

Shepherd's Voice



February 2020

“Grateful... again...”

By Pastor Scott Searl

The spire of the Duke chapel in the distance, imagine for a moment you are in classroom with twenty other people. Your gaze turns to see every other chair occupied by a member of the other gender. Your ears hear the voices high and low with equality. Your eye notices that the skin tone of every person from dark to light. Your ears hear the sound of the experiential depth of all those hues. Your spirit notices that all the other ears are open, listening, digesting and straining to hear the resonant fullness of the song of each story and word. If you pause for a moment it is possible to believe this is what Christian diversity is like in its most holy incarnation. All are welcome, all are heard, all are trusted and loved. At more than one point in time, the words are so overwhelming your eyes leak just a little. Together the time and discussion is branded as “fumbling with love.”

Your mind is directed to discover the ways in which we communicate God's imminent presence. Your professor who also hosts the evening news, describes the haunting of a twelve-year relationship with a man on death row. The professor will witness his execution. Years later the professor will have to recon with his own inability to speak with a senator about the possibilities that might have been. Later, the professor must recon with the man's sister and confess his inability to speak and ask. You are confronted with the fact that in order to communicate the truth of God's love you must also speak of the hauntings of the cross, death and our own failures. It is only in speaking the reality of life, the beauty and the horror, that we find the transcendence of hope. The resurrection of hope comes after the haunting of the cross.

I am grateful for a week with these amazing people. I am grateful for a few moments away to sit with others who are struggling to find ways to crack the imminent secular frame in which we live. I am grateful to hear their stories of hope and frustration.

On Friday night, the four of us who rented a house together gathered for a few moments to say goodbye for now. We will be back together again on-line in a week, and together again in person in May. Of those who remained at the house on Friday, one is a Seventh Day Adventist pastor. She is one of only a handful of women clergy in her denomination. Friday night she practices a sabbath time. We dimmed the lights, lit candles and sang together. At first a bit uncomfortable, only because it was unusual, it soon settled into a quiet reflective, prayerful time. It was a small sliver of light breaking through the hardened hearts of an age that only sees the flatness of secularity. It was the transcendence of God speaking in a still small voice reminding us that there is more going on in the world than meets the eye. Words failed but song prevailed. It was additional bread for the journey, in a week that felt like a feast.

Thank you all for this time to be away, and time to be with these amazing folks. Time to learn some new things, and experience God's love in new ways. I cannot say thank you enough.

In Gratitude – Pastor Scott

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

Staff:

Pastor	Scott Searl
Assistant/Visitation Pastor	Fred Jensen
Director of Music/Organist	David Surdez
Shepherd's Song Director	Emily Koski
Deacon	Brian Henning
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Custodian	Kevin Wicks
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe

Church Council Members / Officers:

President	Todd Biewen
Vice President	Julie Luers
Treasurer	Steve Hanneman
Financial Secretary	Julie Luers
Secretary	Adam Driscoll
Service	Nate Lichty
Worship & Music	Allie Jensen
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learning	Joan Dillon
Growing Relationships	Robin Beck
Caring	Gretchen Marble
LMCC	Karla Palmersheim
Evaluation	Chris Polston

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

Worship Times	1
Directions	2
Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Scott Searl	12
Brian Henning	14
Blair Prax	15
Emergency Message Mailbox	24
Kaye Wothe	25

Shepherd Online!

Pastor Scott Searl	scott@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Kaye Wothe	kaye.wothe@sothchurch.com
Brian Henning	brian.henning@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com
Center for Service	www.hopkinsvolunteers.org



NEW ONLINE MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY IS COMING!

Shepherd of the Hills uses Servant Keeper membership software to organize information about our families. We are excited that we will be able to share Servant Keeper access with our members via a password protected member portal and an online member directory. There will be an info session on Sunday, February 2 to help members get set up with Servant Keeper.

1. MEMBER PORTAL

WHAT IS IT? The Member Portal allows you to view and update your personal information and track your contributions to Shepherd.

HOW DO I ACCESS IT? All parishioners with an email address in Servant Keeper will receive an invitation via email. Follow the link in the email and create a password. If you did not receive an invitation or if you are new to Shepherd, or have any problems registering, please call the Church Officer at 952.935.3457.

