

# 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, February 24, 2021

I had to read Scott Thumma's books in seminary. He's a researcher studying religion in America. That is, here and now research. Five years ago, when Bishop Hazelwood visited Good Shepherd, someone asked him what the "church of the future" will be like. The bishop humbly said he didn't know. But now, sociologist Thumma says, clear changes are showing and the pandemic has had a lot to do with this. In a recent article in the Post (Sunday Feb. 21), a rabbi, a minister of an evangelical Christian church and clergy and lay leaders in Hamden, Norwalk, Greenwich and Danbury comment as well. The changes that are emerging have to do with new uses of technology, a turn toward helping others in need locally and globally and fostering a deeper personal faith life. I find this very interesting and hopeful.

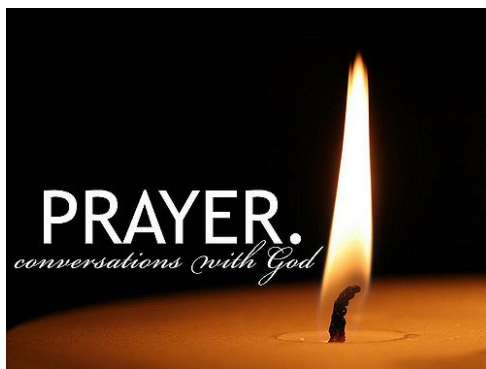
Our Lutheran story in this nation began with immigrant fellowship. That is, congregations as support spaces for Finns, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians and Germans. This began to change as time passed and so you see many churches named "First English" congregation in all synods. English became the language used in Worship. The next generation was deeper into their Americanization. The next change was to put it bluntly, "Congregation as clubhouse." People filled their social friend needs and need for community with members of their congregations. They were large in number, built large facilities, classrooms, church halls. Suppers and breakfasts, bowling leagues, baseball leagues and men's and women's groups. The downside of this model though was insulated and self-preoccupied. When as a seminarian in '93, I was required to spend time in multiple congregations in different states, this model was just beginning to crack. Council Meetings and Committee meetings were almost entirely focused on budgets and fights about carpeting, how often to "make the Service longer" by having Communion twice a month instead of once a month and how many pipes and ranks the organ really needed. I wondered as a young trainee what ANY of this had to do with Jesus?

As generations changed people no longer found their social friendships in the congregation. They had friends from work and neighborhood. Often unchurched friends. The number of "nones" began to grow mightily. But according to Thumma, the church today is, as in ancient times, smaller, and more focused on helping those who were NOT members of the congregation. Involvement in the needs of the communities around the church is replacing discussions about new hymnals and (horrors!) pianos in the chancel. "The tremendous amount of change that congregations have put into effect in an incredibly short amount of time is frankly, shocking to me." said Thumma, who is also a professor at Hartford Seminary. Late last month for example a Pew Research Report found Americans were more likely than people from other countries to say the pandemic has STRENGTHENED their religious faith! A parishioner at an Episcopal church in Danbury said "I would never have believed in a pandemic (that has killed half a million people) that you would get this kind of response. Our donations of food has just been out of this world." I'm thinking that the Holy Spirit uses (not causes) events to break through to reform of the church. Luther said famously "The church is always in need of Reform." I see that what we at Good Shepherd,

and the churches around us are doing has much more to do with what Jesus came to make us all about. Similarly, we hold "the keys" to heal racial divide, to welcome those with little or no but questioning faith as well as those who often feel unwelcomed at church such as gay and lesbian people and their children. Bigotry must decline as growing into the full stature of Christ increases. This is the Way not of "churchy people" but of Jesus Followers.

"Behold, I AM doing a new thing, not like the old things of days past but a new thing. Can you not perceive it? " Is. 43:19. Repent (change your head) and believe the Good News!

LV  
PD



*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.*

#### 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.

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.

***Our deepest sympathy and prayers for the family and friends of + Trudi Black +, wife of Larry Black.***

*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@gslc-ct.org](mailto:office@gslc-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](mailto: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](http://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, February 28th 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.



## Lenten Bag Activities

The Thom family has started on their Lenten journey with Mardi Gras beads, decorating Valentine cookies and painting Alleluia rocks...

Everyone in the congregation should have received a Lenten bag. If you haven't, we apologize for the oversight. Please call the church office or email and let us know and we will be sure to get one to you!





## 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". The booklets are included in your Lenten Bags so it's easy to participate. If you did not receive one, we have extra copies at church or it can be sent to you via email. In addition, we will put the pages for the upcoming discussion in the newsletter each week.

Please join us tonight -  
**Wednesday, February 24th  
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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86398759484?pwd=WC9yemptSTVpRlNBSy9MNnFMM05mZz09>

Meeting ID: 863 9875 9484

Passcode: 195625

One tap mobile

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# US (Chicago)

+19292056099,,86398759484#,,, \*195625

### TIPS FOR READING DICKINSON'S POETRY

1. **TAKE HEART!** Dickinson is a fascinating, rewarding poet, and her style can be quite compact and sometimes enigmatic. If you don't understand something at first, don't worry. Think of her poems as little cut gems, or small bites of delicious, rich food. Go slow, savor, and let the light come!
2. **THANK GOD FOR DICTIONARIES:** Dickinson wrote in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and she also had a taste for quirky terms, so her vocabulary can be unfamiliar at first. Don't be afraid to look up words as you go!
3. **TRY READING OUT LOUD:** Sometimes, the simple act of reading aloud can unlock the inner emotions or meaning of a poem. And all – those – dashes? Think of them as tiny dramatic pauses, or as signals to sharpen the notes of the music.
4. **RINSE AND REPEAT:** And speaking of music, think of a Dickinson poem as a song, or a miniature symphony, meant to be listened to again and again. Like many poets, she writes in a way that opens each poem to many possible meanings – and no reader is supposed to get them all at once! So take your time, and come back often. Each poem is a continual invitation to visit and revisit, always with the possibility of discovering something new.

"A little Madness in the Spring  
Is wholesome even for the King,  
But God be with the Clown –  
Who ponders this tremendous scene –  
This whole Experiment of Green –  
As if it were his own!"

# FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

## READ

Scripture:

Mark 1:9-15

Poem:

"A little Madness in the Spring,"  
by Emily Dickinson

## MEDITATE

The baptism-in-the-wilderness by John was about repentance, and Jesus' preaching was, too. In Mark's original Greek, the word for repentance is *metanoia*, from *meta* ("change") and *noia* ("mind") – today we might say, "change of heart," or "change of life." Dickinson suggests that some "wholesome madness" is fitting for this time of year: a fresh start, a new beginning, a wild, lush springtime of the soul.

But just as the spring brings new growth in a forest or in a backyard garden, the new life in our lives is not "our own," but rather a gift from God, the movement of the Spirit in our lives. With this in mind, we can ask: What "change of heart" is God already stirring within us? What new growth, what new leaf, what new flower is the Spirit calling us to cultivate?

## MORE LIGHT

For a beautiful meditation on the dignity and "responsibility" of a flower (Dickinson was a passionate gardener), see Dickinson's "Bloom – is Result – to meet a Flower."

The time is  
fulfilled, and the  
kingdom of God has  
come near; repent,  
and believe in the  
good news.

+ Mark 1:15

## PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of repentance, praying, "God of mercy, show me the ways you are changing my life, the new growth, the new flowers you have in mind for me, and for your wider world, 'this whole Experiment of Green.' In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Schedule a "wilderness walk" in solitude or with a family member, listening for how God may be calling you to change and grow.
- + Do something "a little mad" this week, for the sake of delight: explore a brand new place; eat breakfast for dinner; read your favorite children's books to each other; fast from housework entirely (entirely!) for a full day; have a snowball fight; put a bunch of quarters in parking meters downtown; schedule a day-long board game marathon with your family; do a Zoom call with friends consisting entirely in joke telling – the "madder" the better!
- + Research or reach out online to an organization changing the world in inspiring ways: a racial justice and reconciliation organization; an environmental advocacy organization; a local community garden – follow your passions! Learn more about their work, their impact, and how you can get involved.
- + Dickinson loved letter-writing – so write a letter to yourself this week. What changes are you making (or would you like to make) to be more in tune with God's good news? Discuss this question with family or friends over a meal or online. And then, like a mad monarch, address the letter to yourself – and put it in the mail!

# SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

## READ

Scripture:

Mark 8:27-38

Poem:

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?"  
by Emily Dickinson

## MEDITATE

This passage in Mark is full of paradox, including Jesus' idea that salvation somehow involves letting go of "wanting to save one's life," and instead, being willing to "lose" it. Dickinson's playful poem suggests one way to understand this mystery: the attempt to save ourselves, to be "Somebody" in the world's eyes (and, we may add, in God's eyes) ends up looking as foolish as a frog incessantly announcing his name. And on the other hand, Dickinson herself models the antidote to this self-absorption: gladly and boldly declaring – and embracing, with a wink – her identity as "Nobody!"

## MORE LIGHT

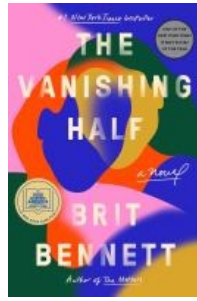
For another picture of what "losing one's life" might look like, see Dickinson's "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain." It's a challenging poem, typically read as some kind of mental crisis, depression, or panic attack, but it can also be understood as a more positive "breaking through," moving beyond stifling forms of self-absorption, a "funeral" for the poet's former, mistaken sense of self – just the kind of insight that Jesus' paradoxical teachings may be meant to provoke.

For those who  
want to save their  
life will lose it, and  
those who lose their  
life for my sake, and  
for the sake of the  
gospel, will save it.

+ Mark 8:35

## PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of letting go, praying, "God of grace, help me let go of what I need to let go of, trust you to do the saving, and trust myself to live boldly and humbly, gratefully and compassionately, as your beloved child. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Experiment with an "I'm Nobody!" fast this week, creating little sanctuaries of serenity. Try fasting from technology (or social media) for an hour, a day, or the whole week; or create a "Sabbath box" for cell phones or other devices, so you can better experience a respite from "Being Somebody," including the temptation to work, work, work. Being Nobody for a while can be a blessing!
- + Do you know someone (or know someone who knows someone) who is living an "all-in" life of service, devoting their time and energy to acts of love and justice? Make a special effort to thank them for their commitment and inspiration. Write them a handwritten note, and be sure to ask how you can help.
- + Send (or drop off) flowers to someone this week – anonymously. If you're feeling especially Dickinsonian, include the poem, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?"
- + In this passage, Jesus warns that our attempts to "gain the whole world" can in the process result in "forfeiting life." Make a list of the things that make you truly come alive. Discuss this topic with family or friends over a meal or online. What small, practical steps can you take to do these things more often?



**The Good Shepherd Book Club** is meeting on March 2nd at **1:00 p.m.** when we will discuss ""The Vanishing Half"" by Brit Bennett. In April, we will discuss ""The 100 Year Old Man Who Jumped Out the Window and Disappeared"" by Jonas Jonasson. We will either meet via Zoom or possibly indoors using the new handler system if the infection rates are low. We welcome new members!

## Reaching Out, Serving Others:



### Council of Churches Thank you

The Coat Collection was a great success! Thank you for your generous donation of 7 bags of coats to the Janus Center program. Your thoughtfulness has helped those most in need of warmth in the winter weather.



### 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.



As part of your Lenten journey, we have asked you to designate the money you may have used to eat out or buy take out coffee for The Good Shepherd Foundation. We will collect the money on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Please see the update below from Linda McGurn, VP of The Good Shepherd Foundation.

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



# GOOD SHEPHERD FOUNDATION

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD FOUNDATION

### 2020 UPDATE

If you are ill and suffering, can you imagine facing the impossible choice of seeking care and relief that comes every 3 weeks, or, protecting your life due to the real possibility of being killed while journeying to seek that help?

The people you have helped us serve in Haiti are crushed by circumstances beyond their control and they are depending on the medical help we provide.

Thank you for your generous support in 2020. We would be grateful if you would consider supporting TGSF again during Lent to help us continue to serve these people.

As a result of your generosity, let me share with you some details of what we were able to do:

1. 2020 Clinic Summary:
  - a. 21 clinics held with 3,302 patients seen
  - b. Rise in clinic costs from \$2 to \$8+ per patient per clinic in 9 years, yet we continue to serve over 160 patients per clinic. The increase is due to a rise in medication costs and the devalued local currency.
2. Because of Covid 19, we increased our clinics to every 2 weeks for a short time. At the request of the National Health Agency, we could only see 150 people per day and we were turning away over 50 people per clinic. We handed out 60 handwashing buckets with chlorine and spouts to help prevent the spread of Covid 19. For reasons we are unsure of, the rate of Covid is very low in the area we serve, and indeed, in all of Haiti. While we are now allowed a full load of patients, we find that our patient census is reduced due to current extreme violence in the country.
3. Total amount raised in 2020 was just over \$35,000, totaling \$215,500 in 9 years.
4. We now have 2 working wells and 2 latrines, and an indoor clinic with electricity and running water in the community we serve, thanks to the generosity of so many.
5. We have been approved for a Rotary International Grant to build or repair 14 wells and 17 latrines. We are still working out the arrangements with Rotary International to access the funds approved.

### **Should you decide to make TGSF your Lenten project again, our needs include:**

- a. \$1800 per clinic to provide more frequent clinics.
- b. Until we can get the Rotary Grant started up, \$800 to build one well and \$1200 to provide one latrine.
- c. \$3,000 to add more solar panels to increase the electricity available.
- d. \$200 per month to provide a weekly Registered Nurse onsite to provide a safer way to hand out meds for chronic illness until the violence stops.

Many thanks for your past generosity and for considering TGSF again this year.

Linda McGurn, VP



Secure Even When It's Not Safe

## Devotional for the week of February 21st, 2021

The world is unsafe in countless ways. It contains wilderness after wilderness, places where temptation and danger seem to reign. Struggle, pain, fear, violence, hate, death, and suffering are all part of the uncertain world that we wake to each day.

Today, the Gospel of Mark discusses Jesus' own encounter with the wilderness. After he was baptized by John the Baptist, Jesus was driven into the desert wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. What's more, when Jesus left the wilderness to re-enter society, he encountered another kind of dangerous wilderness, a world where John the Baptist had just been arrested for confronting Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias with some hard-hitting truth.

After forty days of temptation, Jesus was met by yet another temptation: to play it safe in a world that had just silenced his friend for doing exactly the kind of thing that Jesus came to do. Despite the risk posed by worldly power players like Herod, Jesus proceeded to teach, heal, and spread the good news of God's kingdom. Despite the danger, Jesus trusted in the promise that God's love was bigger than the wilderness of human wiles.

The world is not safe, and believing in Jesus does not change this fact. However, we are secure in an unsafe world because of the promises made by God in baptism. Think of children who are secure in the love of their parents. They may go to school and face bullies—a painful experience, for sure—but they are less likely to trust the lies of the bullies because they know a deeper truth about themselves, a truth instilled by the love of their parents. So it is with us. There is danger and wilderness all around, but we are secure in the truth of our baptism: we are God's beloved children, with whom God is well pleased. Grounded in this secure love, we derive courage to set out into the wild.

*Devotional message and art based on the readings for February 21st, reprinted from [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com).*

## Sunday, February 28 — Second Sunday in Lent

Prayer of the Day: O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of 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: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalms 22:23-31

Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

Gospel: Mark 8:31-38



Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."