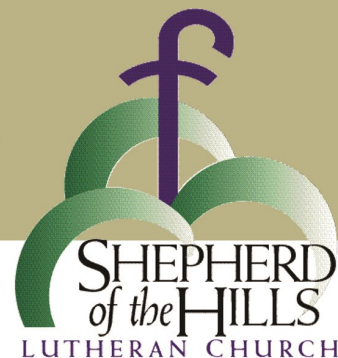


Shepherd's Voice



January 2022

"Where are We Now"

By Pastor Scott Searl

I remember my naïve optimism early on in the pandemic. Surely if any place in the world could "flatten the curve" it would be our beloved Minnesota. We know about hunkering down in the winter, we know about taking a little time out in isolation while the snow flies. We even sent out an announcement from church that we'd likely be worshipping from home for a few weeks and then we'd be back in the sanctuary sometime soon. In terms of thinking about the typical emotional phases of a disaster, I might call this early period our "Heroic" or "Honeymoon" phase. As we know now, it was both naïve and hardly heroic. Looking through the rearview mirror, unfortunately it wasn't even a honeymoon of community or country cohesion. Instead, it was really the beginning of our deep disillusionment. So where are we now and who or what might guide us?

It is probably time to look to the prophets of our spiritual past. While we might think of our biblical prophets as divinely guided spiritual savants, which they in many ways are, what the prophets really do is tell us what time it is currently. Yes, they have prophetic insight into the future, but those insights are deeply based in knowing what the current situation is. The Israelites didn't simply escape Egypt and immediately enter the promised land. The exiles after the destruction by the Babylonians didn't suddenly wake up and find themselves in a more comfortable situation. God's people, guided by prophets, helped the community recognize their situation and then they gave honest, often practical guidance about how to live. Prophets like Jeremiah often began their messages with bad news. Most of the time God's people didn't want to hear the harsh truth, and prophets were often shunned, persecuted or worse. It's only after a matter of time that prophets are revealed to be true or false, but if a prophet starts out with bad news... unfortunately they might be on to something.

It seems instructive then to listen to those prophets past and present who have walked the difficult road of disaster and trauma before to help us gain as clear a picture as we can muster regarding where we are in our current wilderness. The exilic wandering we've called the pandemic. The graphic on page 2, is a kind of prophetic map of the emotional journey a community takes during a disaster. Taken from a book titled, "Disaster Spiritual Care" the graphic charts the emotional course of more acute disasters like a hurricane or the collapse of a bridge. So, while the pandemic is less acute and more an unfolding slow-moving disaster, the graphic can at least provide us with some possibilities of our current emotional and spiritual location.

Continued on page 2

**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	Jill Miller
Care	Dave Cousins
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Chris Polston

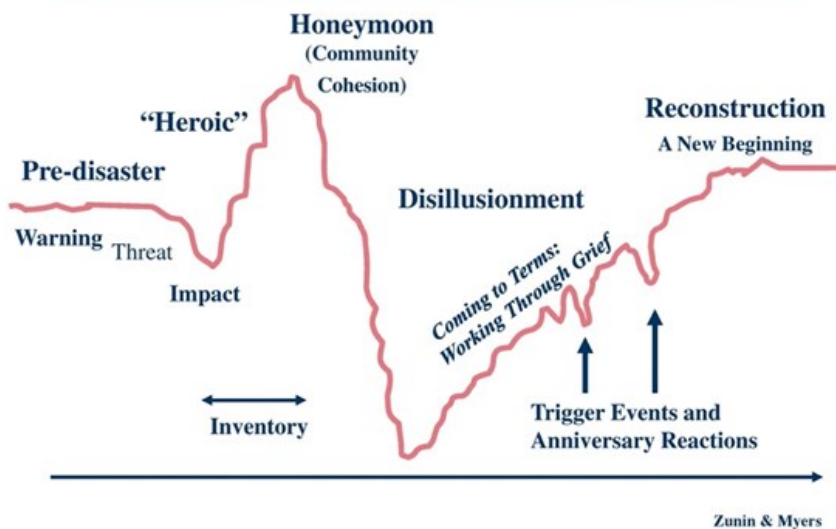
Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

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

Typical Phases of Disaster



Pastor’s Message continued from page 1

Without being able to pinpoint our exact location on the above graphic’s map, it feels like we are somewhere post honeymoon (if we even had one), and still a long way from reconstruction. It feels appropriate to ask, “with the emergence of the omicron variant have we finally reached the bottom of the disillusionment phase, or will we continue to move downward?” And, even if we are at the bottom, it feels prudent to recognize that the journey from “Pre-disaster” as we first learned of the virus in December of 2019, to “Heroic” through “Honeymoon” to the bottom of “Disillusionment” now in December of 2021 took us almost two years to travel. Might it be wise to consider the possibility that we have another two years before we really begin to enter into the “Reconstruction” phase of our covid journey? Certainly, there is a powerful desire to return to some new normal as soon as possible. Yet, it also feels important not to paint a picture of false hope. We’ve already had too many false prophesies of a normal summer or a normal Christmas or a normal spring. False hope hurts. False prophesy hurts. It feels difficult, but more honest to recognize that our pandemic journey might not come to the speedy recovery we all wish for. Time will reveal if this prophetic time telling is true.

So why share this perspective with you, beloved, beautiful, children of God? It is to recognize that no matter where we are on our journey, like the prophets, we will need to trust that God remains with us. It is to recognize that this pandemic journey might take longer than we’d like. It is to recognize that God’s people have lived through forty years in the wilderness, and generations of exile from their homeland. Even Jesus endured the brutal roman cross and the grave for days on end on his way to easter morning resurrection. For my own spiritual health my prayer is

Pastor’s Message continued on page 3



PRESIDENT'S POST:

"Be of Good Cheer"

By Adam Driscoll, Council President

A disclaimer: I am no theologian, I have no formal and scant informal training in biblical interpretation. What follows are the opinions of a layperson, and I appreciate in advance any work our clergy needs to do to mop up my mistakes and inaccuracies!

I'm lately drawn to command to "Be of Good Cheer;" which some quick searching brings me to John 16:33

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

To me, there are a few ways we could interpret Jesus' words. We could posit that he's telling us "do not worry, for I have overcome the world." We could otherwise imagine that Jesus seeks to encourage us, perhaps with a little bit of tough love: "approach the world with optimism, with your best positivity, because that's what you'd need to overcome your tribulation." Now, I'm probably wrong, but I take comfort in the concept of Jesus encouraging us to approach life's burdens while being of good cheer.

Why am I placing focus on tribulations in what is otherwise our season of light and hope? As many of you know, in any year, the holidays can be among the most difficult as it relates to one's mental or emotional state. Celebrating family traditions and reflecting on the past year can put anyone into a less than merry mental estate, for a variety of obvious reasons. Add to that our ongoing pandemic, and one could be forgiven for feeling less than merry and bright.

One thing we tell our children in our home is that we cannot always guarantee our results, but we can guarantee our effort and our approach. So, difficult as it may be, I take comfort in my amateur interpretation of scripture to imagine Jesus encouraging us, to be of good cheer, he's taken care of the big things, but he knows life isn't easy, and we can do our best by bringing our best versions to our tribulations.

Merry Christmas to you and those whom you call family, and be of good cheer.

Pastor's Message continued from pg 2

that God give us the wisdom to know where we actually are on this journey so we can tell the truth. Because truth is the only real basis for hope. For my own sense of hopefulness, I need to know that God's love has already walked in these darkest most disillusioned places. And for my own sense of the future, I need to know that even in the valley of disillusionment God's love is available, and shareable. Certainly, we are not yet home people of God, and there may be a significant journey yet ahead. Like the prophets, be honest with your own disillusionment and beg God for a palpable sense of God's love in your spiritual lack. As importantly, be generous with the love that God has given you. The road toward reconstruction begins with love of neighbor, care for neighbor, forgiveness, hugs, and verbal declarations of affection for one another. Because love begets love, joy begets joy, peace begets peace. Like our exile brothers and sisters, and like our Israelite brothers and sisters wandering in the wilderness, our reconstruction will begin individual to individual. The exiles built houses and lived in them. The Israelites learned how to be God's people in the desert, learning how to love and forgive each other. Both times after walking their journey through disillusionment, God lavished forgiveness on God's people and loved God's people into a new reality that began even in the midst of the disillusioned journey. Through it all God's people thrived and grew. So let us be honest and faithful. Let us be disillusioned and hopeful. And let the promise of God's future come into being once again for us, God's people, and all the people of God's world so that at the end of our journey we can answer the question, "Where are we now?" with "A hopeful new beginning."

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 30 at 10:30 a.m.
(after 9:30 a.m. worship service)

Please make plans to join us for our annual meeting January 30th at 10:30 a.m. The Council will bring forward our budget recommendation for Congregational vote. We have a lot to share, so we hope you will be able to be there!



WOMEN'S BREAKFAST

Date: February 5, 2022 at 9:00 am
Topic: The Bible through Women's Eyes
Speaker: Intern Pastor Anne Schaefer
Description: Everyone has a filter

through which we see the world. This comes into play when we interact with our neighbors, listen to the news, and of course read the Bible. Come listen to and discuss how cultures and histories have strongly influenced the filters that female Biblical scholars have used to interpret and teach the Bible. Pastor Anne will lead this discussion on how women across the world have shared questions and concerns when it comes to religion and reading the Bible, but

the answers we each gain are largely dependent on cultural context, race, and social class. All genders, levels of knowledge and experiences are welcome; trigger warning that violence against women is foundational to most women's perspectives and will be part of the presentation.



MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT EDUCATION

Monday, January 17 at 6:00 pm
Deep Listening Training, this event is free, and virtual!

This is a 6 week course, meeting at 6pm every other week ending on March

28th. You do not need to attend each session!

“Deep listening training for people who want to be great listeners, improve their tools to help others, leaders and you. Drew Brooks, Executive Director of Faith Partners will be presenting on tools to enter into challenging conversations, like mental health. Each session will focus on a different listening practice or skill. The mental health pandemic is increasing and we can learn how to help each other. We'll build on what we know with a 6 week training for anyone that wants to be a better listener, have the tools to support others and feel confident.”

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

Thursday, January 27

Self-Care for the Caregiver, this event is free and open to the public!

There are 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.”

Registration is not required but highly recommended. Go to <https://www.mhconnect.org/events> to register and to find the Zoom link!



NEW EXPERIENCES

Artur, Naida and their boys, Akhmed and Murad, are enjoying their new home, as well as experiencing more of American culture. The family was invited to share in Thanksgiving dinner and tasted their first turkey. The turkey was a hit with Artur! A Christmas tree went up in the living room, and the aroma of Naida's freshly baked cookies has filled the house.

Snow was another new experience for the family, as snow is a rarity in the part of Russia from which they came. Everyone was suited up with coats and boots to enjoy a family play day in the snow. The boys also received sleds and have had the fun of making snow people. Artur found the snow shovel in the parsonage garage and shoveled his first snow.

The family's days are busy with English lessons, medical appointments, and health assessments. A few of the coalition members have been meeting with the family via Zoom to get better acquainted and to help Artur and Naida develop English skills. Some proficiency in English will be necessary when they become eligible to work in the spring. The ACT-TC coalition is working with Naida and Artur to learn what career paths they wish to pursue, how they can gain experience in those careers, and the long-term implications of their career choices.

Enrollment of the boys in the special public school programs that they need has been a challenge, but the coalition continues to work diligently in meeting this need.

ACT-TC and I are continually grateful for all of the support this outreach ministry has received from the staff, the council, and the congregation. A special note of thanks goes out this month to Owens Companies for installing a humidifier on the parsonage furnace and to Dr. Amy Chi for a dental assessment performed for one of the family members.

If you wish to send a note of welcome to the Magomedov family, feel free to mail it to them at the parsonage. We all look forward to the time when we can get to know them in person.

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

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SUNDAY

Date: February 6, 2022

Speaker: Mark Anderson,
Executive Director, Barbara
Schneider Foundation

Topic: "De-escalation"

Description: Let's talk about de-escalation of a crisis. Crisis is part of life. De-escalation opens the door to recovery, healing and wellness of body, heart, mind and spirit. Physical health, emotional health, mental health and spiritual health are inter-related aspects of wellness for each of us. We become more whole when we reach out to support each other's journey through recovery, and healing to wellness.



SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all, male and female. 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 held in person and on Zoom. For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net

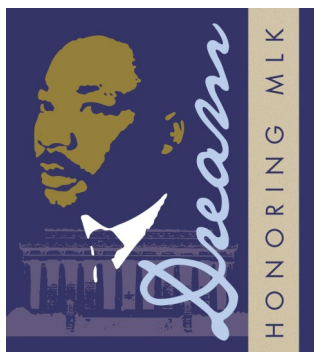
Book Club Schedule

Thurs., January 6 at 7:00 pm

“The Girl with the Louding Voice”
by Abi Dare

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.



RACIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION SERIES

Our education series on Racial Justice continues. Our speakers (David Scherer, Joe Davis and Justice Feldman) will help facilitate some strategic thinking and planning with our church council and staff. And they will be helping to lead us to new ways of thinking and being in the world both as individuals and as a family of faith. **We hope you**

will make every effort to participate in this unique opportunity. We have much to learn about our history and ourselves.

**Date: Sunday, January 16, 2022 Worship at 9:30 am.
Education Hour at 10:30 am**

**Topic: Racial Justice Worship and Adult Education (MLK Sunday)
"From Dreams to Action"**

Speakers: Joe Davis and Dave Scherer, JUSTMove

Description: While we know that we are called to pray and dream for change, we also acknowledge the importance of what Frederick Douglas called "praying with his feet". How do we move beyond simply dreaming to live into God's promised world on a daily basis. This session will help us develop a plan to utilize the "three feet around us" to create the systemic change that we wish to see in our world.

Education Hour Topic: A police and community round table discussion on race and equity initiatives and criminal justice reform.

Guest Speakers: Law enforcement leaders from the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka Police, Hennepin County Attorney's Office and a facilitator by the name of Tru who leads an organization called Tru Access that focuses on conversations around empathy and leadership in law enforcement.

WEDNESDAY SPEAKER SERIES

Our Wednesday Night Adult Education Speaker Series continues. We plan to meet in person but for those who prefer, a Zoom connection will also be available. All are welcome, kids and adults. Speakers start at 6:30 pm. We hope you will join us!

Date: Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 6:30 pm

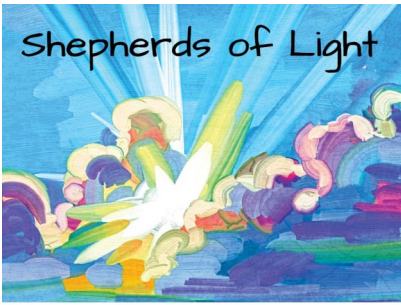
Topic: Science and Religion

Speaker: Greg Cootsona

Description: "Growing Spiritually in a Scientific Age"

We live in a world defined by science and technology, and sometimes it's hard to see how and where our faith fits. The amazing discovery is that science and technology can dramatically enhance our faith. Writer and theologian Greg Cootsona will address particular practices that create a scientifically-engaged spirituality through forgiveness, meditation, and gratitude

Greg Cootsona is an ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) pastor and a lecturer in Religious Studies and Humanities at Chico State University. He also co-directs Science for the Church, which resources Christian congregations as they integrate mainstream science into their ministries. Greg has written *Mere Science and Christian Faith: Bridging the Divide with Emerging Adults* and is active in leadership in many ways in this area.



WAM/SUNDAY SCHOOL New Year!-New Changes in 2022!

We have some exciting news to share with you! Beginning in January, WAM will be renamed Shepherds of Light, Children's Ministry.

After discussions with our staff and the LEARN team, we decided that it was a great time with the new year to re-brand and start something fresh. We chose this title as our kids give us light when we see their faces, when we hear their voices and when we see them in action. The light of God shines through them every day and we want to make this known to our community and beyond.

We also recognized that when our visitors came to Shepherd, they did not always know or understand what WAM stood for. This new name is transparent and states who it is for, the children.

Within Shepherds of Light, we will break it down into three age categories for Sunday School.

- Pre-Kindergarten will be named, Fireflies
- Kindergarten – 2nd grade will be named, Sparklers
- 3rd grade – 5th grade will be named, Stars

Each age group reflects a light that shines in the darkness, just as God's light shines in each of our lives. It will be fun to use this theme of light in all that we do!

Our theme song for this first year is... you guessed it... "This Little Light of Mine!" My hope is that in the very near future, we can sing, dance and learn all kinds of new songs about Light!

I pray that your families are safe, healthy and happy in this new year and I look forward to leading Shepherds of Light!!
Peace, Pastor Sherri

1st Communion News

We are happy to announce that we will have our First Communion celebration on Maundy Thursday, April 14th. Two things will happen before this important time. We will have a class that teaches our students about the Lord's Supper which will be held at the beginning of March at SOTH. (Date/time to be determined) There will be an opportunity for students to make their own chalice through the Hopkins Community Education on Saturday, March 12th. One class will be offered in the morning and one in the afternoon.

I had the chance to visit the Hopkins Community Education and met with Holly Magdanz, Community Partnership Coordinator and the pottery instructor, Nancy Johnson. Nancy taught us how to shape a piece of clay into a chalice, paint the chalice and put our initials on it. She explained to us that the clay will need to dry thoroughly before being glazed and placed into the kiln. It takes about 3 weeks for this work to be completed. I am super excited to see my final product and to share it with you and the students so they can see what they will be creating!

I look forward to this important ministry in the lives of our students and am grateful for the partnership formed with Hopkins Community Education. If you have any questions about this or would like more information, please contact me.

Happy New Year! Pastor Sherri

SHEPHERDS OF LIGHT IMPORTANT PARENT MEETING

January 11 at 6:30 pm

Shepherds of Light, parent meeting will be held at SOTH on Tuesday, January 11th, at 6:30pm in the lounge area to discuss what we want for our younger students in the coming months. With COVID still looming, it is important for us as a community, to talk openly and honestly about the future of learning for our children in the church. Please mark your calendar for this important and vital conversation. If you have any questions, please contact me at sherri.otto@sothchurch.com or 612-251-1342.

Staff Reflection

At Every Turn continued

seminary and the second half of my internship are racing by at record speed. As much as I'm excited to meet the next chapter – the chapter of becoming a pastor – I suddenly feel like dragging my feet because it has come too quickly! I guess this isn't a lesson as much as a realization as we approach the end of this year. Soon it will be 2022 which has felt like "the future" for so long, that I feel nervous to meet it

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 this month: Pastors sometimes need a pastor too. As human beings, we also can get into places where we feel like we're just going through the motions in life. Trying to balance tasks, events, lists and traditions is hard enough in the best of conditions, but with a death in the family, everything feels a little more difficult. I am thankful for my pastor friends that I can lament to, be prayed for, and consoled by, as well as to just be validated and encouraged. I felt cared for in ways that I hope to care for others as well. Being a pastor doesn't mean I am exempt from needing spiritual care.

#2: SOTH does teamwork really well. Many of the challenging lessons I have learned here have been in partnership activities. This is helping me to realize that most of my experiences up until this point have been in situations where I call all the shots and handle all of the execution. Sometimes this is the easiest route, but there's such a rich opportunity for bigger and fuller ideas when we work together. But working with others is a skill, and it is one that I am working hard at attaining. I'm thankful for Pastor Sherri who has walked with me in a number of projects and events and has taught me how to be a better collaborator. I hope I always want to continue this work of being a better teammate. Everyone benefits when ministry is done this way. Jesus had his disciples, right?

#3: Most of the time I love New Years because I love the clean slate! This year, however, it feels more like a new week than a new year. It feels like a really big, looming Monday. I am not sure if this is because Covid has made time warp or if this is somehow just that "normal" feeling of time flying. Either way, I am feeling like my last months of



HAPPINESS IN 2022

By Pastor Sherri Otto

I was in a bit of a funk this past week. Christmas came and went this year without seeing my mom, sister, brothers and their families. We did not get together with some of our kids because they were sick with COVID. Such a strange time, such an odd year and I wonder what 2022 will bring. I was feeling a bit like gloom and doom today.

But then I made a phone call to a very wise woman from Shepherd who said to me, “Happiness is a choice.” This struck me as more than a coincidence for her to say this phrase as I was feeling... well... let’s just say... not so cheery. I wrote down her words as she said them and thought, “She is right!” It is our choice is we are happy or not. If we smile or frown. If we laugh or cry. If we dance or sit. If we sing or snarl. If we compliment or complain.

I’m not calling this my New Year’s resolution (because I usually end up breaking them!), but I am going to try each day to look in the mirror and say, “I have a choice on how I feel, react and live today. For I am blessed and loved by God.” I’m hoping that you join me!

Here is a blessing from one of my favorite devotions by Terry Hershey. I hope this warms your heart today! Wishing you and your family a very HAPPY and BLESSED New Year!!

Created For Joy

I sometimes forget that
I was created for joy
My mind is too busy
My heart is too heavy
Heavy for me to remember
that I have been
called to dance
the sacred dance for life
I was created to smile
to love
to be lifted up
and lift others up
O sacred one
Untangle my feet
from all that ensnares
Free my soul
That we might
Dance
and that our dancing
might be contagious.
Hafiz



Emotional Intelligence continued

Interpersonal includes:

1. Interpersonal relationships require the skill of developing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships that include trust and compassion.
2. Empathy is recognizing, understanding and appreciating how other people feel, including your ability to articulate and show respect for their feelings.
3. Social responsibility is being willing to contribute to society, social groups, and welfare of others.

In all this, it is important to remember others cannot be our gauge for feelings of self-worth.

Each of these areas has impacts on our work, our personal relationships and our own daily life experiences.

Emotional intelligence (EQi) is equally, or actually likely, more important than cognitive intelligence. EQi can make or break you personally and with others. There are strategies for how to improve areas of your EQi that need improvement that can both help you feel better and help with relationships in all settings of life.

If you are interested in a taking an assessment of your emotional intelligence, I am happy to set you up with that. I took one this year through Leaderwise and found the results to be fairly different than what I projected, recognizing no measuring tool for emotions is perfect. I continue to reflect on it because for the most part, I think it is accurate and it gives me an overview as well as an in-depth explanation of what the results mean, as well as actions I can take to improve each area. It suggests some do-able goal setting to help manage my progression to prevent getting in too deep all at once or biting off more than I can chew and, therefore, failing to progress. How are you feeling about your EQi?

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

In December, we had a speaker on Emotional Intelligence. His discussion focused more on how we are navigating our emotional well-being in the pandemic. I would like to communicate more about what emotion intelligence (EQi) is, why it is important, and how you can learn more about your own. I believe this is an incredibly important aspect of living life abundantly and is more important than cognitive intelligence for one's overall life experience and legacy.

The five areas of EQi are: Self-Perception; Self-Expression; Stress Management; Decision Making and Interpersonal. Under each of these categories there are specific areas.

Self-Perception includes:

1. Self-regard is accepting/respecting oneself including strengths and weaknesses, often associated with inner strength and self-confidence.
2. Self-actualization includes a willingness to persistently try to improve oneself and work to engage in meaningful relevant goals that lead to a full, enjoyable life. This is the pursuit of meaning and self-improvement.
3. Emotional self-awareness includes recognizing and understanding one's own emotions, including ability to self-differentiate between one's own emotions, cause of these emotions and how they impact others.

Self-Expression includes:

1. Emotional expression is openly expressing your feelings verbally and non-verbally constructively.
2. Assertiveness involves communicating feelings, thoughts and beliefs openly (including defending personal rights and values in a non-defensive and non-destructive way that is socially acceptable).
3. Independence to be able to be self-directed and not emotionally dependent on others (i.e., can make decisions, plan and complete daily tasks without others' help).

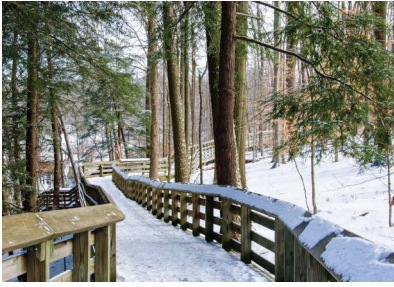
Stress Management includes:

1. Flexibility is the ability to adapt thoughts, emotions and behavior when things are unfamiliar and unpredictable.
2. Stress tolerance is coping with stressful and difficult situations, believing you can manage it, and possibly influence change to a more positive situation.
3. Optimism is an indicator on one's positive attitude and life outlook, remaining hopeful and resilient during occasional setbacks.

Decision Making includes:

1. Problem solving is the ability to find solutions to problems where emotions are involved. Includes understanding how emotions impact decision making.
2. Reality testing is the capacity to remain objective by seeing things as they really are, including recognizing when personal bias and/or emotion can drive you to be less objective.
3. Impulse control is the ability to delay or resist a temptation or desire to act, behave or decide something immediately or rashly.





LEAVE IT BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

I suspect many of us grew up hearing this mantra. My kids would tell you they have many memories of their dad picking up someone else's garbage or repairing golf course turf while reciting this personal value.

This statement has been running through my brain every day lately.

Am I leaving the world better than found it? Are my choices and actions reflecting a "leave it better" mentality? If I am honest, some of my actions and choices are not. I use too many single-use plastic zip bags, some of my actions are more entitled, and even selfish, than considerate of someone with less. At times I do not stop and take the little time necessary to do a repair or help with maintenance of a community space. I could keep listing the many ways I fail at this, but you get the picture.

Leave it better than you found it does not just refer to things or places, it also refers to relationships, communities, work-related fields, and so much more. It refers to the world, all of creation, the physical, relational, etc. This can be overwhelming and cause us to give up before we start. But if we realize that if each of us does small things to the breadth of our ability and availability (or access) together, we can leave it better than we found it.

Maybe this is sort of a New Year's resolution? Make a list of places in your life you can act to make the world a better place. I am doing the same. Here is my starter list:

- 1-Decrease my single-use plastic consumption by half by using alternate reusable items, making for less garbage and climate stress.
- 2-Consider ways I create more fuel usage, i.e., how I can avoid extra trips in the car, order fewer deliveries or combine them for fewer trips, etc.
- 3-Reflect on how I care for others in my community who are vulnerable, and do things that add to their safety and ability to thrive.
- 4-Work to heal relationships that are broken, recognizing this makes the world better for us and for the next generation.
- 5- Be actively involved in my communities to be part of caring for others in the community and be part of actions taken for the larger community around us.

These are just a few ideas. They need more specific action plans with goal dates to make them actionable in order to actually leave the world a better place than I found it. What does your list look like? What are you doing that makes the world a better place? What are you teaching or modeling for those around you in this way to carry on this important value?

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

<http://www.mhconnect.org/>
events

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

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