

Living Connected...

TO GOD & EACH OTHER

June 2020

SENIOR PASTOR'S COLUMN

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Worship: 10 AM
YouTube & Facebook Live
(All Age Worship)

Pastoral Staff:
Bonnie Wilcox
Senior Pastor
Jill Bergman
Associate Pastor

The Caller Newsletter is
Published by First
Lutheran Church.
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SEEKING WISDOM AND HOPE by Pastor Bonnie Wilcox

Over the next five weeks we'll read parts of the Book of Job in worship. Job's story is one of heartbreak and loss on a large scale.

We are all experiencing Communal Trauma - tragedy and loss across our world, not only as individuals or families, or even communities, but much broader. We've now completed thirteen weeks of Shelter at Home because of COVID-19. But this is compounded and stressed by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day and the resulting outrage. We are experiencing compound communal trauma.

We are not the first to experience communal trauma. History and first-person accounts can teach us about resiliency and where hope is found. Each week during this series, a member of our church or a friend of First Lutheran will share their story of communal

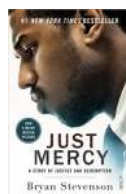
trauma-- here, in the Twin Cities, or somewhere else in the world.

Where is our hope when all are experiencing trauma on some level? Why does God allow this to happen? This series, told through the lens of the Bible's Book of Job, as well as living witnesses, and a drama, will help us seek wisdom and hope for this time in our lives.

The Spanish Flu Comes to Hilltop Ranch:

Our Drama Team retells the Biblical story of Job and his newly-named wife, Dinah, set during The Spanish Flu in 1918 on a ranch in Clifton, Texas. [Why Clifton, TX? Because Clifton is the Norwegian capital of Texas, of course!] Written by Nathan Roberts and directed by Pastor Jill Bergman. (Sundays, June 7 - July 5 online.)

To gain perspective about the lives of African Americans, I recommend these as one place to begin.



Just Mercy, by Bryan Stevenson. Available as a book and movie, or as a book for younger readers. Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal

practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and

legal brinksmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.



The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas. A novel written for young people, also available as a movie. This is a work of fiction: Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood

where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Watch for conversations at church in July to talk about opportunities to work for justice and become more anti-racist.

Pastor Bonnie

Youth Group Bonfires starting in June!

We will be hosting monthly socially distanced outdoor bonfires at the church for groups of 12 people or less from 6–8 PM.

Chairs will be kept more than six feet apart, no food or utensils will be shared, and all youth are invited to wear masks. We'll be staying outside, praying, doing a Bible study and

playing games on Wednesdays, June 10, July 8 & Aug. 12.

Kids and youth have been serving and helping in our communities. They've been writing letters and creating artwork to send to seniors in our church, helping to clean up their neighborhoods and helping with the Sunday meal.

Walk-through Outdoor Vacation Bible School (VBS) for All Ages, August 3-7

Get ready for a family adventure at First Lutheran Church as we learn about God's grace through our Vacation Bible School program: Knights of the North Castle.

Come to experience music, Bible stories, science experiments and crafts in small groups each night. Families will sign up for a time slot and walk through all the stations on the grounds of First Lutheran Church in the evenings. After you've visited each station families will pick up

picnic lunches and a discussion guide so they can have dinner together and discuss what they've learned.

We will stay socially distanced, with no contact activities and invite families to wear masks.

We are seeking volunteers to make this a great experience! Teens and adults needed to help with the stations and also to pack meals during the day. If you are interested, please contact Rachel, Rachel@flech.org

From The Music Director:

I bet the most commonly asked question from the past 10 weeks is "How are you doing?" We ask that of our friends, our neighbors and our church family. We are especially thinking about those who live alone and are isolated. We, the staff at FLC, are always thinking about our church family and longing to be reunited.

Music, I find, is very cathartic. It helps us find joy when it is very hard to do so. Being a musician most of my life, I know that it is something that is a part of me and I find joy in sharing it with others.

It has been very strange recording our weekend worship to an empty Sanctuary. I miss my choir and congregation so much! I am honored to be at FLC, but might have chosen a different way to begin my tenure here!

I wish to thank the many musicians that have made our online worship so spectacular. I appreciate their time, energy and talents to make our worship meaningful and first class. **Many thanks to:** Corin Barnhart, Blaine Barnhart, Pam Hartel, Meagan Ferrise, Ruth Dodson, Ruth Craft, Tyler LeClear-Vachta, Jon Lueth, Paul Christensen, Jerry Erickson, Drew Stolba, Judy Eddy, Jeremiah Bohn & Chris Larson for your fine musicianship!

Thanks also to Dorothy Markowitz and Cheryl Ballingrud for their expertise and willingness to change the banners to correspond with the church season.

Keep the faith. We will get through this stronger than ever!

Jeffrey Patry, Director of Music Ministries



The Spanish Flu Comes to Hilltop Ranch Drama by FLC

Our amazing actors will be gussied up in cowboy hats, pearl snaps, and southern drawls...as we film short skits retelling the Bible story of Job as a Texas Rancher during the Spanish Flu of 1918. The skits will be played during our Sunday services in June.



Coffee Hour with ZOOM Sundays at 11 AM

Bring your morning coffee and join us following worship as we gather to connect and converse with the video conference.

HopeFULL Camp activities from Camp Wapo for families coming in July! We are bringing Camp Wapo to our homes with:

- ◆ Bible study guides for all ages
- ◆ Virtual camp activities built around each weekly theme
- ◆ Family Devotionals

Summer Sunday School Online & in the mail

Each Sunday, Rachel will be reading the Bible story on Facebook live at 9:45 AM.

Sunday school activities will be sent out each week so that kids can follow along during the Sunday worship service.

Music class with Miss Janet for toddlers and preschoolers is live on ZOOM each Sunday at 12 PM. Please contact Rachel for the link.

If you'd like to schedule a ZOOM meeting for your Ministry Group, contact Joyce, joyce@flech.org or leave a message at the church office.



Searching for God's Help in Trying Times

COVID-19 Update June 3, 2020

To the Community of First Lutheran Church:

The coronavirus pandemic continues, and now, our community is devastated by the death of George Floyd. We now experience compounded communal trauma -- loss, worry and disruption that are layered, one on top of the other. We see signs of God's help and hope around us: peaceful protests demanding justice; food and dry goods collections; neighbors helping with clean up.

Please pray that we get serious about racism within ourselves and within our community. Let us make an effort to listen more to what our African-American brothers and sisters have to teach us. Let us work to stand with them in the gap to see justice.

We are also continuing to assess how to protect the wellbeing of our congregation as guidelines are loosening for public gatherings.

We are taking this slow. The Church Council and the Staff have agreed we will take our time to return to in-person worship in our building. Our state and the Twin Cities have not yet experienced a reduction in the number of cases, nor a decline in the number of deaths from COVID-19. With conversation shaped by prayer, we share with you today:

Worship During COVID-19

We will begin to reopen our building with care and attention to the wellbeing of our community. "Being careful is a way to be faithful."

1. Communion will be offered during the Community Meal the first Sunday of each month, beginning June 7. Prepackaged wafers & juice will be served by a pastor in a separate location in the parking lot (near 40th & Polk Street). We will also celebrate communion with those who are serving the Community Meal that day.
2. People without internet access are invited to attend a small, physically-distant outdoor worship service on the sidewalk entrance to the church. Holy communion will be served. Because the group size is limited, we will be asking you to reserve your spot in advance. Two services will begin on Wednesday, June 10, at 9:00 and 10:30 am. Each service is limited to ten people, and will continue weekly until further notice. The service will last about 20 minutes. You may reserve a place by calling the church office and leaving a message for Joyce. Your call will be returned with a confirmation.

