



Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church

The Current Word

2015 #3

SETTLING INTO ADVENT

Advent is settling upon us, a season of quiet honesty, waiting in darkness and anticipating Christmas, when we celebrate the light coming into the world – God forever with us, transforming our world from the inside out. Advent is Holy Work. We wait on behalf of a world that is hurting, afraid and combative. We gently sit in the darkness, grieving, hoping and trusting in the light of the world that no darkness can put out. In a restless time of constant motion, this settling into waiting is powerful, holy work.

For Lake Nokomis, this Advent is also a season to settle in, take a breath and adjust to the new rhythms of life around this place. We have some of our own grieving, hoping and trusting to do. We said goodbye to our beloved Jan, who has been ministering with us for 24 years. Jan's warmth and welcome has shaped this congregation, and she will be so missed. We celebrated her with a delicious luncheon filled with great stories and shared memories and lots of good friends, including the presence of Warren and Marlys Schluck (Warren was chair of the Personnel Team when Jan was hired in 1991!), and a substantial farewell gift. Sue took a photo of Jan with her last calendar... Bittersweet.

At the same time, we are welcoming two new staff people, (whom you can read more about in the following pages). Dennis Sanders serves as our new Communications and Administration Manager. In this new model of administrative support, much of the position will be done offsite, and he will be on site 1-2 half days a week. When the schedule is settled, we will let everyone know what to expect. Our second new staff member is our bookkeeper Krysta Niznick (Pat's daughter in law!). She takes over the majority of the treasurer duties, and will keep our books in ship shape. We are so grateful for these two people, and the gifts they bring to our community, and we looking forward to the getting to know them in the coming months.

Another transition that is coming is in our relationship with St. Joseph's Home for Children. November 30 is our final joint chapel service with St. Joe's. For lots of reasons, they are switching from a weekend chapel model to a mid-week youth group- type gathering. Chaplain Amy expressed what an impact LNPC has had in the lives of the kids these past seven years of regular partnership in worship, and how she hopes we can continue to be connected. We are excited to maintain our ties with St. Joe's through Movie Camp, which Amy says is absolutely life-changing. We are so thankful for this partnership.

This also means our 5th Sundays, which we've dedicated to connecting us to the world in worship and service, will take more creative forms. Just like the one we did a few years ago, where we combined worship with creating bagged meals to deliver to those cleaning up from the tornado damage in North Minneapolis, our four 5th Sundays during the year will be opportunities that remind us that we all belong to each other and help us to see this whole world as belonging to God.

As we move into Advent, I am reminded how life just keeps moving. Sickness and health, rest and work, planting and harvesting, fallow and fruitful, sorrow and joy. May we be people who hold space for the seasons in which we find ourselves, trusting God to meet us here, and may we hold space well for others' seasons too in this holy work.



As we move into Advent, a number of resources have been compiled to help us settle – help us to ease into and move through the season of 'waiting.' Check out the website:

<http://www.lakenokomispc.org/entering-into-advent.html>

which includes information about and links to: Advent Evening Prayer at Sabbath House (32nd and Portland); various books and articles, online devotionals, and activities for one and all.



Lake Nokomis will journey through the waiting in worship:

Advent 1, Sunday, 11/29, 5 pm- God's Hope - at LNPC then St. Joe's at 6:30 pm

Advent 2, Sunday, 12/6, 10 am - God's Peace- Communal worship, with Advent Adult Ed & Sunday School at 9 am

Advent 3, Saturday, 12/12, 5 pm - God's Joy - Special Advent Evening Prayer Service

Advent 4, Sunday 12/21, 10 am - God's Love - Communal worship, with Advent Adult Ed & Sunday School at 9 am

Christmas Eve – Thursday, December 24, 4:30 pm - Emmanuel - God with Us!

Sunday, December 6, will bring a very special speaker as Mark Yaconelli shares with us in worship. Mark, an author, retreat leader, and speaker, is with *'The Hearth: Real Stories by Regular Folks.'* His organization helps 'communities and individuals deepen relationships and cultivate compassion' through storytelling. He is in Minneapolis/St. Paul to lead a workshop, *'The Power and Practice of Personal Storytelling.'* Information about that workshop is noted later in this newsletter.

