



Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church

The Current Word

2017 #2

What is a parable?

This Fall we are back in the parables of Jesus. We already began with the parable of the "Unforgiving Servant," and next up is the "Parable of the Vineyard."

In worship, Sunday school and Adult ed, we will be exploring some of Jesus' stories that start out with, "The Kingdom of God is like..."

It might be helpful, then, to review, *What, exactly, is a parable?*

Parables are invitations to hold your own life up for reflection. To think about how God's way is not like our way.

An *allegory* is a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one. It's like a complex metaphor, each character symbolizes someone, there is a specific hidden meaning to uncover.

But a parable is not an allegory. It is not meant to be *figured out* in this way. A parable is an illustration, a short story that illumines something. A parable is, literally, something "cast alongside" something else. Jesus' parables were stories that were "cast alongside" a truth in order to illustrate that truth." (gotquestions.com)

Jesus taught in parables. Which is problematic, because it's indirect, open to interpretation, vague. He explained some of them later to his disciples, but not to the crowds, and not to us – and the parables themselves are what are preserved in our scripture. Glimpsing something of Jesus' own imagination, we sit at the feet of this storyteller listening to his "cast alongsides" - his illustrations, or word pictures that start out, "The Kingdom of heaven is like..." He is telling us something about the truth, by asking us to open our own imaginations to let in, *The big picture is like this – God's way might be seen if you think about this story...*

A gift of parables is that we hear them differently as different people, in different times in our lives, with different baggage or issues, and different insights depending on what we're going through.

PARABLES

This in itself, tells us that the kingdom of God is breaking in *in all sorts of ways* – not just one

way, in all sorts of lives, not just some lives, and God's truth can grip us where we are and tell us what we need to hear.

So, we are digging into parables between now and Advent. Parables are frustrating and slippery and not clear cut, and they require us to be thoughtful and intentional and actually hold up our own lives before the scripture and ask God to use the parable to come alongside us and show us what God would have us see.

Jesus' parables most often involve an unexpected twist, a place where the story doesn't go where you think it should go, and something is revealed through that surprise. Because all of Jesus' parables are meant to expose something about what we see as real, and reveal something we're not quite grasping. They are all contrasting the kingdom of God, the big picture, the real reality, with the way of fear.

Sunday worship will be lively, our prayer stations on Saturday will be chances to hold our lives up to the story of God for insights, and and Adult ed should be filled with juicy conversation as we dig into a few parables this Fall!



WE DID IT!!

This spring, Kara and the Sabbatical Task Force submitted a 'Clergy Renewal' grant application to the Lilly Foundation, hoping to support our next Sabbatical adventure in 2018. It was approved!

This isn't short, but take a few minutes to sit with this understanding of Who We Are and Who God Calls to Be, and how our 'time apart' will open us to a deeper listening:

Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church 2018 Sabbatical Grant

Summary:

A Sabbath Sabbatical Journey. For three months, Kara will immerse herself in experiences that take her out of her roles and work, to reconnect with God, herself, those she loves, and the world, through extended travel with her family, reflective, creative time alone at home, and a silent retreat with close friend colleagues.

Rationale:

We are a Sabbath-keeping congregation who believes the world has two competing narratives; the way of fear pits us against each other in competition, defining our worth by what we produce or consume, and the way of God, incarnated in Christ, is the reality that we all belong to God and we all belong to each other. Sabbath is one of God's strategies to regularly bring us out of the pervasive way of fear into the true way of God. Spending time apart from work, being fully present with God and others, and awake to life, reminds us, reorients us, and reconnects us to God and one another as human beings. We practice Sabbath intentionally twice a month, and continue to deepen our learning, broaden our sharing, and support our pastor as she writes and teaches about Sabbath in the community and the larger church.