Once logged-in, you can upload a picture, change your contact information and customize your settings. **You can control what fellow parishioners see in the online directory.** For example, if you prefer your phone number to be unlisted, you can simply check the box that says “unlisted” in your profile. This information is ONLY viewable by your fellow parishioners via the password protected online directory. **We encourage you to upload a photo!**

2. ONLINE DIRECTORY

WHAT IS IT? The online directory contains contact information for families of Shepherd of the Hills. This directory is password protected, only your fellow parishioners can view the information. Giving records are NOT viewable. If you wish to be removed from the directory, contact the Parish Administrator or log-in to the member portal and update your settings.

HOW DO I ACCESS IT? You need to know Shepherd of the Hills’s password to access the directory (this is NOT the password you created for the Member Portal). The password has been sent to parishioners, but if you are new to us or need a reminder, please call the Church Office at 952.935.3457.



PRESIDENT'S POST

By Todd Biewen, Church Council President

Earth Day is Coming

"The earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations." - John Paul II

How "old school" are you in your house? What do I mean by "old school" you ask? Let me explain by giving some examples from our house.

- We still receive the Star Tribune on our front step every morning because we still like reading "the paper".
- We shovel our snow and have never owned a snowblower because we have multiple shovels and strong backs!
- We still have a land-line telephone - not sure why!
- We have cell phones, but we were later than most in switching from flip phones to smart phones.
- We own our cars and drive them a long time!

So that's what I mean by "old school". I often think about my/our habits, behaviors and preferences and how green they are. How green are the few "old school" items I listed above?

- Getting a newspaper isn't being very green when we could read it on-line.
- Shoveling our snow - yes, that is green.
- Having a land-line telephone is pretty neutral.
- I suppose delaying the purchase of smart phones was a good thing.
- And, maintaining and driving our cars for many years is a good thing? Or is it? Should we be investing in a new, more efficient car?

My point is there is always a decision to be made about what we want, what we do, what we wear, and what is most green. And these decisions are not always easy or straightforward.

I think we've all heard these suggestions for how to be more green:

- Before buying something, stop and think "do I really need this?"
- Buy quality things that will last.
- Use things until they are well worn.
- Reduce! Reuse! Recycle!

Pretty basic stuff right? There are many more best practices for being green, and I'm sure you have some great ideas of your own. I'd be interested in hearing about your "old school" and "new school" practices that you live by, and where you place them on the "green-ness" scale.

President's Post continued

As we approach Earth Day in 2020 and mark its 50th anniversary, I wonder if we can find ways to be more green at Shepherd? I know we can, and I've been hearing more people sharing ideas on this very topic. Let's see what we can do together; this is a good time to bring our best habits from our own homes into our Shepherd home.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ~ Margaret Mead

Peace — Todd

NEEDED: Books for Hopkins Summer Reading program

Do you have new and gently used books, K-6th grade books to donate? Please bring them to church. The Shepherd of the Hills Foundation is supporting the Hopkins Summer Reading Program. Elementary school students at Gatewood, Alice Smith and Eisenhower can borrow a book on a weekly basis. Books will be lent out in conjunction with food trucks at parks in Hopkins. Please bring books to the bin near the Welcome Desk marked: Hopkins Summer Reading Program.

CIRCLE MEETINGS

Deborah Circle

New members are welcome!

Date: Thurs., February 13
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Hostess: Joan Oyaas
Location: Church
Bible Study: Members
Contact: Mimi Drangeid
(952) 934-9318

Lois Circle

Date: Tues., February 11
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Hostess: Joan Dillon
Location: 14225 Glenridge Road
Minnetonka
Bible Study: February Gather
We are Called!
Session 2
Disciples of Christ
Contact: Nadine Broholm
(952) 935-5054

INFERTILITY SUPPORT

Sunday, February 23

The next Infertility group gathering will be Sunday, Feb. 23rd. Please talk to Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse or email her at kwothe@comcast.net if you are interested to get the details of our gathering.



WEDNESDAY SPEAKER SERIES

Date: Wednesday, February 5
Topic: "Communication and Conflict Resolution"
Speaker: Presented by Marc Hertz, FRrE (Family Recovery Resource Experts)

Description: Do you struggle to communicate in the midst of conflict without inciting more conflict? Do you struggle with setting boundaries that are healthy for you and those around you? Come hear clear and easy to learn skills for both conflict conversations and boundary setting, both skills needed by all humans in healthy relationships!

