

ERLC Current

July 2018

Newsletter – Elk River Lutheran Church

Pastor's Message

Greetings Members and Friends of Elk River Lutheran, July and August will be months full of joy and deeper learning. This month we continue our "Journey to Freedom: Embracing God's Cultural Mosaic," with continued opportunities for us to reflect on issues of race and diversity. I'm so grateful for Jia Starr Brown's leadership with this program and for our congregation's response and participation in these important learning opportunities. In her section Jia highlights remaining opportunities, and I want to just echo invitations to two standalone events, which would be great to attend, even if you haven't been able to attend previous events. Jia shares more about these events in her section of the newsletter:

- **Anti-Racism Training**- Saturday, July 14th 10:00am-12:00pm
- **Open Forum with Lunch**- Sunday, July 15th 11:30am-1:30pm

Jia's last day with us will be Sunday, July 15th, and so I hope you'll join us for worship that Sunday as we bid her farewell and Godspeed as she begins her new position with Park Avenue Methodist Church in Minneapolis.

On Sunday, July 22 in worship we will celebrate the theme from this year's **ELCA National Gathering: *This Changes Everything***. We'll learn a little bit about what our high school youth experienced at the gathering in Houston and think about what that theme and message has to say to our lives.

And do I hear sleigh bells jingling? Yes! Sunday, July 29th is **Christmas in July**. At both services we'll sing Christmas carols, hear the Christmas story, and reflect on what the Christmas message means for us during the rest of the year.

In between services on Sunday, July 29th, 9:20-10:20am we'll hold a **Congregational Vitality Update Forum** to share updates on our work with Jim LaDoux and the Vision Team, as well as our part-time associate pastor position.

On Sundays in August we'll embrace a new Sunday series, "**Weird Animal Stories of the Bible: A Fun Way to Learn About Ourselves and God.**" We'll read rarely read Bible stories about everything from poisonous snakes biting complainers, to God being compared to a chicken.

I know summer is a busy time and people are out of town a lot on weekends, but if you can be [here](#), you won't want to miss these July and August Sundays! If you are on vacation and out of town, enjoy those times of rest and renewal and we'll see you when you get home.

Peace, Pastor Nathan



Adult Faith Formation

The joy on the faces of kids who see the bounce house set up in our driveway during Kids Days at the Farmers Market is not to be missed! While the kids love bouncing, it's the parents who are so pleased that there's an activity that lets their children have fun and burn off energy at the same time. Plus, free ice-cold water and crackers are a refreshing way to end a bouncing session. This has been an opportune time to share information about our LIFT and Youth programs during the school year, too. Please volunteer for the upcoming Elk River fest on July 7 or the Kids Day on July 12 to see firsthand how much fun our bounce house is bringing to our community.

Our Interim Visitation Minister Jia Starr Brown has organized and has been leading an amazing series of learning opportunities. The Bible studies between Sunday services, the sermon series, the book club on "Waking Up White" on Monday nights, movie night, and the trainings are outstanding! If you have not yet attended any of these activities, there's still time. Please join us for this time of reflection, growth, and challenge as we examine ourselves, our communities, and our culture in the "Journey to Freedom: Embracing God's Cultural Mosaic of People" series.

Our Ministry Teams, the Vision Team and the Council have been keeping a busy schedule of meetings, too. (FYI: Pastor Nathan attends almost all these meetings!) Planning for the future of our congregation and how we offer real hospitality to those who visit looking for a church home, as well as serving our current members, has been a focus of our meetings. The Council has celebrated the special outreach that our congregation has established in Downtown Elk River, but we have concern about the lower financial giving over the past couple of months. While we are closely monitoring our spending, we cannot help but feel joy about the momentum of this congregation as we move into the future by sharing the Good News of Jesus in this place at this time.

With all of you I'm looking forward to hearing about the experiences of our senior high youth at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. Our prayers for celebration, service, learning, fun, and safe travel are with them!

Blessings,
Kari Christianson
Council President

"Journey to Freedom: Embracing God's Cultural Mosaic of People" Summer series is underway!

Together, we have learned, we have shared, and we have bonded. Have you missed some of the events?

GOOD NEWS: There is still time to join in and be a part of the incredible activity of the Holy Spirit among us! We need your voice to help us grow!

Here are additional ways to get involved through July 15:

Bible Study - meets every Sunday between worship services downstairs in the Community Room.

"Anti-Racism Training" - facilitated by POWERHOUSES Shari Seifert and Katherine Parent - Saturday, July 14, 10:00am - noon in the Fellowship Hall.

