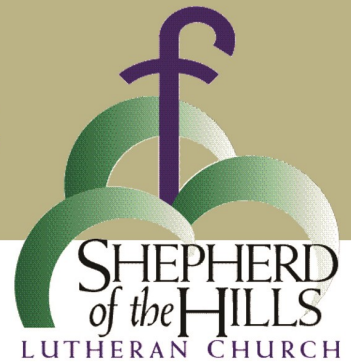


Shepherd's Voice



July 2020

“Confession, Forgiveness and The Kingdom of God”

By Pastor Scott Searl

If you're like me you've probably read too many news stories lately. Maybe you've had to set limits for yourself on your iPhone that reminds you that it's time to put it down! On Sunday I put my phone on my dresser, plugged it in and let it sit alone all afternoon. But it's a bit too late. Swimming in my head have been a multitude of words, advice and recommendations from Facebook to twitter to my newsfeed. There are videos to watch, books to read, attitudes to adopt, emotions to recognize. Our racial bias and white privilege needs to be acknowledged and we must strive to overcome. There are systems to change, policies to address, politicians to review, and systems to rebuild. All of which are worthy, important, and needed. Now is the time for discomfort, disorientation and discovery. It is time to learn and to seek ways to change, personally, institutionally and systemically.

The dream of God's kingdom come is one where the lion and the lamb do indeed lay down together. The dream of God's kingdom where one is judged not by the color of our skin but by the content of our character is one that still needs to come into being. The hope for a world where all are fed, all are loved, and all are able to live into the human being that God created them to be is still not here. We must continue to strive for these dreams. We must also confess the ways we have actively and passively hampered those dreams from being realized. We must come to see that even the most beautiful acts of humanity are still filled with the limitation of our humanity. We must strive and admit. We must yearn for the kingdom of God and confess the ways in which we have not brought it into being.

And, we must know that in so doing we will get some of this wrong. We need book clubs and protests. We need to watch videos and we need to vote for policies that change the status quo. We need to do some honest, vulnerable self-reflection and we must begin to support business's run by people of color. We need to confess, and we need to act. And, we will get some of this wrong. Do not become paralyzed by one opinion article that says, “start a book club” right next to the opinion piece that says, “don't start a book club.” If reading a book is the way you begin, read a book. If you have a neighbor of color and you start by having an uncomfortable conversation with your neighbor, start with that conversation. If you like to watch history, watch a documentary. If you are inspired to protest, protest. If you are inspired to pray, pray! If you are fearful, worried, angry or hurt, talk with someone! There is no wrong way to get started. And we all need to find the way to get started. We need our hearts to change. So, however you feel called to engage in changing your heart, do it! And... we will get some of it wrong. So, we will need to confess, ask for forgiveness and then keep going! To act in ways in which you feel called to act to engage racism is what Luther meant by sin boldly! Just do it! Then when you realize you did it wrong, confess and go again!

Pastor's Message continued on page 2

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Deacon	Brian Henning
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

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Vice President	Julie Luers
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LMCC	Open
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Directions	2
Shawn Wacholz	11
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Pastor Sherri Lawrence	13
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We will also need to act. Like many of you I believe that systemic racial bias is real. I believe that white people like me have been given advantages we did not earn. I believe that the policing system and our judicial system reflect the same racial bias that I find within myself. I believe we have a history that has economically disadvantaged an entire population of people. We are all complicit. We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. And yet, we cannot stop at knowing and confessing. We must continue on to changing and doing. What that means will continue to become clear as you hold yourself accountable to becoming the change that the world needs. What is needed is to strive toward one more incomplete and imperfect step toward the kingdom of God. And, we will get some of this wrong too. One of the greatest gifts of our Christian faith is the honest truth that we are imperfect human beings and that God loves us still. One of the other great gifts of Christianity is that our neighbors and those with whom we disagree are also imperfect and God loves them still. In this Spirit of Love, we must learn, confess and strive to usher in the kingdom of God in our hearts and in the systems and institutions all around us. And... we will get some of it wrong. We will confess, ask for forgiveness and go again. Always striving, with God's help, to usher in the Kingdom of God!

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Pastor Sherri Lawrence and Troy Otto who were married at Shepherd on Friday, June 12th. Wishing you much joy and happiness as you begin your life together!





PRESIDENT'S POST: Can America Live by These Words, Finally?

By Todd Biewen, Church Council President

There is neither Jew nor Gentile; neither slave nor free; nor is there male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)

In 1776, our Founding Fathers wrote: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Such good words and so recognizable. These inspiring words from our Declaration of Independence are taught to every child in our school systems, recited by our presidents, and engraved on great American monuments. The first time I stood with Cindy and our kids at the Jefferson Memorial, I was moved by these words and pleased that my children were seeing them and living in a country that held them up as aspirations. Yes, I value and respect these words, and I'm proud they were conceived as founding principles of our country. But I'm not proud of the tortured route we've taken on race relations and equality in this country; in so many ways, we have failed as a republic in living out the ideals expressed in these words.

It's difficult to know exactly what these words meant to the men who wrote them so long ago. It was such a different time. Some of our Founding Fathers were slaveholders, and most did not consider the races equal in any sense of the word. Thomas Jefferson owned two hundred slaves, profited from their labor, and regarded black people as inferior, untrustworthy, and, of course, as property. To be fair, there were Jefferson contemporaries, like John Adams, who said the Revolution would never be complete until the slaves were free.

The further reality at the time of the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, is that the words "all men are created equal" was applicable only to white, land-owning men. Women, slaves and indentured servants were not considered equal at all. And of course, the road to equal treatment and rights for women and non-white men, has been long and difficult ever since. How many years to abolish slavery? And since the end of the Civil War, how many barriers have been built to prevent equality and justice in this country? Jim Crow Laws, segregation, redlining in housing, unequal pay, disparities in educational opportunities, environmental injustices, mass incarceration and unfair policing practices. How much suffering, death, fear, and dashed potential of individuals has resulted from these injustices?

Continued above

President's Post continued

The Founding Fathers lived so long ago and in such a different world, and they were as imperfect as we are. The good news is, the words they wrote are still driving us to where we want to be and need to go in this country. Over nearly 250 years, Americans have heard these words slightly differently, but they remain simple and powerful.

Fast forward to today, when more and more Americans, led by our youth, are adding their voices to this cause because they are so tired of unequal treatment and systems of racism. The words of the Declaration of Independence have always been there as our guide and inspiration, and we have come some distance on these issues since 1776. But there is so much more work to do, and now is the time to quicken the pace in order that we might reach where God intends for us to be.

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal"

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
August 28, 1963

Peace, Todd

GARDENING HELP

Even though our church building is currently closed, our gardens continue to grow—and so do the weeds! If you would like to help a little or a lot, please contact Gretchen Marble, Cindy Koelsch or Naomi Peterson. Thank you!

Staff Reflection

Breakthrough continued

What I didn't understand at the time, is that they saw me as a white privileged female and I was acting exactly like that. I was "shocked" when they took the Kleenex from me and now wonder how many times no one even offered a Kleenex or even noticed them in their struggles.

What I didn't understand at the time, is that there was a lot more going on in that room that day, than I will ever know. Tensions were high, not only between the women and myself, but between the two women and the one woman and her husband. But I was not supposed to know. I was not "privileged" to know. And I am still learning to be okay with that.

Breakthrough or breakdown. Two words that are more important now than on that day. As a white, privileged female, I want to reach out to you who are reading this.

It is time for us to break through the barriers and break down the walls of racial injustice for our brothers and sisters of color. It is time for us to break through and break down the systemic racism that is in our community and our nation. It is time for us to break through and break down all of the things that we say and hear and think and focus on our neighbor, listening to their cries, having empathy for their stories and truly start to build foundations where we can have conversations with each other. It is time to learn from and learn about and really take to heart what people of color have gone through and continue to go through each day.

Break through and break down through the love of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Peace to you all,
Pastor Sherri



Breakthrough and Breakdown

By Pastor Sherri (Lawrence) Otto

During my time at Luther Seminary, we had a requirement class called SCUPE in which we would engage with the community in a certain area, research the community and then do a project in order to bring about awareness or change. I was fortunate that during that year, it was held at a church near the north side of Minneapolis.

I had an opportunity to meet some community leaders in the area one Saturday afternoon, to learn about their community and what struggles they had been facing. It was an experience that changed me that day and is still changing me today. I will try and summarize this as best I can.

When I arrived, I saw a young woman who I recognized! I had given her a tour of the jail just a week prior to this and so she ran up to me and gave me a big hug. It put me at ease as I did not know a single person in the room. It was a very casual setting with chairs and couches placed in a circle. I sat down waiting for others to arrive. One of the women who owned the place said to me, "So, you work at a jail and you want to be a pastor? Are you going to preach about the system or about Jesus?"

I was taken aback as her tone seemed accusatory in nature. I told her I would preach about the love of Jesus. She then asked me, "What does your Jesus look like?"

I again did not know what to say and stammered to find my words. I assumed that she was speaking about color and so I explained to her and the group that I grew up in a very small town, with no diversity and so my Jesus was very white. I'm not exactly sure what I rambled on about after that, but she was having none of it. She called me out and I felt as though I was being attacked. I did not understand what was happening or how we had gotten to this point, but I started to cry because of what her and another woman were saying about me.

At this point someone tried to throw me some Kleenex and the woman intercepted and said, "So a white female comes in and cries and you think she deserves Kleenex?" The young woman I had given a tour of the jail to was crying also. It was a very tense situation and I did not know what they wanted from me. I wanted to scream. I wanted to run out. But I stayed. Things calmed down and we went on to different subjects, but I just sat and listened, not saying anything at all. My voice had been shut down. Later we had a meal together and I knew that I could not leave that place until I had some type of closure or peace. So, I asked one of the women if I could speak to her in private and she agreed. She explained to me that she thought I was on the verge of a "breakthrough." I told her I felt like I was on the verge of a "breakdown." We hugged after our conversation and I valued that moment.

What I didn't understand at the time, was the fact that they saw me as "the system." That I was Law Enforcement that was in their space and not a person that wanted to learn from them.



Moving from Prayer to Action

By Deacon Brian Henning

When I first heard of the news of the murder of George Floyd, I don't think I really even processed it. I had a million things on my mind and the news didn't even hit my brain. As time went by, it did finally and slowly begin to sink in what had happened.

I found myself silently asking, "Why, God, why?" Then, my silent cries turned into a silent prayer for peace and comfort. But, I kept finding none - no peace, no comfort. Instead, I found revelation after revelation that my peace and comfort has directly contributed to the murders of the Georges, Ahmauds, Breonnas, and so many more of our siblings of color. And I didn't know what to do.

Then, while sitting on the couch with my puppy, I got a Twitter alert: "Minneapolis burns in wake of murder of George Floyd." "What?" I thought. I quickly grabbed my remote and searched for whichever broadcast I could find that was covering what was happening. Again, as I watched the news, I cried, "Why, God, why?" Then, my silent cries turned into a silent prayer for peace and comfort. And, again, I found revelation after revelation that my peace and comfort...

Two weeks after the murder, many of us knelt for eight minutes and forty-six seconds in our parking lot. Many of us have prayed a variety of prayers and have taken the time to listen to our siblings of color. Now, as we have heard, the murders of black people continue, even in this time of a hyper-focused populace. If you are anything like me, you may be wondering if God paid any attention to any of our prayers to end violence and hatred in the country. If you are anything like me, you might be now asking, "God, are you there? Are you listening?" Or, to borrow the words of the psalmist, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken us?"

Well, my dear friends, the good news is that God has heard our prayers. God has not forsaken us, but instead has activated God's physical presence on Earth to get some work. Jesus has been activated and is ready to go. The bad news, at least for some of us, is that, as we heard on Pentecost Sunday from the Apostle Paul to the Church in Corinth, Jesus is made up of all of us. The physical presence of God on Earth in the person of Jesus, is made up of all who have participated in the water, bread, and wine of Jesus. In other words, God is activating you and me to do the work of our prayers.

This is a hard concept for many of us and if the work of justice frightens, fear not! You are part of a very large group of people. However, as we well know, it is long past time for us do the work we've been hoping someone else would do for us. If you have prayed for peace or justice in the past couple of weeks, now is the time to do the work. Now is the time

Moving from Prayer continued

to ask yourself some pretty hard questions. How do you participate in the systems that allow or encourage supremacies, biases, and inequalities? Think about where you work, where you shop, where you play, and where you live. Are those places and communities simply non-racist or are they anti-racism, working to restore equality for all people? How does your lifestyle prohibit marginalized voices, particularly BIPOC voices, from informing your worldview?

We must ask these questions of ourselves and of our communities. They are hard questions and we will get the answers wrong. However, what's most important is that we try. The age of complacency and ignoring the problem is over and it is the job of people of privilege to ensure the health, safety, and happiness of all people.

In Memory

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Judy Aarness and family on the death of her husband Virgil Aarness. We pray God's grace and peace in the days ahead.

Thanks for Prayers

To all, our thanks for including Dave and Edith, my brother and his wife, in your prayers. Edith came through surgery with flying colors, no continuing pain, and they both were able to celebrate Fathers' Day at the home of their daughter Vonnie.

~Darrell & Helga Egertson



mental
health
connect

We help open doors

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.

Check mhconnect.org (the MHC website) for more information on:

Breakfast of Hope: The annual fundraiser Breakfast of Hope is rescheduled for Tues., Aug. 11th at 8 am via Zoom. If you had registered for the breakfast in June you do not need to re-register. The speaker's topic is resiliency.

Let's Connect: A new community called "Let's Connect." This will be a virtual and safe place where we can talk about mental health, life and share stories. It is like a support group not therapy group. It will be 45 min on Thurs. evenings at 8 pm.