Being a pastor makes Kara's heart sing. She loves leading a community paying attention to what God's Spirit is doing in and through us at any given moment, and sharing about the life of Christ in us in ways that inspire, challenge and equip other communities. Pastoring this way takes attention, imagination, and energy. Short breaks, days off, and vacations can take her momentarily out of the role, but they are not long enough to take the role out of her. We want to give Kara a Sabbath from Sabbath hosting and teaching for an extended time to let her heart sing in other ways. The spaciousness of Sabbath can awaken noticing, and we want to give Kara the space to notice and be present in each day, connecting to God, her family and friends, and the greater world, as a child of God, with a break from asking, *What does this mean for our congregation? For the world? How will I teach this? How can I lead others in this experience?*

We are thrilled about this timing, because in 2018, for likely the only time in their careers, Kara's sabbatical (3mo/5 yrs) overlaps with her husband's academic sabbatical (12 mo/7 yrs), allowing their family to do something big together, (their kids will be 11 & 14). By spending a significant portion of her sabbatical out of the country, immersed in another pattern of living, we hope Kara will truly be able to step away from her role with us, entrusting both herself and our congregation to God, and experience Sabbath deeply with her family.

Narrative Description:

1 week (8/5 – 8/11): Berlin, Germany: While I was preparing this document, my 12-year-old son Owen told me that he wanted to learn more about World War II, and asked if we could please someday visit Poland. The week prior to my sabbatical's intended start, my husband will be teaching an intensive course in Berlin, for American seminary students, on the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. They will visit World War II sites (possibly including Warsaw) and hold lectures in the Bonhoeffer family home. Suddenly, the joy of Sabbath opened up – which is the chance to pay attention to the moment and meet it with full presence – and I realized we could leave a week earlier, and join my husband in Berlin. So, on August 5, Owen, our daughter Maisy, and I will fly to Berlin, where we will launch our time away with exploration and learning together (maybe even sitting in some of dad's lectures!) The chance to be present to my children in this way, and learn alongside them, is exhilarating to me.

7 weeks (8/12-9/30), Paris, France: For seven weeks, our family will live in another culture, with 2 hours of language tutoring 5 mornings a week, and the rest of the time falling into Parisian rhythms of life, with sightseeing, exploring museums, and visiting nearby towns and countryside. I am fascinated by contrasts between French and American cultures, and the French commitment to *joie de vivre*, 'the exuberant enjoyment of life.' I am a recovering multi-tasker, great at it, groomed for it, and learning now to let it go. Walter Brueggemann calls multitasking, "The drive to be more than we are, to control more than we do, to extend our power and our effectiveness." The French are famous for uni-tasking, seeking to be present in each task and moment. Paris-based author Matthew Fraser reports, "...I now appreciate with epicurean relish the pleasures of each moment. Life in France places you happily in the present tense, unlike in anglo-Protestant countries where everything is driving madly towards the future. In Paris, when you are enjoying a bottle of claret in a restaurant with friends, or walking your dogs along the Seine, that moment suffices in itself." I want to learn from this mindset, to immerse myself in the present tense, and see what it might reveal to me about myself, Sabbath, and connecting deeply with God and others. In the seven weeks, we plan to take three short trips out of Paris:

- **Taize, France**, 3 nights– (4 hr train). Worshipping as a family in community; participating instead of leading, in an experience of belonging to God and to each other in ways that both embrace and transcend language and culture.
- **Florence & Venice, Italy**, Florence, 4 nights– (10 hr train or 2 hr flight) Staying in a former

monastery 5 km from Florence, we will visit the Uffizi, Cathedral and Boboli Gardens in Florence, other Tuscany sites (maybe Pisa), wander the countryside, watch the sunset, and take a family cooking class, then to Venice (3 hr train) for one night.

- **Charmey & Gruyere, Switzerland**, 3 nights– (7 hr car). One night in Charmey, then hiking the Juanback Gorge to Gruyere, past the pilgrimage chapel of Notre-Dame des Marches, and a day and a half in the medieval town of Gruyere, with the cheese factory, chocolate factory and castle – a feast for the senses!

