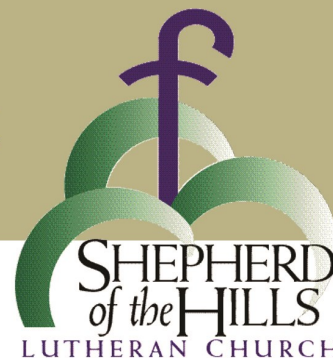


Shepherd's Voice



March 2023

“UNFINISHED”

By Interim Pastor Susan Debner

We will be spending the Lenten Sundays in March with Jonah. Our sermon series is a deep dive into this ironic, humorous, and often unbelievable Bible story—I encourage you to read it through a few times this month. I’m always surprised at what I hear differently when I read the same thing a few times. Jonah is a quick read—only 4 chapters. You can search it on your phone and get through most of it while waiting in line for groceries or coffee.

Prior to this sermon series, I had not tuned into the unfinished aspect of Jonah’s story. The book ends with God asking Jonah a question. Typically, I prefer hanging out with God’s universal and unwavering statements, for example: “You are my beloved child. Your sins are forgiven, for I am slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. My mercy is everlasting.”

When I do deal with God-questions, I strongly prefer the ones I ask of God, not the ones God asks of me. It’s a relief, then, that the question from God at the end of Jonah’s story is rhetorical, and the answer feels like an embarrassingly obvious “yes.” Even so, we’re not entirely sure how Jonah would answer God, given the arc of his story. The question hangs there—unfinished and uncomfortable.

I’ve been thinking about the unfinished nature of the interim time we are sharing. I catch myself talking about the arrival of your next pastor as if it finishes things, I suppose because it will finish my time with you as interim? But your new senior pastor will not experience your call as the conclusion of anything with you.

When a congregation votes, calls and welcomes a new pastor, the call process doesn’t finish so much as it goes public, like a hot new stock offering you will all want to invest in. Once your new senior pastor is here, the entire congregation and community become the Call Committee! You get to regularly meet, worship, sing, pray and join God in the work of the neighborhood.

It will be wonderful when it all happens, but it will not be finished.

See you at worship,
Pastor Susan

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

Staff:

Pastor	Sherri Otto
Interim Pastor	Susan Debner
Music Director	Open
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

Church Council Members / Officers:

President	Adam Driscoll
Vice President	Don Wothe
Treasurer	Johanna Olson
Financial Secretary	Fred Jensen
Secretary	Open
Serve	Nate Lichty
Worship & Music	Karen Hofstad-Parkhill
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learn	Stephanie Nordin
Communications	Joe Palmersheim
Care	Open
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Open

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Susan Debner	12
Pastor Sherri Otto	13
Blair Prax	35

Shepherd Online!

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Pr. Susan Debner	pastorsusan.debner@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com



**Shepherd of the Hills and Calvary
Lutheran present:**

**Hero Hotline Vacation Bible School
June 19th – June 22nd, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

The Hero Hotline Headquarters is a place where everyone's gifts are valued, and every hero has a role to play. Each day at the Hero Hotline

Headquarters, superheroes of all ages and abilities answer the call and join the Professor and veteran hero, Super Meer the Meerkat, to provide expert assistance and solutions to Hero Teams everywhere.

We will discover heroes from the Old and New Testaments, who work together to bring peace, build each other up, and share the great story of God's love for us where they are and with the whole world.

As kids (called Heroes) experience these stories through music, drama and storytelling, games, arts and crafts, science, and even snacks, they'll learn that Heroes are called to Follow Jesus, Help Others, Work Together, Listen to God, and Show Grace! And, best of all, they'll be invited to answer this call at VBS, at church, at home, and every area of their lives.

Mark your calendars as this is something you won't want your kids to miss!!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

SUMMER FESTIVAL CAMP 2023 will be here before we know it! We have TWO separate adventures planned. Make note of the dates and grade levels for each week, and then mark your calendars in pen because you are not going to want to miss this!

Summer Festival Camp takes place on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College. We will sleep in the dorms, eat in the cafeteria (which has awesome food!) and play in the fields and pool! There are games and activities, singing, skits, talks, presentations and discussions...so much gets crammed into this time together. There really is something for everyone!

This camp is only 3 nights/4 days, and the cost is lower than other camps (plus SOTH has funds available to help off-set this cost, so please let Pastor Sherri know if you'd like to know more about these funds).

Check out <https://summerfestivalcamp.com> for more info. Registration and details to come via email. Friends are always welcome, so spread the word!!

July 9-12: Students entering grades 9-12

July 16-19: Students entering grades 6-8.