Dinner will be served at 5:30 pm. All are welcome, kids and adults. Speakers start at 6:30 pm. We hope you will join us! Nursery care provided.

SUNDAY MORNING SPEAKERS

Date: February 9, 2020 following worship
Topic: Conflict Competency: Moving from Avoidance to Opportunity
Speaker: Julie Showers, Associate Vice President,
Office for Equity and Diversity, University of Minnesota

Description: Most of us think of conflict like a root canal – something to be avoided to the greatest extent possible. Faced with conflict, our wellbeing suffers. We lose sleep, stress levels increase and our productivity decreases. Conflict interferes with our ability to do our best work, and to be the best spouse/parent/child/friend/person we can be. Yet, conflict (for humans) is inevitable. The real question is not whether it will occur, but how effectively we will respond when it does. This session teaches practical skills for reducing discomfort and improving outcomes through increased conflict competency.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS & WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES

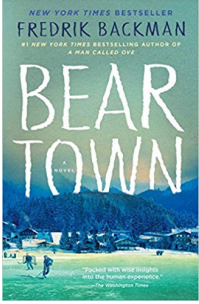
"Aging Abundantly"

Sundays, February 23 and March 8 from 5:00 to 6:30 pm
Drop-ins Welcome!

Aging Abundantly meets next on February 23 from 5-6:30pm with dinner provided. Feel free to drop in and join us. Sign up at the Welcome Desk or let Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net know so she can get you the book and so we know the number for dinner.

Looking Toward Retirement or Already There? What next? The discussion questions will guide individual thought, small and large group discussions related to purpose, meaning and identity in the transition and during retirement in the hope of creating an abundant time of life after retirement. Come join us for rich conversation and good food.

For questions or input about any of the above offerings please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse, at kwothe@comcast.net or kaye.wothe@sothchurch.com. Or check the welcome desk for signing up.



BOOK CLUB OPEN TO ALL

Wednesday, February 19 at 6:30 pm

The WoSOTH book club is opening up to all who are interested for our February 19th book selection. The book is “Beartown” by Fredrik Backman. We are opening this book up to everyone as it is a book that is relevant to everyone and especially relevant to parents, teachers, grandparents, or anyone who has been a kid on the last several decades.

The story is very real and relevant to the struggles most in our communities face in some or all ways. It is an excellent read! Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse, has a few copies to loan out. (It also was available at the county library when I checked and several copies at Half Price books). Sign up is at the welcome desk to help us know how many to expect and to be able to communicate any last minute information. You can also sign up by emailing Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net. Join us!! The discussion promises to be great!

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SUNDAY

Will you be my Valentine ... Even if I am Depressed or Anxious?

This month on Sunday, February 23, we are having our second mental health awareness Sunday of the curriculum year. This one is focused on the very common struggles of anxiety and depression. We lump them together because they often go hand in hand and can have similar symptoms. However they can be experienced separately as well.

We will lift up in worship through liturgy, prayer, scripture and message our concerns to God, we will have written information, visual education through a display and after worship a professional psychologist who works in therapy at Relate Counseling in Minnetonka (a group we refer to often) talk to us about depression and anxiety.

If you think you do not know anyone struggling with depression or anxiety, you are possibly not aware because that is how common this diagnosis is. Please join us!



WoSOTH BREAKFAST

Saturday, February 22 at 8:30 am

“Women’s Wellbeing : Finding Balance in Body, Mind and Spirit.” Speaker Maureen (Mo) Anderson, DNP, RN, staff at UM Center of Spirituality and Healing.

Wellbeing is not just another word for physical

health—it is about finding balance in body, mind, and spirit. In this state, we feel content, connected, energized, resilient, and safe.

In this session, Mo will share an overview of the six dimensions of the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing’s wellbeing model: health, relationships, security, purpose, community, and the environment. She will invite you to explore your unique path to wellbeing, arising from an awareness of where you are and what you need.