NEW OFFICE HOURS: the church office will be open Tuesdays 1:30 to 4:30 and Fridays 9 – 11:30. Drop by to meet Dennis! Much of the work of the new position will be done remotely. Voice mails will be checked and receive responses daily.

A New Chapter...

We are so excited to welcome Krysta Niznick to our staff, as our bookkeeper. Krysta brings lots of bookkeeping experience and enthusiasm to the position. Krysta loves to read, especially Vince Flynn books, and she enjoys walking the lake and being with her family, who loves to have fun together. Her favorite food is chocolate, the best place she has ever visited is The Badlands, and the best movie she's ever seen is *Wait Until Dark*. Krysta is afraid of snakes and finds babies' belly laughs extremely funny. She appreciates the community and support LNPC gives to its members and really looks forward to getting to know everyone.

Welcome, Krysta!



Dennis Sanders joins our staff as our new Communications and Administration Manager, and we are thrilled to welcome him! Dennis comes to us with lots of experience working as a pastor, graphic designer, and communications and administration specialist for another small congregation. Dennis loves reading, writing, taking long walks (really), and riding roller coasters. His favorite book is either *The Dawn Treader* or *A Grief Observed*, both by C.S. Lewis, and his favorite food is Cornbread Dressing (yum!) One thing Dennis loves about himself is that he is persistent, probably to the point of being a pest, and one thing he loves about his family is being able to hear English and Spanish growing up. Because his mother is Puerto Rican and his Dad was African American, Dennis speaks both languages. Dennis would like to try riding a motorcycle someday, and the best place he's ever visited is either Buenos Aires or Paris – too close to call. Dennis is afraid of heights, though his favorite movie, ironically, is *Up*. Dennis believes LNPC is an example that there is a future for small congregations. He's heard a lot of good things about us and is looking forward to seeing them in action.

Welcome, Dennis!



We will always Love You, Jan!

Giving Thanks – thoughts from Pastor Kara

We're moving from Thanksgiving weekend into the darkness and waiting of Advent. And it is my feeling, especially this year, that we are carried appropriately into Advent by gratitude. The world feels sad and scary just now. And for some, it may feel like denial or naiveté to deliberately turn to gratitude. Perhaps we start to believe we are accomplishing something by feeling the weight of the world in every moment, so by stopping to give thanks, it looks like we're stepping away from our post.

But that couldn't be further from the truth.

Gratitude is not trite. It is not shallow. It comes out of suffering and survival, and it demands honesty. In fact, grieving opens us to greater gratitude, and gratitude opens us to deeper grieving; they are both aspects of being alive and paying attention. Gratitude recognizes that life is filled with tragedy, or at the very least anxiety, and it acknowledges our finitude, but at the same time it notices that our very existence is a gift from God; it points us again to that truth. It helps us come awake again.

Gratitude happens *only* in the very moment we are in. *"This moment is a gift!"* gratitude exclaims, *"Life is such a gift!"*

With all the noise, sorrow, guns, advertisements, fear and campaigning, we get distracted from the real reality that is here within it all. Sometimes we stop seeing the presence of God, but God is here. Sometimes we miss the beauty, and the love, and hope, and the human connection, and forgiveness and compassion, but here it is, leaking into everything through the splits in the seams. There is no suffering Christ is not sharing, no situation that God is not right here in the midst of, bringing life out of death and light into darkness.

God is God and we are God's beloved children. Every one.

And one day, when time is no more, there will be only wholeness, abundance and peace, life, wrapped in eternal gratitude.

The dis-membered world needs people who re-member. Who notice and celebrate and say Thank You. And we need it too.

Gratitude brings us back to home base, and plugs us back in to love and hope so we can join in God's reality around us and between us. When we allow ourselves to stop in the moment of *thank you*, for that one moment the real reality of God is breathlessly tangible.

So when we move through this Advent sharing life with those who we love and wish we could love better, when we bump up against each other with our joblessness and our cancer, our autism and our anger, our stupid mistakes and unfulfilled goals, and every scary, broken, sad and violent thing happening in the world that presses in on us and feels so heavy and overwhelming, these things are not the biggest or most powerful, or more real thing in the room. Or in the world.