Cost is around \$270 per person (final amount not yet published)



PRESIDENT'S POST

Transitions

By Adam Driscoll, Council President

As we approach our Annual Congregational Meeting, which is scheduled for Sunday, April 30, many of our current congregational council member's terms will be expiring. I want to thank all of these wonderful people who have given so much of their time and talents to our community in these years of transition. Thank you to all of our outgoing council members: Don Wothe - Vice President, Christa Meland - Secretary, Peter Barott - Facilities, Nate Lichty - Serve Team Lead, and Steph Nordin - Education Team Lead.

It is the committed work of our lay leadership which provides a foundation for this community to continue to thrive now and in the future. With these coming departures comes new opportunities for others to engage in their faith in this unique and fulfilling way. I ask you to consider whether you'd be called to serve in one of these capacities, and if so, to submit your name for our elections to be held April 30. If you'd like to learn more about one of these roles, please reach out to me, or Pastors Susan or Sherri. Thank you for all you do for Shepherd, and thank you for considering:

Positions coming open:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Facilities
- Serve Team Lead
- Care Team Lead
- Education Team Lead

WOMEN'S BREAKFAST

Saturday, March 25 at 9:00am

SOTH will be hosting a Women's Breakfast on March 25th at 9:00am. Bring a friend/neighbor for great coffee, cuisine and conversation. Sign up at the Welcome Desk before March 22nd. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Saturday, March 11 at 8:30 am

There will be a men's breakfast at Shepherd on Saturday, March 11 at 8:30 am. Sign up at the Welcome desk before Jan. 8. If you have any questions, please contact Steve Grams at (952) 607-5840.

LENTEN OFFERINGS

Lutheran Disaster Response: Ukraine War Relief

Lenten offerings this year are designated for Lutheran Disaster Response. As the war continues, so does their work. They and their partners are constantly adapting to new phases of refugee assistance. Providing food, clothing and a warm place to rest has now evolved into community integration — finding people jobs, enrolling children in school and securing permanent housing for refugees.

Amid grief and hardship, God grants us the strength to see moments of hope. We are thankful for your commitment to stand with our neighbors in Eastern Europe.

Donations can be dropped off at SOTH. Or give on line at <https://community.elca.org/lutherandisasterresponse>

SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all. Please feel free to join us. For questions please contact Kaye Wothe at kwothe@comcast.net

Book Club Schedules

Sunday, March 5 at 10:45 am at SOTH

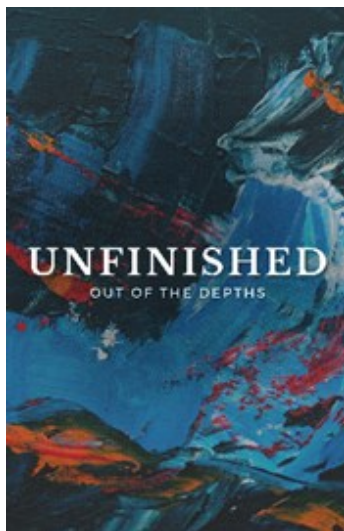
Book: "The Vanishing Half"
by Brit Bennett

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.

REMINDER FOR PARENTS TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- 5/17/23 Confirmation Banquet
- 5/21/23 Confirmation Service
- 6/19/23 thru 6/22/23-
Vacation Bible School
(More information coming soon!!)
- 7/9/23 to 7/12/23
Summer Festival Camp
High School (9th – 12th)
- 7/16/23 to 7/19/23
Summer Festival Camp
Middle School (6th – 9th)



LENTEN SERIES AT SHEPHERD

Jonah walks a Lenten path. Like all human beings, he is prone to wander from his Creator in favor of determining the shape and scope of his own future. This temptation is especially powerful when God calls us to take on risky ventures, travel to strange places, and confront things inside of us that prevent us from seeing one another as God does. God meets us in those liminal, Lent-like spaces when we find ourselves somewhere between trust and doubt, courage and fear, anger and empathy. Please join us Sunday mornings as we walk through the book of Jonah this Lenten season.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Ash Wed., Feb. 22 | Jonah 1 - God Calls and Persists |
| Lent 1, Feb. 26 | Jonah 1:17; Psalm 139 - Intercepted and Redirected |
| Lent 2, March 5 | Jonah 2; Psalm 130 - God in the Depths of Chaos |
| Lent 3, March 12 | Jonah 3 - Obedience and Preservation |
| Lent 4, March 19 | Jonah 4 - Faithful and Unfinished |
| Lent 5, March 26 | Matthew 8:23-27 (cf. Mark 4:34-41; Luke 8:22-25)
Jesus, a New Jonah |

DINNER CHURCH OFFERING AND SPONSORSHIP Wednesdays during Lent (all of March)

Offerings collected on Wednesday nights will be shared through Lutheran Disaster Response, an ELCA branch that helps with domestic and international emergencies like the major weather catastrophes in the South, the war in Ukraine and the earthquakes in Turkey/Syria. To maximize the offering we are able to share, we are inviting sponsorships of the meals. The planning, shopping, preparing and serving of each meal is \$400. If you would like to sponsor a full or half meal, please let Pastor Susan know. The first meal will be sponsored by the Church Council!

