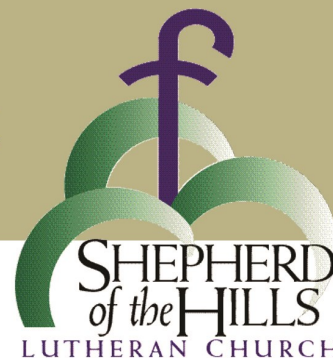


Shepherd's Voice



October 2021

“Moments of Hope and Gratitude”

By Pastor Scott Searl

It's been a difficult year or so. The pandemic, my dad's passing, and the divisions over public health have left me feeling worn out. I know I'm not alone. And yet, there have been moments of hope and gratitude over the past year as well.

One strange gratitude has been a funny little app on my iPhone that kicks in whenever I am washing my hands. As soon as I start to lather up the soap a twenty second timer appears on my screen and counts down to zero to ensure that I scrub long enough to get rid of all the germs. After those twenty seconds it dings a happy little “ding!” and offers some little encouragement. “Good job!” for example. And while I'm grateful that my hands are clean, I've also marveled at how long those twenty seconds feel. About halfway through last year I started to scrub a bit more slowly during those twenty seconds and tried to draw my attention to my breathing. Almost a little mini meditation session as I washed my hands. This little app has been a regular reminder of the gift of germ-killing soap, and the gift of just a few moments of time to slow up, breathe and reconnect to myself. A strange little gratitude.

More seriously I cannot offer enough words of gratitude for all those who cared for my family and my dad during his brief stay at Folkstone care center in Wayzata. The nurses, aides and doctors were amazing people who genuinely cared for my dad and my family. Hannah, one of our regular nurses, cried with me just after my dad died. I cannot imagine the strain of this past year on her trying to keep all her patients Covid safe and at the same time being emotionally vulnerable enough to share that level of empathy for someone she had only known a few weeks. I am grateful for all the health care workers at places like Folkstone and those in every hospital and doctors' office across the country. A sad, but grateful sense of love and gratitude.

Finally, I am grateful for each and every one of you. As our block party filled with families and kids, I was reminded of how important physical gatherings are. Full tables filled with the energy of hopeful kids lifted my spirit in a way I didn't know I needed. I am grateful for zoom, and I am grateful that we will, albeit slowly, return to in person gatherings. There is a different emotional charge that takes place when we see each other face to face. It is hopeful, and it is important. I am grateful for all the ways we now offer for worship, and I am grateful that we can cautiously gather in person.

Continued on page 2

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

Staff:

Pastors	Scott Searl, Sherri Otto
Assistant/Visitation Pastor	Fred Jensen
Music Director	Emily Koski
Intern Pastor	Anne Schaefer
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

Church Council Members / Officers:

President	Adam Driscoll
Vice President	Don Wothe
Treasurer	Steve Hanneman
Financial Secretary	Ryan Erickson
Secretary	Christa Meland
Serve	Nate Lichty
Worship & Music	Julia Buteyn
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learn	Stephanie Nordin
Communications	Jill Miller
Care	Dave Cousins
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Chris Polston

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

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

Shepherd Online!

Pr. Scott Searl	scott@sothchurch.com
Pr. Sherri Otto	sherri.otto@sothchurch.com
Intern Pr. Anne Schaefer	anne.schaefer@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Kaye Wothe	kaye.wothe@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com

Pastor's Message continued from page 1

Thank you for all the ways you have been present at SOTH over the past year or so. How have you felt hope or experienced gratitude in these challenging days? To whom would it be good to say, "Thank you?" Like many of you I continue to feel a sense of weariness in my soul. And at the same time, I continue to look for little glimmers of hope and gratitude along the way. I trust that God is in the good stuff, I hope that God is in the challenges and suffering, and I am grateful for all the people who have loved me, cared for me, and tended to my weary soul over the past year. I will keep an eye out for these moments of hope and gratitude, and I know you will join me in doing the same.

Peace - Pastor Scott



JUSTMove...

Oct. 13th - 6:30pm!

By Pastor Scott Searl

If you're anything like me, after the death of George Floyd I wasn't sure what to do. I remember distinctly sitting in my home pandemic office looking out the window and feeling stuck. "Now what?" kept popping into my head. What could I possibly do to help educate myself? What could I do to help try and uncover some of my own hidden bias, my unacknowledged prejudice and my blind spots? And I wondered what we might do as a family of faith.

Many of you may have corporate experiences now with diversity, equity and inclusion trainings. I hope these have been helpful and productive. Some of you may be in the same boat that I find myself, interested in growing and changing, but without much guidance on how to move. Some of you may not be interested at all, maybe even frustrated that we are being asked to consider our privilege or consider the racial history of the United States. One thing I know is that no matter what we are talking about or thinking about we are not a homogenous group as a people of faith here at Shepherd. My prayer is, that wherever you find yourself along the range of hopeful, pessimistic, fearful, or intimidated, you will find a place at the table as we gather for discussion and learning.

I cannot encourage us all strongly enough to join us as we explore our relationship with race and injustice. Having now seen David and Joe, our two consultant leaders in worship, I know that everyone will find their leadership grace-filled, hopeful, energetic and inspirational. No matter how you feel about our current racial conversation, we all need to be here. We all need to show up if we have any hope of moving beyond our differences and divisions.

The church is one of the very last places in our culture where we regularly make the claim that unity isn't about our vocation, or our physical location, or the color of our skin. We weekly make the claim that we are all united as brothers and sisters in faith. This doesn't mean we won't disagree. What it does mean is that we can discuss, disagree and even be free to passionately state our feelings without running away from each other and hiding in our corners. Our unity is that Jesus loves us, each and everyone. Our unity is our forgiveness.

So, if there is any sense that we need a new way forward, we will all need to take the next step together. Please, I cannot ask strongly enough, come join us for all of our racial justice experiences. The next one is Wednesday, October 13 at 6:30pm. The topic is, "From Monocultural to Intercultural: How do we pay attention to the difference that makes a difference?" In this session participants are introduced to a helpful tool called the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) that gives us a new language to talk about cultural differences.

I am grateful for this opportunity. It answers my question from last summer... "Now what?" This is what... this is the beginning of a new journey for us all. I am hopeful, and looking forward to seeing you all there!

PRESIDENT'S POST:

Welcome Back! *

By Adam Driscoll, Council President

While it may not have been the grand return to pre-pandemic normal that we had hoped for, it was great to get to see so many of you at our annual Block Party. While the full return to "normal" has been a muted and stop and go affair, we have much to be grateful for. Thanks to our clergy, staff, volunteers and members who have continued to fill our spaces with warmth, both virtual and in-person. My hope is that even though worship and activities continue to evolve and may look a little different than how we remember, it provides us a glimpse of memories and traditions we hold dear, and gives us a future to look forward to.

SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all, male and female. Please feel free to join us. We have 2-3 copies of each book. All books will be available all year if you want to read ahead. Please read the book and return ASAP so another person can borrow the book for reading also. We try to get 2-3 readers to be able to read one copy.

Meetings will be held in person and on Zoom. For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net

Book Club Schedule

Sun., November 7 at 7:00 pm
"The Midnight Library"
by Matt Haig

WEDNESDAY AM BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday morning Bible Study has resumed its Fall schedule. 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.



community.

FLU SHOTS AT SOTH

Sunday, October 10th—9:00-11:00 am

The flu shot will be more important than ever this year with the COVID variant virus spreading and symptoms so hard to distinguish. There will very likely be more flu around this year as people are traveling again and much less isolated. Please prioritize getting your flu shot at your Dr. office, a pharmacy, flu shot clinic here or in the

Flu shots this year on Oct. 10th, 9am-11am, will be provided by Bloomington Public Health (as usual). This year appointments will be required with a few walk-in or same day appointments available. This is required by Bloomington Public Health and is to help prevent having people present in crowds. We did have appointment times last year when we did a drive through clinic, so this is not completely new, but this year the scheduling will be done through Bloomington Public Health. You can use the link below to schedule or call Bloomington Public Health at 952-563-8900, select the option for a flu shot or COVID vaccine, to schedule flu shot appointment time at SOTH on Oct. 10th. If you are able they will email you pre-registration forms (forms to be filled out before). If not, I will have forms at SOTH you can pick up and complete. They may ask your health insurance information when making an appointment for their billing purposes so have it handy. There will be limited same day appointments available also. Below is the link to get forms and register for a flu shot appointment:

<https://prepmo.health.state.mn.us/appointment/en/clinic/>

If you need help making this appointment, please call Kaye Wothe. She will help you. If you miss getting an appointment call (952-250-2566) or come by church Oct. 10 and we will work to get you in.



OUR FINANCIAL LIFE: Consecration Sunday—October 17th

By Pastor Scott Searl

Friends, we are a very fortunate family of faith. We have come through the pandemic with enough promises toward our capital appeal that we will have a new parking lot soon. We have weathered the challenges of the pandemic and have shared our finances in such a way that we continue to support our staff and make contributions to the betterment of our community. We have shared a portion of our PPP money and supported local businesses as a result. We are a very fortunate family of faith, and we cannot say thank you enough for all that you share to ensure God's presence continues at Shepherd of the Hills and in our surrounding neighborhood.

As we move toward the Sunday where we gather our financial promises toward our shared mission and ministry, there are a few things I'd like to highlight.

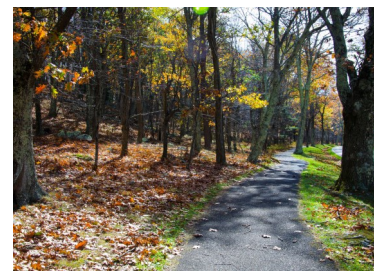
First, we have over twenty students in confirmation this year! When we gathered a few weeks ago for our first meeting so many of the students were twice as tall as the last time I saw them. You can imagine how it felt to be back with these students... it has been amazing! Thanks to Pastor Anne for her leadership. Pastor Sherri and I will also be helping with confirmation this year.

Second, we have learned walk and chew gum! We have learned to zoom worship and in person worship at the same time! While this might not seem like a huge accomplishment, it has been a journey! I am grateful for all those who have helped and continue to help. I know there are people who cannot come physically to church who are now joining almost every Sunday by zoom. While I would have chosen a pandemic to inspire such innovation, I am grateful that this is now one of our worship options.

Finally, we will be taking another step in our faith journey as we spend time with Joe Davis and David Scherer thinking about racial justice. I know there is much I don't know, and I look forward to exploring ways in which I can help in a world after George Floyd. Their first worship experience with us was fantastic! Please, please, please, make every effort to attend their next session with us on September 29th.

As always, please prayerfully consider how you will continue to support our mission and ministry together. We are grateful for all the gifts that have been given and are excited about our future. Promise cards will be mailed out this year, please return them no later than October 17th in worship.

Thank you for all you share, thank you for your partnership in ministry!
Pastor Scott



The Path of Peace Walking Ministry Tuesday, October 5th, 6pm.

Come experiment with a new spiritual discipline! Join Pastor Anne on four Tuesday evenings this fall to spend time walking in nature as we walk through images of nature in the Bible. We plan to meet at Lone Lake Park (5624 Shady Oak Rd., Minnetonka), listen to a Bible passage and contemplative questions, then we'll wander as we wonder about the text. We will end our time each week by gathering back together for a short discussion and prayer. The passages and questions are provided in a book by Becca Stevens called "The Path of Peace."

Come alone or bring others; walk fast or walk slow; walk and talk or walk in silence...make this discipline work for you! This is not an exercise class, rather it is a time to walk and ponder and be reminded that God is on every path.
Tuesday, October 5, 6pm.
Please reach out to Pastor Anne with any questions!



RACIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION SERIES

With a grant we received from Augsburg College, we have hired three consultants to help us make our next faithful move toward racial reconciliation: David Scherer, Joe Davis and Justice Feldman. These three talented folks will be with us in worship

on Sunday mornings, lead educational opportunities on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. They will help facilitate some strategic thinking and planning with our church council and staff. And they will be helping to lead us to new ways of thinking and being in the world both as individuals and as a family of faith.

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

Date: Wednesday, October 13, 2021 at 6:30 pm

Topic: "From Monocultural to Intercultural"

Speaker: Joe Davis and Dave Scherer, JUSTMove

Description: How do we pay attention to the difference that makes a difference? In this session participants are introduced to a helpful tool called the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) that gives us a new language to talk about cultural differences.



LeaderWise
leaderwise.org

WEDNESDAY SPEAKER SERIES

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

Date: Wednesday, November 3, 2021 at 6:30 pm

Topic: "Motivational Interviewing"

Speaker: Rev. Rebecca Fletcher, Consultant, ICF Coach in Training, Leaderwise

Description: "Motivational Interviewing is a person-centered and evidence-based way of talking with people about change. While it is neither "motivational" in the sense that the goal is to generate energy or activity, nor "interviewing" in the sense that it involves specific questions, it is an intentional way of listening and responding when people are contemplating change. Motivational Interviewing is goal-oriented and collaborative, and is based on a spirit of partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation."



WOMEN'S BREAKFAST

This year's WOSOTH Breakfast theme will be Life Moving Forward: Looking at Our Purpose, Faith and Boundaries.

Emerging into a new world, we are all changed. We will begin in fall with guided conversation about re-emerging and

beginning to re-imagine our purpose and goals. In winter we will look at how God's message for us impacts that. Last, in spring we will explore setting new boundaries that fit with what we have learned about ourselves.

We plan to meet in person but for those who prefer, a Zoom connection will also be available. Serving breakfast may depend on the covid situation at the time. Details will be provided as we get closer to the date of the event. Contact Pastor Sherri (sherri.otto@sothchurch.com) or Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse (kwothe@comcast.net) with questions.

Date: October 16, 2021 at 9:00 am

Topic: "Guided Discussion on Purpose"

Speaker: Led by SOTH Staff

Description: Come join us for a guided conversation around finding purpose and focus in the ever evolving pandemic life. It feels like everything has shifted. We started out surviving the pandemic by making huge life changes we thought might last a few weeks. Now 18 months later we are still adjusting daily or weekly to changes. How can we emerge out of the blur and exhaustion that creates, and find focus on our purpose? Has what that purpose is been changed by the ways our world has changed? Join us, join the voices of women of all ages in your trusted community of faith to recharge and see forward.

ADULT FORUM

Date: Sunday, October 3, 2021 at 10:30 am

Topic: "Immigration Education"

Speaker: Sandy & Tim Iverson

Description: The Iversons will be talking about their congregation's experience hosting an asylum-seeking family from Nigeria for the last 4 years. Sandy and Tim Iverson recently celebrated their 52nd wedding anniversary, a marital journey that began in 1969 as Peace Corps volunteers in El Salvador, Central America. They are active in AMMPARO and return to El Salvador every year. Their home congregation is Saint Paul Reformation in Saint Paul.



IMMIGRANT MINISTRY

UPDATE

After months of anticipation and preparation, our congregation is finally ready to invite an asylum family into our

parsonage! With the help of our interfaith coalition of volunteers (ACT-TC: Asylum Coalition for Transition-Twin Cities), we will be responsible for the care of our guests. This includes things such as rides, companionship, help with schooling, addressing practical questions (such as how to use the microwave), and financial assistance. As of this writing, we do not yet know the home country of our guests, but undoubtedly, an interpreter will also be needed. All in all, we will probably need twice as many volunteers as we think we need.

Right now we need people to be proactive and contact either Pastor Sherri or me as soon as possible to offer your time.

If you would like to make a financial contribution, that can be sent to SOTH with ACT-TC written in the memo line of your check.

We ask for your prayers for God's guidance as we work to fulfill our calling to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger. We also ask for your support in whatever way you can give to this ministry.

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

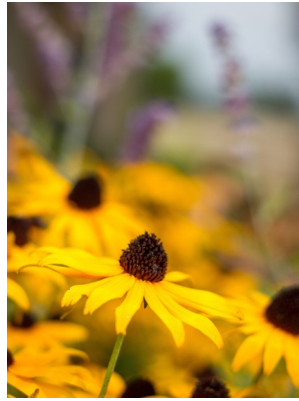
Pastor Sherri Otto
952-935-3457
sherri.otto@sothchurch.com

Staff Reflection and Youth News

At Every Turn continued

#3: Foul tipping can be obnoxious, but at least the batter is still in the game. Covid is getting really tiring. It has been difficult to plan and prepare for events that may or may not even happen, and with only a guessing game for gauging the number of attendees. It can start to feel like we're striking out when things get canceled, or our events don't turn out well, or Zoom attendees can't hear what is being said in-person. But instead of looking at these things as strike outs, I'm going to start considering them an obnoxious foul-tipping at bat. It's not failure, it's not even trial-and-error. It's a chance to see if we have the persistence to keep our head in the game. So I'm going to keep my eye on the ball and keep swinging knowing that one of these times, I'll connect with a whopper!

Grace and peace!
Pastor Anne



AT EVERY TURN: Insights from the Intern

By Intern Pastor Anne Schaefer

Welcome to my little corner of the world. As an intern pastor, I am learning a great deal about what it means to be called to ministry. Each month, I will use this newsletter space to reflect on the wisdom that has come my way. I will likely learn a great deal about God, the Church, this congregation, faith, myself and grace. Thanks for being part of my journey!

Lesson #1 this month: Funerals are sacred – even when the pastor doesn't know the family, even when details go awry, and even when the pastor doesn't know her knee from her elbow. I felt incredibly thankful that I got to come along side Pastor Sherri and help with a funeral this month. I had never met the family, yet I got to help preside over the interment (bonus learning – it's interment NOT internment...look it up!). Never having done anything like this before, I was incredibly nervous. And yet, the Spirit showed up and made the moment beautiful. It wasn't my newly discovered amazing graveside skills, nor was it the magic words printed for the service. It was that we were all there welcoming the Spirit to do her thing, to bring peace where it was most needed, and to remind us how sacred a funeral is.

#2: God created the path... the ground is already holy. Sometimes it feels like so much pressure to plan the right event, preach the right words, make the right decisions. As a new pastor, I want to lead people well on this path of Christian discipleship. Even more so, at the very least, I don't want to hinder them.

But I read a poem this month by Rob Bell that pointed out that when Moses saw the burning bush, he took off his shoes because the ground beneath him was holy. The ground did not BECOME holy the moment that Moses arrived. The ground was already holy, and Moses – through the burning bush – learned this and participated in the sacredness by getting barefoot. This is true for me and the ministry in which I get to be part – God has already created the ground holy. I just need to take off my shoes and soak it in.

Continued on above



FALL-FLEXIBILITY

By Pastor Sherri Otto

I love this time of year! The cooler temperatures, the Fall colors, the smell of burning wood from the backyard fire pit. For me, it's a time of renewal, a time to slow down, a time for reflection.

It's also a time of excitement for us here at Shepherd as we have been planning all of the events that will be happening throughout the year! But sometimes, more often than we would like to think, our well-thought-out plans change. I am calling this Fall-Flexibility.

Last year when the pandemic hit, we had to totally change how we "did" church. We worked from home, didn't see each other, learned how to use ZOOM and all the technology we could muster. And then we had a reprieve. Vaccinations came and we finally were able to gather without masks! We could see each other's smiles and there seemed to be a sense of relief and joy. We had the flexibility of moving back to a somewhat sense of normalcy.

