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Council members—Mike Unverferth, Judy Hornung,
Jerri Daugherty, Curtis Olson, Gabe Allen



Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Davey

Zoom log in information and the worship bulletin for each week can be found on our website on the “Worship in the Pandemic” page

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
PO Box 96
Davey, NE 68336



Bethlehem Star

October 2020

Racial Justice and Building for the Kingdom of God

When I was a kid, I was a Walter Cronkite fan. I remember running in from playing outside to watch the news when I was 7 or 8. I also read the newspaper from a pretty early age, although I don't exactly remember when.

I was 8 in 1968. Mostly what I remember from the news is Viet Nam and the protests against the war. I remember the hippies and all the concerns about drugs. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination must have happened just on the cusp of my news memories, because I don't actually remember him or the Civil Rights Movement he led. But I do remember the protests and even riots that happened after his murder.

As a white Nebraska kid, racial justice issues barely floated in and out of my consciousness for most of my life. Being white in a mostly white world in part means that one never has to think about race if you don't want to. Racial issues have periodically risen up in my lifetime and tend to prick my conscience, but generally, after a while they fade again.

Beyond the 60's, I remember Rodney King and the LA protests and riots in the 90's. I had some awareness of affirmative action and the charges of “reverse racism” leveled at it. I was appalled at racial and ethnic hatred directed against Middle Eastern Muslims after 9/11. I had a sizeable number of Iraqi women as patients when I was in medicine and neither they nor the male relatives I met were enemies. Maybe that was the beginning of a turning point for me. Actually knowing people in a particular group often is.

An even more significant turning point for me was in January of 2007. I was in seminary and I took a J-term class at a theological consortium of schools in Chicago. Half the class was Black, one Latino, and the rest were white. It was a class in urban theology. The goal of urban theology, similar to any theology, is to imagine what God is up to in city neighborhoods.

It's the first time in my life I've gotten to know any significant numbers of Black people well enough to hear their stories. The stories they told are the same ones we're hearing now. It wasn't the media telling them, but Black people who actually lived in Black neighborhoods told them. Mind you, these weren't poor Black people. Yet they told stories of the difficulties getting loans and buying a home. They told stories of neighborhood grocery stores that never had fresh produce, if they had grocery stores at all. The young men told stories of incessant stops by police officers for no reason other than they were young Black men driving a decent car. I believed their stories. I still do.

They told a story so different from my experience I wondered why I hadn't paid more attention before. As this Millennium has gone on, I've found it harder and harder to not pay attention. At this point, it's simply not possible for me to not pay attention anymore and I believe that the Spirit is working powerfully in my life to make me pay attention, to learn more...and even more, to try to do something.

(cont. pg. 2)

I still don't know what all that means, but it's why you've heard it show up in my sermons a bit more.

Sometimes that seems threatening to people in congregations – that it's too political. I've not had much in the way of negative comments. And when I have, respectful conversation followed. I'm always happy to have conversation when someone disagrees.

Jesus cared about people and the future of humanity. The Kingdom of God is a vision for God's beloved creation. It's a vision of peace, justice, and love, especially for those who struggle to find justice in the kingdom of earthly power. Our call is to work toward that vision – to build for the Kingdom of God. Racist policies and racist ideas mar that Kingdom of God vision terribly and can't be ignored by people of faith and their leaders.

Like so many things, the issue of racism has become terribly polarized. It doesn't have to be. All but the most overt white supremacists agree that racism is bad. Christianity has a fairly poor track record where racism is concerned, but most present day Christians will at least pay lip service to the idea that racism is not a part of Jesus' vision for the Kingdom of God.

Many Black people have been telling us for decades systemic and individual racism still have a huge impact on their lives. Too often, we respond to their accounts with knee jerk denials or counter arguments or the "what about _____?" argument. We could choose to listen and believe them instead. It is after all their experience and their stories to tell. Not believing those stories is just another act of injustice against a people who have suffered too much injustice already.

Starting from the premise that racism is bad and choosing to believe the experience of Black people who say racism hasn't gone away is neither a Democratic stance nor a Republican stance. For us it is a Christian stance. And it's a stance from which we can begin to untangle the effects of 400 years of racist policies. That's what building for the Kingdom of God looks like.

Christ's peace,

Pastor Kris

Pet Blessing



Sunday October 4 is the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis was very connected to creation and is especially known for his relationship to the animals. He saw all of creation, including humans, as connected and interdependent. Franciscan orders in the Catholic Church are still very focused on creation care.

Many churches, both Protestant and Catholic, do a blessing of animals on or near his feast day. During Zoom worship on Sunday you'll have a chance to introduce your pet if you have one, and we'll offer a prayer of blessing for our pets and for all animals in God's creation.

Calendar

- October 4** 10:00 am—Zoom Worship - pet blessing during worship
11:30 am Outdoor communion service at Zion
- October 7** 6:30 pm, Women's Group at Sharon Mumgaard's
- October 11** 10:00 am—Zoom Worship
- October 18** 10:00 am—Zoom Worship
11:30 am—Outdoor communion at Bethlehem
- October 27** 10:00 am Zoom worship

Other Events

Carol Joy Holling Heart of Camp Gala – Virtual event will be October 10. Online bidding begins October 1. Register and find more info here: <https://www.caroljoyholling.org/gala>

Ceresco UMC beef dinner Sunday October 4 from 4:30—6:30. Take out only, no pre-orders

Davey Craft Fair – Saturday October 25 from 10 -3 in the park. Proceeds will go to Davey Park renovation

Church offerings can continue to be mailed to:

Mike Unverferth
2800 W. Branched Oak Rd.
Raymond, NE 68428

Both churches also have an online giving option through tithe.ly. The easiest option is to download the tithe.ly app on a mobile device. Then just search for either church. You can also give from a laptop or PC – go to this link and instead of downloading app, click on "give online."

<https://get.tithe.ly/download-tithely-app>

Here is the log in information for worship at **10:00 am**

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81665346843?pwd=dkhXWG4REh4QnA3Um5mQ05GOUJQT09>

Phone—1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 816 6534 6843

Passcode: 787545