3. We will open the church for individual prayer on Thursdays, from 9:00 to 11:30 am in the Sanctuary, beginning June 11.
4. Wednesday Night Contemplative Prayer, beginning June 3. Pastor Bonnie will offer a brief service of prayer each week at 7:00 pm online.
5. Our primary focus for worship will continue to be online through our website, YouTube and Facebook. Even when we return to physical gathering in the future, an online recorded service will continue to be available for those who are homebound or unable to attend because of travel or circumstance.
6. We are setting up the Sanctuary to ensure physical distancing. This will greatly reduce our seating. More information will be available soon.

Procedures for everyone who enters our building:

- A. Do NOT come to church if you have tested positive for COVID-19, have a fever or cough, or if you have a family member who has COVID-19.
- B. If you are over the age of 65, or have underlying health issues that make you vulnerable to COVID-19, we encourage you to consider staying home.
- C. Wear a mask. We will have disposable masks available as well.
- D. Register when you enter according to posted instruction. We need to know who has been in the building in case of an outbreak.
- E. Restroom access is limited. We are planning events that are an hour or less to limit this need. Cleaning and sanitizing regularly and between each use takes time.
- F. Please help us maintain a safe environment by following these guidelines, and using available Lysol wipes to clean areas you have touched during your time at church.

Responding to the Death of George Floyd

This incident took place in south Minneapolis, not far from the home of staff member Nathan Roberts. Pastor Bonnie Wilcox, Rachel James, and Nathan have all been present in Minneapolis and St. Paul on your behalf to help.

We are working with local Lutheran congregations to respond to the loss of grocery stores, gas stations and pharmacies along Lake Street in south Minneapolis, and in north Minneapolis. Public transportation is no longer consistently available. Financial donations, non-perishable food, diapers and other household items are desperately needed. Watch our First Lutheran Community Group on Facebook for more details, as well as emails from the church.

Lots of misinformation is flying around, along with reasonable, verifiable information. Check sources before passing information along.

Pray -- for Mr. Floyd's family and community; for those outraged at yet another death of an African American man in police custody; for those who work in public safety and seek to protect and care for our communities; for those who seek justice and work for peace. Please reach out to the pastors and staff if you need to talk or pray.


Facility Care & Maintenance

Update: New landscaping will be installed at our main entrance the week of June 8. The project to replace the bituminous surface in the lane in front of the church will also begin in June. For more information about this project, contact Dave Reilly at the church office, 763-788-9653 (ex. 104) or dave@flcch.org.

Living Connected Appeal Update

On May 31, we gave thanks for and dedicated a check for \$850,000 toward the principal on our facility mortgage! This is possible because of the Edstrom and Bakken families and your contributions to the Living Connected Appeal last fall. These funds are raised independent of our General Fund, which continues to need your ongoing support.

In Christ,



Rev. Bonnie Wilcox

Senior Pastor

Email: bonnie@flcch.org

MINISTRY NEWS

Volunteer to Safely Connect... with First Lutheran Community members this summer!

First Lutheran is finding creative ways to continue to be a supportive connected community in this difficult time of COVID.

We are asking for volunteers to step up as Connected Community Group Leaders to connect with 15 - 20 households in our First Lutheran Community twice a month this summer. You will be provided a short call/email script and a Bible Verse in an email from CCG Coordinator Nathan Roberts. You can use this script to shape your weekly connections. You are also invited to be creative and use your unique gifts to help people feel supported, loved, and encouraged!



Cookies for June Community Meals

Our church bakers have rolled up their sleeves and are baking 300 cookies a week to add to our community meals for After School families and Sunday Community Lunch.

We need cookie donations of homemade cookies to add to these meals through June. We are asking for donations on Tuesdays & Thursdays of 50 cookies each, and on Sundays of 200 cookies.

Sign up on the FLC Meal Train: <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/9l1dlo> or Contact Nathan Roberts, nathan@flcch.org



Summer Drive Thru Prayer and Lunch

We are so excited to continue serving Drive Thru Community Lunch and Prayers all summer on Sundays, 11 AM -Noon! We will have grilled picnic style meals weekly, and administer Holy Communion the first Sunday of the month. Six volunteers are needed each week to make this meal possible.

If you are healthy, without increased risk factors, and can help serve food curbside, please email Nathan, nathan@flcch.org

Southern Anoka Community Assistance (SACA) Food shelf

has two volunteer opportunities for you to consider this summer:

- 1) Packing and/or delivering food boxes to Seniors and disabled one Saturday a month, June thru September.
- 2) Assist with fresh produce distribution at SACA July 25, Aug. 8 & 22, Sept. 12 & 26, Oct. 10.

Contact Larry Bugbee for more information: 612-812-1633, lbugbee@msn.com

Election Judges for Hire for both the Aug. 11 Primary and Nov. 3 General elections. Election judges serve as the officials in the polling places on Election Day. Some duties include opening and closing the polls, registering and signing in voters, and distributing and collecting ballots. Current pay is \$11 per hour.

For more information visit: www.columbiaheightsmn.gov/electionjudge or call Nicole Tingley, City Clerk, 763-706-3611

After School Meals

We will continue to deliver 250 meals a week to After School youth and children through the month of June. We have partnered with Columbia Heights Schools to allow us to add a bag breakfast and lunch to our delicious dinner we serve our kids each Tuesday and Thursday!



Faith Community Nurse Notes

"Sometimes I Want To Scream"

Truths to hang-on-to, by Rick Warren

"Sometimes I want to scream," is not the sentence I was expecting to hear over the phone from a 90-year-old isolated and lonely member quarantined. Here are a few items from Rick Warren's article, "Truths to hang-on-to during the Covid-19 crisis article," to help you cope as time drags on.

"This will pass." The Bible tells us there will be trials. 1Peter 4:12 says, *"Dear friends, don't be surprised or shocked that you are going through testing that is like walking through fire"* (CEV). These are tough times, but they won't last forever. We need to still do what the health professionals recommend.

"Focus on what's unchanging not what is changing." There are many changes to your world, community, and families. The Bible says, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* Hebrews 13:8 (NEV). In the midst of all this change, you can count on the truth. You can also know that God's love for you and community has never changed. God's call on your life hasn't changed. Don't let all the changes make you lose sight of everything that is still the same.

"God will go through it with you." This virus didn't surprise God. He will walk through every bit of it with us. You may feel alone at times. You may feel like no one understands. Isaiah 43:2 says: *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze"* (NIV).

"This is not the end of the story." The Bible says, *"In times of trouble, God is with us, and when we are knocked down, we get up again...because we know that God raised the Lord Jesus to life."* Corinthians 4:8, 14 (CEV). Rest in that truth!

It's OK to vent your frustrations and perhaps scream over the phone!

In HIS name!

Jane Bugbee RN, BSN, Faith Community Nurse



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**SUNDAY MEAL
SERVED CURBSIDE
DRIVE-THRU
11 AM—12 PM**

CHURCH OFFICE
is currently closed due
to COVID-19 crisis.

Please check our
website or call for any
updates.

Come, see what's new for the summer!



*Drive-thru Holy Communion
served 1st. Sunday of the month*



Community Garden Blessing, May 2020



*Community Meal continues
with summer grilling to go!*



Thank YOU Community Meal Team!

First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights is financed by the generous, direct monetary gifts of its members and friends.

Thank you! During this time of COVID-19 crisis, the offerings you give online, through the mail and hand-delivered on Sundays, continue to bless our mission of Jesus. flcch.org/give

A mid-year Financial Update will be included in next month's Caller.

For questions regarding giving or First Lutheran's finances, please contact Business Administrator, Dave Reilly in the church office.