Ending the Silence event: On July 13th at 6:30 pm NAMI and MHC are offering an event "ENDING the Silence." This will include good information for teens and parents.



A Summer of Promises

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

I was almost glad to hear Pastor Sherri say she was tired in her sermon this past Sunday. I am so exhausted, but I think I am being a wimp when I hear myself say that. As a farm kid, if you did not do hard manual labor from

dawn to dark every day or you did not drive a tractor all night for days during harvest you had no reason to say the words, "I am exhausted."

However, the very real exhaustion that accompanies being in the middle of a pandemic, the unavoidable realization that our neighbors of color are still not being treated fairly and we must be part of the solution, and the ever increasing need to fact check anything anyone says along with our personal daily challenges can make it feel hopeless most days right now.

How can I settle my brain and create space for hope?

Places I am finding hope this summer:

- 1) When I am outside in God's amazing creation I can remember God's promises.
- 2) At night if I am where I can see the stars, I can be reminded of God's promises.
- 3) When I am around children of all ages, I am reminded of God's promises.
- 4) When I remember I just need to live hour to hour, day by day I am reminded of God's promises.
- 5) When I experience someone who knows me, sees me, cares enough to reach out to me and see how I am, I am reminded of God's promises.
- 6) When I witness the joy of healing, and the peace of life's end, I am reminded of God's promises.
- 7) When I ask for forgiveness for mistakes I have made and I feel forgiveness, I remember God's promises.
- 8) When I witness my community of faith, imagine and work together to do things to help those in need of help, I remember God's promises.
- 9) When I send prayer requests to a group wanting to be prayer warriors for others, I remember God's promises.
- 10) When I break bread at the table with my family or my community, I remember God's promises (even virtually on Zoom 😊).

There seems to be an endless list of places and times that I am reminded of God's promise to me (and you, and all people) to be with us thru pandemics, and the work of solving racial injustice, unemployment, job changes, education changes, loss, summer schedule changes, illness, loneliness, mental health challenges and new normals (and anything else you might be experiencing).

What things in your life or day remind you of God's promises for you? I would love to hear them! I challenge you to name them each day this summer.



Being White

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

I am not an expert on being white, even though I have been all 57 plus years of my life, was raised by white parents in a town with only white people, and have spent all of my life in predominately white neighborhoods, schools, and work groups.

Like many people I have had to read and listen in attempt to learn to understand the struggle and injustices that people of color experience most days and to understand the need for me to understand what it is to be white. So far here is what I have learned:

- 1) This is not about us (white people), so making it about you is not helpful. Listen, be empathetic, stand with and walk with, support!
- 2) Read, listen, learn about how to be more aware of white privilege, ways the white race has or continues to oppress those of color, wonder about and act in ways that dismantle these systems.
- 3) Talk about race with your kids. Do not attempt to not see color as that diminishes the beauty of each culture and individual people. Instead celebrate, admire, see the beauty in all God's people. Teach them about our history of social injustices, to listen, support, notice how we are each different and how we are alike, celebrate each.
- 4) White culture. Sometimes to better understand another person's culture you need to understand your own culture. As a white person, what is your cultural identity? How would you describe what it means to be white in the world? How does that differ from others in our country? world? Is that ok? Or should things change?
- 5) White Guilt. Most white people experience white guilt, feeling guilty about what privileges we have experienced because we are white and how those have added to racial oppression. Feeling guilty, while a normal response for many in the journey of empathy for the oppressed, can stop us from listening, learning and acting. We can get stuck in sort of a guilt rumination. Take a minute to work through it, and do not stop your progress of helping others.
- 6) Where is God in this? Maybe this is too simplistic...I believe we are all God's children, all receivers of God's promises. Time and time again Jesus modeled care for all, especially the oppressed. As the privileged it may feel harder than getting a camel through the eye of a needle to see racial injustice never end after its long, terrible history but it is what we are called, even commanded to do.

Being White continued

This is not an exhaustive list!!! These are just a few things I have learned through reading and listening the last few years. I continue to read, learn, lament, and listen to increase my knowledge, and attempt to stand up with anyone experiencing racial injustice. I am in the midst of reading several more books again right now.

Titles like:

“White Fragility”

by Robin DiAngelo;

“Raising White Kids”

by Jennifer Harvey;

“Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria”

by Beverly Tatum;

“Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Race Story”

by Debby Irving;

the classic article:

“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

by Peggy McIntosh.

Two more in my library I have yet to read are:

“How To Be An Antiracist”

by Ibram X Kendi;

“So You Want to Talk about Race”

by Ijeoma Oluo.

There are many others which are good places to start listening or reading to learn also. Let me know the ones you would recommend!

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