HOLY WEEK

- Maundy Thursday on April 6th at 6:30pm with Holy Communion.
- Good Friday worship on April 7th at 6:30pm.
- Easter celebration on Sunday April 9th at 9:30am.



SOTH CALL COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Call Committee had a very busy February and we expect significant action in March as well. The Synod provided us with several Lead Pastor candidate profiles. The candidates had varied experiences and a wide range of qualifications. We completed a first round of interviews and invited a few candidates for second interviews. After the second round of interviews, discussion and discernment, we ended up with a top candidate. Unfortunately, it didn't work out at this time with this candidate. We are

disappointed but know that this often happens in the Call process. The Holy Spirit is moving with us to another group of candidates from the Synod as we seek the best fit for Shepherd's next Senior Pastor.

The Call Committee thanks you for your prayers and asks for your continued support on this journey of discernment.

LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

Sunday, March 26

Shepherd is excited to welcome young adults and board members from Lutheran Campus Ministry-Twin Cities on Sunday, March 26. One of the university students will preach for us! Here's what they have shared with us about their ministry and upcoming visit:

LCM-TC bears witness to the love and mercy of Christ in the midst of 55,000 young adults at the University of Minnesota. We often talk about young adults as the "future" of the church, and fail to understand the ways they are shaping it already. As we move into a new stage of life together after the crisis of the last few years, we recognize how deeply this time of uncertainty has shaped all of us. Young adults are no exception. Whether bearing witness to the Uprising, entrenched polarization, or the deepening climate crisis, young adults seem to realize that uncertainty will be a part of their world for some time.

And still, or maybe because of this uncertainty, students are actively engaged with their faith. They are hungry, and they show up to pray, to serve, to learn, and to worship together. More than anything, they show up to connect, and to center down in the love of God. At LCM, we see first-hand the incredible work of the Holy Spirit, who animates these young adults and our ministry among them.

We are excited to let you know that a student will be preaching on March 26, proclaiming the Gospel, and sharing stories about their life as a young adult. We are also excited to thank you, and to invite you into further partnership with this ministry. Your support matters now as much as it ever has, and we are grateful that Shepherd of the Hills will be taking a special offering in support of this vital young adult ministry. Please consider making a gift that day, and thank you for being church together.

For more information, visit <https://umnlutheran.org/support-us/>

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ASYLUM WORK

As of mid-February, ACT-TC has committed to temporarily helping a family of 3 Egyptian siblings with rent. This assistance will provide them breathing room while they secure jobs after recently receiving their work authorizations. Donations for that commitment are being accepted through SOTH or online at [ECLC.org>give>donate>ACT-TC](https://ECLC.org/give/donate/ACT-TC) (memo: Rent for Egyptians). Please note that tax receipts cannot be provided for online donations to Edina Community Lutheran Church (ECLC).

ACT-TC is also in the process of interviewing a family of 5 from Guatemala (2 parents and their 3 young children). If all goes well, this family will be moving into the St. Paul apartment we just furnished as noted in last month's newsletter. More details will follow.

One of our team members, Terrie Thompson of Edina Community Lutheran Church, just completed a one-week learning and volunteering experience at the southern border in El Paso, Texas. While there, he and nine other members of his congregation prepared and served meals, visited 4 shelters, including one across the border in Mexico, and visited the border wall and met with one former and one current border patrol agent, the latter of whom just recently briefed President Biden at the border wall. Terrie also attended a deportation hearing in federal court and spoke with court personnel. He was grateful for the chance to learn first-hand what was really happening at the border and felt the experience was both extraordinary and transformative.

At our next monthly ACT-TC meeting Terrie will be sharing details and pictures of his trip. If you are interested in attending, this Zoom meeting will be on MARCH 2 at 11:00 AM. Please use the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86726610755>

As always, ACT-TC continues to be grateful for your support of this vital ministry.

On behalf of ACT-TC
Paul Bohnsack
952-891-5677
bohnsackps@frontiernet.net

Staff Reflection

HOLY WEEK FOR CHILDREN

Good Friday, April 7th at 4:30pm

We invite children and their families to join Pastor Sherri as we experience interactive ways to help children understand the events of Holy Week between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Please join us for this important time together. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri.



HOMELESSNESS IN OUR MIDST

By Pastor Sherri Otto

My husband and I had the wonderful opportunity to go to San Diego this past month. We had rented a VRBO in Mission Beach, right on the ocean and it was perfect. The weather was not warm

enough for either of us to jump into the ocean, but it was beautiful to watch the sunset each evening and to relax.

We had several places in mind that we wanted to visit and had decided that instead of renting a car, we would use Uber. This turned out to be a great decision! The best part about it was that we got to meet some very interesting people and ride in some nice vehicles without the worry and stress of how to get somewhere and where to park.

Our first driver drove us from the airport to our condo. He was originally from Syria but moved here years ago because of the unrest in the country. Another driver was a young father with two children who lived in the suburbs of San Diego. He had grown up in the San Diego area and loved it there. The next was retired Navy, who was originally from the East Coast, but ended up falling in love with someone in San Diego, so he stayed. He now is a baseball umpire and was going to give up his Uber gig in the upcoming months. Following him was a man originally from Israel and spoke little English, but was super sweet and really tried hard to understand what we were asking him. Then there was a college student who was getting his masters in something with music and technology. He was very informative about what we should see and what we should stay away from. And the last person was originally from Texas but said he moved because he could not stand the politics and how it was hard to be a black man living there.

It was interesting to ask how long they had been doing Uber, what they liked about San Diego and anything else they wanted to share with us. And I was really curious about how people live there, in these places, when the houses are so expensive and rent is insane. All of them stated that they had two or more jobs and that they live in the suburbs of San Diego.

But the one comment that really stuck with me was from the young college student. He told us that if we go to the Coronado Island, we would be safe. He said, "It is heavily patrolled and if they find a homeless person there, they will drive them out of that area to another place. So, it is very safe there with little crime."

I wanted to tell him that I don't consider homelessness to make me feel unsafe. It is people that have no where to live because of either the economy or other situations that they are faced with. I wanted to say, until we have walked in someone else's shoes, we have no idea how hard it must be for them. I wanted to say that he is a privileged white male who is driving around in a Tesla and going to school and would never know what it is like to be living on the streets. But I remained silent.

Homelessness in our Midst continued

As I returned back to Minnesota the blizzard came and I wondered about our homeless people in Minnesota. Yes, there are shelters, but not enough to take care of everyone who does not have a place to call home. And I wondered, how many people are homeless in our state and in our neighborhoods and is there anything we can do to help?

I found one website that was extremely helpful and simple to follow. Here is the website link. www.hmismn.org/point-in-time-count-information

This information is based on a Point In Time (PIT) Count where, on a single night, there is a large scale community effort to identify people experiencing homelessness that may not otherwise be counted, meaning those who are unsheltered, living on the streets or in a place not meant for habitation such as a car or abandoned building. They also try to get an accurate count of those that are “couch hopping” or temporarily staying with friends.

The other data comes from those who are already in Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing or Safe Haven programs on the night of the PIT.

What I found was heartbreaking. On a single night in Minnesota in January 2022, there were 7,917 people experiencing homelessness. That is 7 TIMES the population of my hometown!!

22% were unsheltered, 56% were in Emergency Shelters and 22% were in Transitional Housing. 65% were adults, 10% were young adults (18-24) and 22% were children. 290 were Veterans. 56% identified as male, 43% identified as female and 1% identified as a gender that is not singularly ‘female’ or ‘male’. People of color are disproportionately affected.

Out of the 7,917 people in Minnesota, Hennepin County counted 2,591, Ramsey counted 1,688 and the Suburban Metro counties were at 726.

I wish I could wave a magic wand and have all of this go away. I wish all people would have the opportunity to have their basic needs met... shelter, food and clothing. I wish that we all can do something in our community to help out our neighbor who may need their basic needs met.

I do not have answers to homelessness in Minnesota or our community but want to offer up this. If you have a passion for the needs of others, get involved in your local government or local agencies. Talk with your elected officials about bringing a change in the laws at the local level that deal with affordable housing. If you are at all moved by these statistics, give to your local food shelf or create a Food Drive here at church. Invite people to come to our Wednesday Lent meals. Get creative and see where it will lead us in this fight against homelessness in our community.

And pray. Pray for those who are suffering, who are without homes or shelter, who wonder where their next meal will come from, who can't afford an apartment on the paycheck they receive. Pray for the people here at Shepherd to find creative ways to help in our community. And pray for the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with love and compassion for all people.

Peace and Blessings to you!
Pastor Sherri

HOMELESSNESS INFORMATION

If you want to know more about homelessness and/or are experiencing any form of this yourself, here are websites that has resources for you to look at.

www.hud.gov
www.mnhousing.gov
www.bridgeforyouth.org
www.housinglink.org

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

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