

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

THE CROSS CONNECTION

Providing Strength for the Faith Journey

April 2020

CONGREGATIONAL
LIFE
PAGES 1-6

BEYOND THE
CONGREGATION
PAGE 7

VIRTUAL WORSHIP
SCHEDULE
THROUGH APRIL 30

[HOLYCROSSCHURCH.ORG/
SERMONS](http://HOLYCROSSCHURCH.ORG/SERMONS)

WEDNESDAY EVENING
IN LENT
APRIL 1

SUNDAY MORNINGS
APRIL 19 & 26

HOLY WEEK
VIRTUAL WORSHIP
SCHEDULE

PASSION/PALM SUNDAY
APRIL 5

MAUNDY THURSDAY
APRIL 9

GOOD FRIDAY
APRIL 10

EASTER SUNDAY
APRIL 12

Dear Holy Cross Family,

We hope everyone knows that “shelter in place” and “social distancing” does NOT mean that the ministries of Holy Cross are closed. We may be physically distant but we are still spiritually connected. Holy Cross continues to function in different ways during these challenging times. We look forward to the opportunity to be engaged in our life together.



Consider the following:

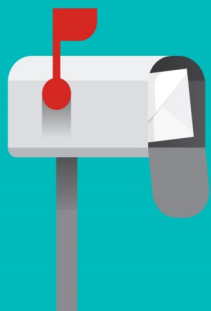
- Continue to practice kindness and compassion towards others. Check in and inquire how family, friends, church members, neighbors, colleagues and others within your relationship circle are doing during this health crisis.
- Our congregation is pulling together to care for one another in a number of ways. Is there a particular personal need that you are struggling with at this time? Please consider sharing this information with the church office so that we might connect you to volunteers who have offered to assist. Please direct all prayer requests, special needs, or offers of assistance directly to office@holycrosschurch.org so that we can reach out in the way most helpful to you.
- **As of now, we have suspended all in-person worship through April 30.** This also includes the suspension of meetings, relational group gatherings and community groups using our facility. We invite you to worship with us virtually on Sunday mornings and especially on special festival days during Holy Week. Recorded worship services are available to view on our website at holycrosschurch.org/sermons
- In addition to the worship service videos, we continue to add daily content to our Lenten Devotional. Access the devotional content at holycrosschurch.org/lenten-devotional
- We continue to add the most current information to our website at holycrosschurch.org and encourage you to visit it regularly.
- In order for members to stay connected with us and with each other, we are expanding our online meeting capabilities. If you are a participant in any small group, leaders may reach out to you individually. View current virtual meeting opportunities on the following page: holycrosschurch.org/virtualmeetings

Above all, let us remember to be gentle with one another in this time. We’ve never been here before. We are all trying to do our best to be faithful and loving in this time of COVID-19. We trust that the presence of Christ goes before us and behind us, around us and within us. We hope that our virtual worship experiences and the daily devotions will help deepen and enrich your spiritual life.

In the words of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: “Respect the disease. Do not take unnecessary risks. Provide for the spiritual and physical needs of the neighbor. Make use of medical aid. Care for one another, especially the most vulnerable.”

Peace,

*A congregation of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America*



This issue of the *THE CROSS CONNECTION* is an abbreviated version of our monthly newsletter and will only be available online.

Full newsletter publications and mailings will resume once regularly scheduled activities are being held.

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Sarah Accettura, Administrative Coordinator
Katie Bernabei, Congregational Activities
Randall Casey, Director of Music
Carmen & Abel Cervantes, Custodians
Carrie Mack, Director of Youth Music Ministries
Beth Malecha, Handbell Choir Director
Steve Oelschlager, Director of Engagement and Generosity
Mike Price, Business Director
Jennifer Radtke, Nursery Attendant
Ellie Rautenbach, Congregational Communications
Manny Rivera, Property
Dale Tippet Jr., Director of Contemporary Music
Tom Zombolo, Property
Beth Ann Koenemann, Financial Administrator

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Roxanne (Rocky) Kupfer, Assistant Director

