

Shepherd's Voice

July 2021



"Thanks, Gratitude, Lament and Hope"

By Pastor Scott Searl

Thank You!

As we slowly come back together after over a year apart, I wanted to take a moment to say, "Thank you!" During the pandemic about a third of all churches saw their financial giving drop. Another third saw their giving increase and about a third maintained their giving. I am grateful that our general fund giving remained consistent during the past year. Thank you to everyone who continued to share generously! Then a HUGE thank you to everyone who made promises to our parking lot capital appeal! If we took this giving into account, we grew our giving significantly! Thanks to your generosity we have \$390,000 pledged to the appeal. I cannot say thank you enough! We anticipate that we will start work on the project in July. What a nice new welcome everyone will receive when our parking lot and sidewalks are all new! Thank you for all your financial generosity that helps ensure God's love flows from our family of faith.

Gratitude

Then I also wanted to offer a word of gratitude that I have been experiencing every day. Every time I walk from my car into a grocery store, or my local hardware store, or even into church, I say a word of thanks for these amazing vaccines. Too often we pit science against religion. An unfortunate and unnecessary division. Our minds are gifts from God. Our insights about how the world works are gifts from God. Our ability to influence and even manipulate the world around us is a gift from God. Every time we cure a disease, save a life, learn something new about our world we should offer our thanks to God for a world that is knowable and that we can know. I find it amazing to breathe without a mask. I am so aware of the air around in ways that I never have been before. It's almost a little meditative. So, join me in offering a word of gratitude for these vaccines with each breath you take!

Lament

Relatedly I find myself overwhelmed from time to time when I am reminded that more than 600,000 people have died from Covid-19. There is no way for me to get my mind around that scale of human loss. I really don't know how to grieve, or mourn, or even react to such an overwhelming number. So instead, I've simply been offering a word of lament even as I offer my word of gratitude for all those who did not arrive at this other side of this pandemic. I pray that God fulfills the promises that God has made throughout history. The promise that in both life and death we belong to God. The promise that the tomb will be empty for us all.

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Faith Community Nurse Kaye Wothe
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Building Manager Blair Prax

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

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I also pause and offer a few moments of lament and thanks for all those who kept working despite the risks: nurses, doctors, therapists, nursing home staff, grocery store employees, teachers, and school staff. I pray that we find ways to offer our thanks, and our laments for those who are victims of this disease.

Hope

As we begin to find our way back into the world, I am hopeful for what God has in store for us. As VBS winds down and we enter into a slower summer pace, we are already anticipating our fall ministry. Racial justice will take center stage for us over the next year as we work with three local consultants paid for by a grant from Augsburg University. I also look forward to our mental health Sundays, Wednesday with kids, and full worship services. There is much to hope for, and much to look forward to. As always, I am grateful for our family of faith. For what God calls us to, for how you all care for each other, and for your generosity in funding our mission together! You fill me with hope!



PRESIDENT'S POST:

Share, Save, Spend!

By Adam Driscoll, Council President

The members of your Church Council wanted to give you an update on the Payment Protection Plan or PPP grant which Shepherd received, and how we've used those funds in support of our mission. As many of you know, at the onset of the pandemic, the federal

government, through its PPP program sought to get loans to employers to help keep people employed and paychecks getting distributed to employees. Shepherd sought and received such a loan, which was later converted into a grant, which did not require repayment. This was done to help our financial health in an uncertain period, and to assure that we could keep our staff employed in a pandemic whose length and impact was very uncertain at the time. The good news, as we've discussed in financial reports, is that even during the pandemic, our church family remained tremendously gracious. Our giving remained steady, while our expenses were less than planned, as there were fewer expenses from a closed church.

That brings us to this year, when we found ourselves with these additional funds and asked what we should do with it. The council deliberated, and a small group made of Jill Miller, Dave Cousins, Pastor Scott and myself set out to make a plan, and ultimately adopted a Share, Save, Spend approach in which we're taking the funds that we received via PPP and sharing just over 50%, saving around 33% and spending the remainder. For our sharing, we sought to use these funds to positively impact our community, and we have chosen two types of recipients. First, we looked to the non-profit sector and have given gifts to Mental Health Connect, and the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative, two local non-profits which we have a history of partnering with. Second, we decided to grant gifts to local businesses, as we know many businesses did not make it through the pandemic, and others are currently on the edge. Working with the City of Hopkins as well as the Hopkins Business and Civic Association, we solicited applications from local businesses, to determine where we could make the most impact to help small businesses keep their people employed, and positively impact our community. We received 11 applications, and decided to award gifts to 7 local businesses: Hoagies Family Restaurant, Nachos Mexican Grill, V Nails, Samba Taste of Brazil, Suburban Tailors, Tibet Corner, and Costa Rica Ballroom Dance Studios. I'm proud to share just how overwhelmed, grateful, and thankful our gift recipients were. Thanks to your faithful support of Shepherd, we have been given this unique and innovative way to positively impact our community, and put our mission into action. Thank You! There's still more we can do to help our local business community, and it is by bringing our business to these and many other great local businesses.

