . . There has been great imagination and creativity leading us forward. Ministry has not been stopped by the pandemic, it has just found new ways to be expressed.

Having said that, I sure look forward to when we get to be with each other in-person again! I know it is on our minds a lot, including: “When do we get to come back together in our church building?” Your church leadership has been highly engaged in discerning this:

SMART Team:

At the recommendation of our Bishop’s office, our Vision Council has formed what is called a SMART Team. The task of the SMART Team is to aid the Vision Council in making decisions regarding how our church best does ministry safely in the midst of COVID-19, with particular focus on when it will be wise for us to come together for in-person worship. The team is also gathering recommendations of what it should look like to have in-person worship be done with little risk of spreading coronavirus. SMART Team members include Kim Dauner, Sara Hendrickson, Katie Rich, Pastor Tim, and Pastor Dave. Our first meeting was on March 19, and we have been processing information from the CDC, the Minnesota Department of Health, the guidance put forth from our denomination’s national ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), and our NE MN Synod Bishop’s office.

Guiding Principles:

To answer the question of when we should consider a return to the sanctuary, along with what the safety policies should be in order safely do this, the team has identified these as guiding principles:

- 1) We are guided theologically by the foundational understanding that Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God, a word which comes to us wherever and whenever words of Christ are shared with us.
- 2) We follow our Lord’s command to “love our neighbor.” We see this in terms of caring for the individuals who might attend in-person sanctuary worships as soon as they are offered (we do not want them to get sick), but also for our whole community (we do not want our church to become a hotspot where people catch the virus and bring it out into the community).
- 3) We draw on the best science to guide us, understanding that our knowledge continues to grow as we learn more and more about this particular virus. As trusted sources, we draw centrally on the CDC (our nation’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and the Minnesota Department of Health.
- 4) We draw on the guidance of our ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) national Bishop’s office, along with the shepherding of our local NE MN Synod’s Bishop Tom Aitken.
- 5) Throughout this time of discernment, we acknowledge that there is a high level of uncertainty about the timing and impact of COVID-19 in our area. We see the need for our leadership to create preparations and plans, but with the understanding that – as new information unfolds – our plans will need to be updated. The SMART Team will meet weekly to look at markers such as the increases and decreases of COVID-19 cases, over time, in our area.
- 6) We are guided by the principle of doing the most faithful and effective ministry we can. In doing so, we recommend following the guidance of a neighboring pastor (Hans Dahl of Calvary Lutheran in Alexandria MN) who writes, “So when will we gather again? We will gather again for worship when we can provide a better experience in the building than we can provide online.”
- 7) We want to be known as a church that takes COVID-19 safety guidelines very seriously, so that when the time comes for us to be holding worship and meetings in the church building again, people can be confident that we are following good safety protocols.

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“But when will we open?”

The current recommendation of our SMART Team and Vision Council is that we continue to be an active Community of Christ in new and creative ways, knowing there will be a time when we can safely come back into the sanctuary (but not regarding our ministry as dependent on that). We recommend holding off on in-person worship in the sanctuary for now, and likely throughout the summer. We express thankfulness that we are allowed by our state ordinances to open when the time is right for us. Our Bishop Tom Aitken of the NE MY Synod is strongly urging congregations to not try to get back into their sanctuaries too soon; the risk is just too high.

There are still so many unknowns. Your SMART Team will continue to meet weekly to monitor the progression of COVID-19 in our area. It appears that a substantial rise of COVID-19 cases in Duluth is still coming. We don't know how steep the curve of increased cases will be, but it still appears that we are likely within the “calm before the storm” of COVID-19 in this part of the country.

Policies for Safe In-Person Worship in the Sanctuary:

We are blessed with specific guidance from the CDC, the MN Department of Health, the ELCA, and our NE MN Synod for offering specific safety guidelines. Our leadership is looking at how we best implement these guidelines in our particular setting. At least at first, we will need to be following social distancing rules and other guidelines to keep infection at a lower level of risk. In the mean time, please continue to connect and bring God's goodness to each other in all the ways you have been doing.

God's blessings to you in all,

Pastor Tim



What does Youth and Family Ministry look like now?

- It looks like children's sermon videos in an online worship service...
- It looks like a small group of Confirmation kids meeting online through Zoom once a week to share talk about life and faith...
- It looks like families gathering around high school seniors for personalized graduation milestone prayers and words of blessing...
- It looks like an online and curbside food drive for Chum, led by our Peer Ministers...
- It looks like a VBS Photo Challenge along Lake Superior, featuring videos made by college-age young adults...
- It looks like a box of books ordered for parents and congregation members to engage in a conversation about faith and racism...
- It looks like learning as much as possible about Covid-19, so we can be as ready as possible to launch fall programming in new ways...



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WHITENESS
AUSTIN CHANNING
BROWN



Thank you so much for continuing to support youth and family ministry here at Good Shepherd. It looks very, very different from ministry last summer

Thank you for your faithful support!

Our ministry is challenging, thriving and vulnerable.

