

TOGETHER



This gifted duo contributes music to our online worship

FAITH THAT WORKS

FROM THE COUNCIL:
RESUMPTION OF WORSHIP
AND ACTIVITIES . . . NOT YET

GOOD SHEPHERD
ONLINE CHOIR SINGS
TOGETHER APART

FIRST SUNDAY FOOD
SHELF COLLECTS FOOD
FOR CES FAMILIES

CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 2020



- 3** Senior Pastor's Letter:
"Change"
BY PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON
- 4** P.E.P Talk
BY PASTOR ELISE POKEL
- 5** Money Talk
BY PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON
- 6** From the Council
BY PRESIDENT BETH HELGEN
- 7** The Financial Outlook
BY TREASURER KATHY BENCH
- 8** Zoom Sunday School
Reaches into Homes
BY KIAJA KLABO
- 9** Remembering the Rally Day
Drive-Thru
PHOTOS BY CHRIS HAMMOND
- 10** Advent Celebrates "A-Blazing
Grace"
BY BRITA TARACKS
- 10** Women's Saturday Online
Bible Study
BY PASTOR ELISE POKEL
- 11** Good Shepherd Online Choir
Sings Together Apart, Prepares
for Christmas
BY RALPH JOHNSON
- 12** Do You Hear What I Hear?
- 14** First Sunday Food Shelf:
Developing a New Approach to
Collect Food for People in Need
BY CONNIE FUKUDAD-CLARK
- 15** When Will Confirmation
Be Held? We'll Celebrate When
We Can Be Together Again
BY MARK HALVORSON
- 16** Ten Questions
with Roger Krafve
BY ELLA KRAFVE
- 17** Life Passages
COMPILED BY LAURA STEIN
- 18** Adult Education Explores
Gospel of Luke, Books by
Current Authors
BY PASTOR ELISE POKEL AND
PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON
- 19** Advent and Christmas
Worship Themes
BY PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON
- 20** The Challenges with
COVID-19 at College
BY MIA OPSAHL
- 21** Performing Arts Offers
Online Musical Cabaret &
Children's Play
BY TOR JOHNSON
- 22** SCRIPTURE STORY
The Judges: Larger Than Life
BY DUSTIN HAIDER
- 23** Our Brothers and Sisters in
Ethiopia Struggle with Political
Conflict, COVID-19, Hunger
BY KAREN WALHOF

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SUNDAY WORSHIP

Worship with Communion
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goodshepherdmpls.org

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Photo by Chris Hammond

TOGETHER



**THIS IS WHO
WE ARE
HERE, AND
WHAT WE
ARE ABOUT:**

**LUTHERAN
CHURCH OF THE
GOOD SHEPHERD:
FAITH THAT
WORKS**

The moments that we are living in, here at the close of 2020 – these moments of pandemic and amplified racial tensions, of unrest and outrage and upheaval – are moments that thirst for change like dry, cracked soil thirsts for water, for newness, for refreshing.

It has been said that “changed lives change lives.” That is, when we find ourselves changed, in any way, that change means that we will live and move and have our being somehow differently. And so, that change in us seeks to bring the gift of change to others. This promise can be, for us, a calling: A changed life *can* change a life. This living out of our Christian calling, then, is the story/are the stories that define us; We are changed lives, changing lives.

We may think of the gospel, the promise, like the Word itself, as a change-agent – change that is not simply for change sake, but change in light of the Good News. The gospel challenges us in this way; while God does love us without question, as we are, God also loves us too much to simply let us be. And so we learn that:

We must change: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

We will be changed: “What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

We generally dislike change: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it” (Acts 7:51-53).

We need change: “Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.” He answered them, “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “If you are able! All things can be done for the one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:17-24).

My friends, the year ahead of us will likely bring change for us, as the past year already has. It is difficult to predict what that change might look like. But our answer to it, our stance in the midst of it, is sure. We, too, can be the change. This world needs the promised change that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring. And it is we who can bring it.

**FAITH THAT WORKS IS FAITH THAT CAN TRANSFORM
THE WORLD – “MINE,” “YOURS,” “OURS,” “THE.”**

P.E.P. TALK

DURABLE FAITH FOR A GRITTY WORLD



BY PASTOR ELISE POKEL

Our Obnoxious Savior

In the new year, Good Shepherd will be taking a deep dive into the Gospel of Luke. I'm a Gospel of Mark person, but if I had to choose a second favorite Gospel, it would be Luke! The Gospel of Mark tells stories at break-neck speed to inspire a sense of urgency in the reader to embrace the gospel and get a move on. But Luke takes his time and is an expert at building suspense. The Gospel of Mark never really resolves any tension! It's a thriller from start to its very cliff-hanger-y ending.



My favorite story (okay, stories) from the Gospel of Luke took me the longest time to understand. Chapter 4 starts out with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness by the Adversary. Evil is trying to poke and prod and coax Jesus into using just a little of his divine power to show off. Why be divine if you're not willing to dazzle just a little?! Jesus cares more about faithfulness, integrity,

and truth over glory and glamor. Typical Jesus. Jesus so annoys the devil with his steadfastness that the devil goes away. As someone who is very easily tempted by sequins and fancy sheets, the Gospel really bops me on the head. So far in Luke 4, I discover that serving God means I have to care about far more than my own comfort. It means that I'm being called to be a servant. It means I need to keep my eyes fixed on the abundant provisions God regularly places before me even if they don't look like the provisions I wanted.

The very next story in Luke 4 also highlights just how obnoxious Jesus can be. If you thought the devil was irritated by God's goodness, just wait. Jesus is traveling throughout Galilee, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, teaching and preaching. Everyone is so excited about him. He goes to his hometown of Nazareth and serves as a guest lector at a service at the local synagogue. I'm sure people were very pleased. Their own celebrity is coming to bring a little honor to Nazareth! Jesus reads from Isaiah 61. Echoing

the prophet, he tells the people gathered for worship that Isaiah's anointing to bring good news to the poor, release captives, give sight and freedom, and usher in a Jubilee year falls on Jesus' head now. The time has come for fulfillment, and Jesus is God's answer to the longing of God's people for freedom and newness.

But freedom and newness is not just for Jesus' people – which is a huge problem because Jesus' people are an occupied people. They're living under the dominion of Rome. They're awaiting a savior who would overthrow their Roman overlords and restore their former kingdom's glory.

But Jesus says that when there was a famine, God sent the prophet Elijah to save a widow in enemy territory in Sidon. When leprosy was a big issue, the prophet Elisha cured Naaman, a Syrian general who eventually found his way to repentance for his previously very snotty attitude. The people of Nazareth are so filled with rage and are so haunted by not getting that to which they felt entitled that they want to hurl Jesus right off a cliff. They are so angry that God would have his eyes on other sparrows.

The obnoxious truth is that God loves us and sees us. God appears on the scene to correct, encourage, and lead us into truth and service. But God also loves and sees our enemies. God loves all the ones we want humiliated and overthrown. God loves and sees the ones we're too embarrassed to love.

It's frustrating that Jesus doesn't only belong to me. He doesn't belong to people who vote like me or believe like me or look like me. Jesus can't be bought or bribed or cajoled into just being mine. I can't force Jesus to be or do what I want. If I tried, I would be just about as good as the devil.

Jesus understands that we become fearful and try to grasp at what little power there is when we feel threatened. The good news is that we don't have to force Jesus to stick around. He promises to be near us to the very end of the age.

Instead of clinging to things that don't bring security and goodness for me and others, I'm doing my best in 2020 to cling to Jesus. He might annoy and challenge me to no end, but he is my greatest hope and dearest friend.

“Where your money is, there your heart will be also.”

MONEY-TALK

“Put your money where your mouth is.”

BY PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON

Jesus talked a great deal about money and wealth of all kinds quite frequently. Perhaps his most well-known observation about money is that “where one’s money is, there one’s heart will be also” (Luke 12:34 and Matthew 6:21).

Jesus likely meant two things (at least) by this:

- First, that we can see what we value if we look closely at how we use our money. What we purchase, how we save, how we share – all of these say something about what we value and, therefore, about who we are.
- Second, Jesus is saying that wherever we put our money, our “heart” (i.e. our loyalty) follows. Where we invest, we become invested. This can be both a conscious and an unconscious emotional and spiritual commitment.

We say similar things about money in our culture; most commonly that we expect people to “put their money where their mouth is.”

This, too, means more than just the obvious. When we hear this phrase, we might think that we are mostly saying to someone that we want them to follow through.

“Talk is cheap” comes to mind as well along these lines. Talk is cheap, it seems, where money actually talks. And this is true – in certain ways. But this saying may also be an invitation to show up, to demonstrate what matters to a person.

All of which this means that we need to think carefully and seriously about how our money talks. If we don’t, we run the risk of no longer putting our money to work, but of working for our money.

CHURCH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

Last month in the Pastor’s Letter, I wrote the following:

Church has left the building,	And still we are worshipping together.
Church has left the building,	And still we are caring for one another.
Church has left the building,	And still we are learning.
Church has left the building,	And still we are serving those in need.
Church has left the building,	And still we are the church.

To borrow from the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 12:27), both as the “whole” body of Christ in this place (Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd) and individually members of it, we need to think carefully and act accordingly – faithfully – as stewards of our own finances, of the shared ministry of this congregation, and of the community in which we are called be. And where we commit ourselves, where we invest, will speak volumes.

During November, we have been talking seriously about our stewardship. We have been hearing in worship from members of this congregation as they talk about their personal stewardship, the stewardship of this congregation, and the ministries that define us. (These video messages are available on our website.)

In the days ahead we will be laying out a budget for the coming year that includes our monthly mortgage payments, priorities for how we will serve the members of this congregation in worship, service, learning, and more, as well as financial and service support for our ministry partners around the corner and around the world.

If, by the time you are reading this issue of *Together*, you have already pledged, thank you.

If you have not, yet, please do. When we are as sure as we can be of the talents that God has placed in our keeping for the coming year, then we are freed to act faithfully and boldly to live out our calling in this place and time.

From the Council

BY PRESIDENT BETH HELGEN

As we near the conclusion of the calendar year, the council has continued work to support members, staff, and ministries as we grapple with staying connected during the pandemic, give oversight and shape to administrative and financial matters, update our constitution and bylaws, and to identify new leadership and plan for a virtual annual meeting on January 31, 2021. The council has been supported in its work by the Finance Committee, the Governance Task Force, the Nominating Committee, the directors of the Foundation, the Ministry Board, staff, and by the wise counsel of former council members.

RESUMPTION OF WORSHIP AND ACTIVITIES ... NOT YET

At its October meeting, the council voted to continue the suspension of in-person worship and most programmatic activities through Advent and Christmas.



Some outreach programs that serve those with food and housing insecurity continue in person, but most other programs, pastoral care, and meetings are held virtually. While the building remains closed, several small groups had been meeting. However, they are now paused due to the Governor's most recent executive order.

Decisions about whether to resume in-person worship and activities are made in conjunction with recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control as well as from medical professionals in our congregation. Making these decisions has been agonizing for staff and council, but we are committed to the safety and well-being of all ages until conditions for resumption are more favorable. Thank you all for your continued patience.

MORTGAGE PAYMENTS IN 2021

The Finance Committee been working for most of the year to identify funds on our balance sheet to address the monthly

mortgage payments. At the annual meeting, we will present the council's long-term plan for the mortgage. For more information, I refer you to Kathy Bench's article, "The Financial Outlook," below.

REVISION OF CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Over the summer, the Governance Task Force completed updates and revisions to our congregation's governing documents, which were last updated in 2011. These documents require two congregational meetings for adoption – with final approval at the annual meeting. In late November, the documents will be available for review on our website, and we will hold two information sessions prior to congregational meetings.

If you are not able to access the documents on your computer or you cannot be a part of the information sessions because of technology issues, please be in touch with Laura Stein. More information will be forthcoming in the weekly email news from Good Shepherd.



The Financial Outlook

BY TREASURER KATHY BENCH

We've heard it so often that it's imbedded in our brains – 2020 is a year like no other. Indeed, it has been a year of challenges – for our world, our country, our community and here at Good Shepherd.

When we first closed the building in March, we were concerned that offerings would fall off dramatically. How would we be able to pay our staff, our benevolences, our utilities? How would we keep church going even though church had left the building?

Our first step was to revise our budget, eliminating those expenses that would not occur without our physical presence in the church building. We also had to eliminate some income items – outside groups would not be able to use our facilities while we were closed.

Then, when Congress approved the financial relief package, we applied for and received a payroll protection program loan covering two months of salaries and benefits, mortgage interest, and utilities. This enabled us to stretch our existing funds to cover future months' expenses. Our lender has approved forgiveness of this loan.

By far the biggest factor in keeping our church solvent, however, has been the faithfulness of our members. Many of

you stepped up with extra gifts or paid your pledges through the end of the year. Thank you!

Looking forward, the past couple of months have seen our offerings dip below budget. While we still have a healthy cash balance, it is less than last year at this time. And we have mortgage payments impacting our cash flow soon. Until now, those payments have been made from the Building Our Path fund – money raised during the last capital campaign. Those funds will run out at the end of this year, forcing us to find a new source of money to pay our mortgage, which is \$11,366 per month.

The finance committee has identified several funds on our balance sheet currently labeled "endowments" that are actually designated funds – monies set aside by previous leadership for various future purposes or that were received as memorial gifts without endowment restrictions. The mortgage task force recommended, and Council has approved, using these funds, less an amount set aside for unexpected expenses, to help meet our mortgage obligation. Those funds, currently invested in a conservative portfolio, should help pay the mortgage for about five years.