CHURCH COUNCIL

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Andy Eidson, Mick Garrison, Sarah Grayer, Bill Miksch,
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Yocius
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VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

Sunday School Coordinators:
Felicia Brandt, *age 3 - age 5/Kindergarten (Core Stories)*
Patty Moyer & Teri Chadd, *grades 1 - 5 (Deep Blue)*
Altar Care: Julie Lucziw
Greeters: Therese Delli Paoli

The Cross Connection, parish newsletter of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, is published monthly and is available online at HolyCrossChurch.org/newsletters. Articles should be submitted by the 1st of the month to office@holycrosschurch.org

HOLY WEEK

PASSION/PALM SUNDAY
April 5

MAUNDY THURSDAY
April 9

GOOD FRIDAY
April 10

EASTER SUNDAY
April 12

The celebration of the Resurrection.

We invite you to worship with us virtually at
HOLYCROSSCHURCH.ORG/SERMONS

Easter Baskets

Holy Cross is participating in the COOL Ministries Easter Baskets project again this year. This is both a fun and meaningful project that helps to bless the Easter tables of the less fortunate in Lake County. If you have not already dropped off donations at church, you can still do so on **Sunday, April 5 between 10 am and 12 pm ONLY.**

This is the last day to drop off your donations. Please place donations in your own paper/plastic bags to transport. Basket grocery list: bit.ly/bagskets Monetary contributions in lieu of preparing an Easter Basket can be made online until Sunday, April 5 at donate.holycrosschurch.org

Easter Treat Bags

The Easter Treat Bags service project is cancelled.

Canned Hams for COOL

Monetary contributions toward canned hams for COOL Ministries can be made online at donate.holycrosschurch.org until **Sunday, April 5.** (Suggested donation of \$10/ham.)

Easter Flowers

Orders are no longer being accepted. Refunds will be issued for orders received.

PADS

Monetary contributions in lieu of donating food items to the monthly food pack can be made online at donate.holycrosschurch.org



Holy Week 2020 and Our Life Together...

by Pastor Bob Davis

The word "liturgy" (liturgia in Greek) literally means "the work of the people." We are accustomed to doing this work together in communal worship. But what happens when we can't gather together? Does that mean that we can't still do the work of praising God and celebrating the good news of the gift of God's love and grace in our lives and in the world?

These are unprecedented times. Having said that, maybe we need to give ourselves permission to consider alternatives that still honor our religious traditions and rituals. As we consider these alternatives we begin to sort out the difference between mission and methodology. If we start our consideration with what is essential instead of what is correct, we may discover that God's Spirit moves us in our curiosity and imagination.

There are moments and movement in our communal worship life which may be replicated in life when we can't be together. This is often referred to as "Sabbath time."

Consider creating time each day for...

- A time for honesty which we refer to as Confession.
- Enjoying musical offerings which inspire and connect us emotionally.
- Reflecting on sacred texts like the Bible.
- Using images to bring focus and bring clarity to our thoughts.
- Praying for circumstances in our life and for others in need.
- Experience the joy of "being known" by a gracious and loving Creator.
- Discovering a sense of peace that does not come from our own accomplishments but is a gift.
- Receive and be a blessing to others.

Holy Week with its worship opportunities will look different in 2020. That doesn't mean we can't do "the work of the people." It means we will need to be open to new ways to do this work than we may be accustomed to. We will offer online worship for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. We will not have the benefit of being together in person. However, we will be together in other ways that will enrich us spiritually.

On Maundy Thursday you may want to consider baking bread and share a moment of gratitude for a time when you served others in your life.

On Good Friday the practice of lighting a candle or gazing at a fire in the fireplace can provide a time of solace and solitude as you pray the Lord's Prayer or another favorite prayer.

Saturday before Easter is referred to as the Easter Vigil and often times revisits the promises of the Old Testament made to God's people. Maybe this is a time to think back about a journey or a promise that was particularly defining in your life.

And of course there is Easter. Easter is the celebration of the presence of life seen and experienced in a way that transforms the way we live our lives every day. Easter was never to be relegated to one day on the calendar. It is a daily awareness of God's presence and life transforming accompaniment.