- Challenging:** We continue to face unprecedented unknown factors because of the impact of the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. We have had to learn new ways of worship, mission and nurture while not being able to worship in our sanctuary.
- Thriving:** The Gospel continues to be proclaimed through online worship. We continue to reach out locally and globally with the love of Christ. The faith of all ages continues to be nurtured through zoom meetings, small gatherings and resilient relationships.
- Vulnerable:** We don't know how long this present pandemic reality will persist. We are definitely feeling its impact in loss of personal connection, threat of infection for our most vulnerable, deaths of loved ones, and economic repercussions throughout our community, nation and world.

As we began this year we would never have imagined that at the end of June fewer than half of our Sundays, including Holy Week, would have included worship in our sanctuary. Despite these challenges and this vulnerability our ministry is thriving because God is with us! And one of the ways God is with us is through the faithful financial support of our members. Our pledged giving is strong. Thank you! Many of our members are enrolled in Simply Giving. Thank you! Special thanks to those who participated in the Ascend Challenge. We have been blessed to receive a Paycheck Protection Program forgivable loan from North Shore Bank. Our Finance team, Resource Development team and Vision Council are monitoring our finances carefully given the threat and uncertainty of the pandemic. We understand that many families are facing significant challenges with threats to employment and family security. In a time such as this, we also realize that the mission to which we are called is more needed than ever. Thank you for your commitment to God, your participation in the spiritual life of this community of Christ, and for your generous offering of yourselves, your time and your possessions for the ministry of Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd.

Thanks be to God!
Pastor Dave

You are Invited!

You are invited to join our "Summer in the Psalms" Bible study. Groups meet by zoom either on Wednesdays at 1 pm or Thursdays at 6:30 pm for fellowship and a "deep dive" into the power of the Psalms. You may join at any time by letting me know your interest. I will send you a study guide for each Psalm and a zoom invitation for each session.

Pastor Dave

Hello Church! This past year, I recommended reading the book "Inspired" by Rachel Held Evans. The response was amazing! We passed out more than 50 copies of this book and had great conversations. At both of our "Book Club" nights, people asked "What should we read next? What else do you recommend?" My beloved church, it is time for us to read "I'm Still Here" by Austin Channing Brown. I read this book in 2018 when it was first published. I read it again after watching the horrific videos and images of the death of George Floyd, the protests and all the information following. Trust me when I say – if you enjoyed reading "Inspired", you will enjoy reading this book, too. It is both relatable and eye opening – easy to read and so important to hear, especially right now. Just let me know you'd like a copy and we will purchase it as a church and find a way to safely get it to you. Please email me at katierich.lcgs@gmail.com.

Thank you! Katie

**I'M STILL
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PRAYERS FOR HOSPITALIZED PERSONS shared with the Prayer Chain (and in the Prayers of the Church) will begin with “God knows the names of all for whom we pray...” unless permission has been granted by the hospitalized individual or a family member of the individual. This is in keeping with our Privacy Policy. If you have questions/ comments regarding this policy, please feel free to discuss it with one of the pastors.

Your Camps are Open!

While we aren't able to welcome campers to our traditional summer programs, it isn't summer without people at camp. Our facilities at both Camp Hiawatha and Camp Vermilion are available for family and small group rental opportunities! We already have some families taking advantage of this, and we would love the chance to welcome you to camp as well. Interested in learning more about our sites? Visit www.NorthwoodsRetreatsMN.com. Wondering about our policies and procedures regarding Covid-19? [Email](#) us to request the document...and to check availability. Hope to see you at camp soon!

The VLM Bluegrass Festival is happening!

While our Board of Directors made the decision to cancel our in person gathering at camp, we are still excited to gather virtually with you on July 25...and perhaps even throughout the week before. Watch for more details coming soon!

VLM CONGREGATIONAL BASKET CHALLENGE!

- Come up with a theme for your congregation's basket
- Gather items to fit that theme and compile your “basket”
- Send 2-4 (creative) pictures of your basket to VLM@VLMcamps.org by July 15.
- Arrange a time to deliver your basket to the VLM office in Duluth. Our staff can also come to you if needed, just let us know.

We ask that the basket value be a minimum of \$50.00. Please complete the Basket Challenge form and sending with your 2-4 pictures by July 19 to VLM@VLMcamps.org.

Every congregation that participates will be entered for a chance to win one full week of camp for a camper of your choice for the summer of 2021.

We want to thank again those congregations that participated last year in our basket challenge. We look forward to seeing what new ideas come together this year!

We are continuing our ministry here, not only at Colorado St and 43rd, but throughout the city, country, and world!

We are part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) We would love for you to know what we believe, and how you feel called to be a part of it!! You can visit our website www.lcgsduluth.org, the North Eastern Minnesota www.nemnsynod.org , and the ELCA at www.elca.org.

At our website, you can find a place to give financially and sign-up for weekly e-mails!

Continue to join us for worship online!

We are praying for you and your family as we are apart from each other, give your loved ones a call.

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD MISSION STATEMENT:

A Community of Christ

Experiencing God † Reaching Out † Nurturing Faith

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (ELCA)

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The church building is currently closed due to Covid-19, but ministry continues!

Find us at www.lcgsduluth.org for online worship and information about what we are up to! Sign-up on the homepage for weekly e-mails!

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

Currently Closed due to COVID-19

Phone: 218-525-1922 •

Website: www.lcgsduluth.org

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