



# Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church

## The Current Word

2016 #1

### Living into Calling...

The past few years, at each congregational meeting, we acknowledge how blessed we are to have Lisa's leadership among us, and how we'd love to find a way to make it "official." The day has come! After much discernment, work and prayer, we are now at the place where we are excited to share that we have offered, and Lisa has accepted, a request for her to serve as (Stated Supply)\* Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at LNPC. (10 hours/week).

I love working with Lisa SO much. I am grateful for all she brings to our congregation, for her intelligence and humor and insight, for her persistence and care for this congregation. Having her at the helm of congregational care gives needed structure and support to us all. And sharing preaching with her keeps things fresh, interesting and collaborative. Having her on board officially, as a pastor, recognizes and affirms what we already experience –Lisa is an important leader whom God has called to minister among us.

What changes is this: Lisa will be ordained. She will be able to officiate communion and moderate session. The rest is Lisa living out the ministry of leadership and pastoral care among us that she has already begun, only now we get to call it what it is.

The other thing this opens up is the shift to my job description, to deliberately spending ¼ of my time on what session has called "special projects." This means session will expect me, and hold me accountable, to doing things that serve the larger church and increase the outreach and witness of our congregation through writing and speaking. By structuring our job descriptions this way –Lisa pastoring among us at ¼ time, and ¼ of my pastoring time focused on special projects –we broaden the leadership and deepen the ministry of the congregation.

It answers a persistent and unrelenting call we have – which is to share our story.

Our story inspires others. The work we do together to live in trust instead of fear, to try to practice Sabbath, to find ways to pray, learn, and be church together that connect with all ages, to be alongside each other in life's ups and downs – these faithful things, it turns out, have a life beyond themselves and their impact on us. They touch other lives, encourage other communities, and spread the gospel in ways that click for people outside of our congregation and in the larger Church. It is a joy for me to share about them, and it has an impact.

And I get asked to share *all the time*. Just this week I had two requests for phone consultations and one request to write an article. I say no to more of these than I say yes to. I feel ready to write a book – I have almost eight years of excellent material from our life together that has shaped us, shaped me, and I get more requests to talk and write about it all than I am able to meet, so I keep telling our story in snippets here and there, one person or community at a time. I want to do one big project that can be shared; I want to write a book. And now there is a publisher in conversation with me about a book project.

This feels like a challenge to me personally, like movement and growth. The set path for advancement in the career of a pastor is to move from small churches to big churches. In other fields, you can get additional degrees that lead to higher paying jobs, you can open your own clinic or practice. For pastors, if you don't use youth ministry or small church ministry as a stepping-stone to bigger things, then you could deepen education, and gain expertise in something, and share your knowledge by writing or speaking on the side. There are not many other means of advancing in your career. I am in a phase of my life where I *do* have the desire to advance my career. But I *do not* have any desire to leave LNPC for a bigger church. Nor do I want something else competing with my work and ministry here. I am committed to my work as a pastor and I love it. I am committed to LNPC and I love you.

Spending a quarter of my time on special projects (right now, writing), creates the opportunity for me to keep growing and being challenged. It means I must keep learning, and I have opportunities to advance my career, stretch my knowledge, and modestly supplement my income, that don't require the congregation to pay me more money. Instead, the congregation is giving me space, time, and accountability to broaden our ministry through this work. The prospect of this feels really exciting and fulfilling to me.

I am looking forward to seeing the ways we will deepen in faith and reach out in ministry alongside each other through this unfolding chapter of our life together.

"If the way be clear" we hope to be celebrating Lisa's Ordination on October 30, and welcoming her voice and gifts in our community as Rev. Lisa Larges.

Please hold our congregation in prayer these next weeks as these dreams move toward reality.



*\* "Stated Supply" is a designation indicating that she will be appointed by presbytery on a one year, renewable contract. This means we do not have to create a position and a PNC and interview multiple candidates, and it also means we will not be required to pay mandatory health insurance for her when she already has coverage through her job at State Services for the Blind.*



*Lisa's journey to this point in ministry has led her to a poignant and poetic Statement of Faith. This was shared with the Committee on Ministry, and will be shared with the entire presbytery in September:*

## **A Statement of Faith**

Love.

And from love grace.

And through grace we claim what is beyond us to know:

That the source of all that is, is for us,

And that this source, expressed in love, is sovereign over all of life and death, all that is, has been, and is yet to be.

And because love is not in itself alone, therefore love creates.

In love, through love, by love, we were created.

Created together with the whole world.

And not world, worlds.

So that star and worm, soil and sea, rock and leopard – life known to us and life unknown was claimed by the Holy and called by the Holy, "Good".

And still there is this in us:

Something that fights life.

Something broken, even yes, violent.

Call it sin.

Sin in me, in this world.

In this world, but also in me.

So that love, and by love grace

Must come in to this world.

Must be here in the midst of us

Abiding in this broken, wrecked world, To bring life, restoration, wholeness.

So call this love, this grace, God.

And this breaking in to the world, call Christ.

Christ in a person who was Jesus.

And this Jesus among us, healing, teaching, confronting, reconciling.