"Open Forum" - Join us for lunch and learning as a variety of panelists answer your questions about culture and diversity and share their experiences. Sunday, July 15, directly after 10:30am worship service in the Community Room.

July Devotion

The Adult Faith Formation committee is happy to announce some exciting opportunities this summer for personal growth and learning as well as some fun new initiatives coming up.

First, **The Journey for Freedom** led by Jia Starr Brown is off to a great start! The attendance has been very good at the Sunday morning Bible studies. A book study is being conducted on Monday nights of the book, "Waking Up White" by Debby Irving. Our education about what it means to be white in America has been eye-opening! We are so thankful to have Jia leading us on this educational journey. Hearing different perspectives on Acts 8:26-40 in the sermons has created more insight into the passage about the eunuch and Phillip!

The **fundraiser** sponsored by the Union Congregational Church (UCC) and ERLC, for ARMANDO who has DACA status, was a success! **\$3600** was earned to help Armando and his family with legal expenses. The money was raised at a silent auction with items from both churches as well as monetary donations from many other churches and the UCC synod. Those in attendance had the opportunity to meet Armando and his family and to learn how he was treated while in prison. It was a very moving, educational & sad commentary for us to hear. Armando's family brought some special Mexican food to share with those in attendance.

Special thanks to those who donated items:

Jim and Sue Hecker, John Natwick, Pauline Kuhn, Diana Schansberg, the ERLC Quilting group! Also, thanks to Carol Vikstrom for her leadership in support of this event & of the decorating committee from our church which included: Carol, Diana Schansberg and Lorie & Tom Werk.

UPCOMING MOVIES: "42" which deals with the life of Jackie Robinson will be shown at **6:00 PM Sunday, July 22nd**. Other dates will be selected for the following movies: "I Can Only Imagine," "Hidden Figures," & "The Shack," dependent upon the response we get for "42".

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

ERLC has two exhibits being planned for the **Farmers Market** which we hope will be of interest to adults of the congregation as listed below:

A (classic) **CAR exhibit** will be held on Thursday, August 2nd. If you have a classic or unique car or vehicle you would like to exhibit, please contact Lorie or Tom Werk.

An **Art exhibit** is being planned for Thursday, September 6th. If you have items you would like to exhibit please contact Conni, John Natwick or Taylor Quinn.

We hope many of you will have an opportunity to join us at one or all of these events!

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!!



“See you next

Music and Worship

time!”

That is what employees at Kwik Trip locations tell their customers when they are leaving the convenience store after they pay for their purchases. I remember being taken aback the first time I heard that phrase, wondering, “That’s a bit presumptuous, isn’t it? Assuming that I will be back!” And I do return. Often. Every time I leave the store, I am embraced with that familiar statement.

“See you next time!”

Interestingly, I have given this sentence a great deal of thought. I have come to believe that it is not presumption; rather, these four words express a message of hope. Employees hope that I will return, that I will choose to shop at their convenience stores for my “on the go” needs. Kwik Trip hopes that somehow a relationship will form between me and them, one that I will value as much as they do. I have grown to love these words, and when I am there, I wait for the “hope” of another encounter.

As I prepare to transition to the next chapter in God’s plan for my life journey, I do not want to say “goodbye.” As we are discovering in our “Waking Up White” book study during our “Journey to Freedom” Summer series, each page reveals new discoveries, new “a-ha” moments, new ways of being community...and of being family. The relationships that I have formed here have expanded my “family;” we are indeed intertwined.

We are, in fact, connected.

And, I wouldn’t have it any other way. Being in true relationship with others means taking them with us in our journeys, committing to learn and love and grow together. As various limbs in the living body in Christ, we need each other in order to be complete. This requires intentional, hopeful, aspiring, inspiring work - to keep us united, aware, and seeking God’s incredible presence among us. And, in us. And, through us. We are in relationship.

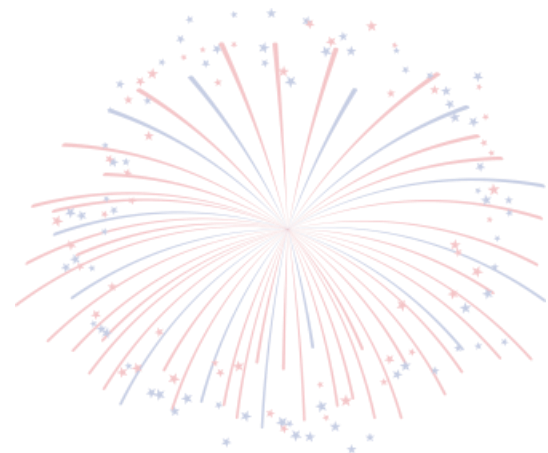
Thank you for receiving me, for encouraging me, and for being willing to take such bold and courageous steps to connect, to understand. Thank you for inviting me into your lives and into your stories. This experience has changed my ministry and will continue to contribute to the ways in which I connect with those whom God has called me to serve.

I look forward to seeing you again, serving with you again, and walking alongside you in days to come. And, I hope that you feel the same. There is no “goodbye;” only, “see you next time!”

“Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11, NIV)

Peace to you all,

Jia Starr Brown
Interim Visitation Minister



Happy July, everyone!

Last month, on the Saturday of the Twin Cities Pride weekend, Darryl and I walked around the festival with a group of friends, looking at the booths, chatting with the vendors, eating the food. As we were walking about, I saw one of my friends had acquired a sticker that read “Not all Christians are [jerks].” I loved it! Going with the sometimes-irreverent spirit of Pride this sticker was bold yet truth-telling. I loved it so much that I wanted one for myself. So, as we continued through the festival I was bent on finding the booth with that super cool sticker. When I found the booth, and thusly the sticker, I took a picture of it and sent it to Nathan, knowing he’d get a kick out of it. A bit later he responded with a picture himself, saying he had already been to Pride and acquired the same super cool sticker. I wasn’t surprised. I knew he was going to Pride with his family that day, I just wasn’t sure when. As I continued walking throughout the day I was touched by how much Pastor Nathan supports the queer community. I was moved to tears knowing that he has my back in a world where I could be hated for my love for Darryl. I also think of you at ERLC, how you have not only my back but the back of countless others who are hated or treated poorly in this world.

I think our work together at Elk River Lutheran Church is so important for our community and the world around us. Because we are a *Reconciling in Christ* congregation we have the opportunity to be a “lightning rod” for not only queer folk but for folks on all sorts of margins. I’m still pondering how to be a lightning rod in the musical sense, but I do know that the musical message of ERLC is that. Every song we sing is selected with the hopes that its message is one of love, truth, compassion, and grace.

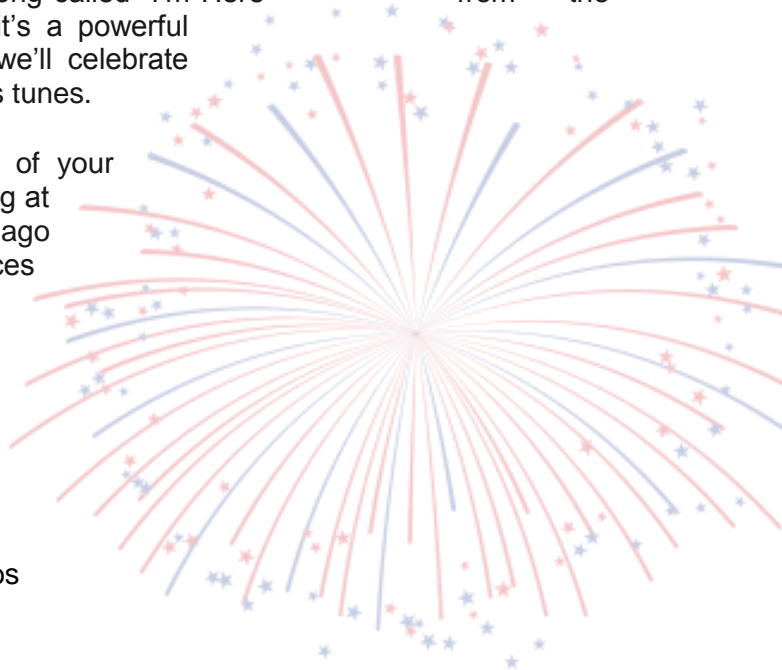
My prayer is when musicians like Carol Roden, Joyce & Tom Hels, John & Conni Natwick, Bea Bastyr, Kara Hennig, and Mike Wadzink share their musical message that it reaches ears that hear the good news of Jesus and far-reaching love of God. My prayer is when we fill the lounge of Pour Wine Bar & Bistro with loud, boisterous hymns of praise people around us *know* they are welcome to join us in song. My prayer is when we, the staff, tell the story of our blue hair that people see we are a fun-loving church and find joy in giving back to our community. My prayer is when the choir goes to sing with the other choirs of Holy Trinity and Union that we are reminded that we’re not in this as a competition but in it to share with each other.

This month the music ministry continues to share their message with you and with our community. On July 9th we’ll gather again at Pour Wine Bar & Bistro for Beer & Hymns. Last month we boasted 50+ in attendance and donated more than \$240 for CAER. On July 9th we’ll take up a collection for “Project Promise” through *Lutheran World Relief*. On July 15th, the church choirs of Holy Trinity, Union Congregational, and Elk River Lutheran will sing for both services, as they did in June at Holy Trinity. This choir-sharing project allows all three choirs a chance to get together and enjoy singing with a larger group of singers this summer. Also sharing their message through music will Audrey and Katherine Horner on July 22nd. They both have been practicing songs with Bea, their teacher, and are excited to share them with you. Nikia Brown, daughter of Jia, will sing for our July 8th services. She’s prepared a song called “I’m Here” from the musical *The Color Purple*. Coupled with Jia’s sermon, it’s a powerful anthem about personal liberation. Finally, on July 29th we’ll celebrate Christmas in July by jumbling familiar hymns with Christmas tunes.

I hope you all have a safe July 4th and wonderful rest of your summer. I’ll leave you with the lyrics of a song we’re singing at the 10:30 service “Take to the World.” It attracted me years ago and I’m happy to have the chance to include in our services during *Journey to Freedom*. May the Holy Spirit stir your hearts to take to the world the good and life-giving gospel.

Go in peace to love and to serve,
And let your ears ring long with what you have heard;
So, go and go far, take light deep in the dark;
Believe what’s true God uses all, even you.

And may the bread on your tongue leave a trail of crumbs



To



lead the hungry back to the place you are from.

And take to the world this love, this hope, and faith;
 And take to the world this rare, relentless grace,
 And like the Three-in-One, know you must become
 What you wanna save cause that's still the way
 God takes to the world.

See you Sunday,
 Taylor

The following questions are just a few of over 100 wonderings that we received from you on June 3, 2018. Thanks for participating and getting involved!

1. Are people of different religions still considered our brothers and sisters? Should we be trying to convert them?
2. How can I be most effective in helping or leading my neighbor?
3. What Bible verses help answer how God made us all to be equals and [where does it] show [that] His love is equal to everyone?
4. Is it okay to ask [race/cultural] questions directly to people?
5. How can we even begin to correct the inequities of our past history in re: to race and come to some kind of reconciliation?
6. What do we do in our faith community to create discomfort for some of our neighbors?
7. How can I best to love my neighbor when so many strong political disagreements exist between us?
8. How does Christianity tie to/connect to/object to Islam/Judaism/Native American traditions/Russian Orthodox/non-denominational and other churches?
9. How can we be more welcoming of the LGBT community?
10. What ways can we break white fragility that honors all people?



Got (MORE) questions? Bring them with you to the **Open Forum on Sunday, July 15** directly after church. Join us from **11:30am-1:30pm**.

We will feed our hearts (and our bellies!) with lunch and conversation with panelists who will share their learnings and experiences with us. All are welcome!

Sherburne County Parade (held on July 21st)!!

We are looking for volunteers to help us Build,

Decorate and Occupy a float!

This is a wonderful way to show the community who we are and do a little 'advertising' all while having fun!! If you have never been a part of a parade

before, it is a wonderful experience and awesome way to get to know your Church Family!

Please contact the office for more information or to sign up to volunteer!

"Journey to Freedom" Summer series wraps up on July 15, 2018...but our work does not end there!

A lot of new learning happens in coming days afterward, where we will have time to pause, reflect, and pray about where God is leading us next in this important conversation about "embracing God's cultural mosaic of people".

We will have time to share our reflections on Saturday, August 4, from 10am-noon. A seasoned facilitator will guide us into some thoughtful dialogue about what we have discovered - about ourselves, others, and God.

As we prepare for that time to follow-up, I invite you to consider and meditate on the following prompts:

1. What did I discover about myself during "Journey to Freedom"?
2. What did I discover about God during "Journey to Freedom"?
3. What actions am I called to take, as a Christian, to continue - and further - this important conversation with others in my congregation and community?

See you Saturday, August 4, from 10am - noon for our "Journey to Freedom" Follow-up Conversation!



How can I, unless someone guides me?

-Acts 8:31



Elk River

LUTHERAN

Trusting in God's grace, an accepting,
joyful community, serving God & neighbor.

Elk River Lutheran Church

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