We hope you take the time when your heart and head are ready to share in our online worship offerings this year for Holy Week. More importantly, we hope you do the work of nourishing and feeding your spiritual appetite knowing that our trust and hope is in the promise that God makes to us as God's people.

Lenten Daily Devotional Visual Faith Practice



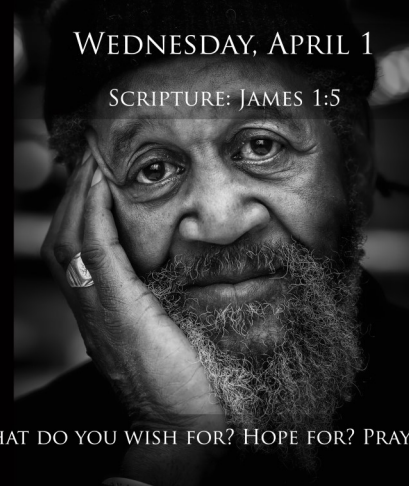
The 40 days of Lent provide us with the opportunity to alter the daily rhythm of life. During the Lenten season, we invited you to change things up by adding a daily practice. It consists of an image, a scripture passage and reflection questions. Each day we offer a different image, scripture, and question. We hope that these daily devotions provide you with a few moments each day to deepen and enrich your spiritual life. In viewing these images, the following questions offer a guide to reflecting on the images and scripture. How would you describe this image to another person? What aspect of this image most grabs your attention? What story does this image tell? What emotions surface as you consider this image?

The daily devotional is located on the church's website on the following page: HolyCrossChurch.org/lenten-devotional And on our Facebook page at: fb.com/holycrosslibertyville

New content is added daily and will continue through Sunday, April 12. We will also incorporate the Lenten "Visual Faith Practice" into our last midweek Lenten virtual worship experience on Wednesday, April 1 that will be posted on the following page: holycrosschurch.org/sermons

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:5



WHAT DO YOU WISH FOR? HOPE FOR? PRAY FOR?

Daily Visual Faith Practice

The Lenten Daily Devotional (above) that we've utilized during the season of lent will conclude on Sunday, April 12. However, we will continue to offer a Daily Visual Faith Practice through the end of April. As before, a new image along with content to enhance a spiritual life will be offered on a daily basis.

The Daily Visual Faith Practice will be accessible on our website starting on April 13 at HolyCrossChurch.org/dvfp and on our Facebook page at: fb.com/holycrosslibertyville

Virtual Faith Opportunities

by Rev. Sally Hanson

Being away from school, work and the “normal” routines can be opportunities to invest in relationships. Here are a couple of ways that you can connect with others in your family or virtually with others.

Family Faith Walkies Talkies:

(Pick a theme, take a walk, and talk about it)

Theme: Playing in the rain.

One a raining day, walk outside and see what you notice; gray clouds, puddles to jump in, worms on the pavement. If its warm, maybe even go out without rain gear to feel the wetness. Why is rain good? Imagine a world without rain. What would it be like?

Read John 4: 13 -14 (longer story is John 4: 1-26) The Woman at the Well.

What can we do to offer spiritual water—love and service—for others? Pray together to close.

Bible Movie Night:

Pick a video from *BibleProject.com* to learn more about books of the Bible, biblical themes or characters. Most are under ten minutes.

Children's Chapel:

Watch in early April for recorded chapel services that we often do for our early childhood ministry. Have a chance to see what we do or play it for your kids who are missing chapel at Holy Cross. Visit holycrosschurch.org/sermons

Morning Watch & Morning Watch KIDS!:

A daily Facebook video that is live each morning at 7am and 7:15 am (kids) to begin our day with God. It is created and posted by two ELCA pastors (brothers) who offer music and faith-based commentary on things happening in the world today utilizing a sock puppet named Nathaniel. Check it out!

[fb.com/MorningWatch20/](https://www.facebook.com/MorningWatch20/)



5G High School Youth Group:

5G High School Youth Group will meet virtually via Zoom on April 5 and April 19 beginning at 6:30pm. We expect this to be around an hour long but we are leaving room for flexibility. This will be a time to play games together, catch up with one another, have a time to see what God has been up to since we were last together. 5G HSYG is open to students in grades 8-12.