3 Weeks Home (10/1-10/20): I will settle the kids into school and help them make the transition home (and turn in academic projects arranged in advance with the school). I'll ease into being present in my life at home as an aspiring uni-tasker, through journaling, reading, walking, and two days a week at the Mosaic studio near my house, a secret haven for me of creativity and rest.

1 week Abbey of Gethsamani, Trappist KY (10/21-10/27): The penultimate week will be a 5-day silent retreat in Trappist, KY, with my clergy group—five pastors who have been meeting and retreating together for five years – with one night before and after in Louisville, preparing for and debriefing the silent retreat. I once took a 3-day (accidental) silent retreat. Day one my head was filled with noisy chatter, day two it began to quiet and open up, and day three I was deliciously attentive and present. I look forward to trying five days, particularly after such a rich and full couple months, and sharing the experience with this close community of mutual support. This week, and the time at home that precedes it, are designed to help integrate the practices and mindset of sabbath and presence, into my personal, family and vocational life in lasting ways.

Final week, Home (Oct 28- Nov 3): This week is set aside to prepare in whatever ways I discern on my silent retreat are needed for integration, celebration, and return to my congregation. I will meet with my spiritual director, and nest as necessary.

From the Pastor – Intended Benefits:

Immersing myself in another culture has been a lifelong wellspring of meaning and joy, ever since my first trip out of the country (as the first one in my family to do so) at the age of fourteen, to Haiti. That trip set the tone for my college years studying theological anthropology and cross-cultural psychology, and I eagerly found ways to travel and learn as much as I could. After seminary graduation, when Andy and I were first married, we traveled for six months, solidifying our relationship and setting the trajectory for our lives and ministry. Disillusioned and disconnected from what my life and faith had previously been and not yet clear what the future would hold, it was on that trip, in Australia, that I felt the call to be a pastor, and returned to begin pursuing ordination. It was on a short trip to England eight years later that I began to ponder the “What if?” questions that led my congregation into nearly nine years of practicing Sabbath together. The little tastes of travel I have had along the way have fed a hunger for this in extended form.

When I am out of my comfort zone and familiar routines, in an environment with other unspoken beliefs, routines and customs, I feel alert, attentive, introspective. Observing others in their context makes me acutely aware of my own; watching problem solving from other perspectives stimulates my ability to see problems differently and try new approaches. Mostly, I feel grateful. Connected. Awake. The experiences of frustration and vulnerability as an outsider and a beginner strip me down and build me up stronger, more open, more willing to try, fail, and learn. I know it makes me a better pastor, because it makes me trust very deeply that we all belong to God and we all belong to each other. It makes me brave, and calls me to be present with my congregation, alongside each other as children of

God, seeking to follow Christ by being present in our own lives, families and communities, and watching for God's activity and invitation in each moment.

I am ecstatic that our sabbaticals coincide; my husband and I get to be together in intentional ways outside the regular patterns of work life, seeking to notice and be present with each other and our kids. It feels like sheer gift. And travel of any kind with my family – watching my children experience themselves as part of God's big picture, being explorers of God's world together – is the very greatest joy I know. Thomas Merton wrote, "We are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join the general dance." I long to forget myself on purpose and join the dance, with my husband and children, alone and with my friends, far from home and back again, to notice and embrace how I belong to God and we all belong to each other.

Congregation – Intended Benefits:

by The Sabbatical Dream Team - Lisa Larges, Associate Pastor, Amy Leafblad, Personnel & Session rep, Joyce Tesarek, Session Rep, Sue Goodspeed, Treasurer & Personnel Chair, Susan Hensel, SDT Chair

The concept of sabbatical's underlying theological principle of Sabbath-keeping is a core belief that shapes our life together. We believe that modeling this way of being together – drawing from the rest, renewal, and free-flowing joy that are the gifts of Sabbatical – is a critically necessary witness in these times of uncertainty, polarization, and brashness. We want to live secure enough in God's unfailing grace that we can take three months to live by a different rhythm, and that living in this way will not only change us as a congregation, but will also be a guidepost out of the way of fear to those in our community, and any who would find our witness.

