On Prayer and Hope for Transformation

Dear Members and Friends of Christ Church Lutheran,

One year ago, I was in the midst of a sabbatical, generously granted to me by the congregation. I was away from my duties at Christ Church for three months, exploring the theme, “Ora et Labora,” prayer and work. I explored prayer practices alongside the spirituality of craft and working with one’s hands. It was a special time—a gift for which I continue to be grateful, and one that continues to bear fruit in my own life of prayer.

One of the prayer practices I explored is one that has roots in many of the world’s religious traditions—that of praying with a mantra, or a repetitive phrase.

So often Western Christians (perhaps especially Protestant Christians) have assumed that prayer needs to consist of many, many words. And prayers full of words (running the gamut from formal liturgies to spontaneous outpourings) can be beautiful and powerful. I think of how often I am moved by the prayers offered by our prayer writers at Christ Church, and how centered my own spirituality is in the life of prayer we share together on Sunday mornings.

However, prayer can also emerge without words—in silence and meditation. Centering prayer is a form of prayer that seeks to help the pray-er empty her mind of images, thoughts, and words, so that she can simply rest in the presence of God.

It is also possible to pray using very few words—using a mantra, or a repetitive prayer, as I mentioned above. Of late, this has actually been the most helpful kind of prayer for me. The repetition helps center my breathing, quiet my mind, and then often allows me to enter what truly feels like the presence of God. The words that I have been using as a mantra these days come from the Orthodox tradition, an ancient prayer known as the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Over the centuries, Orthodox writers have rhapsodized about the spiritual benefits of praying this prayer, and recommend praying it over and over again. I find myself drawn to this prayer with the simple thought that I am joining the prayers of so many pilgrims of faith before me. How many millions, billions of times, has this prayer been prayed? One by one, I add my own prayers to those of this communion of saints, as I yearn for the healing, transforming presence of God in my own life, here and now.

I was also deeply grateful to have this prayer on my heart and on my lips as I joined a silent march to the corner of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, in Minneapolis, where George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis Police officer Derek Chauvin just over one month ago. This particular march took place just a week after George Floyd was killed, and I joined a great throng of people led by Black clergy members from all over Minneapolis and St. Paul. At the site of George Floyd’s murder there were powerful prayers led by those same clergy members; at one point we were all invited to take a knee and pray the Lord’s prayer together. Perhaps because the crowd was so large and I had trouble hearing the spoken prayers, I found myself most profoundly moved by the silent, seven-block walk we took to and from the Sabathani Community Center. As that great throng moved together toward that now-holy place where George Floyd was murdered (a place filled, simultaneously, with such pain and hope) I found myself praying, over and over again, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Those words emerged in me spontaneously, and this “Jesus Prayer” felt like the truest prayer I could pray—a prayer to our crucified savior, filled with yearning to be healed from all the ways I am part of a system that kills, impoverishes, and demeans God’s beloved children. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

May such prayer, however we offer it, do its transforming work in us all.

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A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
A Reconciling in Christ Congregation
A National Historic Landmark
Find us on Facebook: Christ Church
Lutheran, Minneapolis (@CCLmpls)
Find us on Instagram:
@christchurchlutheranmpls

Sunday Worship and Office Hours suspended
until further notice
Please call the church office and leave a mes-
-sage if you have a concern

Staff
Pastors  Pastor Eva Jensen
         Pastor Erik Haaland
Cantors  Pastor Robert Farlee
         Pastor Martin Seltz
Children’s Ministry Director   Tyler Egge
Office Administrator          Laurel Jacobson
Facilities                     Laurel Jacobson
                   Property Team
Courier Team                   Melody Pauling
                                Pastor Eva Jensen

Congregation Council
President                     Matthew Courtney
Vice President               Kate Haugen
Secretary                    Hilary Gebauer
Treasurer                    Brad Hubert
Council Members              Elena Hilding
                              Deane Lagerquist
                              Kevin Olsen
                              Melody Pauling
                              Colin Watkins

July Birthdays
7/1 Alvin Weber, Jason Weber
7/3 Eli Nooney, Zander Nooney
7/7 Mary Bode
7/8 Sharon Kambeitz
7/9 Calvin Jenkins-Buegel,
       Dick Strom, Janice Wahlstrom
7/11 Chuck Merrell
7/16 Ute Swenson
7/17 Mark Jensen
7/19 Donna Gawreluk
7/23 Marilyn Johnston,
       Marcus Nooney
7/25 Molly Boes Ganza,
       Donna Lindberg
7/29 Chloe Rice

Happy Birthday, everyone!

