

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Weekly Update

*Our mission is to be more visible, to become more connected,
and to draw closer, with Christ as our center.*



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.



Wednesday, March 17, 2021



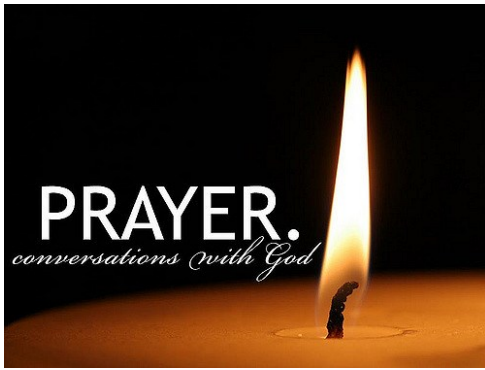
One of my Lenten guideposts is reading the diaries of Etty Hillesum. Etty (short for Esther) was a Dutch Jew who died as a prisoner in the Holocaust. She was 29.

Etty's diaries describe both her religious awakening and the persecutions of Jewish people in Amsterdam during the German occupation. In 1943 she was deported and killed at Auschwitz. She was influenced by the writings of Russian and Western Christian mystics. She was a most highly developed spiritual being.

In her first camp internment - in Westerbork, she had deep prayer experiences of spiritual awakenings and insights. She wrote "Those two months at Westerbork behind barbed wire have been the two richest and most intense months of my life, in which my highest values were so deeply confirmed. I have learned to love Westerbork." Truly amazing words. Here is an ancient and correct theology but one which we have forgotten, although I have sought to bring it to my sermons...

Hillesum addressed G-d repeatedly in the camps, *regarding G-d not as a savior rescuer but as a Power we must nurture inside ourselves*. "Alas there does not seem to be much that You, Yourself can do about our circumstances about our lives. Neither do I hold You, G-d responsible. You cannot help us but we can help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last." Etty developed a way of showing others in the camps their own interiority, their own "G-d dwelling within them", in a time of horrible adversity. She continues to do so in her writings. We give thanks for such saints. I'd recommend spending some time with her writings or reading more about her.

LV
PD



A Community of Prayer

For those in need of healing and comfort:

Members and Friends of the Congregation: Vic, Lauren, Ray, Tim, Joan, Marie, Audrey, Elizabeth, Gordon, Sarah, Miriam, Scarlet, Jason, Brian, David, Tricia, Cate, Cecilio, Donna, Anthony, Steve, the Wilk family.

Military (on active duty), Fire fighters, and Police: Ryan, Teddy, Tyler, Ben, Kenny, Brian, Bill, Ken, John, Glen, and Vic.

Front Line workers in the COVID-19 pandemic: Diane, Alicia, Brittany, Loretta, Jay, Alyssa, Monica, Rachel, June.

Pour out your Spirit on all people living with illness, as well as their loved ones and caregivers. Help them to know that you claim them as your own and deliver them from fear and pain; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. Amen.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147 vs. 3

Do you wonder how to put a loved one, friend, neighbor, or yourself on the prayer list?

Simply email the church office at office@gscl-ct.org. If you would like a prayer card sent to your loved one, friend or neighbor, please include the full name and address. Prayer requests may also be made by phone (203-268-7596) and will be included by the church office.

For privacy, only the first name of each individual will be listed.

Do you have something you would like to discuss with Pastor Doug?

Should you be in need of pastoral care, please contact Pastor Doug Ryniewicz by cell phone (860-595-9560—text if you like!) or by his email (dearynos@gmail.com).

To join us for Worship online:

There are several options for you to join us for online worship:

- 1) go to the Good Shepherd website www.gslc-ct.org. Click on youtube on the menu under News & Events to be directed to our church's YouTube page.
- 2) go to our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Good-Shepherd-Lutheran-Church-220717937953573/> Scroll down until you see the post with the current "Church Service (date)" click on this to be directed to our church's YouTube page.
- 3) To find us directly on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/> enter Good Shepherd Monroe CT in the search field and you will be directed to our page, then select the worship video you would like to see. Subscribe to our channel to make it even easier.

To join us for Worship in person: This Sunday, March 21st at 10:00 am. We will have Drive In Church, weather permitting (If it is extremely cold, snowy, or a steady rain, the service is cancelled).

This is how it works:

- Pastor Doug will be on a platform at the rear (east edge) of the large, main parking area.
- Cars should park facing that direction (east – towards the wooded area) with taller vehicles closer to the main road. This will allow shorter vehicles visibility by parking in front of the taller ones.
- The radio frequency of the broadcast is **FM 94.9**. Please tune your car radio to that station to hear the worship service.
- You should stay in your vehicle and keep your windows closed.
- Bring your own bread (as you did for Outdoor Worship) for communion.
- You must wear a mask if you exit your vehicle.
- Other recommendations of social distancing apply when you are outside your vehicle.

Reaching Out to those in Need during Lent



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Covenant to Care Easter Donations

With the ongoing impact of COVID-19, this year for Easter, Covenant to Care is asking for donations of pre-made Easter baskets that are already shrink-wrapped instead of those assembled by hand as many of us have done in the past. Alternatively, they suggest donating health-related items such as hand sanitizer and Kleenex or other tissues, along with springy type items such as colorful pinwheels, chalk, etc. These can be placed in an open, plain paper bag like the ones we received for our Lenten activities so that the items can be redistributed according to the community needs on their watch.

Please drop all donations in the plastic bin outside the church Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon, and Sunday morning during drive-in worship. Donations are due **before Wednesday, March 24**, when they will be picked up.

Thank you for your generosity in continuing these outreach efforts, especially under the current circumstances. Easter blessings and gratitude to all.

Jane Fieberts



A faith-based medical mission serving the people of Haiti.



GOOD SHEPHERD
FOUNDATION

Once again this year, the Church Council has selected The Good Shepherd Foundation as a Lenten giving project and asks you to designate the money you may have used to eat out or buy take out coffee for this medical mission in Haiti. Their website at <https://www.thegoodshepherdfoundation.org/> gives more information on their purpose, projects, and goals. We will collect the money on April 11th.

Upcoming Events



EMILY DICKINSON and the POETRY OF LENT

A LENTEN
DEVOTIONAL

This year we're trying something different and invite you to join us on Wednesday evenings during Lent at 7:00 pm for a 45 minute Zoom get together to discover "Emily Dickinson and the Poetry of Lent".

Please join us tonight - **Wednesday, March 17th at 7:00 p.m.**

Topic: EMILY DICKINSON AND THE POETRY OF LENT: A LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting

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[pwd=WC9yemptSTVpRlNBSy9MNnFMM05mZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86398759484?pwd=WC9yemptSTVpRlNBSy9MNnFMM05mZz09)

Meeting ID: 863 9875 9484

Passcode: 195625

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+19292056099,,86398759484#,,,,*195625# US (New York)



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

READ

Scripture:

John 3:14-21

Poem:

"Wild Nights – Wild Nights!"

by Emily Dickinson.

Indeed, God did
not send the Son
into the world to
condemn the world,
but in order that
the world might be
saved through him.

+ John 3:17



MEDITATE

Jesus speaks here of both grace and judgment, but his emphasis is on grace: after all, in Numbers 21 (the story Jesus references in this passage) the bronze serpent Moses lifted up saved all the afflicted Israelites, not just a few; and likewise, God's Son came not to condemn the world but "in order that the world might be saved."

Dickinson's poem is typically read as erotic, and it is – but we can also read it as riffing on the ancient tradition that uses erotic poetry as a way to explore the love between God and humanity (the Song of Solomon being the most famous example). And reading John and Emily side-by-side helps highlight a particular idea: Dickinson writes of abiding "in Thee," the beloved; and John writes not only of believing but also of acting "in God": "their deeds have been done in God" (John 3:21). Both texts, then, invite us to consider a radical intimacy between lover and beloved, divine and human, so intimate, in fact, as to be a kind of communion, "rowing in Eden." In the end, if the Song of Songs is any guide, it's this closeness, this sweet, wild companionship, that God wants with us.

MORE LIGHT

For another of Dickinson's love poems that include theological dimensions, see "That I did always love" – a compact little argument that love is life, that life is immortal, and that these truths are shown nowhere more clearly than in Christ's death and resurrection.