When our pastor took her first sabbatical five years ago, as a congregation we took that time to reflect together on how to bring sabbatical time in to our own lives and our life as a congregation. We suspended committee meetings and posed a sabbatical question each week during worship that became an art installation. It was an important time for us, and we eagerly anticipate what the Spirit might have in store for us as we approach our 2018 Sabbatical time.

We trust that through our own intentional practices of trust and joy this sabbatical, we all - the congregation, leadership, and our pastor - will become more deeply rooted and grounded in love, growing in the faith that we belong to God and we belong to each other, and more attentively listening together to what the Spirit may be leading us into next.

Congregation Plans:

We will take what we learned from our last sabbatical time into this one. We can now see more clearly the areas where the smallness of anxiety beguiled us away from more fully seeking after the Spirit through the discipline of rest. We tended, for instance, to be more preoccupied with questions of maintenance, and less on noticing the places of growth and renewal. Because of this, the burden of maintenance fell more heavily on some than others. We relied more heavily than was necessary, for instance, on the tremendous gifts of our Music Director, depriving her of a deeper experience of sabbatical.

Knowing that we might be tempted back into the anxiety known as "keeping everything going," we are approaching this sabbatical time with the spiritual discipline of curiosity. We're putting this into practice by framing questions, planning, and budgeting in a way that promotes joy and a sense of adventure. Here are a few ways we are laying the groundwork now: Asking our Music Director, our Operations Manager, and worship leaders, "What would make your heart sing?" and "If you let go of your assumptions about what needs to happen in the three months that Kara is away, how could we use this time in a way that would bring you both ease and joy?" We are also seeking what might be

supportive to our staff, (eg, a vacation beforehand and afterward, time off or a conference or workshop during sabbatical, a weekly Sabbath day, etc).

Nothing kills creativity like stress and fear. We hope that a focus on ease, joy, and this being God's ministry we all share in, will reinforce the trust that we belong to God. And in our busy lives with not as much time together as we would like, we are excited about the opportunity for the sabbatical to emphasize belonging to each other, so we are posing this challenge to the congregation: "What activity/adventure could we share in together that would bring your heart joy (eg, baseball game, movie night, boat trip, book discussion, campfire, meal)? Our planning team will draw from these responses to shape our sabbatical time so that joy, fun, and belonging to each other are built in.

With support from session and the Sabbatical Dream Team, our Associate Pastor, Lisa, will moderate session and lead us in congregational care (with an increase in paid hours), and will preach/lead along with guest preachers, artists and teachers supplementing the line-up of our alternating Sunday morning and Saturday Evening services. With Lisa and our Music Director, Jeanne, a team of volunteers will coordinate services, and/or other creative worship experiences as the congregation dreams up leading into sabbatical (eg, picnic worship, home church in members' gardens, musical experiences, etc.)

Leave-taking & Returning-

A congregational pot-luck, sharing together both Kara's and our plans for joy, adventure, curiosity, and belonging will follow a commissioning liturgy in worship. We will welcome Kara back with a worship service of reunion and storytelling, and a shared meal. (During the leave we will not have contact, as part of our practice of trust).

Sharing Insights –

We will take an all-church retreat to Clearwater Forest Camp to reconnect and ponder together what God might be telling us through our experiences. Kara will have coffee visits to reconnect with individual members (especially our older members who would likely skip the retreat). Over the next several months, session will reflect on learnings at each meeting, integrating them into our leadership and congregational worship and practices.

Process –

Our congregation believes in sabbaticals and wrote a 3-month sabbatical every five years into the terms of call before calling Kara. For her first sabbatical, a sabbatical task force coordinated leadership and managed the transition and time. Kara's sabbatical was primarily at home, so we gave her space and had no contact with her. This experience showed us we can handle sabbaticals actually, not just hypothetically, and deepened our gratitude for our pastor and one another.

