

Shepherd's Voice



March 2020

“Gratitude, Culture and Welcome”

By Pastor Scott Searl

Sitting in our staff meeting yesterday I began to reflect on the past few months. We celebrated with Pastor Joanna as she began her new adventure as a senior pastor. We celebrated with our organist and musician David as he begins to enjoy the fruits of his long career, making the transition this summer to being fully retired. And we have given thanks for Kevin our faithful custodian as he begins his next career as full-time grandpa! All the while our staff has taken on additional responsibilities. Deacon Brian has become our regular worship leader and preacher. Kaye our Faith Community Nurse has stepped into the pulpit, added additional programming responsibilities for our young families, and made more visits with folks than ever before. Shawn has fielded more questions and concerns about all things pastoral and financial. And Emily has stepped into a new expanded role leading all our musical ensembles and leading worship every Sunday. Please, please say an extra thank you to each of our staff who have done more than their share of work in this significant transition. I am so grateful for each of them. These are extraordinary people who bring God's love and light into our family's world every day.

Now, as we prepare to welcome Sherri Lawrence into our family as our soon to be associate pastor, special thanks to our call committee, Scott Edmundson, Alysa Horsman, Christa Meland, Andy Jensen and Carole Schulze! As each of these folks can attest, it is a significant responsibility to prayerfully consider our next pastoral leader. It takes time, energy and wisdom. Please, please say an extra thank you to each of them!

Finally, as a staff we have begun to reflect on the key stories and values that form and shape the culture here at Shepherd. We've asked each other to share the stories of our recent past that help remind us of who we are as a family of faith, and what are the values that we share. Deacon Brian noted how we clearly value our kids by prominently displaying their artwork in the front of our sanctuary. The Christmas tapestry is a reminder that our diversity, our flaws, our imperfections and our mistakes are beautiful, beloved, forgiven and even highlighted by God's love right in front of us all. Perfection is not our goal, but forgiveness, hope and compassion are the values that come from Jesus' love for us all.

As we prepare to welcome Sherri, I would love to hear from each of you. What are the stories that have shaped you here at Shepherd? I know for some of our kids, this is the place where they feel most like themselves and are affirmed in ways that they are not in other places. When you think of Shepherd, what story or value comes to mind? Maybe it's the way we've highlighted mental health concerns and you've found ways to confess your own struggles and have found help. Or maybe it's the way we've engaged in difficult conversations about political life or immigrants or time with others in classes or conversation.

Pastor's Message continued on page 9

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

Staff:

Pastors	Scott Searl, Sherri Lawrence
Assistant/Visitation Pastor	Fred Jensen
Music Director	Emily Koski
Deacon	Brian Henning
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

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	Open
Evaluation	Chris Polston

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

Worship Times	1
Directions	2
Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Scott Searl	12
Pastor Sherri Lawrence	13
Brian Henning	14
Blair Prax	15
Emergency Message Mailbox	24
Kaye Wothe	25

Shepherd Online!

Pr. Scott Searl	scott@sothchurch.com
Pr. Sherri Lawrence	sherri.lawrence@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Kaye Wothe	kaye.wothe@sothchurch.com
Brian Henning	brian.henning@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com



MEET PASTOR SHERRI LAWRENCE!

On Sunday, February 16 the congregation voted unanimously to call Pastor Sherri Lawrence as our next Associate Pastor.

Ministry is a second career for Pastor Sherri Lawrence. Prior to attending seminary, she spent more than two decades as a detention deputy at the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office. There, she developed a strong theology about who our neighbor is. "I found this passion, this idea, this call, that even though the people I worked with were considered 'inmates,' they were also human beings, created by a God who loves them and cares for them," she said.

Studying at Luther Seminary affirmed and expanded this belief, which is still very much a part of Pastor Sherri's core theology today. "I want to show that God's love is for all people and that it is important that we, as Christians, show that love by how we engage with others," she said.