In everything, one of us. In everything, holy.

And then, death came.

Because death comes.

For he was love in a time of terror,

And love is always a threat to usurped power.

So by injustice, fear, and force, he was put to death.

Death came.

...

Then life came.

Then life came.

Then, life came.

Life the last word.

Life, the Word.

Life for us, for freedom, for love.

Life that is resurrection, the resurrection of the Christ. The resurrection of Jesus.

And, that restoration, that wholeness, that life, call it salvation

And we now, seeking in the Way,

We have the gift of one another.

Call that gift church – "God's provisional demonstration" of the holy intention for all living things.

And we learn with and through one another forgiveness and reconciliation, repentance, and beginning again.

And this love in us, this capacity to turn to one another, to learn and forgive, is grace at work in us – and that work is the mystery we call the Holy Spirit.

And together we enact the eternal promise of welcome and belonging, of community and service, and that enactment we call sacrament: Baptism and Communion, by which community is made with and through us.

So that by this love, and through this grace, and in the gift of the spirit and by the tending of community and the call to lay our hearts down in service, we may be love for this world.

This world that God so loved.

Love.

Whenever someone becomes a member, or a staff member, of LNPC, we interview them, and create a short introductory bio. The following is from the interview we conducted with Lisa.



### **Welcoming Lisa Larges as Associate Pastor for Congregational Care**

We kick off this bio by reporting this enchanting bit of alliteration: Lisa's full name is Lisa Leigh Larges. For fun she likes to read books, go on walks, and collect wind-up toys. When asked what her favorite food is, she said, "I'm totally on a ginger kick, but my favorite food is milk chocolate, and not the cool, hip dark chocolate."

The best place Lisa has ever visited is Mendocino, CA. "Lots of ocean, lots of fog, lots of Redwood trees." The best book she's ever read is *My Antonia* by Willa Cather.

Lisa got tripped up on the question about the best movie she's ever seen, answering, "Best vs. favorite? That's hard. My favorite movie is *Harold and Maude*. But best movie? It sticks in my mind cause I saw it when I was a teenager, *Ordinary People*."

One thing she likes about herself is that she really works on caring for other people, and one thing she really likes about her family is that they are *all* funny.

Lisa is afraid of mice, and has always wanted to try sailing on the ocean. She finds many Onion article headlines extremely funny, and when asked what is the most interesting thing she's have ever seen or heard, she answered, "Maybe not the most interesting, but I just read that 57% of your friends don't think that they are your friends!"

What does she appreciate about LNPC? "How real and without pretense or hidden agendas people are," and she shared that she really looks forward to getting to know each person better.

**When asked if there is anything else she would like us to know about her, Lisa shared a little bit more in depth:**

*As we move toward my becoming part of Lake Nokomis in a different way, I just want to make sure that everyone knows my story. I came under care, which means having an official relationship with the structures of the church, in 1986, when I was 23.*

*As I went through seminary, I realized that I couldn't continue pursuing working in the church and remaining closeted about being lesbian. I also realized that coming to know myself as gay was part of my spiritual path, and part of coming into the presence of God as a whole human being. Many people, with great faith and integrity, believe that being gay is contrary to scripture. At that time, and for many years after, the policy of the Presbyterian Church (USA) reflected this belief.*

*I had really come to understand that I could love the bible and be faithful to scripture and still be gay, and I wanted to say that openly. So, in 1991 I wrote a letter to the committee that was responsible for overseeing my process toward ordination to tell them about my journey. After long discussion, that committee affirmed my call to ministry, even though the church rules said that openly gay people could not be ordained. That began a 25-year process of [ecclesial] court trials and dialogues and committee meetings.*

*For ten of those years, I worked with an organization that had the mission of changing the church's policies through building relationships of trust and care. Of all the things that matter to me, that commitment to meet and be vulnerable with people with whom I had deep disagreements has formed me the most. Because I traveled all over the country as part of that work, and formed really deep relationships, my journey to ordination is something that has become important to lots of people around the country. Being lesbian in the church has been such an integral part of my story, my story with the church, and my journey of faith, that it will be part of the unfolding of this ordination service. I simply want folks at LNPC and Central to know this about me. If anyone has questions or concerns, or would like to learn more or know more, I would be honored to meet with you.*

*At the same time, even as my story of being lesbian has been a formative part of my journey, what I love about my work and my calling to LNPC is that it is simply about being a part of our life together and caring for people. What I am trying to say is, I feel like I am welcomed as a pastor and not a lesbian pastor. Being lesbian, like being blind, is an important part of who I am, but those are just parts of who I am.*

*It has been more than a year that I have been carrying the question of being called to Lake Nokomis. First and foremost, I just love it here. I love being a part of LNPC and I never leave our community without feeling spiritually fed. The question for me was whether to continue as a participant of LNPC or whether I was being called to this particular role. It was something that I just had to wait and hear from God about. One morning, having coffee with Kara, it was clear that indeed I was being called to serve at LNPC. I wish I could explain this better; all I can say is, in the moment, the answer was clear to me, and that Yes has never left.*

*Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church has such a warm and generous heart. I see this role of Pastoral Associate for Congregational Care as being about tending and reflecting that beautiful heart. Again, if anyone wants to talk more, I would love that.*

We are so blessed by Lisa's ministry among us, and grateful for all the ways her life and voice enrich our community. We can't wait to soon say, "Welcome Pastor Lisa!"

PRESBYTERY MEETS TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, at United Theological Seminary, New Brighton. The meeting begins at 4:00, breaks for a meal at 6:00, and usually winds up about 9:00. Lisa's presentation for Ordination will be a part of the report of the Committee on Ministry. When the agenda is set, the time of that report will be shared with all.



DON'T MISS IT!

(Terry Gilberstadt is on the Board of Trustees for UTS – come support her work, as well!)

### The Latest from St. Joe's:

This Spring, we had a garden blessing service at St. Joe's, and we also gave them one of our monthly tithes for their garden project.

*...and there have been developments with the labyrinth we helped them install last year:*

#### LABYRINTH AT ST. JOE'S

Nearly two years have passed since folks from Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church partnered with staff, clients and volunteers from St. Joseph's Home for



Children to help build a 50 foot outdoor labyrinth. The labyrinth is a gift and has transformed the former playground into a place of reflection, mediation, consolation and peace for those who walk (or even run) its seven circuits. Most of the labyrinth building materials were gifted to us - bricks, design, labor, plants - except for the timber retaining wall on the south side, which was rotting and old. The Labyrinth has provided a safe and beautiful place to be.

The most recent addition - a BRICK retaining wall - has completed the St. Joe's labyrinth project. *Here's the story about how the new retaining wall came to be:*

Over a year ago, while planting and watering the flowers around the labyrinth, a neighbor walked by with her dog, and stopped to ask about the labyrinth. She said she hadn't realized there was a labyrinth in the neighborhood. She listened as I told about how, over the years, this project had been a shared vision of our spiritual care staff and community partners, how it became a reality as each of the items to build it was abundantly provided for, and how important it can be in the therapeutic work we do with our residential and shelter clients.

She shared her story about how a labyrinth had been an important part of her family's story of recovery and how it had helped her during a difficult time in her own journey. Then, she added that she was part of a family foundation that could gift funds to community projects and invited us to submit a grant to help COMPLETE the labyrinth. So, a year ago we submitted the grant and waited. In April, we received word that the grant was approved and a check arrived to nearly cover the cost of the retaining wall. It would be WOOD, but safe and sturdy.

Both Pastor Umo and I envisioned a BRICK wall, but we were pleased to find out the wooden wall would finally be installed and grateful for the grant monies to make it possible. When the work began, we went out to inspect it, and to our surprise we noticed four pallets of BRICKS sitting in the grass waiting to be installed. Thinking it was a delivery error, we asked about it and found out the company installing the wall decided to "gift" us the bricks, at no extra charge.

God's kingdom is like that, even when the desires of our hearts are unspoken, God provides!

We are so grateful to all of you for being partners in this faith walk. Come and experience the labyrinth - just let Pastor Amy know when you will be on campus (it is best during school hours or dinner time when the clients aren't out there). You can reach her at 612-204-8244, or by email at [amy.teske@cctwincities.org](mailto:amy.teske@cctwincities.org), and thank you, for your continued partnership and prayers.

Love Always, Pastor Amy and Pastor Umo

*In early August we hosted Movie Camp:*

Movie Camp 2016: An exceptional group of talented teens under the direction of Kirsten, Dean and Jacob Seal, took part in an experiential learning opportunity, graciously hosted once again by LNPC.

This year's group chose to re-story the parable of the Good Samaritan. The group chose the part of a "nerd" as the main character, but instead of being beat up physically and left on the side of the road, the actor portrayed inward wounds of anxiety, failure and depression. Bullied at school, benched from the team, fired from a job, and neglected at home, the nerdy youth finds little help from those whom you expect would be there for support. The youth loses hope and is writing a goodbye letter, when a "goth" looking schoolmate, someone you expect to walk by, stops to listen, and says, "I see you ( The Title of the Movie) and noticed all you have gone through, and want you to know I am here for you."

Thank you, to Dean, Kirsten, Jacob and Lola (the therapy dog) for investing in our clients and staff for the past 6 summers, and making the Movie Camp experience so enjoyable for all. Thanks, too, to Pastor Kara for making the connections, always providing our clients with a safe place to be. Special thanks to those who prepared and served lunch: Linda, Paige, Sue and Butch, and Pastor Kara.

Movie Camp is the highlight of our summer here at St. Joe's. Thank you, LNPC, for your generosity in making it happen.

Blessings! Umo

**...AND MORE FROM ST. JOE'S!**

*We received this message from Chaplain Amy earlier this summer:*

Pastor Kara and Joukko (the Finnish word for "bunch" or "tribe"),

The garden is flourishing and the clients are taking advantage of the beauty and peace found in the garden space. It is truly a gift. We picked collard greens yesterday and will enjoy some smoked turkey, collards and homemade corn muffins (the clients will be baking this mid-morning in the kids kitchen). On Tuesday, one of the groups harvested green onions, Holy Mole hot peppers, and tomatoes. Then,, for our Spiritual life group, we made a fresh picante.