When Kara found this grant and brought it to session, we were excited about what it might mean for her and for us. The Sabbatical Dream Team was assembled by session to begin dreaming for 2018 (quite a bit further ahead than we'd normally be in this process!). Personnel began connecting with staff for conversations on the heart-singing, ease and joy questions above, Kara and the SDT put this document together, and our session discussed, edited and approved the final grant. We shared this grant with the congregation, inviting feedback, and introducing the question for us all to begin pondering, "What would make our hearts sing?" We are enthusiastic about turning the dreams that arise into specific plans, activities, and worship services together as the sabbatical nears, and the renewal it will bring.

***May God bless the journey on which we will embark
– and open us to all the possibilities it will hold.***

WE HAVE NEW LEADERS AMONG US!

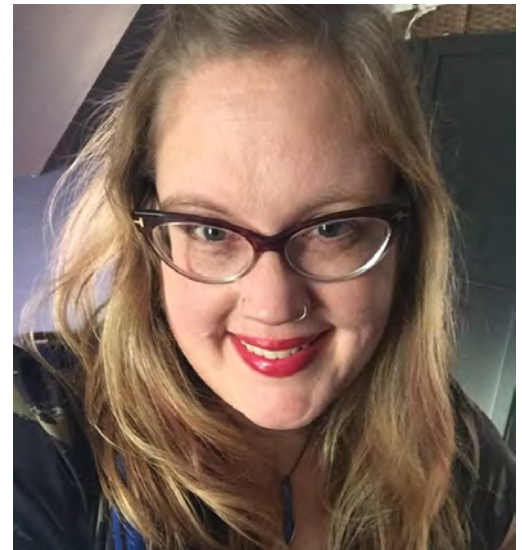
As with all those we're getting to know, the incoming had to answer a few odd questions (some of us are very grateful we got here at an earlier time!) ~

MUSIC

This is a fall of newness – sort of a 'springtime' for our congregation. With Jeanne Rylander's moving to a fuller teaching schedule, we were anticipating a season of 'unknowing' (not anxiety!) in our music leadership. And we did have two months of rotating leadership (gratitude to Jonathon Dexter, Nate Houge, Rachel Kurtz, Erin DeBoer Moran!), but God brought us together with Erin in the most unexpected of ways (really outside the comfort zone of staid Presbyterians!).

ERIN DeBOER-MORAN

We are pleased to introduce Erin Lynn DeBoer-Moran! She loves to hang out with friends, go to movies, and be creative. Her favorite food is donuts, and the best place she's ever visited in New Zealand. The best book Erin has ever read is *A Man Called Ove* and *A Girl Named Zippy* "I guess anything that is 'A Noun called/named blank,'" and the best movies she's ever seen are *Once* and *Amelie*. Erin likes that she is a good listener for others, and likes that her family loves to listen to fun music together. One thing she's never tried that she would like to one day is to attend the Winnepeg Folk Festival, or take jazz piano lessons. One thing she's afraid of is failing "even though I do it all the time," and one thing she finds extremely funny is Kids. "Kids are endlessly funny." The most interesting thing Erin has ever seen is the Northern Lights. What does she appreciate about LNPC? "There seems to be a deep spirituality to the people of LNPC. Very genuine and searching."



When asked, what is one way you look forward to being involved in the life of LNPC, Erin answered, "I look forward to being CREATIVE with everyone, through music and visual art." Erin is open to new things and hopes that we are too.

Welcome, Erin! We are so glad to have you with us!

EDUCATION

With our burgeoning young population, our leaders were wracking their brains to create a well-lead, lively, learning, welcoming opportunity for education for all ages. Possibilities seemed quite limited. Then - God intervened again. Bethel University and Luther Seminary were each looking for internship placements for a student. They really, really wanted to place them with us. A way was found, and we have two amazing women to welcome to our ministries!