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of love, praying, "God of love, help me love, and abide, and live in communion with you. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + We all know we should love one another – but what if, following the ancient tradition of poetically seeing divine love in and through human love, we thought of our acts of love as manifestations, channels of God's love for the world? How would that change our decisions? This week, take one action each day with this idea in mind: being a conduit of God's love. Read the Song of Solomon – and then reread "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!"
- + The writer and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer has a lovely idea: while we may love the world, she writes, in a quite tangible sense it's also true that the world loves us: providing for our day to day, moment to moment needs, from the air we breathe to the food we eat to the colors we behold and on and on. This week, try to experience the world around you in this way: as a tangible, sensuous expression of God's love. Record your experiences and reflections in a journal.
- + The apostle Paul wrote that "Love is patient, love is kind." Be on the lookout this week for moments – a conversation, a social media post, a phone call – in which you might be tempted to impatience or unkindness, and instead offer words or acts of love.
- + What (specifically!) makes you feel most loved? How do you most typically show others that you love them? Explore these questions with family or friends over a meal or online.



John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

READ

Scripture:
John 12:20-33

Poem:

"I know that He exists,"
by Emily Dickinson.

MEDITATE:

Here Jesus compares his coming death to a grain of wheat falling to the ground, "dying," and thereby giving rise to a new plant, and so "bearing much fruit." His opponents (and his friends!) may think they are burying him forever in a grave, but they'll actually be planting him for a new round of fruitfulness and growth: the resurrection and birth of the church to come.

There's almost a playfulness, a trickster's mischief in this image, this recruiting of his unwitting opponents into the salvation process itself, as if to say, *Ha! You think you'll be killing me, but you'll actually be planting me! You think you'll put an end to the movement, but you'll actually be making it more fruitful than ever! For "unless a grain of wheat falls..."*

Dickinson's poem can help us catch sight of this divine playfulness, a spirit too often obscured in many all-too-serious religious circles. Dickinson herself was critical of the solemn Congregationalist style in

Very truly, I tell
you, unless a grain
of wheat falls into
the earth and dies,
it remains just a
single grain; but
if it dies, it bears
much fruit.

+ John 12:24

which she was raised, and here she paints God as a hidden, playful presence, "fondly ambushing" us when we least expect it, the better to elicit a blissful, joyful "surprise." But if our search for God becomes too "piercing earnest," if our joy "glazes" over into a solemnity reminiscent of a corpse's "stiff stare" – then we'll have missed the playful point entirely. Our good-humored hide-and-seek will have become a grim, funereal "crawl."

MORE LIGHT

For another take on the mystery of Jesus' death, see Dickinson's "Your thoughts don't have words every day," in which she explores how mysteries surround us: from the wordless-but-important thoughts that cross our minds to the sips of Communion wine we take, never fully comprehending the "price" and rarity of the cross.

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of joy, praying, "God of wonder and delight, help me notice your playful, joyful presence today. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Schedule a game night or two this week, at home or online (many classic games – like Scattergories – work on Zoom!). Remember that times together in joy are great ways to build relationships, and they also give us a taste of the divine joy that's shot through creation.
- + Experiment with a "joyful fast" this week, setting aside things and activities that create undue distraction and stress: screen time, the news cycle, your social media feed – whatever threatens to pull you out of the playfulness of the present moment.
- + If you have a "Little Free Library" nearby, donate three books that will help make the world a better place: a book on racial justice and reconciliation, a book on climate change, or a novel that makes you think, laugh, and cry all at once.
- + One theologian has called Mozart's music distinctive precisely because of its character as "play," and the way it gives us a glimpse of the playfulness of God. What music brings you the most joy? The most insight into creation's playful, delightful dimension? Explore these questions with family and friends, and make a joy-filled playlist for the week!





*Leveraging hope,
changing lives.*



Raising the BAR -Becoming Anti-Racist

Our Anti-Racism Work is more important than ever!

We invite you to join a monthly conversation, on the 3rd Thursday evening each month.

We focus on a specific, systemic disparity each month, delving into history as well as current policies that continue to plague our communities. Our next meeting is Thursday, March 18, when we will focus on Educational Disparities.

[Click to Register](#)

SAVE THE DATE



FOR A VIRTUAL SPRING FLING
TUESDAY, MAY 25TH @ 7:00 P.M.

**ENJOY A BROADWAY INSPIRED MUSICAL PERFORMANCE
FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME**

WITH OUR SPECIAL MUSICAL GUESTS, CHRIS COOGAN & MICHELE GRACE



*Leveraging hope,
changing lives.*

Update on Holy Week and Easter 2021 - March 28 to April 4, 2021

On Palm Sunday, Drive In Worship, we will have a long table with palms spread wide on it. We invite you to come up before the start of the Service touching only the palm you select, then returning to our cars. After Worship we will drive in procession (the ancient practice of this Day) around the block.

EASTER - For inside 8:30 Worship you will see that all the hymnals will be gone. Masked, we can hum softly to the familiar Easter carols. Seating will be physically distanced. The Sign of Peace will be a friendly nod to one another. I will be masked throughout much of the Service and I will preach from way back behind the altar.

There will be one plate at the Entrance to deposit Easter Offerings. You may bring a small bottle of handwash if you'd like. Of course, you will want to greet and chat with friends after such a long time away. However, we ask you to do so outside and not in the church or Narthex.

Communion will be served in one kind only, small hosts of bread.

We will stand in single file, 6 feet behind the next person in line. Please hold your hands open so that I do not touch your fingers. I will not say the words but you may pray them quietly as you receive the host. We are attempting to have singers but they will need to stand outside Vic's side door while singing.

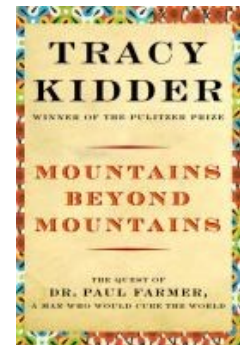
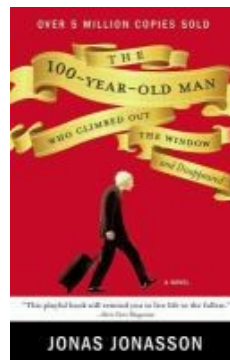
Although these things constrain us let us focus on thankfulness that after a year, we can do inside Worship together.

Please feel free to contact me with thoughts or questions.

Remember that *the 8:30 is by sign up only*. Sign up takes place the Monday after Palm Sunday. We will cap sign ups when we hit the maximum number.

As the time approaches, we will have a better sense of the weather so we will announce close to the day whether Outdoor Worship at 10 AM will be in the backyard or Drive - In. It's like learning to swim all over again but we can do this and do it with grateful hearts.

PD



The Good Shepherd Book Club is meeting on April 6th at **1:00 p.m.** when we will discuss "The 100 Year Old Man Who Jumped Out the Window and Disappeared" by Jonas Jonasson. In May, we will discuss "Mountains beyond Mountains" by Tracy Kidder. We will indoors using the new handler system if the infection rates are low. We welcome new members!

Reaching Out, Serving Others:

Shepherd's Pantry



The need is great!

The Monroe Food Pantry provides emergency food assistance for needy individuals and families in Monroe. Their clients receive one week's worth of food per month and they serve more than 100 households per month.

The Social Ministry and Community Outreach Committee invites you to contribute items to the Shepherd's Pantry located in the narthex. You may drop them off during the Drive In Worship Service or in the blue bin outside the front door of the church Monday - Thursday mornings. The items are delivered to the Monroe Food Pantry once a month.

Items Needed:

- canned fruit - mandarin oranges, mixed fruit, peaches, pears, sliced/diced pineapple
- canned vegetables (regular and low sodium) - sliced/whole beets, creamed corn, French cut green beans, sliced/whole potatoes, olives, Sauerkraut, spinach
- canned beans (regular and low sodium/fat free) - cannellini, pinto, refried, vegetarian refried
- baked beans - regular, pork, vegetarian
- chili - with beans, vegetarian
- stock (regular and low sodium) - beef, chicken, vegetable
- canned tomatoes (regular and low sodium) - crushed, whole, sauce, puree, paste
- regular and low sodium jarred pasta sauce
- regular and whole wheat egg noodles
- Ramen - beef, shrimp
- cold cereal - corn flakes, raisin bran, Rice Krispies
- oatmeal
- packaged foods - Hamburger Helper, instant potatoes
- salad dressing - balsamic, blue cheese, Italian, ranch, Thousand Island
- condiments - mayo, ketchup, yellow mustard, pancake syrup, hot sauce, taco sauce
- crunchy peanut butter
- strawberry preserves
- beverages - black tea (regular and decaf), ground coffee (regular and decaf), hot chocolate, low sodium V8, Ensure, shelf stable milk
- household items - toilet paper, paper towels, household cleaners
- personal hygiene items - menstrual pads, face wash, deodorant, bar soap, shampoo, conditioner



Food for Summerfield

There is an ongoing need for nutritious food for the kids at Summerfield. Protein is especially needed. GSLC Council has challenged the congregation to provide funds for the purchase of nutritious food. GSLC will match donations from members for up to \$250 per month. Pastor Gaston has told us that \$500 per month would meet their nutritious food needs. If you wish to donate please write a check to GSLC with the notation "Food For Summerfield" or place cash in the Summerfield box.

Church Offering and Financial Statements

Financial Statements will be sent out in March. Please review your statement and if you have any questions, Roy Remlin will be happy to assist you.

As worship services are online and outdoor now, if you have a chance, please submit your offering to help with our expenses. Thank you for your contribution!

There are different ways to contribute. You may bring it with you to the Drive In worship service or you may mail a check if you are worshipping online with us or you may use your bank's online checking and have the bank issue the check and mail it—it's most often a free service offered by banks. Check with your bank to see if this works for you. In addition, our Finance Committee is working diligently on implementing PayPal/Venmo and plans to have it in place in the next few weeks. We will let you know as soon as it's ready to be used.

Let us know if you have any questions, we are always happy to help.

Happy Birthday

April

Bill Kaiser
Jeffrey Schmidt
Jane Fieberts
Zoe Helmke
Cassie Dixon
Victoria Hensel
Dagny Hassinger
Benjamin Lee
Duane Noll
Steven Hoffman
Douglas Juliano

Morgan Turner
Christopher Tveter
Marie Tveter
Megan Bucherati
Matthew Hensel
Michael Infante III
Amanda Lee
Thelma Cleland
Veronica Serrano
Jenna Egensteiner
Judith Haven

The current month's birthday listing is posted on the bulletin board outside of the Pastor's office. If your birthday is not listed, please contact the church office and the files will be updated. We do not want to miss anyone's birthday.



Look and Live

The cure for the ancient Israelites, following Moses, is to look directly at what is killing them, rather than avoid or hide from it. Healing occurs in the confrontation.

In today's gospel, Jesus likens his crucifixion to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness so the Israelites might be saved from the venom of desert snakes. In doing so, Jesus communicates that he came so we might look at what is killing us. He came to shine a light on that which poisons our lives so we might live.

In today's gospel, we catch Jesus in the middle of a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who is slinking around in the night to get a word in with Jesus, presumably so he is not seen. In this conversation Jesus gives a judgment that shines a light on Nicodemus: you, Nicodemus, seem to

prefer the darkness because there is something you are doing that you want to hide, thus making it easier for you to live in the dark. This sounds an awful lot like the experience of shame. Jesus is naming the way shame has dictated Nicodemus's life, relegating him to shadows where he will not be seen for what he really is. Notice the lack of condemnation. Jesus is simply a light, showing Nicodemus to himself.

Jesus is also a light to us, showing us to ourselves. Looking at Jesus lifted up on the cross, we see the poison that is killing us: power used to protect the status quo; our instinct to blame one in order to save the rest. We see the fruit of our defenses against what the light reveals: the death of an innocent man at the hands of those in power.

Christ has come so that we will see what is poisoning us and that, in seeing, we might turn and live.

Devotional message and art based on the readings for March 14th, reprinted

Sunday, March 21, 2021 — Fifth Sunday in Lent

Prayer of the Day: O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalms 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:91-116

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:5-10

Gospel: John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