As I spend time with the clients in the garden, I have noticed that a majority of them find it a healing place as they connect with stories and good memories about grandparents and parents who garden. It is a delightful space for us to play and recreate, finding expressions of God's creativity is the smallest of things - including bugs, bees, and dirt! My favorite is when they water the plants, and the precious gift of a child's laughter!

Dear friends, you have been more than just supportive friends, you are truly an expression of what it is to be the family of God. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Love Always, Pastor Amy



ArtSpace is bidding farewell to Iris Logan's amazing mosaics, and at the same time, welcoming the quilters' art of Anne Tiller's 'Pieceful Quilts.' We look forward to celebrating her work with an Open House this fall – stay tuned!

'From both sides of the river' by Anne Tiller



**From the Treasury:**

The Treasurer and Bookkeeper are becoming a real team, working to accurately maintain the finances of the congregation. Krysta is the ‘on the ground’ worker, and Sue signs checks and communicates regularly with staff and Session. So far, so good – except that we aren’t where we want to be with ‘giving statements.’ They’re high on the agenda, and will be distributed as soon as possible.

While we are keeping up, we can each ask ourselves how our personal giving reflects our values, our dreams, and our faith.

**Finances – ‘we live by faith, and not by sight...’**

We are a people of faith. How often have we, as a congregation, looked ‘death’ in the face and decided that God’s call on our life as a congregation could not be seen, but was *known*.

**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:**

Since winter 2014 we, as a congregation, have sought to tithe 10% of our income each month to other expressions of God’s ministry in the world. We 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.

**2016 tithes have been shared with:**

**January – Gloria Dei Lutheran:** We supported this congregation in Duluth after their building burned last winter, causing substantial damage. Their pastor is the brother of Mark - the artist whose studio is housed in our building.

**February – Nokomis Healthy Seniors:** PW selected the recipient of our February tithe in gratitude for the excellent programs they offer the community.

**March – St. Joseph’s Home for Children:** We gave them “seed money” to start their garden!

**April – Marnita’s Table:** This small organization brings together for meals and face to face connection people with different experiences and viewpoints to build relationships of mutuality and respect.

**May – Restorative Justice Community Action:** Using the model of restorative justice, this organization uses restorative justice, bringing together victims, wrongdoers and communities for reconciliation and solutions that build community.

**June – Bay Lake Camp:** to support their wonderful summer programs, especially with urban Twin Cities kids, but all they do is lovely.

**July – South Minneapolis Meals on Wheels:** We’ve had an almost 50 year relationship with this wonderful ministry and appreciate its steady and faithful mission in our community.

**What if I tithed?** Some of us already tithe, others of us have never thought about it. Here 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 on the menu at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian?

**We will worship as people of Sabbath:** The Heart of Sabbath during the Fall, the "Still" of Sabbath during Advent and Christmas, Sabbath Dawnings at the beginning of the new year, Sabbath Wisdom during Lent, Sabbath Living as we experience the resurrection, and Sabbath Community as we move toward Pentecost next Spring.

**We will learn together,** with Pastor Kara again leading the young people in Sunday School and Lisa leading conversations – primarily Bible studies coinciding with our worship time – during grown-up Sunday School, and Andy Root again meeting with our older youth. See other opportunities in this newsletter: the **Being Present** workshop in October – based on the book *Broken Hallelujahs*, and a 'conversation on race' in November, presented by Penumbra Theater and sponsored by LNPC and partner congregations.

**We will serve together,** with meals at Our Saviour's Housing Tuesdays, September 13<sup>th</sup> (of course on Presbytery day – but we'll do it!) and November 8<sup>th</sup>. There are opportunities to share meals with families with babies and members in challenging places. Sew-ers can share in Kathy Erickson's ministry in Kenya – *Days for Girls*. Where can you lead us in ministry outside our walls?

**We will play together!** We'll re-boot our Movie Nights as 'night' begins at a more reasonable time. What do you do for 'play' that might extend to the family of the congregation? Just do it!

On November 5, LNPC will co-sponsor a workshop on Race, led by Penumbra Theater Company. This event is being hosted by Judson Baptist Church, and co-sponsored by Judson, Lake Nokomis Presbyterian, Lake Harriet UMC, Linden Hill and Lynnhurst UCC, St. John's (both ECUSA and ELCA), and St. Luke's. Designed for primarily white participants, these in-depth and interactive workshops help explore the history of race and race relations in our country, our own internal biases and ways to build communication and understanding across differences- both real and perceived. Penumbra approaches issues of race and racism with the fundamental belief that we see difference. Workshops combine expert facilitation, a powerful exploration of race in America, monologues from artists, and opportunities for participants to use theatre as a way to problem-solve and model. The process celebrates difference, recognizes cultural nuance, and invites everyone to participate in the dialogue.