July Calendar
Note: All meetings and gath-
erings remain virtual
July 2   Executive meeting
July 3   Office closed
July 4   Knitters & Crocheters
July 5   At-Home Worship
July 7   Committee meetings
July 9   Safe House meal
July 12  At-Home Worship
July 19  At-Home Worship
July 23  Friends meeting
July 26  At-Home Worship

Lectionary Readings
for July
July 5
Fifth Sunday in Pentecost
Zechariah 9:9-12
Psalm 145:8-14
Romans 7:15-25a
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
July 12
Sixth Sunday in Pentecost
Isaiah 55:10-13
Psalm 65:[1-8] 9-13
Romans 8:1-11
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
July 19
Seventh Sunday in Pentecost
Isaiah 44:6-8
Psalm 86:12-25
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
July 26
Eighth Sunday in Pentecost
1 Kings 3:5-12
Psalm 119:129-136
Romans 8:26-39
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

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Council Report for June

Elena Hilding shared reflections on the turbulent times we’re living through and encouraged us all to return to the thoughtful words of our pastors. She closed with a prayer by the German theologian Karl Rahner: “Oh God, give me the courage and strength to be a person who is worthy of being called a Christian.”

We received an update on the boiler project. The asbestos abatement has been completed, and half of the variable frequency drives (a.k.a. air fan controls) have been installed. The boiler room equipment has been demolished and removed. Installation and calibration of the boilers will be done over the next couple weeks, and the entire boiler replacement project is expected to be completed before mid-July. The Council expressed immense gratitude to the Property Committee for its project management and to the congregation for supporting this work, which will warm the church for many winter seasons ahead.

Council discussed the importance for enhanced children’s ministry in the fall. We look forward to our first confirmation class in over a decade. And, considering the distance learning that we’ve experienced over the last few months, it will be important for children’s ministry programs to be well-prepared for the fall season. So, our Children’s Ministry team will be diligently working to enhance ministry for fall programming.

We received our regular financial and pastors’ reports. No Council meeting is scheduled for July; we will resume regular Council business in August. We adjourned with the Lord’s Prayer.

Treasurer’s Update

The report from treasurer Brad Hubert will be published at a later date. Thank you for continuing to give of your treasures to Christ Church Lutheran this summer!

The ELCA celebrates three important anniversaries

From the recent email written by Pastor Jensen:

In 2019 and 2020 we celebrate 50 years of Lutheran women being ordained in the United States, 40 years of women of color being ordained, and 10 years of LGBTQIA+ individuals being able to serve freely. Many of you will recall the adult forum that Christ Church member, DeAne Lagerquist led earlier this year when she focused on the ordination of women and these important anniversaries. DeAne Lagerquist has created a website that shares a rich history of the movement that led to the ordination of Lutheran women, women of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. On that website you will find many remarkable stories: stories of pain and exclusion, stories of celebration, and stories of gifts belatedly welcomed and affirmed. Here is the website address: https://pages.stolaf.edu/lutheran-womensordination

The most recent Living Lutheran series “We are Church, We are Called” tells amazing stories of different women who serve as ordained pastors of the ELCA, including Pastor Angela !Khabeb, who serves at Holy Trinity, only a few blocks from Christ Church (and who we are teaming with to provide goods to our neighbors): Find Pastor Angela’s story here: https://www.livinglutheran.org/2020/03/we-are-church-we-are-called-it-takes-a-village-to-raise-a-pastor/#.Xv1G3Q9fs5k

With a special emphasis in this anniversary year on the lived experience of women in ministry, we have the opportunity to learn from their stories of faith-filled service and life in the church. Informed and inspired by these and other stories, we can be encouraged and strengthened in hope for the future and the challenges of justice to which we are called today.

Courtyard flower pots

A thousand thanks to member Matthew Kunnari, who created these lovely courtyard flower pots! They beautify our outdoor space and are much-admired by the frequent neighborhood families who come to enjoy the peace and solitude they find there.
This month’s Closeup features Jason Bergquist who has been a member of Christ Church Lutheran for 40 years.

**When did you start attending Christ Church Lutheran and what brought you here?**
I have been a member of Christ Church my whole life.

**Do you live in the neighborhood?**
I grew up in the neighborhood, but my family moved to Golden Valley when I was 10. However, we still chose to remain members at Christ Church. Both my sister LeAnn and I had great friends at Christ Church that we didn’t want to leave. So that meant a lot of commuting back and forth for youth group as well as confirmation classes.

**What about our church keeps you coming back?**
I have always appreciated the small family we have at Christ Church. I enjoy being a part of a group where people notice when you have been gone and are happy to see you again. Whether it’s people I’ve known my entire life or “newer” members, I appreciate our welcoming community.

**Do you have any stories to tell about your time here or about events or activities you have been involved in?**
Youth group lock-ins are always some of my favorite memories, even during my adult years as a chaperone. They also helped me learn a lot about the building!

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**How does Christ Church help you live and share your faith?**
I enjoy sharing my faith and participating in our worship life as an assisting minister. I started as an acolyte. When it felt like I was too old to be an acolyte and more assisting ministers were needed, I was asked to help in that role. I was very nervous at first, but I am very comfortable doing it now. Just don’t ask me to do any singing or chanting!

**What do you do when you’re not in church?**
I work at Mains’l Services in Brooklyn Park. We support people living with disabilities to reach their hopes and dreams. In our participant directed services, my role is to lead a team that supports people in choosing and directing their own services so that they can remain in their own homes in their community. I’ve worked there for almost 10 years and I love my work and the teams I work with. Also, during “normal” times, I would be at Target Field watching the Twins or listening to the game in my backyard.

**Do you have anything else to share?**
I served for many years on the church council, beginning right after high school. I was also the secretary and treasurer as part of the Executive Committee. Over the years I’ve also been a part of the Education, Youth, Nominating, Visioning and Endowment Committees.

“Closeup” is a Courier feature to help us get better acquainted with our fellow members. If you would like to share your story in “Closeup,” call Donna Lindberg at 651/552-8499.

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**Call Committee Update**

On June 30, the Call Committee met with our representative from the ELCA, Craig Pederson, to discuss the next steps in our call process. Covid-19 has certainly delayed our original timetable but we are continuing to proceed. We were very pleased to hear that there is high interest in becoming our lead pastor and they have received both self-nomination and submitted recommendations. After vetting by our synod, they have given us a number of very qualified candidates to consider with the possibility of more to come. The committee will be reviewing these candidates, letting them know that they are being considered, and deciding who we would like to Zoom interview.

We ask for your continued support and prayers through this exciting time.

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**Boiler replacement continues!**

The old boilers are history!

Stuff removed from the boiler room

Awaiting the new unit
Keeping Watch with Our Neighbors

Deep thanks to the members of Christ Church who gave up nights of sleep to join our Longfellow neighbors in keeping watch over our streets during the recent unrest in our neighborhood.

Matthew Courtney, Bob Victorin-Vangerud, and Colin Watkins each stayed up all night at the church on Saturday, May 30 after fears began to circulate about attacks on churches and other civil institutions. (Fortunately, those fears did not materialize.) The photo on the left, taken by Bob Victorin-Vangerud, shows a military helicopter above Christ Church as evening falls that night. The other, taken by Congregation President Mathew Courtney, shows an early morning sunrise illuminating the Tower after a blessedly uneventful night.

After learning about the continued vigilance and anxiety of our neighbors, other Christ Church volunteers offered to spend nights at church through the following week. Thanks to Fred Quivik, Bethany Schowengerdt, Mark Jensen, Pastor Erik Haaland, Jason Bergquist, George Greenfield, Clayton Jelinek, Kevin Larson, and Pat Baehler for giving up a full night’s sleep to keep watch with our neighbors!

Thanks are also due to Mirko Hall, Tim Hagen, Pastor Martin Seltz, Anna Murphy, and Ian Thackray, who offered to stay over June 5 and 6. However, by that time our neighbors had decided to call over the overnight watch, and so we did, too.