SHANNON FARRAND-BERNARDIN

We're excited to introduce Shannon Cathleen Farrand-Bernardin! Shannon is working on her M.Div. through Luther Seminary, and is under care at Westminster. During her internship with us, she will be focusing on children, pastoral care, with some preaching and other things thrown in here and there. Shannon's favorite food is Mexican food – ("I grew up in Colorado, and miss all the amazing Mexican food there!") The best place she's ever visited is Florence, Italy, where she studied for a time during college. For fun, she loves to read, both to herself and to her kids. She also enjoys camping and



running outside, especially during the Fall. It was too difficult for her to pick the best book she's ever read, so she broke it down by category: Best theological reads: Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Cone. Best English lit: Jane Austen books. Memoir: Adam Gopnik, Lauren F. Winner and Nadia Bolz Weber books. Children's lit: Harry Potter! Though she can't say it's the best movie she's ever seen, she loves the movie *A Room with a View*. One thing she likes about herself is that she cares deeply about other people – this is what she loves about her family too. One day she would like to try an adult art class- she hasn't taken an art class since elementary school. She is afraid of rattlesnakes and mountain lions (Colorado – these were actual threats there!) Her husband and kids cannot make sense of this fear, though. The most interesting thing she's ever seen is New York City, "I lived there for many years, and adore it. There was never a day in my life there that I did not encounter something truly unique and interesting. I once visited an art exhibit that was just a big room full of dirt." She appreciates the way that the community at LNPC

welcomes and includes children, and she is looking forward to participating in Sabbath in the life of LNPC. "I am so excited to begin!"

From time to time we will also get to hang out with her husband Tom, and kids (oldest to youngest) Lucia, Allegra and Winter!

Welcome, Shannon!

KATIE HOLMBERG

We're pleased to introduce Kathryn Ellen Holmberg! Katie is a senior at Bethel University, and recently switched her major to youth ministry. Her internship with us will focus on youth (our 5th-7th graders), with a little intergenerational fun sprinkled in. Her favorite food is Sweet Potato Fries, and the best places she's ever visited is Estes Park, CO. For fun, she likes to go out with friends, hike, play piano, and be creative. The best book she's ever read is *Vienna Prelude*, and the best movie she's ever seen is *About Time*. One thing she really likes about herself is her resilience, and one thing she really likes about her family is how close they all are.

Katie is afraid of snakes, and she'd love to try parasailing. One thing she finds extremely funny is the movie *Hot Rod*. Formerly a nursing major, the most interesting thing she's ever seen is a human cadaver.

One thing she appreciates about LNPC is that people take care of each other, and she's looking forward to getting to know everyone. "I love to meet new people, I'm a very relational person so come say hi to me, let's get coffee, I want to meet you :)"

Welcome, Katie!



REMEMBER THAT GUY WHO WE JUST KNEW HAD TO BE A PASTOR?

News from Ben:

Hello, Lake Nokomis Presbyterian! It's been far too long since we've seen each other, and a lot has happened in my life that I want to share with you all. Here's a snapshot:

I graduated from seminary! Yes, you knew that, but it bears repeating: I completed three years of graduate training for ministry and received my diploma surrounded by people I love and respect—no small things. Gratitude abounds.

I found a surprising job. Or, rather, a job at the new downtown hospital found me. Since July I've been working in food service, spending most of my day on the phone with patients about what will feed their stomachs and their souls. It's much more fast-paced and down-to-earth than seminary, and I'm grateful for the second education. Also, grateful to pay bills!



I struggled to find a church internship. Besides taking exams, the last step of my journey toward ordination is a nine-month internship in a congregation. I talked to a dozen churches between January and July; some weren't able to take me on, others weren't willing, and some stopped returning my phone calls. It was rough, and the stark reality of the church's learning curve regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people called to ministry was disheartening. I am truly sorry I did not ask you all to pray for me in this time, though I imagine that many of you did anyway.

I'm journeying with Faith Presbyterian Church in Austin next year. Near the end of summer, the Spirit surprised me again. I reached out to a small Presbyterian church with a big heart in the southern part of town (sound familiar?), and their pastor was excited about the possibility of an internship over this next year. CPM approved it, [Faith's] session voted on it, and my first day in worship was September 10. FPC has a long tradition of working with interns and welcoming LGBTQ people, and I'm looking forward to connecting and singing and praying with them in the coming months.