This three hour workshop is a continuation of our Adult Ed series last Spring. **Stay tuned for details!**

You are invited to attend:

### **Staying Present (Instead of Disconnecting)**

**Saturday, October 8, 2016 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM**

#### **How do we stay open to God, ourselves, and others when so many things hurt us and shut us down to life?**

Beth A Slevcove, author of *Broken Hallelujahs: Learning to Grieve the Big and Small Losses of Life*, will lead us in a workshop focused on opening to the sacred joy-filled, grief-enriched journey of life. In our spacious day together, we will take time to acknowledge our losses, tend to the tensions, invite hope, and rest in God's presence as it unfolds through our specific stories.

**Workshop Leader:** Beth serves as a spiritual director, was the Director of Spiritual Formation for Youth Specialties for seven years and holds advanced degrees in theology and education. Beth is a Presbyterian pastor's daughter, has an evangelical background and appreciation, is deeply rooted in her urban Lutheran congregation, and is an Oblate at a Benedictine monastery. She also runs a surf company based on saving the endangered Tijuana Surf Monkey. Beth can often be found in the ocean, making tent forts with her husband and kids, or reading at a local San Diego coffee house.

#### **PICK UP THE BOOK FOR A BOOK CLUB CONVERSATION IN SEPT! (DETAILS COMING SOON)**

Tickets: Early Bird - \$30, Regular Ticket - \$35, At the Door - \$40. (Advance tickets via credit card include a processing fee). **Cost includes a delicious lunch.**



## **DID YOU KNOW....???**

...that Linnea and Jose change the sign EVERY WEEK?

...that Dick and Gary change the water bottle in the cooler by the nursery - filling it in from the filtered water in the basement and bringing it upstairs whenever it runs out?

...that Sue G. and Sue H. bake our gluten-free communion bread and store it in the freezer at church?

...that Cyndi Wunder is in the Midwest! Cyndi was called as Pastor to the Lodi Presbyterian Church in Lodi, Wisconsin - just north of Madison. She and Seamus (faithful pup) are creating new community and following God's call.

...that Ben Masters completed his CPE unit (Clinical Pastoral Education) at Seton Medical Center in Austin, TX – a challenging, stretching, truth-telling part of his seminary experience.

**Sabbath** is one of the things around which we have shaped our life as a community. But it's been a while since we spent time thinking together about what that really means. For some of us, it simply is a word that represents not having church on Sunday morning two weekends a month, meeting Saturday instead. This is the aspect of our church's practice that seems to fascinate outsiders, and has caused us to be the object of some attention in journals and magazines. They often portray our story as a congregation that was "dying" but was "saved" by doing this new thing, as though Sabbath is a growth strategy, cool gimmick or church-saving formula.

It was not, in fact, any of these things for us. Instead, Sabbath opened us up to a different way of being in the world, of reading scripture, and of seeing our lives in the context of God, but that's harder to understand or fit into a sound bite or feel-good summary.

The truth is, if having worship twice a month on Saturdays instead of Sundays is all Sabbath is, then it's an empty exercise; on its own it becomes hollow and shallow. "Sabbath" becomes something (a pattern of gathering) that people either *like* or *don't*, but it doesn't have much impact on our real life. In fact, quite understandably, some among us might even resent the term "Sabbath," if all it means is that 'our congregation holds worship on a schedule I don't prefer.'

But making a deliberate choice to put Sabbath front and center has actually shaped us far more than we know. In fact, the word "Sabbath" could be seen as shorthand for all sorts of things we've talked about over the years: The way of fear vs. the way of God, Belonging to God and belonging to each other, the Kingdom of God/ the real reality, eschatological imagination, generosity, *who* we are and *whose* we are – you name it, all of the themes we've covered in worship have their origins in the God of Sabbath – a God who invites us to live in freedom, trust and abundance, grounded in God's own "enough-ness."

This year in worship we are going to explore Sabbath as our gift and grounding. So to get us started thinking again about what Sabbath actually is, below is an article just published in Horizons Magazine, (that adapts and shortens a longer article Kara wrote for *Word and World* – which can be borrowed from the Gathering Room in hard copy form or found in digital form on a link on our website).



Kara Root leads worship at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The congregation, whom Kara calls “strong, wildly gifted and brave in sharing and dreaming,” spent time in 2008 discerning how to revive their church. They agreed on practicing Sabbath two weekends a month rather than traditional worship, and the decision has been a good one for the life of the church and the individuals in it.



Photos by Tom Wallace

# “Beloved Congregation, Stay Home on Sunday”

## How Practicing Sabbath Restores and Strengthens a Congregation

BY KARA ROOT

Yesterday was Sunday, and I slept in. When I woke, I made crepes for the kids because that is what they most wanted to eat. Then we took the dog on a long, muddy, squirrel-filled walk. A little later we played a board game we’d gotten for Christmas; it had been sitting pristine in its wrapper, untouched, until it was rediscovered in a wandering moment of boredom. Later in the day, with the sun streaming in my bedroom windows, I propped myself up with pillows in my bed, and without deadline, time-killing agenda or guilt, I read until I felt full and ready to move on to something else.