"Through hospitality, loving the neighbor, whoever that may be, being in community with others, accepting those who may be different from us, showing dignity and respect, listening to stories, and accepting people where they are at is truly loving our neighbor and truly being the hands and feet of Jesus. I believe the more we get to know someone who is different from us, the more we find we have in common, and in that, the fear disappears and love can enter in."

While finishing her master of divinity from Luther Seminary in 2019, Pastor Sherri was as an intern pastor at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Bloomington. She now serves as vicar at St. James Lutheran Church in Burnsville, where she leads Confirmation, supports the youth ministry, and plans worship.

Pastor Sherri has an associate degree in law and legal studies from Rochester Community College and a bachelor of science from Mankato State University. She has a high school-age daughter named Emily, two dogs, and is engaged to Troy Otto, a captain at the Hennepin County jail.

Pastor Sherri will be ordained on March 15 at St. James Lutheran in Burnsville.

Here are a few things about Pastor Sherri to help you get to know her better:

Personal ministry statement: "I am a child of God, humbly called by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ to proclaim God's love, grace and forgiveness to all people. I will use God's gifts to relate to others through the Gospel, to walk with others and to be inclusive and non-judgmental in my ministry."

Favorite Bible verses: John 3:16, Romans 8:38-39, and Psalm 121.

Top areas of ministry expertise: Preaching and worship leadership, pastoral care and visitation, building a sense of community, children's ministry, and music/worship/arts.

Hobbies and interests: Pastor Sherri loves music and singing, likes to golf, can't pass up a good camp fire, and is very much a people person who enjoys getting to know individuals and hearing their stories.



PRESIDENT'S POST: Thanks be to God, Twice Over

By Todd Biewen, Church Council President

On our piano at home sits a small rock that fits comfortably in the the palm of the hand. It is painted purple and has a few words painted in gold lettering. I asked my wife where the rock came from and she said it was given to her at the end of last school year by one of her students. This student was in kindergarten and the rock is very neatly painted, so clearly it was not painted by a someone so young. It turns out the rock was decorated by the student's grandmother and given to my wife by the young boy. The words on the rock are:

Sometimes miracles are just good people with kind hearts

I've searched the internet and can't find any attribution for these words, but seeing them made me think of recent Sunday mornings at Shepherd — the scripture readings and sermons by Pastor Scott and Deacon Brian. We've been hearing of Jesus' healing power, with his hands or just by the brush of his cloak. Jesus' ability to heal is well chronicled in the gospels, and we know these miracles of healing are carried out by a higher power that lies beyond our complete understanding.

At the same time we have been hearing of Jesus' power to heal, let me remind you how we have been serving up some healing of our own in our own community.

Because Shepherd has a reputation for being responsive, Pastor Scott occasionally is contacted when there is a need for assistance somewhere in the community. Recently, Pastor Scott was informed of two children needing medical help. A twelve year-old girl was challenged with the need for new cochlear implants, and a five year old boy needed extensive and complicated mouth/dental care. The congregation was informed of these needs one week, and within two weeks Shepherd members responded with financial gifts that allowed these life-changing procedures to move ahead for these children.

Thanks be to God for the individuals in our Shepherd community who contributed financially in this situation. I feel so fortunate to be in a place such as this, where by the generosity and caring of members our congregation, Shepherd of the Hills becomes known as a place where there are plenty of "good people with kind hearts".

Welcome to Associate Pastor Sherri Lawrence

On March 1st Shepherd will welcome Sherri Lawrence as our new Associate Pastor. Welcome to Sherri, Troy and Emily! We are thrilled that you are joining our welcoming community and we look forward to getting to know you!

I would like to thank the members of the Call Committee for doing an amazing job over these last months leading up to Sherri's call.



MEET OUR NEW BUILDING MANAGER

Blair Prax is the new building manager for SOTH. He has been a member of the church, along with his wife Siri and his daughter Avalon, for the last 15 years. Blair has degrees in Theatrical Arts and Nonprofit Business Administration from St. Mary's University, Winona and Minneapolis.

The last 20 years Blair has worked for a small local production company on numerous films and television commercials.

Blair is excited for the opportunity to work for an organization like SOTH. He looks forward to getting to know the rest of the SOTH community.

President's Post continued

Scott Edmundson, Andy Jensen, Alysa Horsman, Carol Schulze and Christa Meland

Finally, if you haven't already done so, I hope you will extend your appreciation to Deacon Brian and Kaye Wothe for working extra hard these past months, providing care and ministry within our congregation following Pastor Joanna's departure.

Peace, Todd

Continued to right

Learning

CIRCLE MEETINGS

Deborah Circle

New members are welcome!

Date: Thurs., March 12
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Hostess: Lil Tushie
Location: Church
Bible Study: Members
Contact: Mimi Drangeid
(952) 934-9318

Lois Circle

Date: Tues., March 10
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Hostess: Nadine Broholm
Location: 413 Jackson Ave S
Hopkins
Bible Study: March Gather
We are Called!
Session 3
Called to Serve
Contact: Nadine Broholm
(952) 935-5054

WoSOTH BOOK CLUB

**Sunday, April 26 at 4:00 pm at
Cream & Amber (Hopkins)**

Book: "The Physick Book of
Deliverance Dane" by Katherine Howe

Summer 2020 - (date TBD)

Book: "This Tender Land" by William
Kent Krueger



SUNDAY MORNING SPEAKERS

Date: April 19, 2020 following worship
Topic: Lutheran Colleges Today
Speaker: Dr. Paul Pribbenow, President of Augsburg University

Description: Paul Pribbenow, the 10th president of Augsburg University, a private liberal arts university associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and located in Minneapolis, is recognized as one of the country's most engaging commentators and teachers on ethics, philanthropy, and American public life.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS & WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES

"Aging Abundantly"

**Sunday, March 8 at 10:45 am
Drop-ins Welcome!**

Our final Aging Abundantly class meets on March 8 from 10:45-11:30 am with brunch 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.

MoSOTH BREAKFAST

Saturday, March 14 at 8:00 am at Calvary Lutheran

Men of Shepherd of the Hills Breakfast - Saturday, March 14th at 8am... Gents, check it out, such a late start! You can sleep in and still make it! We'll meet at Calvary Lutheran (6817 Antrim Rd, Edina, MN 55439) and share this breakfast with our brothers at Calvary. Come for the food, stay for the speaker, tolerate the pastors! (There will be two of us... twice the grief) You can RSVP with pastor.scott@sothchurch.com or sign up at the welcome desk.

SOCKS FOR THE HOMELESS

Years ago Emmylou Hanson started a program of donating white socks to Hennepin County Medical Center to hand out to homeless and needy patients. Pat Jorgensen carried on this tradition until she had to give up driving. This year we have made two donations of socks to the Hennepin Healthcare Foundation and received the following messages from Sarah Bruemmer and Karin Meier, Director of Development, Hennepin Healthcare Foundation.

"Thank you so much for this generous and thoughtful donation! Our patients will be thrilled and socks are such a wonderful blessing to our staff to have to distribute to patients. Foot health is a key predictor of other health related conditions and the ability to provide a clean new pair of socks can make a real difference for our staff and their patients. "

"My coworker Mia and I just finished putting away the socks. Thank you for the generous donation (and delivering it) – the Coordinated Care Center has so many patients that are going to benefit from clean, dry, and warm socks this winter. Many thanks to you and your congregation. "

As noted in the weekly bulletin, there is a collection box marked HCMC behind the welcome center. Thank you for your donations that keep this program going.