None of this means we can rest on our laurels! Our mortgage runs through 2038 – outlasting our reserves by almost 13 years. Future leadership will need to consider a possible capital campaign to pay down the mortgage. And, of course, we pray that our members will once again step forward to make additional gifts toward our budget, enabling us to stretch our reserves as far as possible.



Lily and Marlin Klabo participate in Zoom Sunday School.

Zoom Sunday School Reaches into Homes

BY KIAJA KLABO

After not being able to finish the Sunday School year this spring, our household applauds Tor and the church staff for their creativity to bring Sunday School to life over Zoom each Sunday. Our kids thoroughly enjoy being back together with their church friends and family. They are excited to participate each week and LOVE their own personal Sunday School box full of supplies for their crafts and activities.

As a longtime member of Good Shepherd, I am thrilled that our family can continue to feel connected to the church through this pandemic. Although we miss being with everyone in person, we are pleased to have technology allowing us to feel like we are together at this time.

Well, we have made it through our first few months of Zoom Sunday School. Every Sunday morning, come rain or shine, I have a Zoom meeting with the Sunday School families. Though it's not ideal, we are making the most of it by singing a song with Ralph Johnson, reading the story of the day together, playing a game related to the story, making a craft, and closing with the Lord's Prayer.

The kids are pros at Zoom meetings now, having spent hours and hours doing hybrid or distance learning for school from their homes.

I'm grateful to the families that sit down each Sunday for yet another hour in front of a screen. Attendance has been good.

We will be continuing our Zoom Sunday School for the foreseeable future. Plans are in the offing to have some type of special Christmas Sunday School/Advent online presentation. I'll keep everyone posted about that.

TOR JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AND PERFORMING ARTS

Remembering the Rally Day Drive-Thru

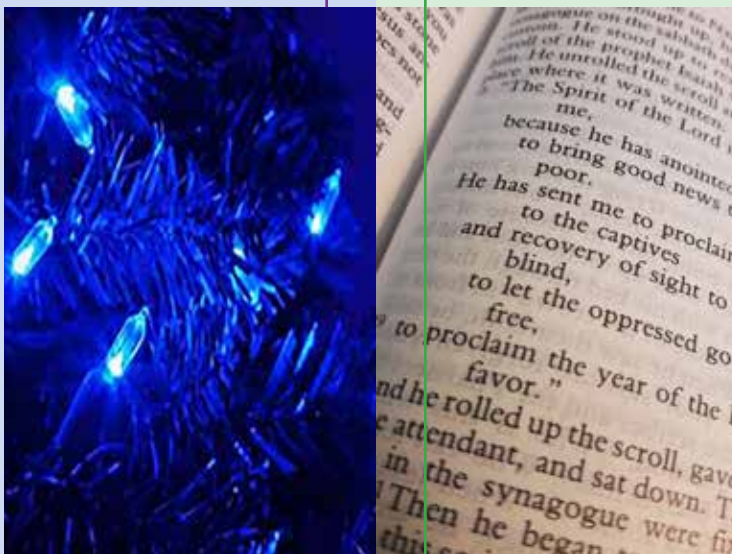


Advent Celebrates “A-Blazing Grace”

BY BRITA TARACKS

Join us for a drive-thru experience in the parking lot for “A-Blazing Grace” each Sunday in Advent from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. It will give us an opportunity to gather – from our cars – as we light large Advent trees wreaths.

It will also be a time, in lieu of the Christmas Giving Tree this year, to bring gifts for the people served by our ministry partners. All during Advent, we will collect winter coats and boots for all ages. Then, each week we will collect the following items:



NOVEMBER 29 – Socks (all ages) for Loaves & Fishes

DECEMBER 6 – Hats and mittens for our Families Moving Forward guests (all ages)

DECEMBER 13 – Hygiene supplies for Simpson Shelter (watch for a list soon)

DECEMBER 20 – Mittens and gloves for Camden Promise (all ages)

Join in the festivities each Sunday evening in Advent. See friends, share gifts with the people served by our partner ministries, and proclaim the Good News that Emmanuel has come and is coming through the lighting of the Advent wreath.

As we gather around the Advent wreaths in our homes, at worship, and in the parking lot, we will focus on these themes:

NOVEMBER 29	Luke 1:1-20	FAITH
DECEMBER 6	Luke 1:24-45	HOPE
DECEMBER 13	Luke 1:46-55	JOY
DECEMBER 20	Luke 1:57-80	LOVE

Women’s Saturday Online Bible Study

BY PASTOR ELISE POKEL

When I was an intern at Good Shepherd, from 2015 to 2016, I was privileged to attend the Women of Good Shepherd Bible Study, held at 7500 York. Pastor Debra Samuelson and I would often sit back and soak up the wisdom and joy present in that room full of ladies.

When the pandemic started in earnest, I wondered how we would capture the wisdom and witness of our women when we couldn’t be together. Well, a big portion of my heart

and the communion of saints just moved online!

Every second Saturday each month, women across generations and neighborhoods from Good Shepherd get together to study Scripture. Some of the participants come from that rock-solid group of long-time members from 7500 York. A few members are new and were excited to jump at the chance for female fellowship from the comfort of their couches. It’s been an immense blessing.

So far, we’ve looked at the theme of spaciousness and discovered women in the Bible who made space for themselves. Then we took a look at women that God made space for. We’ve studied the seven traditional prophetesses of the Old Testament and most recently, started reading the incredible book, “Listening for God.”

If you’re wondering how to fill up your spiritual bucket with a group of women who also know the importance of fun, look no farther. Join us! Just email me, and I will send you a Zoom invite.

Good Shepherd Online Choir Sings Together Apart, Prepares for Christmas

BY RALPH JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP AND MUSIC



This is the Good Shepherd Online Choir preparing some special music for this year's unusual Advent and Christmas seasons. Don't they look happy?

The choir rehearses on Thursday nights from 7:00 to 7:45 p.m. in the Zoom Choir Room and would love to have you join us! Just contact choir director Ralph Johnson (ralph.johnson@goodshepherdmpls.org) for more information and an official Zoom invitation.

Merry Christmas!

“Is choir singing important to us? Well, yeah! We met in a church choir in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1979. When Rhonda was studying at Hamline, we sang in the Oratorio Society. We sang together for years at Westwood, switching to director's choice – tenor or soprano – once our daughter was born. We're lifers, and virtual choir is a great way to keep singing during the pandemic!”

STEVE & RHONDA GROBE

Do You Hear What I Hear?

BY CATHY ROINAS

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

LUKE 2:13-14 NIV

As the chorus faded into the heavens, I imagine the shepherds didn't pause to consider what it took to organize a great company of angels and full orchestral accompaniment, including a tremendous organ. “A voice as big as the sea” is no small task – well, maybe it is when it is the heavenly host. That song engaged the shepherds as a community of faith to seek the Messiah and to glorify and sing praises to God.

If you have been worshipping with Good Shepherd's online services the last eight months, you have heard and seen a lot of talented individuals keeping us connected as a community of faith, engaged in worship together, and fed by the Holy Spirit moving throughout the services, from the opening prelude to the final postlude note.

Behind those wonderful preludes and postludes, as well as the hymn accompaniments and liturgical music, is our talented organist, Sharon Vicic, and her husband, Silvester.

Who knew when Sharon came on staff in November 2017 that we would also benefit from her multi-talented family? Sharon and Silvester have three children, Evan, Julia, and William, all accomplished musicians in their own right. We have enjoyed their musical talents on occasion, including Silvester who has joined the choir for special choral events.

Sharon has been a church musician for many years, and her thoughtfulness shines through in the pieces we hear, chosen to fit the themes and scripture passages which are planned months in advance. Typically Sharon would have plenty of time to practice at the church in order to capture a piece as faithfully as possible on the designated Sunday. COVID-19 changed all that.

A new COVID-19 vocabulary emerged – including lockdown, essential workers, shelter-in-place, socially distance, Zoom, and pivot. (Who else thinks of Ross from the TV show “Friends” when they hear the word, pivot?)

Good Shepherd did pivot for the safety and well-being of our congregation, community, and staff. As the pandemic ramped

up, our staff did as well, and they hit the ground running with an online service four days after we last gathered in person on Wednesday, March 11. The staff's ability to innovate and offer a variety of ways to engage and improve the online experience has been exciting.

Recorder in hand, Silvester checks microphone placement that captures the organ's rich tone and wide dynamics.





Sharon selects music for preludes and postludes, and works with Ralph Johnson to prepare accompaniments for hymns, liturgical music, and choir anthems which are part of our online worship.

A couple days before the official lockdown, Sharon met Ralph at church and recorded a month's worth of preludes and postludes through Easter Sunday, including the stunning Toccata from the Fifth Organ Symphony in E, Op 42 #1, by Charles-Marie Widor. Because Sharon planned ahead, she was able to put it all together, although she had barely practiced.

Silvester's music producing experience and skills were tapped into early on.

Silvester has been an adjunct professor of Digital Media Arts at Hamline University, where he serves as director of Conference and Events Management and Sundin Music Hall (one of the premier small concert halls in the Twin Cities). He stays busy with other free-lance public radio projects and volunteer projects, including recording and creating online services for Arlington Hills Lutheran Church, where Sharon worked prior to Good Shepherd.

Initially Sharon and Silvester would record at church on their own, using a portable digital recorder and later adding the church's camera. Once home in his basement studio, Silvester uses ProTools to apply some treatment to the audio files, syncs them together, and makes adjustments to beef up the thundering bass line so it can be heard properly, balancing and carving out any excess noise or digital artifacts, leaving us to hear the organ as it might sound in the sanctuary.



The computer screen tells Silvester the sounds he is capturing as he records.

Silvester does the same for any vocals for the hymn recordings. He can balance the separate voices in the stereo field with the organ and piano accompaniment so that everyone is in a different place, to give more depth of sound. The idea is not to make them stand out, but to blend. Adjustments can be made for speed and even pitch.

Even with all his years of experience, Silvester is always learning new things based on either a need or just out of curiosity, such as learning to video edit. Expectations are high these days for recorded content, so knowledge and practice allows us to continue to provide a meaningful worship experience.

Besides being immensely gifted with long experience, Sharon continues to plan ahead. Without distractions, she can be focused during her practice times and then when it is time to record, Silvester comes along, and they have a plan to follow, usually recording multiple weeks at one time.

Look for more video recordings in the weeks ahead. And, if you missed Sharon playing a duet with herself on John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever" piccolo solo on July 5, you can find it on the Good Shepherd website, along with all of the online services.

Together, Sharon and Silvester play an important role in bringing the best sounding music experience to our online worship, a spiritually affirming time each week for us and a vital outreach to our community and neighbors. And they do it with good humor and love for this place. We are blessed to have them at Good Shepherd.

First Sunday Food Shelf

Developing a New Approach to Collect Food for People in Need

BY CONNIE FUKUDA-CLARK

The onslaught of COVID-19 has changed life as we know it. Since 2005, Good Shepherd members donated food in the narthex on the first Sunday of every month (“First Sunday Food Shelf”), which benefited Community Emergency Service (CES). All that has changed with the closure of the church because of pandemic concerns. From March through August, food was not collected, because people were not able to worship in person.

Karen Walhof, Director of Outreach, explains: “When it became clear this prohibition on gathering wasn’t going to be a short-time issue, we decided to reinstitute the First Sunday

CES FOODSHELF NEEDS

FOOD:

- Olive & vegetable oil
- Flour, sugar
- Meat soups
- Chili with meat
- Canned chicken, tuna or salmon
- Canned fruit in light syrup or juice
- Rice
- Canned vegetables
- Diced tomatoes
- Coffee in small bags
- Whole grain cereals
- Old fashioned oats
- Instant oatmeal in packets
- Jelly and jam
- Peanut butter
- 100% fruit juice

HYGIENE:

- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Bar soap
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Deodorant
- Razors & shaving cream
- Feminine products
- Toilet paper
- Facial tissues
- Dish soap (small bottles)
- Laundry soap

Food Shelf beginning in September.” The new approach is to collect food in the church parking lot – still on the first Sunday of the month – from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. With this new approach, people now need to make a special trip to Good Shepherd to donate food, and many do.

For the past ten years, Russ Fystrom has volunteered to transport the donated food to the CES food pantry. He’s continued this role by also volunteering to be present in the church parking lot to accept food donations along with Karen. Good Shepherd members’ response to this new method of collecting food has been very positive. In fact, in September and October, Russ’ SUV was filled with food.

Yet from CES’s perspective, Executive Director Mike Lloyd explains, “The greatest challenge continues to be the uncertainty of how long this [COVID-19] will go on, and how deep the economic impact will be. If it goes on well into 2021 and unemployment continues to rise, demand will be a very great challenge to food resources and financial resources. Staff fatigue is another challenge if this continues because it takes

an emotional toll on our people.” He also notes, “Demand has been up over 25 percent overall and in some cases much more. We believe that will continue to increase in the months ahead.”

Although many of the same people donate food every month, Karen states: “I encourage Good Shepherd members to bring additional gifts of food the first Sunday in December. We celebrate the holidays by gathering around tables to give thanks and rejoice in Christ’s birth. So do families who struggle to provide enough food. Let’s be a blessing to them in this holiday time” She adds, “Come say ‘hi’ to Russ and me, and bring food that will make lives better for many families. We can fill both Russ’ SUV and mine to the brim, and share our abundance with our friends at CES. We’ll even make two trips!”

As Mike Lloyd of CES says: “God has been and is our provider. Despite huge challenges, God has seen us through this trial and has provided for our every need.” Mike goes on to express his gratitude on behalf of CES: “We are so thankful for the overwhelming donations of food we have received. These are trying times, but we have faith that through our many partners like Good Shepherd, we will continue to support those in need in one of the most economically depressed neighborhoods in Minnesota. God bless you.”



Top to bottom: Mary Ireland and Russ Fystrom, Shirley Brandt, Russ Fystrom and Allan Campbell

When Will Confirmation Be Held?

We'll Celebrate When We Can Be Together Again

BY MARK HALVORSON, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

As these months unfold, and we think about the things we used to do in person, and the things we can't do in person, and the things we miss doing together, there's always a handful of specific events to which I return: The massive amounts of Easter morning treats we bring in, standing shoulder to shoulder with graduating seniors as this congregation cheers on their next step in life, the rental vans and early morning parking lot send-offs are a few. The yearly confirmation worship service celebrating the lives of young Christians affirming their baptismal promises is certainly one of those events I deeply missed this time around, that's for sure.

Instead of pulling together a Zoom confirmation service or coming together, but limiting who we can invite or standing 20 feet apart outside, this year's group of ninth graders and their families have helped make the decision to hold off on an in-person celebration until we can be together as a congregation, whenever that may be.

The words of that service and the structure of moving kids and families from one part of the sanctuary to another, the prayers and owning of the Creed are all important although they're not tied solely to that day. The students and families as well as the rest of this wonderful congregation have the opportunity and the calling to recite the words of the Apostles' Creed as their own day in and day out, and own their faith.

It became clear though that we can't replicate the physical closeness of not just the families but also the congregation until we're all together. Gathering close enough to be able to lay hands on these young Christians – as parents and grandparents, as sponsors and friends, and as a congregation at large that has watched them and all of our children grow up, then support them and loved them – is important to everyone involved.

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

live among God's faithful people;

hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper;

proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed;

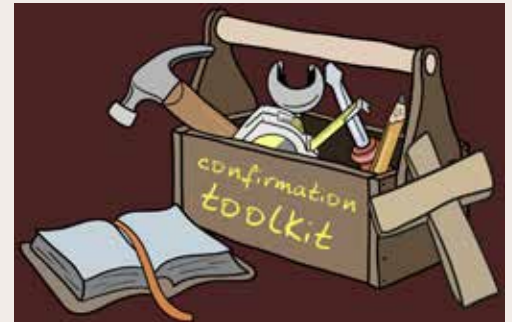
serve all people following the example of Jesus; and

strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

We do, and ask God to help and guide us.

The entire congregation saying the blessing together is beautiful chaos, something we want to make sure this group of students experiences, just like those who have come before.

So in the meantime, middle school ministry and that confirmation program continues through a weekly online tool kit for families to engage in faith conversation. High school ministry continues weekly as well.



It's a long list of things that we have not been able to do as we normally would, both within and outside of the church, and we know that there are things on the horizon that will look differently than they did last year. In spite of that, even in the uncertainty and in the plans that change, we can as a congregation stand firm and hold tight to the things we know do not change.

Focus on the Apostles' Creed, recite it out loud either to yourself or with your family, then really hear the words and know that we will say them together, in person again soon.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.



10 QUESTIONS WITH ROGER KRAFVE

BY ELLA KRAFVE

1 HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER AT GOOD SHEPHERD, AND WHY DID YOU JOIN?

We have been members for 20 years! My family joined because at the time, we weren't members of a church, Ingrid was pregnant, and we wanted to find a nice place to worship! When we arrived at Good Shepherd, Ingrid and I looked at each other and said, "This is the place!"

2 WHAT DO YOU DO AT GOOD SHEPHERD?

I like to say that I run the church building, meaning; I keep it clean, I keep things where they should be, I clean up after groups, set up for different groups, just kind of a guy who keeps the building and activities going!

3 AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHAT DO YOU DO TO KEEP THE CHURCH CLEAN AND SAFE?

What we are doing now is between every small group that comes in, we wipe down and disinfect every hard surface that could be touched, such as every door handle, railing, and other common

areas around Fellowship Hall every day at least once. It's the same in the areas where the groups are meeting – we wipe down and disinfect in between each group!

4 CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER?

Unusual, to say the least! I went to college as an art major and ended up being a graphic artist for 12 years! After that, I ran my own business and was in the beer and wine industry for another 18 years. I decided I wanted a change, and Ron Johnson here at Good Shepherd asked me, "Hey, do you want a part-time job here?" I said, "Oh, sure! Why not?" Five years later, I am the head custodian!

5 SINCE YOU SEE ALMOST EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS AT THE CHURCH, WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE ACTIVITIES THAT GO ON?

When they film service for Sundays! It happens a few times during the week at different parts of the day, and I'll try to participate in a fun and unique way! Everyone seems to have a good time. I also enjoy when we have the drive-thru events outside, such as the food drive or the Halloween event, because we get to see other church members that we don't get to see much right now!



Roger sanitizes Fellowship Hall after a meeting there. He does this after every small group meeting in the building – Good Shepherd's COVID-19 protocol.



A few years ago, Roger (left) performed with his wife Ingrid (right) and daughter Ella (center) in a Lenten Drama – a family affair!

6 WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM GOOD SHEPHERD?

One of them is telling Tor Johnson, “No, I will never act in one of the plays here at church; I don’t have any interest in being an actor,” and then having acted in every single one of his plays ever since! One of them even included a leading role in a Lenten Drama! Another favorite is playing guitar during Sunday School for the kids several years ago with Jay Rudi!

7 IN THESE TRYING TIMES, HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR FAITH?

I am at church five days a week. Staff is still here, so just being here and having that connection with everyone helps my faith. I also like being a part of the church services that are filmed, whether it’s playing the drums, or just background clapping, I am a part of it, so I feel sustained by that. I certainly do miss Sunday morning services, and I miss making the coffee and setting up for church.

8 OUTSIDE OF CHURCH, WHAT HOBBIES DO YOU ENJOY BY YOURSELF AND WITH YOUR FAMILY?

I play the drums, and I’m a big hockey guy, but I’m also an antique collector. I collect art, sports memorabilia, and other things like that. In terms of my family, we like to travel. Our last trip was going to Alcatraz in San Francisco. We have been to Iceland twice, Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon. many times. Hopefully we will get to do some more travelling again soon!

9 CHRISTMAS IS COMING SOON! WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS?

For Christmas, we decorate the house like crazy! We always go to a tree farm, drink hot apple cider, and get a live tree. Then we cover it in ornaments. We have Icelandic traditions as well, such as Icelandic foods, like *Hangikjöt* (HUN-kee-kyut), which is smoked lamb, and *Kleinur* (CLAY-ner), which are like small donuts. We also always put a calendar up where we mark the days that pass until Christmas. And, of course, we come to the Christmas Eve service at church to worship!

10 WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED TO DO AGAIN AS SOON AS THE PANDEMIC COMES TO AN END?

I am excited to have some routine again, some normalcy – I think that will help everybody. It’s hard to alter your daily life so much, even though we’re all getting by and getting used to a new “normal,” but I don’t think anyone really wants to be doing that. I can’t wait for stores, restaurants, and especially church to open up completely. And hockey games!

[IN OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH]

LIFE PASSAGES



BAPTISM

◀ JA’NIYAH ELIZABETH
MARIE COMBS
9.19.20

JAMES ROBERT MICHELS
10.3.20

DEATHS

JUDY MALTBY
4.22.1958 – 9.4.2020

ARDIS GRIMES
4.1.1926 – 9.19.2020

MARY BAICH
4.13.1943 – 10.9.2020

MARGARET TUCKER
7.25.1923 – 10.11.2020

Adult Education Explores Gospel of Luke, Books by Current Authors

BY PASTOR ELISE POKEL AND PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON

WEDNESDAY U

In the new year, at Wednesday U, we will be jumping into the Gospel of Luke. Luke is famous for its many healing stories and its inclusion of women's stories. Preparing for our future evenings together, I was thrilled to notice for the first time that Jesus speaks a LOT. He is constantly urging his disciples and anyone who will listen that they must remain alert to the presence of evil and injustice and persistent in their battling to banish them. I had no idea how gripping this Gospel could be! The calm introduction is misleading. The Jesus in the Gospel of Luke commands our attention and demands that we hear that there is a better way than the one we try to make for ourselves.

ADVENT - The Song of Mary

DECEMBER 2 Magnify and Rejoice (Luke 1:46-48)

DECEMBER 9 Blessed (Luke 1:48b-50)

DECEMBER 16 Strength Scatterer (Luke 1:51)

DECEMBER 23 *No Wednesday U*

DECEMBER 30 *No Wednesday U*

AFTER NEW YEAR'S DAY - Reading Between the Lines: Strange Stories of Luke

JANUARY 6 The Genealogy of Jesus (Luke 2:23-37)

JANUARY 13 Pesky Old Devil (Luke 4:1-13)

JANUARY 20 Rebuking Demons and Fevers (Luke 4:31-44)

JANUARY 27 Feasting and Fasting (Luke 5:27-39)

FEBRUARY 3 Blessings and Woes, Strong Foundations (Luke 6:17-26; 6:46-49)

FEBRUARY 10 A Bevy of Faithful Women (Luke 7:36-8:3)

FEBRUARY 17 *No Wednesday U*

FEBRUARY 24 Only the Little Ones Will See (Luke 10:1-24)

MARCH 3 Be On Your Guard! Watch Out! (Luke 12:1-21)

MARCH 10 The Rigors of Servanthood (Luke 16:1-14; 17:1-10)

MARCH 17 Persistence & Humility (Luke 18:1-17)

MARCH 24 What Child is This?/Parables for the End (Luke 19:11-26; 20:9-19, 41-44)

MARCH 31 *No Wednesday U*

LIFELINES

Starting on November 29, Lifelines will be taking a slightly different tack. Over the next two months we will be reading two short books that can help us think spiritually and theologically about the times we are living in.

In Advent, we will be reading *Virus as a Summons to Faith: Biblical Reflections in a Time of Loss, Grief, and Anxiety* by Walter Bruggemann. Starting in the new year we will turn to *God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and Its Aftermath* by N.T. Wright.

Each book is brief (about 70 pages), accessible, and full of helpful grist for conversation around what lives of faith look like in times such as these.

Reading will be done ahead of time, and Pastor Jacobson will teach briefly from the assigned material before conversation and questions are shared. Books will be provided. The schedule is as follows:

Virus As a Summons to Faith: Biblical Reflections in a Time of Loss, Grief, and Anxiety by Walter Bruggemann

NOVEMBER 29 Chapter 1, "Reaping the Whirlwind"

DECEMBER 6 Chapters 2-3, "Pestilence . . . Mercy? Who Knew?" and "Until the Dancing Begins Again"

DECEMBER 13 Chapters 4-5, "Praying Amid the Virus" and "The 'Turn' From Self to God"

DECEMBER 20 Chapters 6-7, "God's New Thing" and "The Matrix of Groan"

God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and Its Aftermath by N.T. Wright

JANUARY 10 Chapters 1-2, "Where Do We Start?" and "Reading the Old Testament"

JANUARY 17 Chapter 3, "Jesus and the Gospel"

JANUARY 24 Chapter 4, "Reading the New Testament"

JANUARY 31 Chapter 5, "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Advent and Christmas Worship Themes

BY PASTOR KARL N. JACOBSON

As with many other parts of our worship life together, this Advent and Christmas will be a bit different. Still, we are waiting for the birth of the promised one, the One Who Is to Come to set us free and give us life.

Join us for worship as we anticipate the birth of the Christ, the coming of a New Year, and promise that in all things, God is working good for us (Romans 8:28).

Our Advent worship series, outlined by Pastoral Intern Dustin Haider, focuses on the early passages of the Gospel of Luke. We will be joined by our next guest preacher on December 6, Bishop Anne Svenunngsen of the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA, as we continue our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women.

NOVEMBER 29

Telling 1 – **Promise of Life** (Luke 1:1-20 (5-17))

This story connects to the larger story of God's way of interacting with the world – out of barrenness comes life! These promises are not always easy to accept or embrace, but we are caught up in them nonetheless. God promises that we will turn to God, that God's kingdom draws near. Let us prepare for the Good News!

DECEMBER 6

Telling 2 – **Promise of Salvation** (Luke 1:24-45 (26-45))

This is an impossible story that shows us nothing is impossible with God. Joy, doubt, fear, and trust are woven into the fabric of our faith. We anticipate the fulfillment of salvation even as we already experience it. We join together as a community to experience our God and wonder at God's marvelous work.

DECEMBER 13

Telling 3 – **Song of Praise** (Luke 1:46-55)

Rejoice in the God of mercy! Our God showers us in grace and peace as God protects us from those who threaten us. God's promises are fulfilled today as they have been fulfilled throughout history and as they will continue to be fulfilled in the future. Our God is worthy of praise because through God the hungry are fed, the weak are lifted up, and we are filled with mercy. May our prayers ever be like Mary's song.

DECEMBER 20

Telling 4 – **Promise Fulfilled** (Luke 1:57-80)

God fulfills God's promises. Prepare the way! The Kingdom of God is at hand. As we experience the foretaste of God's promise to us, we cannot help but share the Good News of God's love with those around us. Fear and wonderment continue to accompany us as we tell the Good News and prepare the way of the Lord!

CHRISTMAS EVE – DECEMBER 24

The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-14 [15-20])

We will have one service on Christmas Eve, with our children telling the story of Jesus' birth, a special Kids' Time, a message about new life and newness of life, and, of course, worship that ends in candlelight and "Silent Night."

CHRISTMAS DAY – DECEMBER 25

Shepherds Visit the Newborn Savior (Luke 2:8-20)

Christmas Day will be a service of readings and carols, and a message from Pastoral Intern Dustin Haider.



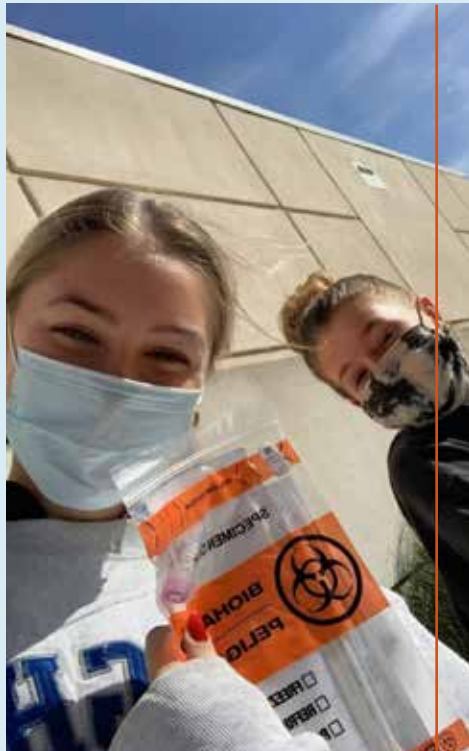
The Challenges with COVID-10 at College

BY MIA OPSAHL

We all know the world has been functioning a little differently lately, and college campuses are no exception. Between daily screenings and random selection testing, college campuses are doing everything they can to keep students on campus this semester. I attend Creighton University, and my freshman year has been very altered, but I couldn't be more happy to be here.

There are many unusual rules that allow us to stay on campus, such as not having the ability to enter any dorm hall other than your own, forcing you to make lots of friends who live in the same residence hall as you. We have to wear masks at all times on campus – yes, even outside. Most of my classes are in person, which is a blessing, as my friends at other schools are mostly online.

Every class has an online option in the case you get quarantined. I would know – I am writing this article from the Doubletree Hotel right off campus because my suitemate was directly exposed a couple days ago. Being quarantined feels like a sci-fi movie scene as you receive “the call” and are given about 45 minutes to pack up any belongings you may want, and then are shipped off to a hotel room by yourself, where you have no human contact for two weeks. As miserable as this sounds, trust me, it's worse than you think. I remember calling my parents and FaceTiming friends 20 minutes into my stay because I was already lonely and bored, thinking about how I had 20,140 min-



Ava (my roommate) and I getting COVID-tested after we were exposed.

utes to go. The only upside to being stuck in here is that I can sleep as much as I want, because I have absolutely nothing to do, so at least my sleep schedule is thanking me.

As difficult as it is, this allows our campus to stay open, and I'd quarantine any day if it means I can stay on campus – no offense, Mom and Dad. I feel fortunate as Creighton is doing an amazing job of keeping classes in person as much as possible and keeping students safe. My friends at state schools are having very different experiences than I am.



My friends and I go for a walk off-campus.

If you know anything about Creighton you probably know they typically have an amazing basketball team, so of course everyone wants to know what will happen when basketball season rolls around. As of now, I have honestly no idea how Creighton is going to handle sporting events, but ironically we will be at home for a majority of the season anyways. Creighton, along with most other colleges, has shortened their fall and spring semesters and extended winter break as a result. This way there will be less back-and-forth between home and campus, and they can keep everything more controlled when it comes to COVID exposure. This means I will be home from Thanksgiving to the very end of January, giving me a break almost as long as summer. I can't even say how excited I am to have the entire holiday season at home totally school and stress free.

I think I can speak for almost all college freshmen by saying that this semester has brought a lot of challenges in addition to the challenges that come with starting a new life at a new school where you don't know anyone. It can be hard to adjust to a totally new way of life, and COVID-19 certainly does not make it any easier. I have been lucky enough to meet some amazing people and my best friends very early on in the semester. However, I know a lot of students are struggling with meeting people. espe-

cially at schools where most, if not all, classes are online. Within my friend group, we are trying to reach out and meet some new people to hang out with, but it is really difficult even when most of our classes are in person. In the time and place we are in now, it is hard to imagine a normal freshman experience as ours has been so altered, but there will be a day where we can walk around campus without masks, and visit friends rooms with the ability to enter any building on campus.

I think as an age group, we are stronger as a result of these unusual circumstances. Even though it is unfortunate our freshman year of college is so weird, we will all come out stronger from it, and life will return to normal even though this feels like the new normal. I truly believe every single college freshman will come home a better person as a result of this isolation and odd freshman year because we have all learned so much about ourselves from it. As alone as we may sometimes feel, we are all in this together and will remember our unique freshman year for the rest of our lives.

Experiences have run the gamut for our college and university students.

“ This semester has been absolutely crazy. Being home has been a struggle at times, but it has brought me closer to my family, both by being quarantined and at heart. I hope that all us college kids can go back safely to our second homes soon.”

MARA HALVORSON

“ Some of college has been stressful. A shortened semester with no breaks means nonstop studying and work. COVID has definitely altered our first year experience, especially in establishing social circles. However, a lot of it has been awesome. I have developed relationships with professors and a passion for many of my classes. My friends are great, and I still get to play Frisbee!

WILL BRANDT

“ College has been weird this year - not being able to see many of my friends even though we are all here on campus together. Lots of FaceTiming has been happening because of it, but I'm really looking forward to being able to spend time in person with everyone I love once all of this is over!

EMILY KRATZ

Performing Arts Offers Online Musical Theater Cabaret & Children's Play

BY TOR JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AND PERFORMING ARTS

The coronavirus has really left an indelible mark on our Performing Arts programming. We are unable to do my favorite activity of the year; the Holiday Musical. I had big plans. We were going to do Scrooge, which was the first show we did ten years ago. Ralph Johnson was going to be Scrooge. It was going to be a lot of fun, with some great music and a timeless Christmas message.



Since the show must go on, we have opted to do an Online Musical Theater Cabaret

instead. We will be posting our final product the week of December 14 on the Good Shepherd website.



We have decided to add an online children's play to the holiday season. On the day after Thanksgiving, November 27, we will be posting the recording of our Zoom performance

of "An Enchanted Bookshop Christmas." It's a fun, feel-good story about storybook characters coming to life to help out a bookshop owner and her sister find happiness during the Christmas season. Before you settle down to watch "It's a Wonderful Life" and the myriad Hallmark Channel holiday shows, go to our website and check out "An Enchanted Bookshop Christmas."

Performing Arts offerings in the new year are still up in the air. We'll have to wait and see where we are with COVID-19 restrictions. We plan to do a Lenten drama. Stay tuned! We will share more information as we have it.

SCRIPTURE STORY

THE JUDGES: Larger Than Life

BY PASTORAL INTERN DUSTIN HAIDER

When I was younger, I really enjoyed the stories found in the book of Judges. The people of God would disobey God (surprise, surprise), bad things would happen to them, then they would cry out to God. Next comes the part that I really liked: God would call people to larger-than-life actions to save the people of God in the nick of time. To me, they read like comic books. Tent pegs take down the evil Canaanites. A bad king is so overweight that, when stabbed, “the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade” (3:22). And who could forget Samson? The jawbone of a donkey, the drama of cutting his hair, and his final vengeance at the end. The book of Judges has everything.

Maybe it is because I am older, but now when I read the book of Judges, I see sadness. It is clear to me now that this book is a commentary on the human condition. Violence simply leads to more violence. The book of Judges tells of the Israelites fighting one another until the tribe of Benjamin is on the verge of extinction. The tribe’s “salvation” comes through Benjaminite men abducting women at Shiloh and making them their wives – a dark salvation for a dark time in history.

Yet even in the midst of the darkness, we experience the gospel in two ways. The first, is that when we are in trouble and we call out to God, God hears us and God responds. Time and again the Israelites would worship other gods. In their distress, they would cry out and God would deliver them. We can take comfort in that hope. God may not respond in the way that we like or expect, but nonetheless, God is there with God’s people. God promises to be with us. And that promise was made unequivocally real in Jesus; the moment when God donned flesh and walked among us.

The second way we experience the gospel is, for me at least, more prolific – the gospel is drawn out of us in response to what we are witnessing. We read these awful accounts of death and destruction and instead of responding with despair, the gospel flows out of us as a response of, “No. We must stop this from happening.”

If Judges teaches us anything, it is that the human condition has remained relatively the same over thousands of years. So take heart, we are not called to fix the massive amounts of brokenness that come with being human. But we are called to respond to the brokenness. We are called to speak the love of Jesus into the bro-



Jael and Sisera
Ottavio Vannini,
early 1640s
See Judges 4:1-24



Samson and the Lion
Nicholas of Verdun,
1181
Judges 13:24 – 16:31



Gideon Overcoming the Midianites
Workshop of Peter Paul Rubens,
c. 1625-1630
Judges 6:1 – 8:35

kenness; to offer hope to the hopeless and comfort to those in pain. We are called to remind each other that God hears us and loves us. May our response ever be one of compassion and love for those who are hurting. May we ever strive – through the love of Christ – to make our world more just and a less violent place to live. That is the larger-than-life action that we are called to today.

Our Brothers and Sisters in Ethiopia Struggle with Political Conflict, COVID-19, Hunger

BY KAREN WALHOF, DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH MINISTRY

CIVIL VIOLENCE

You might imagine that COVID-19 is the most fearsome element of Ethiopian life right now – and it is not inconsequential. But armed struggles between ethnic groups and the government have caused some to predict that civil war is imminent.

Most recently, Ethiopia's prime minister deployed the military to the northern Tigray region, escalating long-simmering tensions with one of the country's most powerful ethnic groups. And the north isn't the only place where conflict rules. The government military has been stationed in the west to oppose insurgent activity among the Oromo people, the largest ethnic group in the country. The territory around Aira, where our partners in ministry live, is occupied by government military forces. Although Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had promised a government which would work for the betterment of all ethnic groups, he has struggled with long-suppressed demands from Ethiopia's patchwork of ethnic groups, many of whom have called for greater autonomy from the central government. Those tensions are becoming increasingly violent, and the prime minister is responding in kind.

COVID-19

The country is reopening all primary and secondary schools this fall. Onesimus Nesib Seminary shut down in March, but opened to students in September, with classes now being held on site, in person.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus instructed its congregations to stop in-person worship last spring, at the same time we stopped worshipping together in our building. Lalo Aira Congregation has now just started meeting in smaller gatherings.

Meanwhile, at Nuestro Salvador . . .

Our brothers and sisters in Uruguay, at Nuestro Salvador, are living out their faith in the midst of COVID-19 restrictions, much like we are. Pastor Octavio Burgoa writes: "Even though the number of COVID cases in Montevideo and Rivera is increasing, we still meet twice a month for service. In addition, we send every Sunday a video with the lesson and a short sermon to anyone who wants to receive it."

With a grant from the Good Shepherd Foundation, they have completed the essential repair of the student's shelter roof.

Aira Hospital was designated by the government as an evaluation site for those who have COVID-19 symptoms. In addition, because media is not available to many in the west, a great number of people had no idea about the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, Aira Hospital decided to use their clinics to instruct people in the west about the reality of COVID-19 and how to avoid the contagion. The government provided no financial support to purchase personal protection equipment for hospital staff or training resources. The Good Shepherd Foundation provided a grant of \$10,000 to Aira Hospital for those purposes. Mergersa Argaw, the hospital administrator, recently wrote:

Our hospital used the money donated to us for the purchase of PPE [personal protection equipment], awareness creation in coronavirus prevention, treatment and management of COVID-19 and related diseases, and care of poor and disabled patients. Aira Hospital is very much grateful.

HUNGER

Because of the violence in the west, Aira farmers had not been able to be in their fields last year, so they have not had crops to harvest this year – which means no food for their families and no money to support their pastors. It is a difficult time as families scramble to find food and pastors' families often go hungry. Conflict throughout the country makes food relief impossible. In the midst of it all, President Melkamu of the BirbirDilla Synod in Aira writes:

We are saying prayers for peace and health. The number of patients from COVID-19 is still increasing. The condition of our church is not good. The youth are losing hope. I am advising them to wait on God – waiting which can also be translated as hoping, waiting with expectation. Waiting goes against what we naturally and culturally do. It is often difficult because we equate it with inactivity. But during these periods of waiting, God is often refueling and refining us for what he has in store.

Though they face hunger and violence we cannot imagine, as well as the threat of increasing conflict within their country, they live in expectation and hope, in certain faith that God is working in and through them. Certainly that is the Advent promise that inspires and comforts us all as we wait for Emmanuel, God with us.

Please pray for our family in Ethiopia.



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Minneapolis, MN 55410

CAMDEN PROMISE



Things are changing at Camden Promise. Ground has been broken for a new food shelf, the Gethsemane Farmers Market, in the parking lot of Gethsemane Lutheran Church – a “unique food distribution site which will provide tens of thousands of pounds of food to the Camden community on a daily basis.”

We continue to work each first and third Saturday, assembling boxes of food. Want to join us?