And if you can't feel it today, that's ok too. It's still real. God is still here. Life is still a gift. Love still wins, and hope still prevails, and light still shines in the darkness and will not be overcome. And some other time when you aren't expecting it, it will tap you the shoulder and flood you with wonder and awe.

So when thanks-giving comes for you – whenever and every time it comes, let it come. Welcome it. Without judgment or hesitation, let it sweep through you and buoy you up in the timeless and eternal promise that tastes like laughter and feels like joy, in its deep-sigh, tear-filled contented stillness. Let your body practice the truth that your brain sometimes forgets: your heart open and free, remembering, rejoicing, defiant and hopeful and grateful. ***Give Thanks.***

As we move forward~

We have been in a time of Stewardship, in which we've challenged ourselves to give thanks to those who have gone before while taking up full responsibilities for the ministries to which God is now calling us. We have responded well, pledging about \$83,000 to date. With income anticipated from partnering congregations (Westminster, Fuego Pentecostes, Central) and building use (FMMN, yoga and Spiritual Direction groups...), we have commitments for 2016 of about \$116,000 towards a budget of about \$160,000. Our giving is, biblically, based on tithing, but we might ask....

What is a tithe?

The biblical covenant of tithing, giving 10% of what you earn back to God, has shaped the people of God throughout history, as a covenant of trust and faithfulness with God. We believe we participate with God in healing and hope-building in the world. Tithing is one way of consciously joining in.

Why tithe?

Tithing helps us remember that everything, actually, belongs to God, and we are merely stewards of what we've been given, called to generously share and bravely participate. We get to be part of what God is doing in other communities and lives, as well as our own. We are all connected!

Our Congregation's Tithe:

As a congregation we tithe 10% of our income each month to other expressions of God's ministry in the world. We've been doing this for a year, and have watched our impact as a congregation ripple far beyond ourselves as we join with others who are sharing God's work.

Why do we tithe as a congregation?

Tithing reminds us that this is God's church and God's ministry, and we are participants. It helps us move from a place of anxiety about finances, to a place of trust, from a mindset of scarcity to trust in God's abundance. Instead of isolated and self-protective, tithing also helps us see ourselves as part of God's greater ministry, connected in the wide world to all the other folks living out the love and hope of Jesus.

Who have we given our tithes to?

This year so far we have shared with:

- St. Joseph's Home for Children for their spiritual life programs
- The Disabilities Task Force of the Presbytery to help host a conference on including people with disabilities in worship
- Bay Lake Camp, to support their camps and ministries
- The Ready? Set, Work! and the Center for Fathering programs at Urban Ventures.
- The Center for Social Healing helping new arrivals from Asian countries settle in and find community
- Peace Beyond Understanding, to help rebuild a beauty salon destroyed by racially-motivated arson in Jasper, Texas.
- Our Saviour's Housing, to support housing ministry in Minneapolis
- Missionary Annamarie Monkemeir, a nurse working in Jordan in a Syrian refugee camp

What if I tithed?

Some of us already tithe, others of us have never thought about it. To the right is a chart of what tithing might look like for you.

Giving and Sharing

Giving, no matter how much, is always a way of living in gratitude. Sharing what we have with others reminds us we are God's beloved children, and that we all belong to each other. And it feels great. Every time we practice generosity, we are reminded again *who* and *whose* we are.

Monthly Giving		
Annual Income	10%	5%
20,000	\$167	\$84
40,000	\$333	\$167
60,000	\$500	\$250
80,000	\$667	\$333
100,000	\$840	\$417
150,000	\$1,250	\$625
200,000	\$1,667	\$840

What's up with Cyndi?

Our dear Cyndi Wunder has been ministering this past year with First Presbyterian Church in Jasper, Texas, and their non-profit project: Peace Beyond Understanding. Hold on to your hats!

Dear Lake Nokomis friends,

I've been asked to update you regarding the work of Peace Beyond Understanding (PBU) and little First Presbyterian in Jasper, TX.

I'm honored to do so! We have had an incredible and exciting year, yet we are also facing some really big challenges. We began this year with the hope that we would be able to fund PBU through grant monies. Some of these funds were anticipated to help First Presbyterian afford the presence of a pastor, something which FP had only had on a very part time basis for many years. Having a pastor present full time has been a huge shift for this congregation even though half of my time has been devoted to the mission of racial reconciliation.

This shift required the congregation and session to change the way in which they were being church together and we engaged this process with hope and great anticipation. We began centering our session meetings in scripture and prayer, holding as a sacred trust the management and discernment of this church. We enlivened our worship services with the addition of new music, healing services, and the inclusion of many voices and talents. We changed our newsletter to make it more accessible and vibrant, sharing our ministry and mission with those who were able to be present and those who were not. We began asking big and difficult questions in bible study. We strove heartily to make the driving force of our life together the love of God in Jesus Christ and to not allow fear or scarcity to motivate us. We learned about non-violent communication and the potential for conflict to be fruitful and productive. It was with great sadness that we realized that all of this work, however good and fruitful, would not be sufficient to sustain the church through the diminishment of funds. We faced the hard reality in October that we would enter January with only \$3000 in savings and must face a drastic change within the church.

Meanwhile, our racial reconciliation efforts were slowly beginning to effect some change. In January at the MLK march only two of our members, one being myself, were able and willing to show up. We took the initiative to begin showing up at celebrations in predominantly black Southern Baptist churches. We struggled with the theology, but the welcome we received was incredibly gracious. We held the first ever ecumenical, inter-racial service of lamentation on the eve of the Juneteenth celebration, which celebrates the end of slavery in Texas. Holding this service on the 18th of June we found ourselves gathered together in the wake of the shooting at Mother Emmanuel in Charleston. The need for a joint lament of our broken relationships was held tenderly and graciously by this incredible witness.

While the rest of the US became involved in Black Lives Matter campaigns we knew that it was not safe to do so here, and that if we were to stir this particular pot it might not be us, the white and privileged, who bore the consequences. A black church burned just down the street from my home, an arson fire. We reached out to the pastor and the congregation, inviting them to come and share our space. They were startled, wanted to know what our angle was, but upon realizing that we were doing our best to live as witnesses to the grace and love we experience in Christ, they withdrew, saying only that they would not bring the negative attention they were experiencing down upon us. A couple weeks later a black-owned beauty salon burned in an arson fire. We drove by this little salon and, seeing how small it was, decided it was within our reach and we could and would rebuild it. It took a couple of months for the fire marshall to release it, but when they did we dove right in, demolishing the old, tearing it down, cleaning it up, hauling it away. We discovered that the rebuild was a bigger and more difficult project than we had anticipated and we decided to purchase a pre-fab shell. The building inspector checked on us frequently as did the sheriff's office, driving by multiple times, following us to the dump. We realized that we were receiving more attention than we had anticipated!

We decided to celebrate the rebuild by holding a block party. We invited a well known reggae band from Houston, *Idiginis*, to drive up and perform. To our incredible joy they said yes! They would drive the 2 ½ hours up and, at no cost to us, share the gift of their music. The prefab building shell was place the day prior to the block party. We shared the band's music on the radio and talked up the party. We put our cooks to work preparing a southern feast, free for all who cared to join us! As the music poured over this blighted neighborhood with its boarded up windows and multiple burned down houses, people began to come forward, to drive slowly past, to stop at the curb and listen. We danced, we ate, we celebrated with one another. And while only two of us had come forward for the MLK march, at this party most of the congregation showed up, unafraid. Following this celebration as I walked an elderly African American man to his car he spoke about those who hadn't come. "They were iust afraid: this is a strane community."

Children rushed up as we closed down to get a bite of food. "We've been sitting behind those trees listening," one said.



The work on the beauty shop is not finished. I put a front porch on it just this last week, a place for children to play and sit in the sun while their mothers get beautiful, a place for the beauticians to sit out and have a cup of coffee between customers...

The president of the PBU board and I traveled to Houston last week to visit ReStore and pick up some flooring and lighting as well as to share our vision of reconciliation with First Presbyterian of Pasadena. There is little we like more than sharing our passion.

This Sunday, First Presbyterian will hold our service an hour early. This is a stretch for some of our more conservative and traditional members, but we will do so in order to follow up our own service by attending the Friends and Family service at Greater New Bethel Baptist. Every time I step into a black church there is a ripple of awareness that one can feel, "a white woman is here." Some of these churches are getting used to us, that ripple is becoming more of a "oh, it's them/her again," and there is less of a "what do you suppose they want?" feeling to our presence. Yet no matter how disconcerting our presence may be, we have always been greeted with grace, love, and kindness.

As we continue our work on reconciliation we are doing so with a "we will meet you right where you are," and a "we will work hard to make your life better" ethic. We have learned that here in Jasper it is necessary to do more than talk about reconciliation: we must actively work to improve the lot of those who have suffered discrimination. As the public face of PBU, I get the benefit of people stopping me in the store and thanking me, taking me by the shoulders and saying, "What you are doing *is* making a difference." I get to receive the grace of having my banking transactions halted so that I might hear the stories of an African American teller and what growing up and living in Jasper has meant for her. Entering the fall of our first year's work at racial reconciliation in the far west edge of the Deep South, these things are deeply, deeply gratifying and affirming.

In so many ways we are feeling our mission and our ministry gain traction and begin engaging the broader community, yet our financial difficulties force us to make some hard choices. The future of PBU appears to be that of a grass-roots organization staffed by volunteers. This has the potential of increasing the effectiveness of PBU, engaging more people rather than having a director who is seen as holding the mission of PBU. While I won't be here to witness this I am incredibly excited to see those who envisioned this gracious reconciliation become more involved, more engaged, that they might receive some of the affirmation and grace I have.

The church has faced closure and downsizing before. There are many here who are hoping that we will again avoid this fate. However another possibility has arisen, that of forming a united Christian witness with the local Episcopal Church. I am hoping to be here, with this congregation, as they discern and begin to engage in the appropriate changes necessary to sustain the incredible witness that First Presbyterian is in this community. We are drawing on our increased dialogue and deep faith as we begin conversations that bring with them an increased sense of anxiety and loss. The church is aware that I will not be able to continue with them over the long haul. We had hoped to engage in revitalizing the church and experiencing some growth, however we did not have the time necessary to do so and the sense of disappointment is poignant. This church is a deeply committed and faithful congregation, and I have no doubt that whatever God has planned for us, we will continue to be faithful and will continue to witness to the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The Power and Practice of Personal Storytelling

Mark Yaconelli – speaker

"Some people think we're made of flesh and blood and bones. Scientists say we're made of atoms. But I think we're made of stories. When we die, that's what people remember, the stories of our lives and the stories that we told."

--Ruth Stotter

How do we tell our story? How does that empower our spiritual growth, ministries of outreach, social justice? Experience ways to draw out your own, and others', stories of the Spirit's work in our lives.

This Saturday, December 5 – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill (105 West University, St. Paul)

\$75

Register now!!

<https://www.cvent.com/c/express/8196613e-51d3-4c10-8fa8-a472afdd39cd>

Getting Ready:

This Lent we are doing a special Book Club Adult Ed series.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates is written as a letter to author's 15-year-old son, Samori, and has been compared to "the talk" parents have with their children to prepare them for facing police harassment and brutality. The book is a combination of memoir, history and analysis about the feelings, symbolism, and realities associated with being Black in the United States. The book won the 2015 National Book Award for Nonfiction.

We will be discussing this book Sundays Feb. 29, March 6 & 20. If you'd like to get a head start on reading it, feel free to pick it up early!



From the Treasury:

We are settling in – a theme-of-the-month, it seems – to a new way of keeping on top of finances. Since Marty's 'retirement' in June, Sue Goodspeed has been acting as bookkeeper/Treasurer. The 'bookkeeper' portion of this role is now passed on to Krysta (see earlier article). Yippee!! Bills and invoices are viewed and approved by the Treasurer, paid and recorded by Krysta, and checks signed and mailed by the Treasurer. Krysta will create all monthly reports which are presented to Session, as

well as handling all IRS filings, monthly, quarterly, and annually. She will also be handling all our 'giving statements' – which used to be a role of the Office Administrator (Jan).

The Treasurer still communicates the fiscal life of the congregation. While noting the good response to 2016 stewardship, 2015 is still needy. Please consider '13th Month' giving – one extra contribution to support the ministries of LNPC. Let's keep the Endowment Fund solid – we've taken just \$10K this year.

At its most simple, church means knowing that we belong to God and we belong to each other.

That was the basic premise behind the four part series led this fall by Lisa Larges on life transitions, end-of-life decisions, and funeral planning. We don't know how to care for and honor one another unless we've talked with each other about what matters most to us.

- We long to be the church that helps each other through life transitions in ways that are respectful and faithful;
- When any one of us gets to that place where we know the end of life is near, we long to be the church that journeys with that one in love;
- When we gather to mark the passing from life into life eternal of one of our members, we want that funeral service to reflect in scripture, hymn, and prayer those things that were most meaningful to that member;
- And we want to have our faith shaped by the faith of those who have walked this way before us.

In addition to rich conversation, we brought together a lot of resources to help each other in making choices that reflect our faith and our values.

These resources include guides and checklists, as well as explanations of advanced directives, palliative care, and more. Among the resource guides included is a guide for caregivers, and an extensive resource list of community services to help folks with tasks like shoveling snow, grocery shopping and household maintenance. Also included is a funeral planning guide specific to LNPC. Our hope is to have something on file for all LNPC members so that we know how best to honor one another.

USB drives with all of these documents are in the church office, along with a binder with all the materials available for copying. Please feel free to drop by the office for your own personal flashdrive, or leave a message in the office and one can be mailed/e-mailed to you.

We care for our neighbors in many ways, but one of the most active is through feeding those living at **Our Saviour's Housing** throughout the year. Dates for 2016 have been determined and are "Taco Tuesdays," January 12th, March 8th, September 13th, and November 8th. Lindsay Hjermstad will lead our team again. Please be in touch with her to let her know of your interest.



Where do your interests lie? There's always a place to share your gifts. It may just be in a role at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church!

Clerk of Session: The hub to congregational communication, the Clerk: attends Session meetings, takes notes and distributes them to the office and Session, meets annually with other

Clerks of the presbytery to review one another's minutes; is the 'official' contact between the congregation, presbytery, and others; speaks on behalf of the congregation at installations and baptisms.

Onsite time requirements are Session meetings and the annual Minutes Review (talk to Andrea!). All else is flexible!

Written on the siding of the newly resurrected beauty shop, victim of the flames of hatred, rebuilt in Jasper Texas by Peace Beyond Understanding:

*‘hearts rebuild from hope ~
resurrect dreams killed by hate’
Aberjhani*

Kara Root – Pastor and Moderator of Session

2015 Session:

Class of 2015:

Amy Leafblad

leaf2be@yahoo.com

Sue Goodspeed | Personnel

ssgoodspeed@comcast.net

Class of 2016:

Sue Hensel

susanhensel@yahoo.com

Class of 2017:

Andy Cochrane

Andy.Cochrane@MapleGroveHospital.org

Andrea Domaskin

andrea.domaskin@gmail.com

Diane Hansen

dianecope2002@yahoo.com

Presbytery Commissioners (3):

Marty Christensen, Norm Petrik, and the LNPC Session

Clerk of Session:

are you interested?

Temporary Treasurer:

Sue Goodspeed

Staff:

Dennis Sanders

Communications and Office Manager

Jeanne Rylander

Director of Music Ministries

Kathy Johnson

Custodian

Newsletter

Sue Goodspeed

RE-VISION STATEMENT
(as approved following the reVision
process, October 2007)

LNPC seeks to

- become a beacon of hope and a place of sanctuary
- reach out to the needs of neighbors, sharing our selves and our resources.

Session: Session has responsibility for administration/building, worship, education, life of the community and personnel. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, interests or anything you'd like to share, please talk with a Session member!

Board of Deacons: The Deacons function as a unit, sharing responsibility for visitation and ministries of presence with those in transition. Members: Lisa Larges, Vivienne Whitfield, and Dick Gross.

Upcoming and Inside:

- o Giving Thanks
- o Entering Advent
- o Mark Yaconelli Workshop

www.lakenokomispc.org

<http://www.kara-root.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.facebook.com/LakeNokomisChurch>

"True hospitality is welcoming the stranger on her own terms. This kind of hospitality can only be offered by those who've found the center of their lives in their own hearts."

– *Henri Nouwen*

Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church
1620 E 46th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55407

TO: