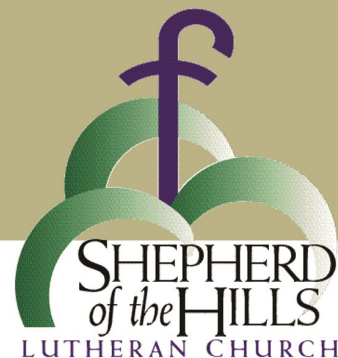


Shepherd's Voice



April 2022

"For the Birds"

By Pastor Scott Searl

Sitting on the porch of my mom's new apartment, we watched and listened to all the black capped chickadees and dark eyed juncos sing their spring songs. Perched on the very top of a huge oak tree they seemed to chase each other, hopping and swooping from branch to branch. It was like watching trapeze artists perform without a rope and without a net! Briefly, I snuck inside to grab the binoculars hanging from the porch doorknob to get a closer look. Upon further zoomed in inspection the tree was also filled with starlings and a few house finches. With the early spring warmth of a late March sun we just sat and listened to their busy song and watched their happy noisy dancing. The ice was melting, the sun was shining, and it felt as if summer would be right around the corner. I took a number of mental photos of the beauty of the day.

For some unknown reason during the pandemic, I set up a bird feeder by my pandemic office window. I'd never really paid any attention to the birds before, but something about being lonely must have triggered a need to at least see some fine feathered friends when I was stuck at home alone. An instinctual way to have some relationships while we were all hiding away from each other. I found great joy in watching to see who might come and visit each day. I learned a few new birds like the northern flicker and the two types of little woodpeckers, downy and hairy! Now as the birds begin to return I've started to notice them again. I hear their sounds and I find a great comfort in listening.

I've also been thinking that for birds that fly south or to other warm places for the winter, they are once again returning to their summer homes. One by one they have begun to make their way back to MN. I see and hear a few more returning each week. A robin here another sparrow there. Not unlike the way we have slowly been making our way back to church. A few more on Wednesday lent services appear, a few more on Sunday mornings. Slowly we are making our way back to our church home after a long pandemic winter of isolation. Hopefully, like the birds, more and more will return and the summer sun will hopefully yield fewer covid cases and a return to more normal days.

I am grateful for the birds, and I am grateful for each of you. As people return to worship, I have so appreciated seeing everyone's face again. It's like seeing long lost friends for the first time in years! You might be able to smile with your eyes with a mask on, but seeing someone's smile light up their face cannot be beaten. I've been grateful to hear the choir

Pastor's Message continued on page 3

**Shepherd of the Hills
Lutheran Church
500 Blake Road South
Edina, MN 55343
(952) 935-3457**

Staff:

Pastors	Scott Searl, Sherri Otto
Assistant/Visitation Pastor	Fred Jensen
Music Director	Emily Koski
Intern Pastor	Anne Schaefer
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

Church Council Members / Officers:

President	Adam Driscoll
Vice President	Don Wothe
Treasurer	Steve Hanneman
Financial Secretary	Ryan Erickson
Secretary	Christa Meland
Serve	Nate Lichty
Worship & Music	Julia Buteyn
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learn	Stephanie Nordin
Communications	Open
Care	Dave Cousins
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Chris Polston

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

Worship Times	1
Directions	2
Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Scott Searl	12
Pastor Sherri Otto	13
Intern Pastor Anne Schaefer	14
Blair Prax	15
Emergency Message Mailbox	24
Kaye Wothe	25

Shepherd Online!

Pr. Scott Searl	scott@sothchurch.com
Pr. Sherri Otto	sherri.otto@sothchurch.com
Intern Pr. Anne Schaefer	anne.schaefer@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Kaye Wothe	kaye.wothe@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Wednesdays in Lent - April 6 at 6:30pm

Our Lenten service includes new liturgy. It is a blend of blessing, poetry and biblical stories supported by music written for meditation and reflection. The liturgy project was funded by Augsburg University and the Riverside

Innovation Hub as part of our young adult ministry initiative.

Lenten Soup Supper— Wednesday, April 6 at 5:00 – 6:15 pm

Join us for an attempt to have a “return to normal” event on our last night of Lenten worship before Holy Week.

Holy Week

Maundy Thursday on April 14th at 6:30pm
Good Friday worship at 6:30pm on April 15th.