Yesterday was Sunday and my family did not go to church. This has been the case two Sundays a month for the past six years. It’s not because we don’t have a congregation; actually, I am the pastor. But on this day, my congregation was passing their day in much the same way I was: slowing down. Noticing. Resisting the urge to rush. Defying the pressure to pour attention into anything obligatory. Breathing. Being.



While Sabbath means no traditional worship service on some Sundays for Lake Nokomis, members of the congregation gather at the church on Saturday evenings preceding Sabbath. They pray, connect with God and reflect on scripture in more personal, contemplative ways. Right: Young members color a banner that will later be hung in the church. Left: A labyrinth provides another nonverbal form of prayer and meditation.



Sometimes we just spend the day in a restless withdrawal from activity, or in a knock-down, drag-out battle to set aside the things we think we should be doing. But even that, like hunger pangs in a dedicated fast, becomes a form of prayer.

### Worshiping and Connecting

Our church, Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church, practices Sabbath. Two weekends a month, we worship on Sunday morning in all our Presbyterian glory—robed choir, sermon, liturgy and hymns in a lively, communal experience of worship. And the other two weekends, we practice Sabbath. On those weekends, the doors of the sanctuary open on Saturdays for candlelit silence and a worship service shaped around experiential prayer stations. Then we go home, and we don't come back on Sunday.

As our Sabbath practice, we spend a day intentionally *being*, instead of thoughtlessly *doing*. We notice the pulls from within, and respond to them. We resist the raucous appeals around us—the screens, noise, demands and obligations—in order to be fully present to God, ourselves and those we love.

Theoretically. Sometimes we just spend the day in a restless withdrawal from activity, or in a knock-down, drag-out battle to set aside the

things we think we *should* be doing. But even that, like hunger pangs in a dedicated fast, becomes a form of prayer. The struggle is a gift of self-awareness. We recognize how badly we need the *stop*, and the deep longing we seek to meet with this practice.

### Why Practice Sabbath?

The practice of Sabbath has been woven into God's way of relating with God's people from the very beginning. In the creation and exodus stories, we see that God's life-giving rhythm of work and rest is part of the fabric of it all. But we've largely lost this pause, this gift that revives awareness of our own humanity and God's providence and presence.

The Jewish people have allowed this practice to continue to shape their identity as God's people, in defiance of a world that increasingly demands 24/7/365 alert attention, activity and anxiety. And practicing Sabbath used to be an important part of Christian life, as well. Early Christians observed the arrival of Sabbath with the setting sun on Friday nights, existed in Sabbath time on Saturdays,



The whole congregation prays for each other in times of celebration, transition or commissioning. Right: The congregation offers a blessing as Amy Leafblad is installed as a ruling elder. Left: During the passing of the peace, Kara greets Eva Webb, the longest-time member of Lake Nokomis, who was driven to worship by a friend, from the assisted-living facility where she lives. Eva's weekly prayer for seven years has been, "For our service people and their families: may they come home soon and may they get the help they need when they do." If Eva is not at worship, others offer the prayer in her stead.

and gathered for worship on Sunday mornings as the Lord's-Day finale to the whole affair. Every week.

### What Doing Does

We live in a state of constant anxiety and relentless productivity. We've all but lost the concept of rest as part of life—as necessary to thriving and surviving—unless we're recognizing it for its ability to increase our efficiency and productivity. Generally, we stop only when we simply can't keep going any longer. Rest must be *earned*; vacation hours saved up. We see rest as weak or lazy. Society tells us that babies and people who are very old or sick need rest. Outside of those categories, we feel guilty, lazy and/or uncomfortable resting.

Conversely, we're really good at *doing*. We do all the time, without ceasing. We do more than one thing at a time to "save time." *Doing* is what we know. And the more we get done in the day, the better we feel about ourselves. So we measure our worth—and others do, too—by how much we accomplish, earn, produce,



**Communion is a part of the traditional worship service that happens on the first and third Sundays. Children are welcome and involved in all of Lake Nokomis's services and ministries.**

consume or contribute, how successful we are in the eyes of world.

However, by confronting our most deeply held, unconscious convictions and overt communal practices, we learn that resting is not just a good idea saved for those who earn it, can afford it or can't help it. It is fundamental to the very fabric of our existence and our connection to God and each other as human beings.

Though we tend to gloss over it quickly or explain it away, the instruction to rest is the longest and most detailed of the "Ten Words," aka Ten Commandments, the description of

life with God in charge. Right between the words regarding our relationship with God and the ones addressing our relationships with one another is this hinge command to regularly *stop everything*. Why?

### Sabbath Roots and Meaning

The first place the Sabbath command appears (Ex. 20:8–11) says to remember the Sabbath because, after God created, God rested. We rest because God rests. *God is God and you are not*, Sabbath says. *And neither is any one of the thousand other things that would seek to dominate your life, clog up your mind, soak up your attention and eat up your time*. Outside forces can't dictate the terms of your existence. Only God can. God rests. You are made in the image of a God who rests. You, too, shall rest.