NURSERY STAFF

The SOTH Nursery is looking to increase our staff. The main commitment is Sunday mornings and an occasional Wednesday evening. Nursery Staff should have completed confirmation and enjoy working with children. Pay is \$10 an hour. Please contact Jen Snell if interested. Snell.jennifer@gmail.com

CARE KITS

Thank you to the congregation for your generous donations to our Care Kit service project and to the Serve team for organizing it. Care Kits are now available in the narthex. Please pick one up to carry in your car to give to a person in need you may encounter.



LOAVES & FISHES

Monday, March 9

Mark your calendar for our next serving date of

Monday, March 9. 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.

LENT SOUP SUPPER VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We are in need of volunteers to help serve and clean up for our Lenten soup meals. Many hands make light work! Please email Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse if you are available (kwothe@comcast.net). There will also be a sign up at the Welcome desk.

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.



Worship

WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE

DATE	TIME	LECTOR	COMMUNION PRESENTERS	COMMUNION ASSISTANTS	ALTAR GUILD	USHER
Mar. 1	9:30	Christa Meland	K & J Wicks	K & J Wicks	K. Boucher	Edmundson Team
Mar. 4	7:00					Olsen Team
Mar. 8	9:30	Bruce Nelson	R & G Morseth	R & G Morseth	L Walker / L Lilly	Olsen Team
Mar. 11	7:00					Olsen Team
Mar. 15	9:30	E or J Showers	P & S Bohnsack	R Rinker / R Beck	J Luers	Stone Team
Mar. 18	7:00					Stone Team
Mar. 22	9:30	Gary Nash	L Cushman / N Broholm	D & K Wiemer	S Nash / L Edmundson	Stone Team
Mar. 25	7:00				K Goodroad / A Barrott	Pederson Team
Mar. 29	9:30	Rich Rinker	R & N Shaeffer	G Morseth / RM Anderson		Pederson Team
Apr. 1	7:00					Pederson Team
Apr. 5	9:30		D & C Schulze	D & C Schulze	S Pederson / G Morseth	Crouch Team
Apr. 9	7:00				K Wiemer	Crouch Team
Apr. 10	7:00				K Vevle	Crouch Team
Apr. 12	9:30		S & L Edmundson	S & L Edmundson	S Nash / J Grams	Lilly Team
Apr. 19	9:30		A & K Boucher	A & K Boucher	L Kopperud / K Hofstad	Lilly Team
Apr. 26	9:30		C Biewen / B Nelson	C Biewen / B Nelson	J Wicks	Lilly Team

March 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	3 MN Primary Polling 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting	4 10:00 Bible Study/Worship 10:45 Soup Lunch 5:15 Soup Supper 6:00 Wed Programs 7:00 Lenten Worship 7:40 Choir Rehearsal	5 5:45 TOPS Group	6 12:00 Church Office Closed 6:30 Pinewood Derby rehearsal	7
8 Daylight Saving Time 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 10:45 WAM 10:45 Aging Abundantly 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	9 11:30 Staff Meeting 2:00 Caregivers Mtg. Loaves & Fishes 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	10 Newsletter Deadline 9:00 Quilting 1:00 Lois Circle	11 10:00 Bible Study/Worship 10:45 Soup Lunch 5:15 Soup Supper 6:00 Wed Programs 7:00 Lenten Worship 7:40 Choir Rehearsal	12 9:30 Deborah Circle 5:45 TOPS Group	13 12:00 Church Office Closed 6:30 Pinewood Derby set-up	14 8:00 MoSOTH Breakfast @ Calvary 10:00 Faith Imprints 12:00 Pinewood Derby Event
15 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 10:45 Altar Guild Meeting 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	16 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	17 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting 6:00 Council Supper 6:30 Council Meeting	18 10:00 Bible Study/Worship 10:45 Soup Lunch 5:15 Soup Supper 6:00 Wed Programs 7:00 Lenten Worship 7:40 Choir Rehearsal	19 5:45 TOPS Group	20 12:00 Church Office Closed	21
22 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 10:45 WAM 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	23 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	24 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting	25 10:00 Bible Study/Worship 10:45 Soup Lunch 5:15 Soup Supper 6:00 Wed Programs 7:00 Lenten Worship 7:40 Choir Rehearsal	26 5:45 TOPS Group	27 12:00 Church Office Closed	28
29 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee & Fellowship 6:30 Apollo Rehearsal	30 7:00 SMART Recovery 7:00 Troop Meetings	31 9:00 Quilting 11:30 Staff Meeting				

Worship Schedule

9:30 am worship



Staff Reflection

Three Days continued

midst of the suffering, not running away from it. We are shown that our God is willing to go to the grave because God's whole Creation will be found there as well. We are shown who our God is.

I love these liturgies and Holy Week often feels like a whirlwind - like we hear these stories and then we're off to Easter without really dwelling in them. So, I like to take the stories of Jesus' last days apart and dwell in them with our kids bit by bit for the four weeks we gather in Lent. I think our kids know all too well what humiliation, fear, and hatred look like. I think they see it in our world often far better than we sometimes do. By going through these painful stories bit by bit it is my hope that they might see our Creator God as someone who is on their side always and who is always with them. If there is interest, I might try to post some weekly blog posts on our website, too, because I think this story is so immensely important in our lives and it's not fair that we blow by it.

This is the story of our God in fullness. Our God is not just a teacher, friend, or moral authority. Our God is a Creator who dwells with us and knows what we experience and works to take the pain and suffering from the world and create new life from it. Lent, Holy Week, and even Easter teach us how to witness it and participate in it and I hope that we take the time to really appreciate that, because I think it will transform us in ways we never thought were possible.



THREE DAYS IN FOUR WEEKS

By Deacon Brian Henning

Do you know all of the specifics of the last days of Jesus' life? How did Jesus prepare for his final meal with his disciples? How did Jesus wash his disciples' feet? What did Jesus pray for in the Garden of Gethsemane? What did Pilot ask Jesus at his trial? Who helped Jesus to Golgotha and what transpired in what order?

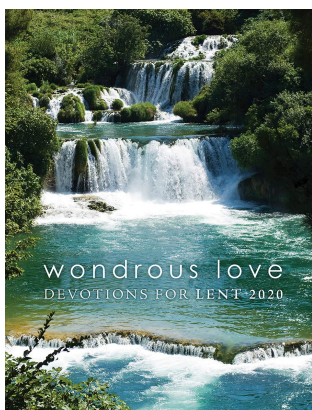
All of these questions may seem like simple trivia, but let me ask you this now: what happened a Jesus' birth? I think we all know every detail to that story.

The final days of Jesus' life has such amazing detail to it and is in fullness the very essence of human oppression, power, pain, and suffering. Yet, we kind of blow right by all of it to get to the good stuff: Easter! As wonderful as Easter is, our faith is predicated on the very notion of what transpired before Easter. Our entire system of beliefs comes from the final moments of Jesus' life: the Last Supper and the Cross. Let me put it another way. Can you name a time when you felt abandoned? Embarrassed? Despised? Outcast? Hated? Betrayed? Rejected? If you have, know that our God has, too. This is the magic of the last days of Jesus' life.

In Seminary, one of my most favorite theologians was Jürgen Moltmann. He is a German theologian who penned a systematic theology book called, "The Crucified God." This book is dense and I highly recommend you never pick it up unless you are looking for something to put you to sleep at night. However, as a theologian myself and as someone who deeply enjoys the academic rigor side of theological education, I thoroughly enjoyed it. The point of his book is not to put "roses" on the cross. In other words, the crucifixion of Christ is not a lovely thing that happened, but a terrible, horrifying thing that has cosmic consequences. In the midst of that book, though, he talks about the way that, through Jesus, our Creator God is able to deeply experience the human condition in a way that allows for our God not to be some God far away, but a God who can relate and dwell with us. He notes that on the Cross, God felt what it feels like to be abandoned by God - God felt God's own abandonment like we might feel God's abandonment from us. God also felt our physical pain and our emotional pains so that God could fully dwell with all of Creation in a way that God couldn't before.

Now, if you didn't follow much of that, that's okay. I do encourage you to read that paragraph a few more times, though, because that is why we participate in the liturgies of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. In those liturgies we are surrounded by symbolism and story which reveal to us in fullness who our Creator is and who we are. We are shown that God is one who sits and eats with us, even those of us who turn our backs against our God. We are shown that our God is one who is willing to go the Cross for us to experience the human condition and to show that God is found in the

Continued above



WONDROUS LOVE – LENT 2020

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. A Limited number of devotional books will be available at the welcome desk. They are also available on Kindle.

Lent Opportunities: We will again offer two Wednesday Lenten worship opportunities. All are welcome! We will gather Wednesday mornings at 10:00 am in Ranum Hall upstairs. 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!

Pastor's Message continued

If you're someone who uses technology please copy this link (<https://www.sothchurch.com/sharestories.html>) into your browser and write me your story or list for me your most important Shepherd values. If you're someone who loves pencils and paper (if you've ever noticed, I only use pencils and paper... erasers are my lifeline!) write me a handwritten note! We will use what our staff has written and those responses from you to help orient Sherri to who we are, what we value and the stories we tell that help define who we are as a family of faith.

Whatever the case, know that God is grateful for you and so am I! Thanks be to God for our family of faith and the future into which God is calling us!

Pastor Scott

NEEDED

Books for Hopkins Summer Reading program

Books for Hopkins summer reading program Books continue to be collected in the bin near the Welcome Desk marked: Hopkins Summer Reading Program. Thank you for your outstanding response and continued generosity! To date, 168 books have been donated. Please drop off new and gently used books for K-6 grade students. The Shepherd of the Hills Foundation is supporting the Hopkins Summer Reading Program. Elementary 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.

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.



MET COUNCIL: Light Rail Need

Good Evening, Pastor Scott and Shepherd of the Hills Friends,

Recently I rode along with the Metro Transit Homeless Action Team (HAT) overnight to witness first-hand the challenges encountered by individuals using transit as shelter. On any given night, several hundred individuals may be riding light rail. Our shelters are full, and some people feel riding light rail is safer than being in a shelter. Trains are not dignified nor humane, they do not have bathrooms or running water and are not intended to be used as shelter. Metro Transit Police' HAT team was formed when Metro Transit stopped the Green Line light rail between the hours of 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. This change allows for our cars to be cleaned thoroughly, provides safety for workers who make line repairs during the night, and to address the needs of those using the train as shelter. The HAT team now has eight specially trained police officers who connect individuals with resources, and in some cases can take them to a Ramsey County shelter with a very limited number of beds, specifically for those referred by the police. It is important to remember that being homeless is not a crime.

The Metro Transit HAT members keep a small supply of items for the officers to give to unsheltered homeless individuals. I asked if there was anything they could use that we might be able to gather through our networks and they said they can always use additional \$5 McDonalds gift cards. They stressed that they should not be more than \$5 as cards with a higher value are sometimes sold and the intent is that they be redeemed for sustenance. Most everyone these days is aware of our severe affordable housing shortage which contributes to the homeless crisis we see growing. While it may seem overwhelming for most to be able to help, donating a \$5 gift card (or 2 or 3...) is a concrete, very helpful way that most anyone can do to help assure that our most vulnerable people (which include children and the elderly) have something to eat.

I am connecting with friends, groups and the faith community to ask if you are able to help me in this effort. Could you share this request within your community of Shepherd of the Hills? Do you have other thoughts or people you would suggest I connect with? I am happy to be the collection point so feel free to put my address in: Molly Cummings, 402 10th Ave N., Hopkins, MN 55343.

Addressing the issue of unsheltered homelessness is complex. We, at the Metropolitan Council, are working with many partners to deal with myriad root causes, often mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, the loss of a job or vehicle, a medical emergency. Resources are scarce so even small things, like a gift card, can help immensely. Please let me know if you are able to help get the word out.