Our prayers are for continued safety for all in our neighborhood. Our prayers are also for justice for George Floyd and his family, and for all who suffer under the tremendous burdens of racism and white supremacy in our society.

A Civil Rights Pilgrimage: Forum on Sunday, June 28, with Fred & Melinda Quivik

Earlier this year, Melinda & Fred Quivik embarked upon a self-guided “Civil Rights Pilgrimage,” where they visited historical sites with significant events during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. On June 28 they recounted their journey and their learning in a Zoom forum (see a snapshot here). Thank you, Quiviks, for sharing your moving and rich stories!

Next Zoom Book Conversation: This Tender Land, by William Kent Krueger

Back in early March, Robert Anderson (who was the founder of the Christ Church Book Group) chose This Tender Land, by local author William Kent Kruger, for the group’s next discussion. However, the discussion was postponed due to the pandemic. And then, early in May, Robert died suddenly and tragically. In order to honor and remember Robert, we’d like to try have a discussion of this book that he chose and loved—this time, over Zoom.

If you are interested in being part of this discussion (sometime later this summer), email Pastor Haaland (ehaaland@christchurchluth.org) and together we will choose a date and time for the conversation. When we do gather in conversation we will surely miss Robert’s passion, wisdom, and quick wit—but we will gather trusting that Robert would very glad to know that we are carrying on.
Christ Church feature #1

Back in March, Christ Church was highlighted in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine, as a notable neighborhood church. Of course WE know this, and now so does the readership! Click on this link to read the full article: [http://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/keeping-the-faith/](http://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/keeping-the-faith/)

Christ Church feature #2

You’ve seen this photo in the past couple of Couriers, and now you can get your hands on a copy of the LSS Magazine with the Christ Church feature on the back inside cover! Along with the devotional booklets that you can pick up in the silver outdoor mailbox (see article below), you will find copies of the magazine. Please take just one so everyone can have one. Enjoy!

Devotional booklets available

If you’ve been missing the “Christ in Our Home” and/or “The Word in Season” quarterly devotional booklets, you can find them in the silver mailbox in the courtyard and help yourself! The mailbox is found on the inner courtyard wall nearest the main sanctuary doors. The July through September editions are in there now for you to collect as you wish.

A Request from Holy Trinity Lutheran

As you may know, following the closures of the nearby Cub Foods, Target, Aldi and Walgreens, many people in our neighborhood no longer have convenient access to food and hygiene items. Our neighboring congregation, Holy Trinity Lutheran, has stepped in to fill this need by distributing donations every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. By 10:30 am last Wednesday, over two hundred people were standing in the line waiting for distribution to begin at noon. In one hour all donated items had been distributed! The need is great. However, in recent weeks donations have been declining and so Holy Trinity has reached out to us to help. (Thank you to the members of Christ Church Lutheran who have been volunteering and delivering items; this new request is that we support these short-term efforts as a congregation.)

Holy Trinity’s initial request to us was for 1,000 bars of soap, which our pastors brought over on Wednesday, July 1. (Thanks to initial donors who stepped up so quickly!) We now want to invite the whole congregation to contribute funds to this effort. Whatever is raised will be used to purchase needed food and/or hygiene items to restock Holy Trinity’s give-away shelves over the month of July.

If you are able to make a financial contribution to support the purchase of needed items, please send your designated check to the church office. You can also donate online. (After you click through to the Vanco website [https://www.vancopayments.com/login](https://www.vancopayments.com/login), choose “Holy Trinity Donations” under the “Select Fund” drop-down.) We will respond as we are able, based on contributions to this designated special appeal. Thank you for your generosity!

Blessings
The Little & Middle COURIER

Children’s Ministry at Christ Church Lutheran—June 2020

What’s Tyler doing this summer?

Tyler Egge, Children’s Ministry director, is working full-time as chaplain at Camp Chetek in Wisconsin! He continues to create YouTube videos for the Christ Church kids and families, and will work with the pastors and Children’s Ministry leaders to plan for fall programming.

We wish Tyler all the best in his camp chaplaincy role!

Greetings from the Youth

Elena Hilding, Pre-Confirmation guide, keeps frequent contact with the young people of the church. In June Elena and Isis painted more rocks, and Chloe, mom Samantha and the pastors gathered (with precautions!) in the courtyard. See the courtyard greeting below!