The first of the two Shabbat candles in the Jewish ritual is lit for this Sabbath command—*Remember the Sabbath. . . . God rested, so you rest*. In our community, when we gather for our Saturday evening prayer service



## A Sabbath Prayer

### *Welcoming Shabbat*

Our noisy day has now descended with the sun beyond our sight.

In the silence of our praying place we close the door upon the hectic joys and fears, the accomplishments and anguish of the week we have left behind.

What was but moments ago the substance of our life has become memory; what we did must now be woven into what we are.

*On this day we shall not do but be.*

We are to walk the path of our humanity, no longer ride unseeing through a world we do not touch and only vaguely sense.

*No longer can we tear the world apart to make our fire.*

On this day heat and warmth and light must come from deep within ourselves.

—*Gates of Prayer: Shaarei Tefila: The New Union Prayerbook for Weekdays, Sabbaths and Festivals* (English and Hebrew edition), Chaim Stern, ed., 245

that inaugurates Sabbath time, we light two candles as well. We call the first one our *Who* candle, because Sabbath reminds us who we are and who God is.

The second directive on Sabbath (Deut. 5:12–15) says to observe the Sabbath because God delivered God’s people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom. We rest because we are free. Because Sabbath is when everybody rests, nobody is ahead of

anyone else. Divisions between poor and rich, ruler and slave, weak and strong, healthy and sick, old and young disappear. We are equal in our identity as God’s beloved children. The drive to compare, consume, produce and protect is no longer allowed to dictate our identity or the way we treat one another. As free people, we are to free others as well. Because we belong to God who sets us free.

The second Shabbat candle is lit for this commandment: *Observe the Sabbath. . . . God freed you, so you rest.* Our community lights a second candle for Whose, because Sabbath reminds us whose we are. We belong not to the gods that enslave in endless busyness, anxious production, and fierce, dehumanizing competition, but to the God of abundance, freedom, justice and rest.

## Putting It into Practice

One of the things we regularly notice, as we are keeping Sabbath around my house and in our congregation, is how challenging it is. You’d think that telling people to put things down and rest would sound like good news. And it does *sound* like good news. But it is so not easy to do. We are so addicted to doing and assessing our individual worth based on what we accomplish that we’ve all forgotten how to just be people.

So, we need help not doing. It turns out it’s communal. We need other people who are not doing with us, and who will check in and see how our not doing is going. We need support stepping into rest and staying there. We need help resisting the urge to crawl out of rest when “I really should . . .” comes to mind (which happens approximately every 40 seconds at first). And we need compassion for ourselves when we discover we’re somehow back in anxiety or busyness without meaning to be, and the courage to gently invite ourselves and each other back into rest.

But while it is unexpectedly difficult to keep to our commitment to *not do* for that day, we have found that when we really *do* our



**Right:** Contemplative, but connected—Kara (seated, wearing her stole) and other members of Lake Nokomis pray for troubled parts of the world during their Saturday night worship. **Left:** Youth of all ages serve as worship leaders or, as pictured here, ushers. Their skills, questions and contributions are celebrated throughout the ministry of the church.



**Jeanne Rylander serves as music director at Lake Nokomis, playing harp, piano and organ, as well as directing the church's choirs.**

not-doing, something wonderful happens. When we really allow ourselves to stop and take a proper breath, time seems to stretch out and welcome us in. Sabbath Sundays always feel hours longer than other days to me. Perhaps this is because in them we are suddenly awake to our lives and the world, and the space we hold open fills up with gratitude. We remember, here and there, what a gift it is to be alive, and we discover again, throughout the day, that God meets us in ordinary and extraordinary ways. *I am*

*not exaggerating when I say this. This happens.*

There are many other ways to let Sabbath begin transforming people, families and communities than the way we have chosen. But the invitation and the promise of Sabbath remains for us all, however we choose to embrace it. In bold defiance, Sabbath calls us to regularly step out of the mentality of constant anxiety and relentless productivity, and into God's reality of fearless belonging and satisfied *enough*.

Sabbath restores us to our humanity as children of God, alongside other children of God, made in the image of a God who rests. Incredibly, when we stop and rest, God reminds us whose we are, and helps us remember who we are. 🍓

Kara Root is pastor of Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### Note

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Read more about Sabbath and the ministry of Kara Root at <http://kara-root.blogspot.com/>

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***“IN LIFE AND IN DEATH, WE BELONG TO GOD...” We are called to share life with each other, and believe that Jesus is with us when we are with and for each other. We get to share life’s joys and struggles, and hold them for one another. In caring for one another, we draw near to God.***

*On Palm Sunday we gathered around Marty, and gave thanks to God for God’s calling on Marty’s life. And because death is coming for every one of us at some point, we said out loud together that Marty is dying, and shared how sad this feels for us.*

*But we also said that God is still God, and that God is with us, and God is with Marty. And there is more beauty and hope and love and joy that God wants to impart into Marty’s life, and into all of our lives, as we share them with each other, so we will not be afraid. And even when we are, a little, still, we will walk with Marty. Because this is where Jesus is. And Marty pledged to share the journey with us – the good parts and the hard parts and the boring parts and the scary parts, and in that way invite us to draw near to God as we draw near to him. We are so blessed to share this gift – thank you Marty.*

*Here is the liturgy we shared when we commissioned Marty to this unique ministry:*

### **Commissioning Ceremony – A Ministry of Dying**

**March 19,2016**

In life and in death we belong to God.