And then another wave hit. And with it, we needed to be flexible once again. The hopes and dreams of the Fall programming have changed because of the new COVID variants, especially when it came to our younger children.

WAM (Worship, Arts, and Music) for ages 3 through 5th grade were all set to be meeting in person on Sunday mornings. I had such high hopes of getting volunteers to help with the students, hopes of having a children's choir, hopes of a Christmas program. But as the COVID numbers continued to rise, it seemed irresponsible to continue this thought process of being in-person. Again, Fall-Flexibility kicked in.

We have postponed WAM until January, where we are hoping and praying that the younger children will be able to be vaccinated and the number of people getting sick will be at a lower rate. But in the meantime, each child will be receiving a box filled with a month's worth of Bible stories, crafts for them to make, coloring sheets and a family sheet with three categories: Read it, Talk about it, Live it. I will also send out videos and music for the families to see and listen to each week.

My hope is that this Fall-Flexibility move will not only keep the kids engaged with the Bible stories, but also build a foundation of faith with parents and their children that will last a lifetime.

God's peace, blessing and Fall-Flexibility be with you all!
Pastor Sherri



mental
health
connect

We help open doors

Trauma Informed Care Introduction

Tuesday, October 19th 6:30pm
& Tuesday, October 26th 12pm

Join a 1 hour session to learn what's involved to be a Trauma Informed Community. We'll be discussing how the church can be a safe place to talk about our experiences, find healing and care. Everyone carries trauma, but it's experienced differently. If you would like to become a Trauma Informed Community, full training will begin in January 2022. These sessions are taught by experts on Trauma, ACE's and mental health:
Ann Ellison, Fairview/MHealth
Rev. Dr. Rachel Keefe, Living Table Church, author
Sherri Stella, Pastoral Ministries Director at St. Joan of Arc
To register, go to mhconnect.org/events

Faith & Life Conference Faith & Mental Health: Being Made Whole

Speaker: Vicki Elliott

November 4th, 2021 7:00pm

The Faith & Life Lecture Series exists to create welcoming and accessible public forums for members of the Twin Cities community to hear nationally known speakers reflect on how Christian faith is related to different dimensions of everyday life. The talks are always free public events. The lectures typically last about 50 minutes, followed by a brief period for Q&A after the presentation by the speaker. Audio podcasts of selected lectures are available.



COMPASSION FATIGUE AND EMPATHY EXHAUSTION

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

I confess at the end of summer, I “hit the wall” as they say. My ability to have empathy and compassion felt non-existent. Why? In early June as more of our community became vaccinated, I lifted my head in hope! My crystal-ball view looked rosy for some

normalcy moving forward. I dug in and began the planning for this year’s speakers and events, I started visiting shut-ins, people in rehab, etc. Hope was in the air like on Easter Sunday. In my personal life, I began doing more normal things, too. Then week by week, month by month as the vaccination demand dropped off and the big barrel that is the Delta variant ripped into our bubbles, slowly the light of hope started to have shadows, until at the end of summer, it felt like a return to darkness, more like Lent and less like Easter. Hope felt like an unreachable goal, even as vaccines were fully approved (not just emergency use only), and vaccinated break-through case numbers rose (still very few getting super sick). The unvaccinated filled the hospitals, leaving people with normal medical concerns to wait for care or even die of otherwise treatable events. Kids who could not yet be vaccinated were starting school, once again feeling unsafe, and numbers of school-borne illness skyrocketed in places where school started early. But you know all this.

For me, the roller coaster that runs repeatedly between hope and darkness pulled down the shades and my compassion fatigue and empathy exhaustion set in. I found myself very angry with people who could have made choices to change this trajectory for our nation, communities most vulnerable and health care settings. The seemingly lack of care and respect for another is mind blowing. I tried over and over to put myself in their shoes, and for short moments I could be empathetic, but it did not last. Pretty soon, I found myself unwelcoming to anyone not vaccinated, which I frankly continue to be to this day. I found myself unwelcoming in practices that are rooted in the welcome, like serving meals and food at church secondary to the risk it adds when it is not our business or mission. I raised the unpopular question of how do we welcome others without food and shared meals? This is an extremely weird question from someone who has spearheaded, cooked, planned and encouraged food-related events tied to church events for my entire life.

I found myself naturally crossing my arms in conversation as a display of closed-body language. My lack of excitement for another year of programming that would be remote, and likely would not include young families due to the vulnerability they still feel with unvaccinated kids and too many unvaccinated adults in the world adding to the variant load.

The only light in this darkness was the repeated realization that kids have no issue wearing a mask, and that the mask fight was really largely between people of adult ages.

In this compassion fatigue/empathy exhaustion, I was growing more and more depressed, grumpy, negative, with lack of energy and overall snarky. I could see it. It resonated so strongly with so many of my nurse friends in hospitals who were quitting because of the lack of respect for public health. Finding so many people with no medical science knowledge, steeped in misinformation and mistrust brought them to a point of empathy exhaustion, leading to a need to quit hospital work and creating the biggest nursing shortage in my lifetime.

Faith Community Nurse continued from page 10

When I finally realized my low was so connected to this empathy exhaustion, I decided I needed to dig in if I did not want to be this way and I wanted to get healthier. So, I began to dig into things I let go by the wayside, things that had fed me before. I started listening to meaningful podcasts while I walked, reading old books related to self-care, finding meaningful short devotions each day and returning to more mindful prayer practices to draw closer to God's word for me, taking self-compassion surveys, confessing to workmates, kids, husband and close friends how I felt, reaching out to my therapist to have a few sessions with her again, etc.

This all made me realize how many habits I had let go by the wayside, either with all the changes created by new normals or by the busy-ness of being out and about during the season of hope. When that hope crashed, none of those supportive pieces were there to hold me up. Discerning which ones were useful and bringing them back into my schedule has been like getting a massage again. It has helped me find steady ground again, begin to refill my tank, step back and be less reactive and negative, be grateful... do things I had lost the ability to do. I have heard several people say they had lost track of practices over the year or summer, so I trust I am not alone in this. Also, navigating the slower, quieter pace the pandemic had us in this past year, plus to the re-emerging summer allowed, and now a partial return to limitations, has to drive us to spend some time discerning yet another new normal life rhythm. We each pick our risk choices and priorities. No longer is everything an option, but also, no longer is nothing an option, either. This will be a real test of our priorities and how our actions put them on full display. This will force us to be honest about our choices, boundaries and undoubtedly drive more mental, emotional, relational and social struggles in our lives.

At October WoSOTH (Breakfast) (likely there will not be food secondary to COVID precautions), we will be having conversation about how we start over in a daily changing world of starts and stops, trying some tools to help us sort these quandaries out and hopefully at the very least, put each of us in a starting block for a vision and personal goals forward in this new world where we live our lives. In January when we meet, we will include becoming more aware of how we each interpret God's word for us to add that perspective to our choices, and then in March, we will look closely at our boundaries related to our life choices. I look forward to having these conversations with people I respect, share a number of values with, I know will share candidly and feel grace from regarding my own choices. These are people who make me a better person.

My prayer is that you can feel honest about your life experiences, feel seen and supported every day in the SOTH community. And if you do not, you let us know, so we can lift our heads again and re-open our awareness. With my confession here about my loss of compassion, I hope to turn, ask for forgiveness from God and discover a new and better path. Doing this both as an individual, but also as a community, is life giving and reminds us of the hope we have through faith. I would love to hear what has happened recently that gave you hope again. How is it for you to experience individual hope versus a shared community hope? If hope is alluding you, reach out to a Pastor or me.

Working to Live in Hope and Community,
Kaye Wothe
Faith Community Nurse

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

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



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