Baptism Birthdays

There are no baptism birthdays this month. If your child has a baptism birthday in July, please send Tyler an email at childrensministry@christchurchluth.org, so he can add them to his records.

Jesus said, “Let the children come!”

At Christ Church Lutheran, we welcome children and their families to the font, to the table, and to worship.
June 24, 2020

Dear Christ Church Lutheran Members,

Greetings from Namibia located in southwest Africa! Although we have been away from our beloved church home since last December, we remain grateful to be connected with you through the wonderful online worship services that our pastors and musicians prepare each week. It is a blessing to hear familiar voices and the comforting sounds emanating from our beautiful sanctuary. This is especially meaningful for us as the church we attend here, St. George’s Anglican Cathedral, has also suspended worship services during our state of emergency.

Our original plan was to return to Minnesota in mid-April, but then we received word that Namibia has granted us permanent residency which means we can now travel to Namibia more frequently and stay for longer periods. We are especially thankful our residency status changed this year due to the pandemic. We have felt safer staying in place here rather than making the long journey home. For over 45 days there were only 16 cases of Covid-19 in Namibia, but as of June 21st, that number jumped up rapidly to over 70 cases. The recent jump is primarily due to Namibians returning home from Europe or South Africa. Sadly, they have brought the virus with them. Even though a mandatory supervised quarantine is required for all returnees, the virus has found ways to spread. We are grateful, however, that Namibian health care professionals and government leaders are handling the pandemic well. Daily pandemic updates and protective practice guidelines are broadcast on the local TV, radio, and even through our cell phones in multiple languages. Spreading “fake news” is a criminal offense. Social distancing has long been encouraged and no one is allowed to enter any shops or businesses without a mask, a temperature check, hand sanitizing and registering in case contact tracing becomes necessary. Along with the rest of the world enduring this pandemic we pray, “Lord, have mercy.”

Even though our experience this year in Namibia has been overshadowed by the restrictions caused by the pandemic, we continue to relish our time in this beautiful country. Before the lockdown, Cheryl and I traveled with a good friend, Shaun Awaseb, to the Namibian coast on the Atlantic and visited Sandwich Harbor where the huge sand dunes of the Namib Desert meet the ocean, as well as the mystical sites of Sossusvlei, which boasts the largest sand dunes outside of Mongolia. Shortly before the lockdown, we spent a weekend at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, where we had the chance to “walk with elephants,” a mountaintop experience for both of us. More recently, we traveled with another good friend and tour guide, Scobie Dewet, to Etosha National Park which is about the size of the state of New Hampshire. Within 15 minutes of entering the park we encountered two family groups of elephants totaling 26. The next day as we drove through the park we saw countless bird species, as well as white rhino, zebra, giraffe, and a wide variety of antelope. We never tire of seeing the beauty of the Namibian landscape and the bountiful wildlife that live here.

Sadly, the after school program in Katutura where I have volunteered in the past as a remedial math and English tutor for elementary-aged children has been closed during the lockdown. I am hoping that it might open in the near future. Cheryl continues to teach graduate nursing courses via online formats, so she remains an active participant in the life of Augsburg University even though we are living on the other side of the world. Before the lockdown, we welcomed friends from Minnesota, including our next door neighbors from Mendota Heights. Now that some of the restrictions of the lockdown have been lifted, we have enjoyed spending time with friends, some of whom live in the same townhome complex. We also hope to do a bit more traveling around this vast and beautiful land before we return to Minnesota. We are learning that international travel will not be allowed until after September 18th, thus we are hoping we can make the trip back to Minnesota then.

We, along with our Namibian friends, watched in horror the murder of George Floyd. Namibians who lived through decades of apartheid understand fully the systems that promote racial injustice and inequity, and they stand in solidarity with all our voices that cry out for meaningful and lasting change in the US and around the world.

In this very strange and difficult time in the world, I find myself occasionally singing to myself, the words of a favorite hymn, “My life flows on in endless song; above earth’s lamentation. I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation. No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I’m clinging. Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?” Perhaps now more than ever, we cherish the promise that “nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Thank you to Laurel Jacobson for inviting us to share a little of our experiences of life in Namibia. As the other old hymn declares, “God be with you till we meet again.”

Harvey Leuning