To join the 5G High School Youth Group virtual meetings for this month, go to holycrosschurch.org/5g-hsyg
The meeting will be open 10 minutes early to start gathering.

5G HSYG - Parent Connection:

This is a group for parents of 8-12 grade students. It is an opportunity to connect with other parents who are experiencing the same things you are and discuss things from a faith perspective. Parent Connection will be meeting on Tuesdays, April 7 and April 21 from 7-8 pm.

To join the 5G HSYG Parent Connection meeting via Zoom, go to holycrosschurch.org/5g-hsyg



Virtual Meetings for Relational and Small Group Ministries



At this time, all in-person meetings for small group and relational ministries have been canceled through April 30.

We encourage you to continue to be in contact with the members of your different groups. It is important to still have community in these times. If you are in need of contact information for someone in your group, please feel free to reach out to the church office staff at office@holycrosschurch.org or at (847)367-4060.

Some groups will start offering virtual meetings via Zoom, by phone or in Facebook groups. Small group leaders will reach out to current participants with details. New participants are always welcome! Please check the Virtual Meetings page on our website for updates, meeting dates and times and the links to connect to the meetings at holycrosschurch.org/virtualmeetings

Current groups that are meeting virtually:

Saturday Men's Group: Every Saturday at 7 am

5G High School Youth Group: April 5 & 19 at 6:30 pm

5G HSYG Parent Connection: April 7 & 21 at 7 pm

Grounded in Grace Friday Night Women's Group: April 3 at 6:30 pm

Not familiar with Zoom for meetings? Zoom is a free app that works on your desktop/laptop, smartphone, or tablet to connect multiple people. Zoom uses the camera, microphone and speakers on your device. If you can't connect to a meeting via a device, you can also call in to join the group meeting by phone. Questions about Zoom? Contact Steve Oelschlager at steve@holycrosschurch.org



Mission Endowment Scholarship Fund

- **Deadline extended to April 30** -

Through the Holy Cross Mission Endowment Fund, Holy Cross provides scholarships to assist and encourage post high school education for its members. These scholarships may be used at an accredited college, university or vocational technical school. Requirements are that you be an active member of Holy Cross and that you submit an application form including a thoughtful faith statement.

Applications are available online at bit.ly/MEFscholarship

Please contact the church office at (847) 367-4060 or office@holycrosschurch.org with any questions.



The Mission Endowment Fund was established in 1999 and it provides resources to enhance the ministry of Holy Cross, apart from the general operations of the congregation. These resources, divided equally three ways, are allocated annually in the following areas: music ministry opportunities within the congregation; ministry opportunities beyond the congregation/pastoral discretionary fund; and in scholarship support for members of Holy Cross.



Journey faith, discipleship, generosity

Practicing Spiritual Hygiene

by Steve Oelschlager

Many of us have seen recent articles about minimizing our exposure to viruses, germs, and contagious diseases. The advice ranges from thoroughly washing hands with soap, avoiding contact with infected people, and not touching our faces. No surprise, hand hygiene continues to be critical to our health.

During this time of fear and anxiety surrounding the coronavirus, what about spiritual hygiene practices? Here are a few that are central to our faith, and just as crucial to our wellbeing.

1. Trust in God that in the end, things will work out. If things don't seem to be working out, know that it is not yet the end. God has been in the creation business for 14 billion years, leading to the extraordinary reality of our existence.
2. Remain hopeful that God is at work in mysterious ways, including through human agency, to multiply goodness and wellbeing.
3. Be amazed at life and whatever health we currently enjoy. Realize every simple breath and heartbeat are incredible miracles that extend the gift of life from moment to moment.
4. Stay connected to others. Our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and fellow human beings is how we derive meaning and purpose from life, especially during times of shared challenge.
5. Take your concerns to God in prayer. Voice your fears, hurts, and frustrations to God. Ask God to be present, a source of peace and encouragement. Talk with God about the cares of others and our world.
6. Get outside, go for a walk, take in some fresh air and sunshine. Movement and nature are both proven ways to turn off our inner voice, lift our spirits, and reduce doubt, fear, and anxiety.
7. Practice gratitude and be intentional about giving thanks. Even though we tend not to believe it, most likely, these are the best times to be alive as a human being, by far.
8. Exercise generosity and service to others. By elevating the needs of those beyond ourselves, it is possible to diminish unhealthy preoccupation with self and the worry that goes with it.

Jesus regularly greeted his followers, "peace be with you." I think his greetings, teachings, and what he practiced are just as relevant today as people found them two thousand years ago.

PASTORAL ACTS

BAPTISM

Ophelia Jade Woodward

daughter of Jered & Melissa Woodward
March 15, 2020



Manage Your Electronic Giving Online or Via Smartphone

To continue your financial support of the ministries of Holy Cross, we encourage you to move your giving to online giving through our website at donate.holycrosschurch.org or on the Give Plus app. The app is compatible with Apple or Android smartphones. For those of you who have created an online account already through our website, your same username and password will work with the Give+ app as well. Advantages of the app include:

- Quickly and easily donate using your debit/credit card or checking/savings account
- Make one time donations or set up recurring giving to multiple funds
- Choose to create an account or donate as a guest
- Securely and conveniently manage donations using Touch ID/fingerprint, PIN or password

Please use the QR codes or links below to download and install the Give+ app.

GIVEPLUS⁺



bit.ly/GIVEPLUSappstore



bit.ly/GIVEPLUSgoogleplay

Then locate Holy Cross as your congregation (zip code 60048) and continue from there.

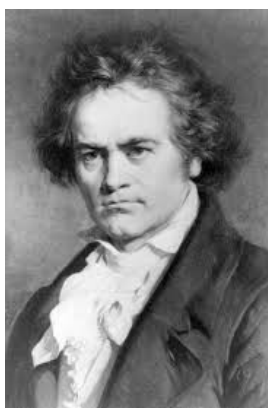
If you have any questions or problems, contact Steve Oelschlager at steve@holycrosschurch.org

On These Present Days

by Randy Casey

Surely these days are unlike any of us have ever seen before. We knew things were serious when the billions of dollars to be created by March Madness were lost. But when all of the churches closed, life as we knew it was coming undone, at least for a while.

The activity which has occupied me more than any other since this ordeal began is the memorizing of a piano sonata by Beethoven. This is a mentally painful process and requires the kind of patience I am unaccustomed to calling forth. Oh, I have memorized music before, but this piece (Op. 26) seems a keen challenge.



Ludwig van Beethoven

I deem this an appropriate activity for now because Beethoven lived an isolated, yea quarantined, life for some thirty years. According to the present estimate, we may endure this situation for some 30 to 60 days. I have read that Beethoven fell down at age 27 and got up with ringing in his ears. He would live until age 57 with his hearing ever diminishing.

But a loss of hearing wasn't Beethoven's only problem. He was a complete misfit in society, lacking apparently all social skills and was ever in need of personal hygiene. He moved something like 28 times throughout Vienna because he could not get along with his landlords. He was profoundly lonely, and the search for his "Immortal Beloved" has occupied music historians for almost 200 years. The anecdotes about his personal problems are innumerable.

And yet the musical masterpieces he created, that were floating around in his head, were also innumerable. Just yesterday I listened again to his "Moonlight Sonata" and was reminded of its greatness. But, I could have also listened to his 5th Symphony or his 9th Symphony or his violin sonata or his Waldstein or his Pathétique piano sonata. Beethoven's creativity seemed to cascade daily.

None of us is Beethoven. Nevertheless, we are called upon to respond to the present crisis in the best way we know how. There are suggestions on our church's website for ways to help others in need. From a strictly personal standpoint, however, I read books and magazines, study German, and watch videos from the Great Courses, in addition to practicing the piano.

My mother once told me that when I got upset I went to the piano and took my feelings out on the instrument. Right now, I am playing a whole lot. If you don't play, may I suggest that you listen to some Beethoven, perhaps his "Für Elise," a simple piece that I have heard described as the most famous work he ever wrote.

My wish for you in these unheard of times is the discovery of a peace that passes all understanding. Perhaps the psalmist's admonition to "Be still and now that I am God" would be a good place to start.



"I Love to Tell the Story ..."

by Judy Frank-Gonwa

Though we are following the guidelines of DCFS and the Governor's mandate to be closed at this time, I want to share with you stories about our wonderful staff at CrossWays Preschool and Celebration! Preschool.

To say the least, CrossWays Preschool and Celebration! Childcare are happy places to be for both students and staff. I recall a story that Kathy Pfister shared a few months ago. She was conducting a tour for a new family when one of our Celebration! students ran up to Kathy and said, "Happy kids!" and then ran off to play. Creating a joyful environment is a daily goal for our staff. But, within this environment, there is an awesome responsibility as well. Our staff recognizes their role in the educational, social, and physical development of our students and works diligently to provide opportunities for each student to realize personal growth and success. We look at our students as little individuals who are ready to learn something new every day!

Our staff at CrossWays Preschool and Celebration! Childcare—about 50 adults—is the force that makes our programs so successful and respected within the community. Parents continue to recognize the positive role that our teachers and assistants play in the development of their children. They also know that their children will be safe and cared for while attending our programs.

With Kathy Pfister's recent retirement, our staff knew that they would need to pull together to keep our quality programs running smoothly until a new director is selected. The search for a director is in process, and several applicants have expressed their interest in this position. Until the new director is named, our two programs will be guided by an "Interim Leadership Team." Four staff members have stepped forward to serve on the team and to lend their time and expertise to offer consistency and stability to the day to day activities. These staff members are Samantha Cooper, Rocky Kupfer, Jennie Schlitt, and Tania Zombolo.

The team meets weekly for support, brainstorming, collaboration, and the assignment of weekly tasks for both programs. Pastor Bob and Pastor Sally also attend the weekly meetings. I am honored to be there as well. These staff members readily took on more responsibility because of their dedication to the ECM ministries and their desire to see that the quality programs we offer our students will not diminish.

The Interim Leadership Team is definitely a reflection of how the entire staff views their responsibility of serving our students in the best way possible. In the current absence of a director, the Leadership Team has filled the need through collaboration, support, and a genuine love for the ECM Ministries. Thank you, members of the team, for your devotion to our programs. And, thank you to our entire staff at CrossWays Preschool and Celebration! Childcare for the care and support that you offer our students—every day.

Community Outreach during the COVID-19 Pandemic

We know that you may want to be helping in our community while we are going through this challenging time. While our normal ways of serving our community may be running differently, here are some places that need your help as you are able to give it.

Can You Volunteer?

If you are willing to help out in any way, please contact the church office at office@holycrosschurch.org or (847) 367-4060 with your name and what you are willing to do. We are compiling a list in order to connect people that need assistance.

211 Lake County Assistance

Do you need help or are you assisting others that need help finding social services, including resources for food, healthcare, paying utility bills, mental health services etc.? Reach out to United Way of Lake County. The service is free and confidential.

- Call 211 from your phone
- Text your zip code to 898211
- Visit 211lakecounty.org

Protective Gear Needed for Health Care Workers at Hospitals

The health care community is at risk of running low on critical equipment. Health care workers need essential safety items to effectively provide care. Donations of the following are being accepted:

Masks* – New and unused N95 and procedural masks. These masks are commonly found in the construction and landscaping industries, and are deemed appropriate to use in a health care setting by the CDC.

Hand sanitizer – Personal-sized hand sanitizer that is unopened. CDC guidelines encourage sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol composition.

Eye protection – Any new or unused goggles, safety glasses or face shields.

Disinfectant wipes – All brands of unopened, premoistened wipes.

Contact COVIDAAHSupplyDonations@aurora.org if you have questions or are unsure if your item qualifies. Drop off items at your local Advocate or Aurora hospital at the shipping and receiving dock.

(*Handmade masks not accepted at this time.)

Donate Blood

People who are healthy and able to donate blood should consider making an appointment at a local blood donation facility.



