

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

February 2022 Newsletter

February 2022: Sing A New Song!

Our congregation is currently engaged in renewal on three levels: the ELCA, our Northeastern Minnesota Synod, and our Good Shepherd Mission and Vision update. Why all this talk about renewal? Because renewal is essential to the life of any living organism! So how shall we live? Foundational to the process of renewal in each expression is the biblical invitation to “sing a new song!”

ELCA Congregational Vitality Boot Camp

Over 450 congregational leaders from across the ELCA are currently participating in this “best practices” virtual workshop designed to enhance congregational transformation, renewal and vitality. The foundational premise of this workshop is that renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of members and congregations. Our team (Dave Chura, Sara Hendrickson, Paula Tsufis, Amie Abenth and me) was inspired by the stories and spiritual principles shared at the first session. We look forward to discerning how to implement these principles in our unique setting.

NE MN Synod LEAD Listening

Bishop Amy Odgren has initiated an intense listening process throughout our Synod designed to hear the voice of our congregations around these questions:

How is your congregation growing disciples with a deepening faith in Christ?

How are you inviting all to participate in the ministry and leadership of your congregation?

What are your hopes for your congregation beyond the pandemic?

What do you value most in being part of this Synod?

The LEAD team will summarize responses in a report to the Synod Council in March, to be shared with the entire Synod at the Assembly in May. Does that process sound familiar?

LCGS Mission and Vision Update

Our Mission and Vision Task Force has listened to the voice of our people through a congregational survey and forums. Based on this process, the Task Force will make recommendations to the Vision Council regarding mission and vision, staffing needs, and self-study. The Vision Council will then propose implementations of renewal to our congregation. Thank you for sharing your voice in this important process.

So how shall we experience renewal in the complexity of an ongoing pandemic and also our interim staffing process? Renewal will happen as we “sing a new song!” Listen to the wisdom of the Psalms:

Psalm 33:3-4 “Sing to him a new song . . . for the word of the LORD is upright.”

The words and power of the new song come from God’s Word.

How will we listen to God’s Word?

Psalm 40:3 “He put a new song in my mouth . . . a song of praise to our God.”

God places the new song in our mouths!

How will that happen?

Psalm 51:10 “Create in me a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

The “new” is a result of God’s creative power of heart cleansing.

How does this happen for us individually and as a church?

Psalm 96:1-2 “Sing to the LORD a new song . . . tell of his salvation from day to day.”

The new song happens every day!

How does that happen for us?

Psalm 149:1 “Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new Song!”

The last word of the Psalms and the new song is “Praise the LORD!”

“Hallelujah!”

(Continued on the next pg.)

(Continued from prev. pg.)

The renewal of our hearts, our mission, and our vision is part of a cosmic process based on the power of God. God is with us, making a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34: God's word written on our hearts), and a new commandment (John 13:34: to love one another). In the final scene of the Bible, after the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, we hear these words: "I am making all things new!" Thanks be to God!

Blessings to each of you as you experience renewal in your personal faith journey and in our life together as a renewed congregation. After our Annual Meeting I will continue my sabbatical begun last summer. Thanks to you as a congregation for valuing this time of spiritual renewal of Psalms study, immersion in nature and the power of music. Thanks also to Pastor Nancy for her spiritual presence and leadership which make this time possible.

These are deep, holy days for Joyce and me. She will complete her steroid treatment on January 27 and begin a process of recovering her immunity. During this time of vulnerability, isolation and risk we have experienced the peace that comes from God. Thanks to you for your support during this time, and especially thanks be to God, who makes all things new!

Pastor Dave



The annual meeting is Sunday, February 13 at 10:30 (following the 9:30 worship). The Annual Meeting will be held in person Please plan to attend.

Call Cyndi Venberg, Vision Council President.

The Annual report is available in the office or online on our homepage at www.lcgsduluth.org

The Mission Vision Task Force (MVTF) held two forums in December, one online and one after church, to share the results from the congregational survey and gather additional input from the congregation. Using the feedback from the survey and forums, the MVTF is drafting a final report and recommendations which will be submitted to the Vision Council for their discussion and consideration. This final report and recommendations will not be finished in time for the normal annual budgeting process or annual meeting. However, the MVTF will provide an update at the annual meeting. It is likely the Vision Council may hold additional forums to gather input on the final report and recommendations and call a mid-year congregational meeting to adopt any required changes and budget adjustments. If you have questions or concerns about the MVTF process, please don't hesitate to reach out to the co-chairs: David Chura or Sara Hendrickson or Pastor Dave.