With gratefulness,
Molly Cummings
Met Council Representative and SOTH Member



“To Understand Everything is to Forgive”

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

The list of word groups or phrases that float into my brain as lent comes quickly onto the calendar each year include: forgiveness-confession-grace, darkness

followed by light, winter to spring, and hopeless to hope-filled, to name a few. Forgiveness is a favorite subject of mine to consider. Each year of my life I find a new complexity and unraveling of its meaning and its impact on my life. I have no doubt this is driven by my German DNA, Missouri synod childhood, and the deep awareness of own sensitive, yet sinful self. After studying forgiveness in seminary and having it as the focus of my masters thesis I thought I had exhausted new deep thought discoveries regarding it. Then I read “The Island of Sea Women” by Lisa See and came across this quote,

“To Understand Everything is to Forgive”

It made me wonder: Does understanding come before forgiveness or after it? Can you really forgive before understanding a situation fully? Do we ever really understand anything fully from our limited points of view? Does grace fill in for the places we do not understand as well as the places of undeserved forgiveness? What if accessing understanding is not possible in a place where forgiveness is needed even so?

When I have been the recipient of forgiveness or the giver of forgiveness I am not sure there is a very really FULL understanding of what happened to motivate the sinful act. I think it is hard to walk in another person’s shoes that closely, to see someone that fully or to be seen fully. If we are lucky (or blessed) we may get enough of the picture to feel a ‘sense’ of understanding that adds to our ability to forgive. At the same time I think the hardest times to forgive are when we have no insight into what happened and why, and also when there is going to be no interaction about the offense and the forgiveness needed.

So I my reply to the quote above would be:

Once you forgive you begin to understand everything.

In complicated situations that need forgiveness, whether that it is because I have no understanding of why the offense happened and/or there will be no reciprocation or open conversation about it, once I convince myself to let go and forgive and I let that forgiveness seep into my being (i.e. do more than just say I forgive but really embrace forgiveness fully and freely), it is then that I get this sense of understanding even though I may not know any more information than I knew before. Maybe what I gain is a softer heart and then the “peace that surpasses understanding.”

The same is true when I am the perpetrator. Once I fully accept forgiveness for myself into my core, understanding why I did the wrong thing and being down on myself, it turns into a sense of my heart softening and a “peace that passes understanding.”

This peace quickly becomes a more welcoming heart that offers forgiveness even before the offense happens. A heart that knows we are all sinners but trusts we each do the best we can (this assumes knowing and keeping safe boundaries with those who would repeatedly hurt us in ways that are not ok).

Continued above

To Understand continued

If you think about it, this is much like what happened in Holy Week and Easter. This is where we learned it. God through Jesus paid the price for the sins of humankind. Both the sins already committed and the sins of the future. God knew we were not capable of being sinless. God understood (understands) us and saw (sees) us fully through grace and a heart of forgiveness. God does not hold it over our heads like a mill stone of punishment but freely, predictably forgives. This allows us to be and live more fully through and with God, without fear. We can still get mad at God, shake our fists at God, rumble with God. Sometimes this is what we need to do to gain the “peace that surpasses all understanding.”

This has helped me in relationships of all types, some forgiveness and unraveling happens slower than others, but progress is being made. I have found this model to be very freeing in my relationship with my adult kids too. They trust I will forgive them and not hold something over or against them. This allows them to be more free with me (or so I imagine ☺). I want to know the real them, their struggles and their victories so this has blessed me greatly.

Forgiveness...it is complicated. But knowing we are called by God to forgive as God has forgiven us, trusting that understanding will come and peace will be its gift.

Wishing you a lent with sneak peeks of the light that is Easter, trusting that your darkness will be changed to light and “peace that passes understanding” would be your Easter basket prize.

Living into Hope,
Kaye Wothe
Faith Community Nurse

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