Continued above

President's Post continued

Not to be forgotten, for our spend portion, we have allocated funds for improvement of the parsonage, to facilitate our future goal of housing a refugee family. Finally, the portion of these funds that we are saving will be reassessed at the end of 2021. At that time, we will determine if there have been unforeseen pandemic impacts for which these funds can help Shepherd's financial life, or whether we have an opportunity to share more. Personally, I am hopeful that we will remain as strong through the pandemic as we have been, and that we get to use this grant to continue to help our community, and help use it for its original intended purpose - to keep people employed and earning paychecks.

In last month's newsletter, I spoke of joy and gratitude at the things we've been able to accomplish and overcome in the pandemic. Let this be another example of the great things we can and have done together in a difficult time. I am so grateful that we are getting through this (AND GETTING TO MEET IN PERSON!) Thank you for your support of Shepherd, which has allowed us to take from our abundance, and share in our mission to our community. Thanks be to God!

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.

For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net

Book Club Schedule

Wed., July 21, 7:00 pm "The Dearly Beloved" by Cara Wall

WEDNESDAY AM BIBLE STUDY

Please mark your calendars for our summer meeting dates:
July 21 and August 18.

Come for Bible study, food, 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.



VBS 2021 RECAP:

God Welcomes Everyone, and God Calls Us to Do the Same!

We were so excited to partner with Calvary Lutheran and welcome 17 preschool and elementary aged kids to SOTH for a 5-day VBS program June 21-25. There is no doubt that the 21 volunteers were the reason that it went so well!!

Our students studied Bible stories that showed how welcoming Jesus is to ALL PEOPLE, and that we are called to be welcoming to ALL PEOPLE as well! Each day had its own theme:

God Heals; God Includes; God Invites; God Welcomes; and God Cares. We did small group activities, made crafts, played games, ate snacks and sung lots of songs to help us learn these great facts.

This world would be a better place if we all could remember the words from our theme song for the week. Our kids will be a beautiful gift to the world if they do!

God's Great Big Tent

[Refrain]

Everybody's welcome in God's great big tent, great big tent! You don't have to be a big star, pay your dues, or pass some test.

[Verse]

Jesus opens the door, sends the great invitation, Heals lepers and holds little kids in his arms, Shows love to a woman from another nation, Teaches us how know who our neighbors are.

[Refrain]

Jesus calls us to heal with our words and our actions, include everyone in our circle of friends, Invite more than just those we think will repay us, Welcome folks from afar, care for neighbors and then we can say:

[Refrain

Everybody's welcome in God's great big tent!

So thankful!

Pastor Sherri, Pastor Anne and Pastor Wade

VBS Highlights

















Faith Community Nurse

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

We are grateful to be back to in person worship!

Starting July 4th and into the foreseeable future, we will open the worship to anyone who would like to attend. No sign up required. Masks are not required. We kindly request that those who have not yet been vaccinated, to please wear a mask. Starting July 11th we will begin to offer coffee outside when the weather permits. Zoom church will continue to be available.

As you know things may change. The return team (Scott Edmundson, Jodi Rogness, Don Wothe, Terry Jensen and Blair Prax) will continue to meet and offer guidance or changes along the way. We look forward to seeing you live in person (or on zoom) as we begin to make a return to in-person worship.



WHAT IS FREEDOM?

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

As a country that largely began over the desire for increased freedoms, there is often a lot of talk about freedom. Sometimes from the perspective of oppression. Sometimes from the perspective of feeling the loss of

the right to choose. Most recently, a big one has come from public health mandates needed to manage the pandemic. As a health care professional, married to a health care professional, this has caused me pause and a lot of mental exploration. I can tell you firsthand accounts of people of varying ages who experienced severe illness or lost family members, as well as others impacted, that very few people are even talking about in the COVID-19 numbers, i.e., the number of premature babies born with huge lifelong health issues secondary to the need to be delivered early to avoid the death of their mother and the baby while still pregnant. And of course, no matter what the numbers, if the one in 1,000 person who gets deathly ill is your beloved person or you, then suddenly numbers matter less.