*We, who are many, are one Body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another.* Rom 12:5-8

We are called by God to be the church of Jesus Christ, a sign in the world today of what God intends for all humankind. The call of Christ is to follow him. Our discipleship is an expression of the new life we enter through Jesus Christ. Discipleship is both a gift and a commitment, an offering and a responsibility. This act of commissioning is a way of recognizing and affirming a calling; it is the community’s way to acknowledge how God may be seeking to use someone in the life of our community to share God’s love in a specific way.

Today we are commissioning Marty to a ministry of dying.

What this means is that Marty is saying Yes to a form of leadership by example, a willingness to share his journey with us and let us share this time with him.

Marty is not called to put on a good attitude, or wow us with his witty wisdom and end of life insight.

He is simply called to be honest and true, not to hide his pain or questions, but to allow us to share in them with him. We get to laugh with him and cry with him, to look backward and forward together, and mostly to be right here in whatever each right here brings.

Where Marty goes, we will go, and we will be his people, alongside him in this journey as far as we can accompany him, until he takes the final steps with Christ alone, into the everlasting arms of God’s love.

### **Commissioning**

Marty, the grace bestowed on you in baptism is sufficient for your calling because it is God’s grace. By God’s grace we are saved, and enabled to grow in faith and commit our lives in ways that serve Christ.

God has called you to particular service, and the Holy Spirit will give you all you need to fulfill this calling. Show your purpose by answering these questions:

Do you welcome the responsibility of this service by affirming again the vow made when you became a member of this congregation, which is: *Will you allow us to be, for you and with you, the Body of Christ in love and service, joy and suffering, sharing life and faith together?*

#### ***I will***

Do you, the members of Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church, confirm the call of God on our brother Marty to live his journey of life and death alongside us as a blessing and witness of God’s grace?

#### ***We do***

Will you support and encourage him in this ministry?

#### ***We will***

## **Anointing**

Marty, child of the covenant, I sign you with the cross that you may remember that in life and in death, you belong to God, and be thankful.

## **Prayer**

Faithful God,  
in baptism you claimed us,  
and by your Holy Spirit you are working in our lives,  
empowering us to live lives worthy of our calling.  
We thank you for our brother, Marty,  
whose life is a witness of your grace.  
We stand with him in this time and place,  
seeking to claim with trust the path that now lays before him.  
In the midst of our own sorrow and confusion,  
we acknowledge your presence here, among us,  
as one who entered into our life and death with and for us,  
that nothing might separate us from you.  
Surround Marty in the days that follow, hold him and love and  
grace each step of the way.

*God, You have called your servants to ventures  
of which we cannot see the ending,  
By paths as yet untrodden,  
Through perils unknown.  
Give us faith to go out with good courage,  
Not knowing where we go,  
But only that your hand is leading us,  
And your love is supporting us,  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Charge**

Marty you are commissioned to a Ministry of Dying in this congregation.  
May the God of peace make you holy in every way,  
and keep your whole being, spirit, soul and body, in God's loving care,  
until the day you are united body and spirit completely with God,  
Father Son and Holy Spirit  
for all eternity.  
Amen.



<sup>1</sup> Eric Milner-White and George Wallace Briggs, *Daily Prayer* (London: Oxford, 1941), p. 14.

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

*“The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.”*

*Henry Nouwen: Reaching Out*

Kara Root – Pastor and Moderator of Session

2016 Session:

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Sue Hensel [susanhensel@yahoo.com](mailto:susanhensel@yahoo.com)

Class of 2017:

Andy Cochrane [Andy.Cochrane@MapleGroveHospital.org](mailto:Andy.Cochrane@MapleGroveHospital.org)

Andrea Domaskin [andrea.domaskin@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.domaskin@gmail.com)

Diane Hansen [dianecope2002@yahoo.com](mailto:dianecope2002@yahoo.com)

Class of 2018:

Amy Leafblad [leaf2be@yahoo.com](mailto:leaf2be@yahoo.com)

Bill Fischer [rbbt6@hotmail.com](mailto:rbbt6@hotmail.com)

Presbytery Commissioners (3):

Sue Goodspeed, Norm Petrik, and the LNPC Session

Clerk of Session:

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Sue Goodspeed

Staff:

Krysta Niznick

Office Manager | Bookkeeper

Jeanne Rylander

Director of Music Ministries

Kathy Johnson

Custodian

**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. Please call the office if you have a need that can be supported by Deacons.

### Upcoming and Inside:

- o Lisa Larges and Presbytery – September 13
- o Serving at Our Saviour's Housing
- o Reflections on Summer and St. Joe's
- o Being Sabbath People – the year ahead
- o 'Conversations on Race' led by Penumbra
- o 'Staying Present' workshop

[www.lakenokomispc.org](http://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 46<sup>th</sup> Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55407

TO: