

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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January 7, 2021

VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY ON SUNDAYS

The Bible study that formerly met on Thursday mornings has been meeting on Sundays at 2:00 pm via zoom. They have currently been studying the readings for the following Sunday.

This Sunday we'll look get a first look at the readings for 1/17, the second Sunday after the Epiphany. The readings are:

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20): The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18: You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20: Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you, whom you have [received as a gift] from God, and that you are not your own [property]? You were bought with a price [you were actually purchased with the precious blood of Jesus and made His own]. So then, honor and glorify God with your body.

—Amplified Bible; see also 1 Cor 7:22, 23.

John 1:43-51: Philip found Nathanael and told him:

"We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, the One the prophets foretold—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION VIA ZOOM

10:00 AM
SUNDAYS



KNITTING/SEWING GROUP VIA ZOOM

7:30 PM
2ND/4TH FRIDAYS



- Visit our YouTube Channel
- All of our worship videos are available to watch at our YouTube channel.
- Find us at:
- St John Lutheran Sudbury.



Check us out!
@stjohnsudbury

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A Message from Pastor Eric

The Mourning After

[Asked by his disciples upon being a “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”, Jesus said], “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!”

-- Matthew 18:6-7

Y'all. I'm new here. My plan for this morning was to do fun new pastor things, like write a pithy few paragraphs about Epiphany and my birthday being the same day. It's an old joke my family's sick of hearing, but it makes me smile and you haven't yet heard me say, “my birth was a real epiphany to my parents!”. My plans were sidetracked.

Today is January 7, the morning after.

This is the morning after folks marched down Pennsylvania Ave. to storm our nation's capitol. They forced their way into our halls of power in an attempt to overturn the will of the People, certified by Congress mere hours later. My wife and I watched with angry grief as people desecrated our most sacred civic process. In the process of this insurrection, four insurgents lost their lives. As I finish this on Friday morning, I see that Officer Brian Sicknick died from injuries sustained in the attack.

Even so, I don't write because there was an insurrection; it's shocking, but unsurprising at this moment in time. I write because alongside Confederate flags and the US and other flags, insurgents flew this Jesus flag. The deep red of its field is muted in this picture, but on my heart caught in my throat as on my television its red, white, and black evoked another flag often present when this particular constituency shows up in places like Charlottesville.

Sincerely, I have no desire to “get political”. Partisan politics are moot in the politics of the Kingdom of God. Truthfully, I have no desire to feel compelled to speak about flags of any sort from the pastoral office entrusted to me.



The problem is that this is an issue of Christian identity and the moral obligation as disciples of Jesus Christ. In our Affirmation of Baptism, we ask each candidate, “Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people - following the example of Jesus, and to strive for peace in all the earth?”. Those who make this affirmation are confirmed into the Church, having adopted as their own the faith into which they were baptized. This sacred vow is our response to the eternal covenant made through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These words signify that we understand with sober clarity that our words and deeds can build up and tear down, so we vow before God to use all that is within us to live this promise out loud and strive for peace and support each other in this effort. This is what Jesus commands us to bring into the world.

This flag bearing the name of Jesus flown in this context tells a different story to the world. A friend who isn't Christian has already asked me why Christians support this and it revealed to me a painful truth: the difference between Christian traditions, congregations, and denominations is a nuance that only matters to those of us active in the Church.

People saw this flag storming the capitol alongside the Confederate flag, and they heard the voices of "Christians" who have for too long terrorized people in the name of Jesus: Matthew Shepard; black bodies lynched by "good Christians" who were in worship on Sundays; German Lutherans who complied with the Third Reich as six million Jews were slaughtered, even though we lift up Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a saint and martyr of the Church. Seeing this flag, I heard the voice of a woman who didn't know I was standing behind her as she stage-whispered the N-Word in the sanctuary.

I want to look at this flag and those waving it and say, "This is not America and these aren't my people"; but because of my faith in Jesus Christ I must instead speak plainly, saying, "This is America and America on its own is not the Kingdom of God, yet these are my people because they are God's". I'm reminded of the deep truth in our Brief Order of Confession & Forgiveness, that "we are enslaved to Sin and cannot free ourselves". I see in this light that the truth of our humanity is present in our nation as a still-bleeding wound in our political discourse, our incompetence to provide equal rights under the law, and the dismissive way we treat those who think differently. Our nation was founded in both liberty selfishness; freedom and slavery, and we have yet to break the shackles of our past.

So what do we do when the nations rage and kingdoms totter?

Our founders spilled volumes of ink to put forth the notion that a nation isn't so much an accident of geography as the intention of community. In Psalm 46, God speaks and the earth melts away, the bow breaks, the spear shatters, and shields are burned away with fire. God speaks, and in Genesis the void becomes existence. God speaks, and the dead rise and the hungry are fed. God speaks, and we realize that our true citizenship is not in a nation whose scant 244 year existence is barely a blip on the radar of recorded history, and whose founding documents are penned in the blood of patriots and enslaved people to enact a dream in which not everyone who bled for it could participate. God speaks into our hearts through the waters of baptism that our true citizenship resides in the community where water is thicker than blood, because in the waters of baptism we are born anew, not according to fickle flesh or broken will, but we are born into God's eternal covenant sealed by the Holy Spirit, marked by the cross of Christ forever.

In this turbulent time we are called to respond with the integrity of our family values as handed down to us in Paul's letter to the Galatians: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. "Against such things there is no law", he writes; and not only that, these are the qualities by which we are called to be identified. Rejoice even in this moment, and let this world see who God is making us to be by offering what the world cannot: Love.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Eric



PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS:

Rachel Florey
 Joe Jackson
 Richard
 Brian Young
 Alexis Marsh
 Paul Simeone
 John Duane
 Jim Hansgate
 Ron Rakowsky
 Pam McKay
 Peter Kindem
 Liz Tolbert

Brian
 Regina Mueller
 David Donnelly
 Trish Sarvela Leiva
 Robin Hartford
 Pat Quinn
 Rhonda Tibbetts
 Charlotte McNeil
 Isla Rose Kelley
 June Carins
 Steven Greene

Bill Moldwin
 Johnny
 Christopher Miller
 Joan LeDuc
 Brennan McGinnis
 Patricia Jolou
 Ruth Avery
 Janice Potter
 Norma Duane
 Dave Weber
 Jeannette Maurer



SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

January 10, 17, 24, 31

11:00 AM - Grade 3 and under

11:45 AM - Grade 4-5

6:00 PM - Confirmation



CHRISMON TREE OUTDOORS!

We hope you all had a chance to drop by the church and see all the beautiful Chrismon tree that we made in Sunday School and Confirmation during the month of December. All the ornaments were white and gold as is true for all Chrismon ornaments, and they were weatherproof—which we needed since our tree was subjected to strong winds, heavy rain, and some snow! We made candle ornaments to show that Jesus is the light of the world, angel ornaments to celebrate the angels sharing the good news of Christ's birth, and crown ornaments to symbolize that Christ is king. Hopefully our tree helped spread the joy of God's love to those driving by our church over the last few weeks!



**ST. JOHN SENIORS ON THE
GO BOOK CLUB FOR JANUARY
12th & 19th**

Please join us!!!

We will have ZOOM book club meetings on Tuesday, Jan. 12 at 11:00 AM for just a get together to discuss prior books read and new books to read.

On January 19th, we will discuss "The Vanishing Half" by Brit Bennett.

If you do not receive a ZOOM invitation email prior to the meeting time, please contact Jan Nielsen at jrnielsen@charter.net or 978-549-3044. And, if you need help connecting to the ZOOM meeting, let Jan know; she will help you.

Next books:

January 19, 2021, "The Vanishing Half" by Brit Bennett

February 16, 2021, "When We Left Cuba" by Chanel Cleeton

March 16, 2021, "Masked Prey" by John Sandford

SAVE THE DATE

*All Meeting are held via ZOOM
Call church office if you are having
trouble connecting.
(Zoom meeting information below
and is the same for MOST church meetings)*

January 8th - Knitting Group

January 10th - 10:00 am - Coffee and Conversation

-11:00 am - Pre-K-Gr 3 Sunday School

-11:45 am - Grade 4/5 Sunday School

- 2:00 pm - Bible Study (Previous Thursday am Group)

- 6:00 pm - Confirmation

January 11th - 10:00 am - Seniorcise

January 12th 11:00 am - Seniors on the Go Book Group

January 13th - 10:00 am - Seniorcise

January 14th - 11:00 am - Discussion on Race, Racism, and Antiracism

January 17th - 10:00 am - Coffee and Conversation

-11:00 am - Pre-K-Gr 3 Sunday School

-11:45 am - Grade 4/5 Sunday School

- 2:00 pm - Bible Study (Previous Thursday am Group)

- 6:00 pm - Confirmation

January 18th - Office Closed for Martin Luther King Day

January 19th - 11:00 am - Seniors on the Go Book Group

January 20th - 10:00 am - Seniorcise

ZOOM Meeting Login information

<https://zoom.us/j/9784438350>

Meeting ID: 978 443 8350

(or call in 1-312-626-6799)

ZOOM Meeting to Discuss Race, Racism, and Antiracism - JANUARY 14th at 11:00 AM

We are meeting every other Thursday at 11:00 AM for informal, unstructured discussion about books, ideas, and experiences touching on race, racism, and antiracism.

Please join us.

Please note: On January 28th Mildred Cheung will present a talk on the History of the Chinese in the US.

If you do not receive a ZOOM invitation email prior to the meeting time, please contact Jan Nielsen at jrnielsen@charter.net or 978-549-3044. And, if you need help connecting to the ZOOM meeting, let Jan know; she will help you.

Jan Nielsen
978-549-3044