Stations of Grace Worship Experience & Holden Evening Prayer

Ash Wednesday Stations of Grace will include scripture, music, silence, and reflection, and it will involve YOU! You will have an opportunity to engage in 5 experiences that involve your body, mind and spirit. Come and experience grace on this sacred evening. Service will be from **6:00-6:45p.m. March 2.**

For the rest of Wednesdays in Lent immerse yourself in the complete Holden Evening Prayer service (if you're not familiar with it check it out on YouTube). The music is contemporary, singable, and gets into your spirit, carrying you through your week! And you know how a song gets stuck in your head? That's what happens in a good way with the music and mood of the Holden Evening Prayer service!

The service begins at **6:00p.m.** and will only be about 30-minutes long. And combined with the service, will be the *Small Groups that will meet either before, or after the Holden Prayer, or on Sundays. In total this will be about an hour well spent growing closer to God and each other! ***Please see the purple insert for the small group info!**

The Thursday morning Bible Study group invites any interested person to join us each Thursday at 9:30am in the Upper Lakeside room. Right now we are reading "The Women of the Bible Speak" by Shannon Bream. Anyone is welcome to come. Questions? Contact Lois Opseth 218-340-3605, or Debbie Sanders 218-216-5366

LCGS IS NURTURING FAITH

Save the Date: Milestones for *All* Ages!

Did you know... in November, we expanded the “Wrapped in God’s Love” Milestone to include adults! Prayer Shawls were available for anyone in the church to take home or give away – with a reminder that we are all “wrapped in God’s Love”. We were all amazed by the response – almost all our Prayer Shawls left the building: there was only a handful of 4 or 5 left in the whole church! This really affirmed the power and importance of expanding our Milestones to support all ages – including (and maybe especially?) adults! So save the date: new and expanded milestones are coming soon!

Sunday, February 6th: The Story Milestone

Books and Book Recommendations for all 1st Graders, 4th Graders, and Adults!

Sunday, March 6th: The Prayer Milestone

Prayer Books and Resources for all Kindergarteners, 2nd Graders, and Adults!

Confirmation in February:

We have been having some amazing conversations this winter in Confirmation – how to ask hard questions about faith, how to “get through” a funeral, even how to detect good vs. bad theology (especially online!) These deep conversations will continue this month. Here’s what Confirmation will look like in February:

Wednesday, February 2nd: How to be Mad at God

Wednesday, February 9th: How to Help Others (and ask for help, too!)

Wednesday, February 16th: How to Celebrate Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

Wednesday, February 23rd: No Confirmation (February Break)

Wednesday, March 2nd: Ash Wednesday Worship and the beginning of Lent...

If you have any questions, please contact Katie Rich

Sunday School in February:

Great work, Sunday School kids! You’ve been doing such an amazing job with Service Projects throughout the month of January! This next month will look a little different, because of the Annual Meeting, Milestones, and February Break from school. Here’s what you need to know:

Sunday School To Go Bags Available Sunday, February 13th – Sunday February 27th. Between the Annual Meeting and School Break, we thought this would be the best way to reach Sunday School Families with great faith activities you can do at home.

Sunday, March 6: Prayer Stations in Sunday School. Let’s experiment with lots of different ways to pray, before we celebrate the Prayer Milestone in worship – special gifts/resources for all Kindergarteners, 2nd Graders, and Adults!



Register for Camp Today!! Invite a friend! [Www.vlmcamps.org](http://www.vlmcamps.org) Summer Camp Registration is open!

Join us this summer at Camp Vermilion and Camp Hiawatha. Spend time at Camp Hiawatha or Camp Vermilion this summer and you will experience a week of a lifetime! It's a chance to try some new things,

meet new friends, explore your creative side, learn team work, *be silly, sing, laugh, and learn what it means to live as God's people in the world!*

We have programs for all ages - a one day experience for those new to camp, a two night program for those not quite ready for a full week, and week-long programs for elementary, junior high, and senior high campers.

**We're looking for awesome summer staff too!!
It will be the best summer ever!!**



Sign up for the LCGS weekly newsletter from Constant Contact. You will receive up-to-the-minute news and reminders! Go to the main page of our website and scroll to the bottom of the page! [Www.lcgsduluth.org](http://www.lcgsduluth.org) Look for news every Wednesday!

A New Feature: What's Your Favorite Bible Verse/Passage?

This month we hear from our Lead Pastor, Dave Mesner:

“My current favorite Bible passage: Psalm 51!!”

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
⁶You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
¹⁴Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
¹⁵O LORD, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
¹⁶For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be
pleased.
¹⁷The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not
despise.
¹⁸Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
¹⁹then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

JUST SHOW UP!

Did you know that core ministries have been organized and led by women at Good Shepherd for decades? These ministries include numerous community outreach services to children and adults in the form of goods, food, time donations, and activities. Supporting our church family is essential to a smoothly run church and supports the needs of our members. We also help to assure that our church is open and welcoming. What better way to live our faith than by giving and receiving gifts between each other!

These groups have been referred to as “Circles”. All of us wear many hats through our lives. These hats change, are replaced, and some discarded. So, as we watch women ministries and membership change over the years, we hope to grow in services that are meaningful to our community. But we need to know what is meaningful for our members. In order for this to happen, we depend on people who bring their gifts, ideas, and excitement to the room. So if you think you would like to be a part of our “Women’s Ministry” please come join us. All you need to do is Show Up!

Our monthly meetings occur on the second Tuesday at 6:30 pm. Locations TBD, stay tuned!

Please Contact Patty Altonen 218-343-3274, Sue Boutin 218-349-5991, Kathy Kreager 218-393-5409 or Lois Opseth 218-340-3605.



From Pastor Nancy Hong:

Taking a Break and Feeling Better by Nourishing Relaxation

Simply put, even in the midst of stress we can feel better. Not perfect, but better. If you're feeling stressed out, you, too, can feel better. And it's just a simple practice away. First, let's look at how we engage with stress.

Stress, whether big stress or little stress, activates our fight-flight-freeze nervous system because our brain takes in sensory data and perceives it as either a threat to our survival, or as safe (not a threat). If we perceive a situation or person as threatening, our God-given survival system activates to help us survive; how amazing is that! And whether the threat is a car that turns unexpectedly into our lane, or a pop-quiz that we're not prepared for, we either fight the threat, or flight away from the threat, or freeze/shut down in the presence of the threat, in order to survive it. And whether we call this the fight-flight-freeze response, or the stress response, it's a valuable and helpful response in that moment.

On the other hand, when we're under chronic stress, we might be staying in our stress response longer than our brains and bodies were designed to be. We might be distracted, tired, hangry, short-tempered, and/or looking for external coping methods including binging on Netflix or games, over working or over sleeping, or using substances to self-medicate, among other means.

Yet to actually *feel better* we could take a few minutes and regulate our nervous system and move it back to homeostasis. Homeostasis is our body's natural state of equilibrium after experiencing stressors. Just imagine a duck swimming contentedly on a lake when all of a sudden a bunch of seagulls swoop down, landing too close for her comfort! The duck lifts up and flaps her wings and quacks loudly! But then settles down...and swims away from the seagulls. Amazing, the duck has experienced a threat, she reacted with visible stress, but then she calmed down, and swam on with her day!

Just like the duck, we, too, have the ability to recover, calm down and move on. There's many ways we can do that, but here I describe using the practice of nourishing relaxation to accomplish it. It's a simple process once learned. As a therapist and yoga teacher I've taught this same protocol to hundreds of people and it works; nourishing relaxation helps us feel better. I invite you to follow the basic steps below as you explore this.

The Preparation:

* Lie down on your back, on a supportive surface (a couch, a bed or on the floor) while resting your legs over a cushion or folded blanket (this helps to relax the muscles of your legs and torso). Your head and neck are also flat and in line with your spine or you might use a folded towel for a small, flat "pillow." Adjust your position until you are comfortable.

*Nourish relaxation throughout your body....

*Bring a bit more awareness and ease to your abdominal muscles. We do this because we will practice our breathing here, in our belly, as opposed to breathing in our chest.

The Practice:

*On your inhale allow your belly or abdomen, to rise and to gently expand a bit. This isn't a big inhalation, or even a "deep breath." Simply allow the breath to enter the body naturally.

* As your exhalation happens, allow your belly to fall back down to its resting position.

*Explore this practice for a few minutes; I often set a timer for 5 minutes, but sometimes longer or shorter.

Notice that this is a "practice." For some of us, this method of relaxation may take some time to feel comfortable or natural. Simply put, sometimes relaxation is hard! So be kind to your self as you practice nourishing relaxation by physically relaxing along with belly breathing. And I hope you feel better!

If you have questions or feedback on your exploration, contact me: hongnancy284@gmail.com

Peace to all,
Pastor Nancy

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (ELCA)

1325 North 45th Avenue East, Duluth MN 55804-1507



2022

Change Service Requested

NON PROFIT ORG
US Postage
PAID
Permit No 28
Duluth, MN

Place address label here.

(new postal regulations)

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

M-Th 9:00-4:00 Fri 9:00-12:00

Phone: 218-525-1922 •

Website: www.lcgsduluth.org

MEET THE STAFF

Pastor Dave Mesner, Lead Pastor
(home) 218-529-9715
email: dmesner@lcgsduluth.org

Pastor Nancy Hong, Interim Pastor
email: hongnancy284@gmail.com

Katie Rich, Director of Youth & Family Ministry
email: kkrich@lcgsduluth.org

Christine Whitcomb, Office Manager
email: office@lcgsduluth.org

Amie Abenth, Communications Coordinator
email: communications@lcgsduluth.org

Greg Susens, custodian

Music Team:

Linda Turpening, Organist email:
linda@archdirect.com

Debbie Sanders, Good Shepherd Choir Director
email: debra.k.sanders@icloud.com