Vitalant (formerly LifeSource) operates two donation locations in Lake County, one in Gurnee and one in Lake Bluff. They are extending their hours and encourage eligible donors to call (877) 258-4525 or visit vitalant.org/Home.aspx to schedule an appointment.

Information on upcoming American Red Cross blood drives can be found at redcrossblood.org



Meals for Advocate Condell Medical Center Emergency Department Staff

There is an opportunity for you to help feed our local emergency room staff, and to support our local restaurants and delivery drivers while staying at home. (*No personal deliveries or home cooked meals accepted.*)

You can sign up for either a lunch or dinner delivery (11 am or 8 pm) for 35-40 people and order from a local restaurant for it to be delivered directly to the ER entrance. We hope that you can form a small group to help spread out the cost.

Grab and go/individually wrapped and portioned items preferred.

For more details, please see the following link:

giveinkind.com/inkinds/E7E1C7E/advocate-condell-medical-center-emergency-department-meals-for-staff

Grace Notes...

by Pastor Bob Davis

In my youth, I took violin lessons. My teacher was a Catholic nun, Sister St. John who taught music at our local college. She would make modest suggestions like, "Move your elbow forward an inch." When I would make this small adjustment, miraculously, the tone of the violin would deepen. "Bend your thumb, and relax your arm," Sister St. John would say, and the bow would sound less raspy on the strings.

I've been thinking again of that violin teacher and her firm, effective adjustments. When a note was flat or sharp, she would sometimes lift my fingers and press their tips firmly down in the correct place so I would learn what the right note felt like. She was trying to train my body to remember how to make a beautiful sound—to develop a muscle memory. She wanted me to be able to make my fingers land on the right note without even having to look.

So, I am wondering, what kind of muscle memory do we need to cultivate as people of faith? Some of us reach instinctively for the ancient words of scripture, others for the methods and insights of philosophy, others for the language of poetry and fiction, still others for the rhythms of everyday life. From all of this and more, we fashion our views, values, and framework of faith.

For example, I believe that God meets us in history, embodied, incarnate: history is where our life with God unfolds. And the stories we tell about our past have consequences. It matters to our common life together and our faith. As a person of faith, I feel a particular need to cultivate a muscle memory for history, not only by reading it but by being read by it. Where am I in this history, and what does it ask of me? I want to press down with precision on these questions so that the notes of my faith ring true.

Sister St. John's instructions for handling the bow always seemed counterintuitive to me—my instinct would be to grasp it firmly so I could get it to do what I wanted it to do. But in fact, a violinist has greater control, and makes a more beautiful sound, if you hold the bow between a bent thumb and a curved hand, looking for all the world like you are balancing the bow lightly between the tips of your fingers.

As a person of faith, there are things that I need to practice holding lightly, too: my way of doing things, my way of seeing things, my way of sharing how my faith has meant the most to me. I remember a person saying to me once, about the Bible, that "the way you love that book, Pastor, is making it difficult for me to figure out what I think about it." I need to learn to hold my bow more lightly and not rush everyone toward a conclusion that works for me.

Beautiful violin music requires a violinist not only to bring their fingers down on the right notes but to use your body to create a rich tone. I learned over time that a simple adjustment becomes a graceful gesture, like something you'd see a dancer do, and it has the effect of opening the space around the sound. The notes no longer sounded as if they were being squeezed, one at a time, through a small opening into the world. A slight adjustment gave them room to become something lovely.

How can we help ourselves and each other to open up the space around our Christian faith and give it room to become something more than we have yet imagined? Like a violinist's elbow, we need to be helped to move forward toward the things we don't know: the histories we have not yet encountered, the unknowable parts of ourselves and others, the mystery of God, and the spaces in between all of it. Thomas Merton once wrote "that faith does not turn the unknown into the known; it integrates the unknown dynamically into our lives." I pray that we would have the desire to want to develop a muscle memory for moving toward what we cannot see, though we feel its claim: that unknowable mystery that sends us back to searching for significance, hoping to draw a little closer to meaning, and, hoping, to understand purpose a little better, in these uncertain times of the coronavirus.

Peace,

Pastor Bob

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