Maundy Thursday

Come gather around the table with our 20 students as they participate in their First Communion! We will celebrate the Eucharist with them for the first time as we honor that very first Last Supper. Thanks be to God!

Holy Week for Children

April 15th at 4:30pm

We invite children and their families to join Pastor Sherri and Pastor Anne as we experience interactive ways to help children understand the events of Holy Week between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Please join us for this important time together. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri or Pastor Anne.

Easter celebration on Sunday April 17th at 9:30am.

We look forward to journeying together with you in Lent. We look forward to a new liturgical experience on Wednesdays in Lent and finally the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday!



PRESIDENT'S POST

By Adam Driscoll, Council President

As you know, our family of Shepherd of the Hills finds itself at a moment of transition. In the months to come, we will take time to celebrate Pastor Scott, and soon we will find ourselves with a new pastor. It is also quite possible that we will take on an interim pastor, to assure that we can

give the process of finding and calling a new pastor the diligence that it deserves.

During this time, we need you. A church is not a building, but a community, or family who come together to love and serve the Lord, and this is a great time for us to take on a new chapter of community ownership, as we guide this family as lay leaders. We have a number of volunteer roles to fill, including numerous positions on the congregational council, plus important committee work including the pastoral call committee and others. In our upcoming annual congregational meeting, we'll be voting to elect members to these positions. Congregational Council positions that we need to fill include Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Communications Lead, Worship Lead, Care Lead, and Evaluation Lead. I ask that you consider if you are called to serve Shepherd, as a way to engage with your faith, and strengthen this organization that has given so much to us. Please reach out to me at driscolla@gmail.com or 701-426-6132 if you're considering serving or would like to learn more. Thank you for all that you do for Shepherd.

ANNUAL MEETING

**Sunday, April 24 at 10:30 am
following 9:30 am worship**

We hope you will make plans to join us. Please come to help vote for your new council and possible call committee members.

***Pastor's Message continued from
page 1***

sing, the organ played, the congregation responding with prayer, and have kids come up for kids' time. And like birds at the feeder, it's been wonderful to celebrate communion with you all once again. After all this time to share even this small meal of God's love with you is as nourishing as a sunflower seed to a house finch!

So, even as my time as your pastor begins to come to a close, I am reminded that this pandemic really was for the birds! And nothing will ever be quite as good as being together in person. As I sit on my little perch in the front of the church, I will be taking photos of you the beauty of all of you for my memory. The birds are returning, the people are returning, and the smell of summer sunshine is around the corner. I am grateful. Thanks be to God
~ Pastor Scott



MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT EDUCATION

Self-Care for the Caregiver

Monthly sessions: offered the last Thursday of each month

A virtual monthly drop in group, Care/Support for the Caregiver. Each of these groups would provide community, support and an education topic. There will be a MHC Navigator, a therapist and our educator (Drew Brooks) at the meeting each month. Many of you are searching for help for a loved one, but you also need support too. MHC has resources, tools and a virtual time to share. This is another source of support for a growing population of caregivers.

To register, go to <https://www.mhconnect.org/events>

**MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT
Mental Health Resources and
Education can be found on their
webpage:**

**[http://www.mhconnect.org/
events](http://www.mhconnect.org/events)**



SAVE THE DATE

Stories of Hope: Apart but Never Alone

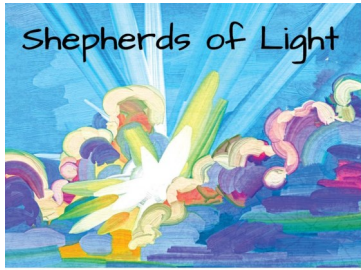
Fundraiser for Mental Health Connect

May 12, 2022 at 8:30 am

Everyone knows someone who's been living with mental illness. You, your child, a friend, or co-worker?

By supporting Mental Health Connect, you're helping to give people hope, reduce stigma, provide resources to increase quality of life and improve access to services for all people.

Attend Mental Health Connects Annual Breakfast "Apart But Never Alone" Join virtually on May 12th at 8:30am to hear how this happens.



SHEPHERDS OF LIGHT

Children's Easter Choir

Easter Morning – April 17th at 9:30 service
Children ages 3 to 8th grade are invited to participate in the Children's Easter Choir.
Practice will be after church on Sunday

mornings: March 27th, April 3rd and April 10th. Any questions, contact Emily Koski or Pastor Sherri

Holy Week for Children

April 15th at 4:30pm

We invite children and their families to join Pastor Sherri and Pastor Anne as we experience interactive ways to help children understand the events of Holy Week between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Please join us for this important time together. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri or Pastor Anne.

Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Morning – April 17th, following worship

Maundy Thursday

Come gather around the table with our 20 students as they participate in their First Communion! We will celebrate the Eucharist with them for the first time as we honor that very first Last Supper. Thanks be to God!

Easter Basket Creation

Palm Sunday, April 10, 10:30am

Students in grades 6-12 are invited to help create Easter Baskets for some of our members! Sue Bohnsack will meet with us immediately after the worship service on April 10 to teach us how to do it. No experience necessary! Parents are welcome to help as well.

VBS Registrations, Coming SOON!!

Mark your calendars! Food Truck Party, On A Roll With God!

Registrations will be coming out after Easter (More information to come!)

Dates for VBS: June 13th to June 16th.

We will be looking for volunteers too!! Any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri or Pastor Anne.

SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all. Please feel free to join us. We have 2-3 copies of each book. All books will be available all year if you want to read ahead. Please read the book and return ASAP so another person can borrow the book for reading also. We try to get 2-3 readers to be able to read one copy.

Meetings will be on Zoom. For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net

Book Club Schedules

Sun., May 1 at 7:00 pm
"One Two Three" by Laurie Frankel

Sun., June 12 at 7:00 pm
"The House in the Cerulean Sea"
by TJ Klune

Sun., July 17 at 7:00 pm
TBD by readers

WEDNESDAY AM BIBLE STUDY

Come for Bible study, coffee, and fellowship! The Wednesday morning group meets at 9:30 am for coffee, treats and fellowship before they begin a Bible study. The Bible study begins at 10:00 am and is based on the following Sunday's sermon text. All are welcome.



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

By Pastor Scott Searl

If you're like me, the past two years of covid have been challenging. As we begin to emerge from what kind of feels like two years of winter hibernation, stress and even trauma, I've needed some help. It's great to be together with people, it's also difficult to think of all the things we've missed. It's been great to be out at restaurants and visits with family and friends, it's also been difficult to reflect on ways in which we haven't been able to be together. It feels good to be back into daily life and it is also stressful and challenging in some ways reflecting on what's lost. It feels a bit like we've all experienced some collective trauma.

You won't be surprised to hear that Kaye provided some help! I've been listening to a number of short "podcast" like sessions on an app called Ritual. I'm sure you can find it on your mobile device. There are sessions that are between 10-20 minutes long on self-kindness, meditation, resilience, overcoming trauma, and others. I've been spending a few moments each night before going to bed listening to a session as a way to wind down, meditate and give myself a little evening ritual to help me sleep. One of the most important has been a session on self-kindness.

I've always known it was important to treat each other with kindness. I hope I've done my best to treat folks with kindness, but I'm sure I've failed from time to time. I've never thought about treating myself with kindness. I've never thought about speaking kind words to myself in my stress and struggle. But I've tried it lately. In so doing I've discovered that I have plenty of negative tapes running in my head that say, "do better, work harder, that wasn't done very well, keep going, suck it up..." I'm sure you have these and others in your head too. I was surprised when I started saying kind things to myself how often I had said mean things to myself in my head.

A wise counselor once gave me some advice that's come back as I've been offering myself some kindness... She said, "behold God, beholding you, smiling." Read it a couple times... In other-words, offer yourself the kindness, forgiveness, love and compassion that you likely give to others. See yourself from the point of view of a loving God who has died and risen again to remind you how precious, beautiful and beloved that you are. Luther once said the hardest thing about faith is believing that God's love is for you! In part it's why we say, "This is the body of Christ given for YOU!" God is for you. Loves you... in all your messed up mess. Behold God, beholding you, smiling.

Anyway... just a thought for the day and for the moment. Be kind. Be kind to yourself. Download the Ritual app and give it a try. Or just speak kindly with yourself!



WELCOME TO CAROLYN DIAMOND

Having been a church musician since high school, Carolyn Diamond has served several congregations as Director of Music/ Organist, and most recently as Staff Musician at Central Lutheran Church (2001-2016) and Wayzata Community Church (2016-2021). While living in NYC for a dozen years, she also served

congregations in the NY/CT area.

Active as both pianist and pipe organist, she performs regularly on concert series and in salon settings. As a recitalist, she has been praised for her buoyant style and interpretive vigor, and has the reputation of delivering passionate and colorful performances. Selections from her CD of piano music, SCANDINAVIAN SUITE, have been played on Minnesota Public Radio/ American Public Media.

Diamond has been a frequent performer at the TCU/Van Cliburn Piano Institute in Texas where she was a winner of their Piano Concerto Competition, performing with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

Additionally, she has formed a salon series called MUSE.... Music Uniting Spirits Everywhere, intended to promote music of multi styles and genres to spread good will and human connection.

She is active as a performing member of the American Guild of Organists, Friday Club, and is an Artist Performer and Executive Board Member of Thursday Musical. And while in NY, she worked with the American Symphony Orchestra and was a performer with the National Arts Club.

She and her husband, Alan, have three children, four grandchildren, and live happily in Chanhassen with their cat, Higgins!

And she is delighted to join the team at SOTH!



THANK YOU!!!

A huge thank you to the funeral team for their hospitality for the families and friends in attendance. Thank you for bringing forth the welcoming spirit of SOTH that begins in our mission statement and that we are called to!

Staff Reflection

At Every Turn continued

#2. I have begun a project for my degree that looks in the rear-view mirror of SOTH's ministry as well as the neighborhoods and communities around the building. This project also teaches to sit in the stillness and to pay attention to what God is up to in and around our community. I look forward to sharing with you what I learn and hear during this research time.

God is at work in and through the hands and feet of Shepherd of the Hills! While the leadership is undergoing some transition with Pastor Scott leaving, there is still a lot of joy and life happening in our community. I'm thankful to partner with Pastor Sherri, Adam Driscoll (Council President), Kaye and Shawn who are holding onto great joy and motivation.

We are all in good hands.

Grace and peace!
Pastor Anne



AT EVERY TURN: Insights from the Intern

By Intern Pastor Anne Schaefer

Welcome to my little corner of the world. As an intern pastor, I am learning a great deal about what it means to be called to ministry. Each month, I will use this newsletter space to reflect on the wisdom that has come my way. I will likely learn a great deal about God, the Church, this congregation, faith, myself and grace. Thanks for being part of my journey!

Lesson #1. One of the things I have learned in seminary that was so small, yet has had a great impact on me is the concept of Holy Saturday being a sacred time to sit in the dark with God. Holy Saturday is the day in between Good Friday when Jesus Died, and Easter Sunday when Jesus was raised from the dead. **The day that God was silent.** The day that Jesus went to hell like we confess in the Apostles Creed. The day that the world was more broken than ever before or has been since.

Jesus defeated hell at sunrise on Easter, but before then, **he experienced death's full sting on that silent Saturday.** Maybe Jesus' death wouldn't have been so bad if God raised him within minutes of dying. Maybe Jesus' resurrection would not have shown God's full glory if it didn't follow a full day of silent darkness. In one of my classes, we read theologian Jurgen Moltmann who said that Jesus, who was God in the human form, died a full human death to further God's solidarity with humans. Jesus experienced our hell so that we would never have to.

Real death and real problems exist in our world today. There are silent and dark days when pain, frustration, sadness and anger surround us. On these days, we may know that Easter is coming, but before we get there, we cling to the reality that Jesus sits in that hell with us. **We are not alone, not ever.**

Continued above



UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

By Pastor Sherri Otto

My daughter Emily called me in the middle of the night crying, “My car has been stolen!”

What? How? Where? Are you okay?? After telling me the details of what she thought had taken place, after calling the police and making a report, after making sure all of our doors were locked (she had our garage door opener in the vehicle), I tried to go back to sleep. Tried being the key word.

The next day came way too early. I was tired and a bit stressed out, to say the least. Church went on as usual; I delivered the sermon and when I got home, took a big nap. We lived in a quiet uneasiness as the days went by, wondering if the vehicle would ever be found and if it was, the shape it would be in.

The police recovered the vehicle four days later and to our amazement it was drivable and even had a full tank of gas!! The inside of the vehicle was disgusting, with the smell of cigarettes and marijuana lingering; clothes, makeup and garbage all thrown around the car. After buying new plates and paying the \$423.00 to the towing company, Emily drove her car home, in despair. Yes, she had her car back, but she was starting to feel the violation that had taken place. She said she didn’t even want the car, didn’t want to think of them being in her car, didn’t want to know where they were or what they had done.

So where do we go from here? The car is getting cleaned up, the insurance adjuster will be coming over to look at the damages of the vehicle and Emily will be getting the police report. All of these physical things are good to go, but how do you deal with the emotions that go along with this. Anxiety, anger, sadness, frustration. In all of this, is there room for forgiveness? Can we forgive an action when we don’t know the actors? If we knew a person’s story or met the person who stole the vehicle, would that make a difference in our thinking and feelings?

I don’t know the answers. I can’t find the sense in this. I’m not sure of how to help my daughter work through this. And so, I turn to what I know. We have been walking with Jesus through Lent and in the coming weeks we will walk as a community of believers through Holy Week to a blessed and resurrected Easter.

But before Easter can take place, we reflect, we wonder, we look at ourselves and long to change the behaviors that lie deep within us.

As I think about my questions, I reflect on Jesus during this season. The one who was left by his friends, the one who was betrayed and denied by his followers, the one who was questioned about his identity, the one who was mocked, struck, and forced to wear a crown of thorns and placed on a cross because he professed love instead of hate, forgiveness instead of blame.

Unanswered Questions continued

Jesus understands our feelings because he has felt them too! Jesus knows what Emily is feeling and isn’t running from her but standing with her in all her questions. Jesus does not leave us but bears our pain and our suffering. Jesus has taught us that forgiveness is possible when we question and wonder.

I may not have answers to my questions, but I do know one thing for certain. That Jesus lived a life full of compassion and forgiveness even to those that despised him and caused him harm. That Jesus asked God to forgive us, for we don’t know what we are doing. That Jesus is resurrected from the grave and in that, we are resurrected too, from all the harms of this world to live a life that is abundant, full of love, peace and forgiveness. I do have one answer... found in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God! Happy Easter!

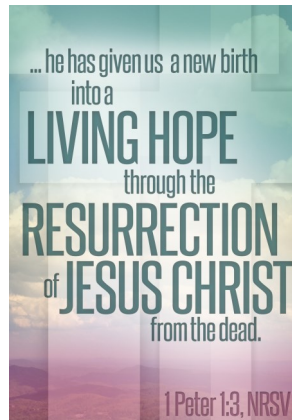
Pastor Sherri

Continued above

Easter Hope continued

wonderful feeling of re-connecting in person and being in community again with people who largely share my faith, what I value most and who love me, flaws and all. I am also reminded of the connection being in the sanctuary gives me in my awareness of God's presence. God is present everywhere of course! But being in the sanctuary with the choir, other members of all ages, with the meal of communion, somehow feels like a deeper connection. Also, the ability to start thinking about acts of service in the community again feels important. Last, when a pastor is leaving, typically we freeze and do little or nothing new as a community. We simply stay alive while we wait for the new person to lead us forward. But, at this moment of return or re-opening after two strange years, is that who we really are? Pastor Scott has done amazing things at SOTH in the last 13 years. We have experienced new growth, the return of young families, he became a leader in the community around us who got us out in the community to lead and serve too, he lead many campaigns to care for our church and nearby house building structure and keep it up to date in ways we have both enjoyed and used well, he led us in several social justice initiatives that were incredibly informative and represented a variety of voices, he preached, loved and wept with us as individuals on painful journeys at times and shared our joy at times of celebration and much more. He accomplished so many

Continued on page 11



EASTER HOPE: Where are you? What matters most?

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

“How are you? It is so good to see you and be with you again!”

These are some of the often-heard words, as this phase of what feels like a re-opening in the pandemic happens. Many of us are living a foreboding joy kind of life, waiting for the next shoe to drop, the next surge to happen. I read articles that say it will not, and others that say it will. Either way, there may be little change in cultural behavior as it seems the illness from the most recent variants has been less severe. Though as an immune-suppressed person, I understand for certain parts of the population, this feels still very much an unknown and may feel at risk. In this moment of time, I am reminded of the mantra, “Plan for the worst and hope for the best.” Sometimes we get stuck on the first half of that statement.

At this time as we wish for the end of pandemic, and, as things to re-start, or at a life transition of any kind, most of us ask ourselves, what do I want to give my time to? What do we want to return to from our pre-pandemic life? Sometimes, to have the energy to return, we need to have hope. Hope is holding a creative tension between what is and what should be, according to Parker Palmer. Each day, we work to close the gap between the what is and what should be.

Hope is not a state of mind we can will ourselves to be. It's a muscle. Something we have to develop. Many of us spend time developing our physical muscles, and also our brain strength. During the pandemic, exercise equipment sold out everywhere. Brain games, like Wordle, became big cultural fads. But what are we doing to exercise our ability to hope and to act on that hope? At this Easter time, we are reminded (just as we are at Christmas time) of where our ultimate, long-lasting hope comes from. This is a hope we want to pass on to our kids. For people of all ages, their faith is often the source of their greatest hope. In a time when suicide is at an all-time high, this hope is not to be overlooked. (To be clear, I am NOT suggesting faith is a singular solution to suicide. Many resources are needed to combat suicide!)

These changes don't happen due to one big world-changing act, but in small everyday acts that we make every day. We don't need to make grand gestures. How do you turn hope into action? What small act can you take each day that keeps hope alive? During the pandemic, what important generative acts have you stopped that it is time to re-start? If you are a young parent and passing on your faith tradition is important, where has it landed in your priorities as the world re-opens? Will remote attendance or no involvement in our faith community meet your needs for community, hope and passing on your values of faith?

I will also be honest, as far as church goes, if I did not work at church, it would be very tempting to keep attending remotely in my pajamas or exercise clothes with my eggs and coffee in front of me. This winter while the pandemic continued to rage, I took a break from many church activities. I continued to do devotions, stay connected remotely, etc. Upon my return, I have had the

Continued above



**IMMIGRANT
MINISTRY**

UPDATE

It is difficult to find the words to express how happy the Magomedov family is to be here and is so thankful for your help. They cannot imagine what they would do without that support. And ACT-TC is exceedingly grateful for the support SOTH has provided for the Magomedovs.

One way you can continue to show your support is to consider **becoming a sustaining supporter** contributing monthly whatever you can. Another means of support is to **engage in social activities with the family**. Additionally, if you are knowledgeable about medical pricing or know someone who is, ACT-TC could use your **help navigating the medical billing system** as the family incurs these expenses. If you can help in any of these ways, please contact me.

Right now is an emotionally difficult time for the Magomedovs. They are very concerned about the situation in Ukraine and Russia. Believing that what Russia is doing in Ukraine is terrible, they wish they could help the people of Ukraine in some way. The Magomedovs are still Russian citizens for now, and they do not want to be perceived as bad because they are Russian. Please remember that it is the Russian government with whom we have issues, not the Russian people. Magomedovs are good people and need our affirmation. Please remember them in your prayers.

Paul Bohnsack
952-891-5677
bohnsackps@frontiernet.net

Easter Hope continued

important things, but with each of these things, he encouraged us to go out and do the same, to lead and serve from where we were at. So, for several reasons, the timing of coming back together with energy as a church community seems a little off. We often have this new energy in the fall as we start the school year, programming at church and other places. Spring also brings energy, but often it energizes us to summer freedoms and activities. It seems like an important time to review what matters most to us and to explore where we need to grow again. Parker Palmer says, "A GROWING EDGE is rooted in the confidence that new life is always possible." A timely reminder at Easter and in this pandemic moment. So, where are you? What can we do to have you in our community again? If not, why not? We want to hear from you. Your feedback is so important to our community. Your engagement in the community is needed for us to move forward. We want to see you again in our community. We want to find our growing edge together again!

Called to Hope, Grow, Serve and Return to Community with YOU,
Kaye Wothe
Faith Community Nurse

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
500 Blake Road South
Edina, MN 55343

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Lord, as we gather together as family and friends; we invite you once again into our lives. May the hope of your resurrection color our days. May the promise of your spirit working in us light up our lives. May the love you revealed to us shape our giving. May the truth in your word guide our journeys and may the joy of your kingdom fill our homes.

Amen

*A Prayer
For Easter*