LOAVES & FISHES

Monday, February 10

Mark your calendar for our next serving date of

Monday, February 10. We prepare and serve an evening meal at St. Gabriel's Church (1310 Mainstreet, Hopkins). Timing is as follows: 4:00 to prepare, 5:00 to serve and 6:00 for clean up. We are finished by 6:45. If you would like more information or are able to volunteer, please contact the church office.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Meals on Wheels is now operating from our church building. If you, or someone you know, would like to learn more about receiving meals, contact Sarah Boguss at 952-253-5200 or hopkinsmow@gmail.com. If you are interested in volunteering as a driver for St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and eastern Minnetonka, contact Carolee Hanks at 612-910-5255 or caroleehanks41@gmail.com.

LENT SOUP MAKERS AND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Lent is approaching quickly with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 26th. We need several volunteers willing to make soup for 30-40 people on each Wednesday of Lent (all Wednesdays of March, and April 1st). We also need volunteers to help serve and clean up for these meals. Please email Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net. There will also be a sign up at the Welcome desk.

Worship

WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE

DATE	TIME	LECTOR	COMMUNION PRESENTERS	COMMUNION ASSISTANTS	ALTAR GUILD	USHER
Feb. 2	9:30	J or K Hansen	W Wollenberg / L Kopperud	W Wollenberg / L Kopperud	K Hofstad / J Grams	Rinker Team
Feb. 9	9:30	Scott Edmundson	H Nelson / B Nelson	H Nelson / B Nelson	G Morseth / S Nash	Rinker Team
Feb. 16	9:30	Warren Wollenberg	T Sheldon / J Rogness	T Sheldon / J Rogness	J Wicks / S Peterson	Rinker Team
Feb. 23	9:30	Dawn Jensen	C Biewen / S Peterson	C Biewen / S Peterson	K Veve / K Wiemer	Edmundson Team
Feb. 26	7:00				L Kopperud	Edmundson Team
Mar. 1	9:30	Christa Meland	K & J Wicks	K & J Wicks		Edmundson Team
Mar. 4	7:00					Olsen Team
Mar. 8	9:30	Bruce Nelson	R & G Morseth	R & G Morseth		Olsen Team
Mar. 11	7:00					Olsen Team
Mar. 15	9:30	E or J Showers	P & S Bohnsack	R Rinker / R Beck		Stone Team
Mar. 18	7:00					Stone Team
Mar. 22	9:30	Gary Nash	L Cushman / N Broholm	D & K Wiemer		Stone Team
Mar. 25	7:00					Pederson Team
Mar. 29	9:30	Rich Rinker	R & N Shaeffer	G Morseth / RM Anderson		Pederson Team

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

Sunday, February 16 at 10:30 am

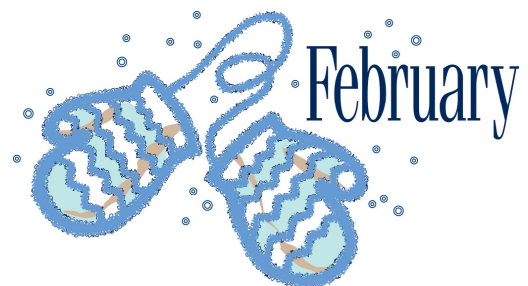
We will hold a special congregational meeting on Sunday, February 16 immediately following the 9:30 am service with the purpose to vote for approval to call a new associate pastor. Please make every effort to attend these exciting next steps in our life together.

February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 7:00 MoSOTH Breakfast
2 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	3 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	4 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting	5 10:00 Bible Study 5:00 Congregational Supper 6:30 Guest Speaker Series 6:30 Wed Programs 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	6 5:45 TOPS Group	7 12:00 Church Office Closed	8
9 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 10:45 Adult Forum Speaker 10:45 WAM 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	10 Newsletter Deadline 2:00 Caregivers Mtg. Loaves & Fishes 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	11 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting. 1:00 Lois Circle	12 10:00 Bible Study 6:30 Wed Programs 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	13 9:30 Deborah Circle 5:45 TOPS Group	14 Valentine's Day 12:00 Church Office Closed	15
16 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 10:30 Congregational Meeting 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	17 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	18 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting 6:00 Council Supper 6:30 Council Meeting	19 10:00 Bible Study 6:30 Wed Programs 6:30 Book Club	20 5:45 TOPS Group	21 12:00 Church Office Closed	22 8:30 WoSOTH Breakfast
23 Mental Health Awareness 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 10:45 WAM 5:00 Aging Abundantly 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	24 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	25 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting	26 Ash Wednesday 10:00 Bible Study/Worship 10:45 Soup Lunch 5:15 Soup Supper 7:00 Ash Wednesday Worship	27 5:45 TOPS Group	28 12:00 Church Office Closed	29

Worship Schedule

9:30 am worship



Staff Reflection

CAPITOL TOUR

Friday, March 6

Get a behind the scenes tour of the MN State Capitol with David Surdez and Joe Marble! David has extensive knowledge of the capitol building. This is a personalized tour that is different and much more extensive than the historical society tour. The tour received rave reviews in 2018, when it was offered as a fundraiser item for Mental Health Connect. Before David retires in June of 2020, he (along with Joe) are offering the tour again as a fundraiser for Mental Health Connect. The tour is planned for Friday afternoon March 6th, and carpooling will be an option from church. Donation cost will be \$25. Check the welcome desk for more information and signups.

MENTAL HEALTH

CONNECT

HOW DO I CONTACT A NAVIGATOR FROM MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT IF I NEED HELP?

Call 612-312-3377 and ask for Mental Health Connect staff or call 952-212-8051 to reach a navigator directly.



WITH HEARTFELT THANKS!

Dear Members of Shepherd of the Hills,
Thank you... two little words! How can I adequately express my gratitude to you as a congregation for the 38+ years of service and being a part of your family's lives?

While I am trying to put into words my thanks for those years with you it will be far easier to say thank you for the wonderful reception which you gave me on my last day at the church. The day was full of joy but not without sadness.

The service was especially meaningful with three beautiful anthems from my beloved Chancel Choir who I will miss working with so very much!

After the Postlude I walked down the main aisle of the church accompanied by Pastor Scott. As we exited the sanctuary Pastor Scott asked me to stand at the doors and greet people. I honestly didn't think that I would be able to hold it together but to my surprise it was a very joyful time for me! Many of you shared little stories or events of which I was fortunate enough to have been a participant. Thank you for all of the kind words and stories that you told me.

The program began with Nancy Penk announcing a song about my time at Shepherd of the Hills starting back in September of 1981. The words written by Dawn Jenson to the tune of "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from Mary Poppins, sung by the Chancel Choir with the Congregation coming in on the Refrain. It was great fun! Thank you!

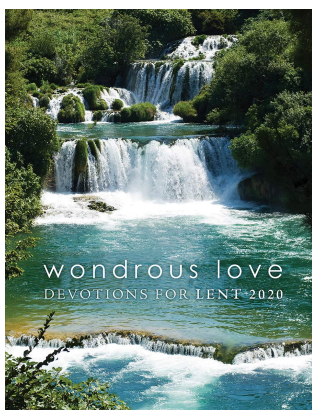
Lovely and meaningful words from Pastor Scott, former Senior Pastor Hub Nelson, and Tom Peterson as a representative of the Chancel Choir. Thank you.

The Chancel Choir presented me with a beautiful Memory Book with letters from my choir which I will cherish for the rest of my life! Thank you.

When Tom Peterson presented the gift from you the congregation I just about fell over by your generosity! Thank you so much.

I have been so fortunate to have spent these years with you and your families. You have meant so much to me and my family through the years. Thank you for an amazing journey!

With warmest regards,
David Surdez



WONDROUS LOVE – LENT 2020

As Lutherans we believe that we are saved by God's grace. At Martin Luther's prompting, we believe we cannot earn God's love. Instead, as lived out by our baptism of babies, God comes to us, loves us and forgives us even before we can know of God's love for us. We respond to God's unmerited love of us, through love of our neighbor. All neighbors, everyone. As God comes to us without merit, God loves all people without fail! This is at the heart of Luther's

understanding of God's love in the person of Jesus. It is a wondrous gift of love!

Other faith traditions have thought differently about this. And while we will always affirm that God loves us no matter what, spending time in relationship with God deepens our understanding of God's love for us. A daily practicing of our faith can inspire us to love ourselves and love our neighbors in new ways. Reading scripture, daily prayer, daily meditation or reflection have been regular ways for followers of Jesus to nurture their sense of God's presence and God's love for the world. A way to connect to God's wondrous gifts of love for us and our neighbors.

This Lent we are encouraging one another to try a daily practicing of faith by using a small devotional book titled: Wondrous Love. The book is so small you could keep it in your pocket! Each daily meditation will begin with a small image, a passage from the Gospel of Mathew, a word or idea to ponder, a brief reflection and an opportunity for prayer. We hope you will consider the possibility of joining with your brothers and sisters in faith as we journey together deeper into God's wondrous love this Lent. You could enter this practice individually, or maybe as a family. However you engage, we hope you will take the opportunity to deepen your experience of God's love in this way. Devotional books will be available at the welcome desk.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26. We will again offer two Wednesday Lenten worship opportunities. All are welcome! We will gather Wednesday mornings at 10:00 am in the chapel. Worship will feature a bible study type sermon by the pastors. We will have soup lunch immediately following the Bible Study. Wednesday evenings we will gather at 5:15 pm for supper and worship at 7:00 pm. We follow this schedule for the next five Wednesday evenings. Worship services will be about 35min. Confirmation students will be meeting with their Lenten Mentors before worship each Wednesday, and everyone is encouraged to come to worship. Please make plans to join us as we journey deeply into God's Wondrous Love!

Faith Community Nurse continued from page 11

operate in the "black and white" but in the gray, he was not rule heavy (actually the Pharisees were the ones worried about all the rules). Instead Jesus was about loving people where they were at, seeing them for the child of God they were, seeing the good in them even when they themselves could not see it. You know the saying, "Leave the world a better place than you found it". I have always applied that to the environment, but I wonder if we should also apply it to how we treat people, all God's children no matter what their faith tradition or home is. If I had a tee shirt printed or a tattoo imprinted on me it might be "Love more, judge less".

After much wrestling with this, aware that most 'normal' people would just leave it alone, I decided I could not leave it be. I needed closure even if it meant they could not meet me half way or recognize the way they had been similarly unwelcoming and hurtful to me over the years. So I ask you to pray for me as walk this road to confession and forgiveness from another who likely will not reciprocate. Pray that I might still find closure and accept the forgiveness I receive from God as enough. Pray that all hearts are softened, mine included. It is February after all ...the month of all things hearts and love.

O God, Our Creator continued

share what God is up to in Creation. I love to take the time to capture the tiny details and show the spiritual nature of our incredible planet home.

When I share my creativity, I hope that I create emotion in people when they view my photos, both at Church and in my free time. I hope that my creativity expressed through photographs tell and retell the story of relationship with God, with nature, and with each other. I believe that when I participate in the creative work of storytelling through photography, I am participating in the creative work of God.

Having an opportunity to reflect on all of this through the QLDS course helped me see the importance of discovering the creativity in our midst. So, this month, as we begin to prepare ourselves and our community for the work of Lent, I want to ask you: what is your creative activity and how might you bring it into our community at Shepherd to grow and strengthen our community and our understanding of God?



O God, Our Creator...

By Deacon Brian Henning

What is your creative activity and how do you see God in that activity?

This was one of the many questions a group of us who gathered online in a brand new series called the Queer Leadership Development Series (QLDS) wrestled with. This past fall, Proclaim, the Lutheran Clergy support and advocacy group for LGBTQ+ clergy and candidates for ministry, held its inaugural

QLDS. As a group, we met for about an hour on Wednesdays for four weeks in October and November with Dr. Shauna Hannan, Associate Professor of Homiletics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. The course was called "Created to Create" and the primary focus was four-fold: God's Creative Voice, Creation's Creative Voice, Our Creative Voice, and Harnessing Our Creative Voice.

Ultimately, we discussed this premise: if God created us in God's image and (one of) God's main task is to create, then how are we called to create?

It's a tough question to answer and, in my experience, most people are afraid to think that the ways in which they create can be compared to the ways in which God creates. However, I think it is far too cynical and, dare I say, destructive to claim that people cannot participate in the holy work of creation.

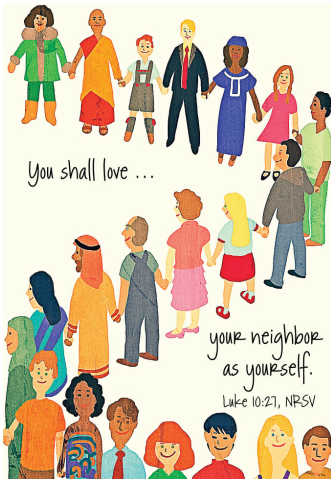
I want to reflect on the creative activity you thought about at the very beginning. What is the thing you are creating? What kind of emotion does it create in you and in the people who get to experience it with you? What kind of relationship does your creativity allow to form?

As a Deacon, I am often incredibly blessed with having a professional career of creation. I get to create sermons, opportunities for learning, graphics for our physical space and digital space, our website, and so much more. Each of these things allows me to express myself and my identity, brings me immense joy to share it with you, and helps to form and inform our community. Professionally, I get to create a lot.

However, there is one thing I did not mention above that perhaps brings me the most joy and it is every time I get to be behind my camera. Most, if not all of you, have seen me with my camera around Church. I love to photograph the things that we are doing and to put those pictures together to tell the story of what we are up to at Shepherd and what God is up to at Shepherd.

I also love to take to my camera out into greater Minnesota. Not being from here, I love to explore our incredible State. And I absolutely love to

Continued above



LIFE'S BIGGEST LESSON: What Matters Most

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

As I walk with people through journeys of crisis, hurt, fear, even and especially ones that end with death, and as I walk my own journey of fears and change I can't help but reflect on how shockingly different what I would list as important has changed over the years. Certainly the tenants of my outline of life remain the same: faith, family, friends, health, hard work, relationships, commitment, world citizenship, caring for the world both people and place, etc.

But the view of how one does that has changed a lot. When and where I grew up emphasized these things but there also was a sense that our beliefs were the correct ones and others were clearly not. Also it was our job to reform others.

For the past over 30 years I have been slowly changing that view. Reading the book "Holy Envy" by Barbara Taylor Brown really helped bring this change to a peak.

Brown is a Protestant pastor who taught comparative religion in a small south eastern college for the last half of her career after parish ministry. She tells of her classes experiences visiting 4 of the major world religions with students and by way of this teaches the reader what the basic concepts or tenants of those religions are. With each one she also shares what she envies in each faiths' beliefs or practices. She fears she is being unfaithful to her own life long theological beliefs and yet is sophisticated enough to embrace the envy without irrational loss of her sense of what her faith is, which is to say she let it reshape her faith and yet remain in her own tradition. When one feels this way it makes it hard to say, "Your faith is not correct" or negatively judge another faith. Brown encourages us to love or embrace what we love about other world religions and through that also respect, love and be in healthy relationships with others in those faiths. The reality is that few of us have the opportunity to have a lot of exposure that allows us to be in close relationships with a huge variety of religions through those we know and spend time with. Hopefully we will embrace those opportunities as they come.

I spent my younger adult years having really strong inner feelings when those in my extended family had very different faith traditions. For example, in my extended family there are atheists, Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), and Eastern religion beliefs. I was really bothered by it thinking it was my job to 'save' them, to help them see their beliefs were wrong and mine were the way. Some of them felt equally strongly that mine were wrong and were proselytizing to me to attempt to convert me. Over the years it felt like this divided us as a family somewhat. We did not share religious beliefs, and often not political leanings, and pretty soon it

felt like we were too far apart to make sense of spending time together. Bothered by that I found myself realizing I was more easily accepting and welcoming of casual acquaintances and friends than I was of my own family members in these areas. I needed to confess this to both God and my family. With God this confession was easy, I knew His response of grace and forgiveness clearly. But with my extended family it was much harder because their response was so much less predictable. Would they say, "Yea, finally you realize how wrong you have been and our views are best!" (basically misinterpreting my confession as me changing my beliefs). I wondered if they would be vulnerable with me to share their confession of being unwelcoming to me and my beliefs over the years too....I assume no, which would bother me. To be vulnerable with someone else and have them arch their back and stand even taller as if to say, "Yes, you have been wrong but we have not been wrong to you at all. We are simply right!" would be more than my proud German self could take.

At the end of it all, just as in the book "Holy Envy", I once again come back to what matters most to me. It's not complicated. It is loving people where they are at, whether you share their religious choices, political leanings, gender identity, sexuality, or even if they are related to you ☺. It is being in relationship. I believe God clearly calls me to love people where they are at. When I do that I am better at welcoming them, listening to them, caring for their responses, reaching out to them and seamlessly forgiving them when they hurt me. Isn't this what Jesus did in his life on earth? He did not

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Let all that you
do be done in *love.*

1 Corinthians 16:14