During this time, I found myself recalling times when I have walked through old cemeteries, seeing grave markers for whole families including several children who died as children and the young mother, all from one family. The grave markers tell you they died from a pandemic illness of the time. The father and often one, maybe two of the children lived longer lives, buried nearby the others but with a later year of death that reflected a more typical age of death for the era. When seeing many of these throughout the large, old cemeteries and reading about the families nearly wiped out by small pox, the 1918 pandemic and others, I find myself thinking public health practices add to our freedoms greatly, not take away freedoms. I, and most people I know had children, fully expecting all of them will outlive the parent, and at minimum, live into adulthood. Historically when the world has had pandemics, people could not expect that. They might have six children, only for one to two to survive. Often one parent died as well, many times it was the mother who died, probably because she was the caregiver to the sick child. I have enjoyed the freedom to have children, and for them and I to live in the world moving freely with little concern for a readily communicable disease to be our third leading cause of death risk, as it was this past year.

I was raised to believe, and I experienced, that freedom comes with some sacrifice, especially as the child of a decorated front-line war veteran who suffered from his war experience the rest of his life. I believe any reasonable person would say wearing masks, getting vaccinated with vaccines that are tested and deemed safe by experienced medical scientists, and doing things that decrease spread and the development of variant disease, is the least traumatic way to act to maintain our freedoms. Freedom for no one is to

What is Freedom? continued

disregard these basic public health policies without regard for our freedom and the freedom of others to move around the country and world with relative safety. Who was raised to believe their actions do not impact others? And, that a disregard for how our actions impact others is acceptable?

ONE more thing, as a nurse, much of my career has been spent working with cancer and organ transplant patients who are severely immune suppressed. For some, this is only during their year or so of treatment, for others this is for several years or the rest of their life (i.e., decades). Over ten million people in the United States alone are in this category and many are unable to get enough of an immune boost from the COVID-19 vaccine to obtain immunity. They are depending on the rest of us to get vaccinated so they can go to the store, to church, and other normal life places with some security that others will not infect them. Recently a friend told me he had been vaccine hesitant, but when he realized getting vaccinated protected others, he knew he needed to do it. This is another reason herd immunity is important.

Early in the vaccine rollout, I was admittedly very frustrated with the antivaccine folks. I have prayed and worked on finding empathy within me for them. I have listened to those I know who are vaccine-hesitant. Everyone arrives at this decision for individual reasons, there is no one reason. Most recently, I have realized one of the reasons many of these folks have in common is that they are simply afraid. It took me a long time to realize this, as some of this vaccine-hesitant group in my circle of connections are people who have very strong personalities, so I was slow to consider fear as the reason. This realization helped me feel empathy toward them, as I do for anyone who is fearful for any reason. I have also been more aware that I have access to medical scientists in my own life, a long history of trusted medical providers as well as knowledge of things like immune suppression and its impact, etc. Most of the people I encounter with vaccine fears have none of those resources. I am also reminded that taking information from only scientifically reputable sources was strongly taught to me in college. Turning in the daily 23-page care plan using even one source considered not scientifically reputable was grounds for failure. As a former Advanced Care Nurse colleague used to say, "Data Walks, BS Talks." When medicine becomes politics, it's BS, not data. So, I pray for those who are fearful of the vaccine with a truly caring heart. I pray for all of us.

On this 4th of July, what is freedom to you? Did those who acted with respect to public health directives (i.e., masks, vaccine, distancing) that limited the spread of pandemic disease add to your freedom or take away from it? Freedom is not just about you or me, it's about all of us.

Kaye Wothe Faith Community Nurse



MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT Mental Health Resources and Education can be found on their webpage: http://www.mhconnect.org/ events

Staff Reflection and Youth News

SUMMER FESTIVAL CAMP

We are super excited to have nine students signed up for Summer Festival Camp held on July 18-22nd. The camp is held at Gustavus Adolphus College, and we even get to stay in the dorms and eat in their cafeteria! We will play a ton of games, have great discussions about the Bible, rock out to fantastic music and listen to challenging and relevant speakers. We will spend time together as a SOTH group, but we will also meet new people from all over Minnesota.

We know this is going to be an amazing time with our students! If you want more info, check out the camp's website here: https://summerfestivalcamp.com/ But you can call or email us as well!

We can't wait!

Peace,
Pastor Sherri and Pastor Anne

SUMMER FUN FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Come join us on July 11th and July 25th from 4:00 – 5:30 for a time of fun, friendship, games and of course, food!! We will meet on the patio, north side of Shepherd. Contact Pastor Sherri or Pastor Anne with any questions.



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!

Getting back to seeing people in person has given me much more opportunity for getting to visit with people without the requirement of a phone or a computer! Thanks to visiting people in their healthcare facilities or homes, and having meals together, I have learned the true privilege and joy that comes from sharing in people's personal lives with them.

This is a sacred role for a pastor. Some might call it a responsibility, and I am sure it is written on "job descriptions" for ministers, but it is far more than just a job requirement. It feels more like a gift to be invited into people's private lives. Whether it is in regard to healthcare situations, relationship conflicts, death of family members or other family emergencies, it is an honor to be invited into people's real trials and life circumstances.

This is a hugging congregation! The more in-person gatherings that we have at SOTH, the more I learn how close this community is. A lot of you express care for one another in hugs. I appreciate this trait anyway, but even more so when someone asks for a hug before just diving in for one. I am sure those who don't like to hug as much feel respected and cared for when someone asks first.

There are often more than one right answers when it comes to decisions in ministry. With church-life usually being very personal and individual, it is impossible to find events or programs that will suit everyone. God has made each of us very unique, and therefore God communicates with us and through us in just-as-unique and individual ways. We learn differently, care about things differently and are excited about different things. This is all part of being created in God's image!

And while this is absolutely amazing, it makes church planning a little tricky. Planning something that sounds good, may only be great for a few people... and yet a different idea will be the same for only a few people as well. I really like the phrase "people over programs" meaning that the relationships with real-life-people are far more important than planning the best event or program.

I have learned that this lesson is not something that is just learned once, rather it is going to have to be a mantra for my ministry practice.

Grace and peace! Pastor Anne

Staff Reflection



THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

By Pastor Sherri Otto

What do you want to be when you grow up?

I remember being asked that as a young child and I never knew what to say. Should I give the answer that I thought my parents would want me to give? Should I say the same thing as my best friend because we were inseparable? Could I dare say the truth, the crazy answer that I wanted to be a rock star?

As I was entering my Senior year, it felt like everyone seemed to know what they wanted to go to school for. Everyone, except me. I still had no idea of what I wanted to be when I grew up. My best friend was going to school in Rochester, so I started to look at the two-year college there. After paging through their catalogue (we did not do this online!), I decided my degree would be in Law Enforcement for no other reason than I wanted to help people and it was a different career choice than everyone else I knew. Not great reasons for going to school! 12 years ago, I finally found what I wanted to be when I grew up. I went back to school and am now your pastor.

I started pondering this question of "What do you want to be when you grow up" as my daughter is now thinking about attending college. She has been working a full-time job since she graduated and didn't want to go to college right away as she was unsure of what she wanted to do. She now has a goal of working part-time while earning her two-year degree. She is 19 years old, and I refuse to ask her the question of what she wants to be when she grows up. I pray that she tries her best, that she is kind and loving and that if she falls, she has the tools to get back up. And I pray she understands that I get it, that I have been there and that it is okay not to know.

I feel strongly that this is not the right question we should be asking our kids. There is so much pressure on our children to know what they want to do, which school they should be going to, what their grades are and what kind of volunteer work they have done just to put it on a college application. They unfortunately are the ones that suffer, for how many of us knew what we wanted to do at the age of 14, 15 or 16.

A few years ago, I traveled with a group of students to a camp and had 10-9th grade girls in my cabin. During a time in our small group, I asked them what kinds of things stressed them out. Every girl, every single one said this... that they were expected to know what they wanted to do once they were finished with high school. In the 9th grade!! I asked them how many knew what they wanted and there was not one person in the group that did.

Continued above

The Right Questions continued

I propose that this month, in honor of our own Independence Day here in the United States, that we start to ask new and different questions for our youth, freeing them from the stress and worries of the future. Instead of questioning what they want to be when they grow up or where they are going to school, consider asking these questions...

- What kind of person do you want to be?
- What makes you special or unique?
- Where does your passion lie?
- What brings you joy?

If we ask these questions, maybe we could change the focus and stress from "Oh my gosh, I don't know what to do?" to one that states, "My passion lies in X, Y and Z and I am the most joyful when I do this." Let them know that they are supported and loved and are a beloved child of God, no matter what or where this passion lies. Allow them to dream and become what God created them to be.

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Jeremiah 29:11 where it states this, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." When I hear this verse, I believe that God has and continues to guide me in all that I do and in all who I am. And in this I find a peace that the world cannot give. Thanks be to God!

Peace, Pastor Sherri

Mental Health Resources & Education

PTSD continued

Many of our coping and relaxation methods were taken away.

We were either isolated, lonely, or we couldn't find a minute to ourselves.

We saw or heard about an incredible number of people dying.

We worried about loved ones or ourselves being exposed and becoming ill. Some of us did deal directly with Covid-19.

We grieved without community... without hugs.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD is a when a person has difficulty recovering after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying, shocking, or dangerous event.

Such events may include:

- A violent crime
- Domestic abuse (verbal, physical, or sexual)
- Death of a loved one
- Serious accident (car, bicycle, sport, etc.)
- Military service experience
- Fearful days of the COVID-19 pandemic
- And many other possibilities...

PTSD may last for months or years with **triggers** that can bring back memories creating intense physical and emotional responses.

Physical and Emotional Responses:

- Flashbacks (reliving the traumatic event)
- Bad dreams
- Frightening thoughts
- Avoidance behaviors
- Anxiety
- Depression
- · Reactive or easily aroused emotions
- Mood changes
- Cognitive struggles
- Regression in children (bed wetting, not talking or forgetting how to talk, acting out scary event in play, being extra clingy with trusted adults, etc.)

What to do if you or a loved one may be experiencing PTSD...

- Get help from a Mental Health Professional.
- Mental Health Connect 612.312.3377
- Hennepin County Crisis Line 612.348.2787
- M-Health Fairview Emergency Room 612.273.5640
- Seek support from trusted love ones.
- Learn how to respond in a safe and healthy way to situations that feel threatening.

PTSD and the Pandemic...

There was chronic stress on everyone, most of the time.

Our livelihoods/healthcare may have been impacted.

We had more responsibilities such as remote work and remote learning or we were essential workers risking our own health.

PTSD continued above

A HISTORY OF LIRS Over 80 years of welcome Submitted by Paul Bohnsack

(For more information see this link: https://www.lirs.org/80-

IMMIGRANT years-of-welcome/)
MINISTRY

For 80 years, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee

Service (LIRS) has offered welcome and hope to more than half a million refugees. Since 1939, LIRS has transformed lives, with the support of people like you, to welcome the most vulnerable to the United States — from sea to shining sea. Together they have supported, equipped and empowered these new Americans, while advocating for policy that protects all of God's children.

500,000 REFUGEES RESETTLED

1939 LUTHERAN ROOTS

The New York-based National Lutheran Council (NLC), founded in 1918 to respond to such post-World War I needs as immigration and refugee resettlement, sets up a Welfare Department with an office for the "rehabilitation and placement of Lutheran refugees." It helped 522 refugees in its first year of operations.

Following the immediate aftermath of WWII, LIRS resettled 30,263 Displaced Persons from Germany and Eastern Europe.

1956 Help for Hungarians

1959 Crisis in Cuba

1972 Expanding Our Welcome

Ugandan dictator Idi Amin expels some 75,000 citizens from the country, 2,000 of whom are accepted into the U.S. as "parolees". LIRS resettles 600 new arrivals as a result.

1975 Vietnam

1980 100,000 and counting

In 1980, LIRS hit the 100,000 mark in refugees resettled since World War II. In the same year, the American Homecoming Act granted U.S. admission to 10,000 Amerasian children fathered by U.S. citizens. The year also witnessed the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, which created a permanent and systematic procedure for the admission of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the U.S.

1990s Conflict in The Balkans

2000s Sudan, Burma, Tibet, Bhutan, Afghanistan & Iraq

Today The Lutheran Welcome Endures

After 80 years of welcome, LIRS and its partners continue answering the call to sponsor and support immigrants and refugees with open doors, open arms, and open hearts. Today, Lutheran congregations support the work of LIRS by offering Circles of Welcome to refugees, assisting with Reception and Welcome for immigrants who have been released from immigration detention, and participation in projects such as Hope for the Holidays and Migrant and Refugee Sunday.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35

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

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