There is always more to share, of course, but I wanted to make sure you all heard the highlights. Please remember me in your prayers, as well as my partner Hiera as he completes his last year of seminary. I will be holding you all in prayer, too—for learning and laughter in your season of new interns and a new music director, for gratitude, safekeeping, and a sense of God's presence when I read updates.

Rooted and grounded in love,
Ben Masters



MONEY & US

It's good to remind ourselves from time to time of the commitments we have made. Our budget for the year, approved at the annual meeting, set our anticipated revenues and expenses for 2017. How are we doing?

Through August, our year-to-date receipts (General Fund, not designated) were \$101,821.23 - \$77,780 in our own giving, plus \$17,760. in miscellaneous receipts (primarily building use contributions from our 'renters') and a \$5,000 grant from Westminster/Mpls. We have also withdrawn \$6,000 from the Endowment Fund and \$3,260 from the Lisa Larges Congregational Care Fund, for a total available for regular expenditures of \$109,800. Our General Fund disbursements were \$102,774. We have also disbursed \$6,170 in congregational tithes (through May – summer checks will go out shortly) –total non-designated disbursements of \$108,944. In 2016, our own (weekly) giving was \$70,919 through August, and our General Fund receipts were \$97,679. Our total General Fund disbursements for 2016 – through August – were \$96,636, and tithe distributions (only through March at this point) of \$3,234, totaling \$99,869. Most of the difference in each total is having Lisa on staff (!!), which we wouldn't trade for anything.

Receipts (not designated)	Expenses	2017 thru August	2016 thru August
Weekly/congregational giving		77,780	70,919
Grant – Westminster		5,000	5,000
Building Use (mostly)		17,760	16,760
LL Congregational Care		3,260	--
Endowment		6,000	5,000
RECEIPTS		109,800	97,679
	Salaries	79,509	72,599
	Building	17,716	20,711
	Committees	5,549	3,326
	Tithes	6,170	3,234
	DISBURSEMENTS	108,944	99,870

Have you noticed the Guiding Convictions on the Gathering room wall lately? Those have come to define us, but did you know, or do you remember, that when we put them up there we did not really believe them?

They came about when we said aloud all the things we thought were holding us back from being Church and doing ministry the way God was calling us. We named our biggest fears, (eg, Our glory days are in the past! We are too small! Too old! We don't have enough money! etc.) and then we spoke *the opposite of them* and hung them on the wall. *That was in 2011.* Today we see these guiding convictions in action every day.

The second guiding conviction felt the scariest to say out loud at the time, and it is the one that still sets us free most often: *We are exactly the right size and make up, and have all the resources we need, for what God wants to do in and through us.*

This congregation believes it. A couple of years ago, we really began getting scared about money – our endowment was dwindling away and the scarcity narratives reared up, and even though for 30 years folks would say, “At this rate, we only have a couple years left!,” this time it felt more real. So the session took a deep breath and prayed. And they decided that we should start giving away 10% of our income every month to other struggling congregations, charities and small, shoestring ministries. The answer to our fear was generosity. We wanted to deepen our trust in God. Our church is one little part of the ministry God is doing in the world -- we did not want to be focused so much on self-preservation that we missed what God was doing, here or elsewhere, and we didn't want to lose sight of our place in God's bigger picture. We wanted to notice and join other expressions of God's ministry in the world.

Two things happened when we began doing this.

First, that same month, Pastor Antonio walked in the front door and said he felt God had called him to stop and inquire whether we might have space in our building for them to worship. They pay us right about the amount we are giving away each month. Last year we gave away far more (and took less out of the endowment) than we ever have.

And **second** – this act of tithing set us free, again, and every month we get these amazing thank you notes, and see the ripples of impact radiate out – connecting us to what God is doing in our city, country and in the world, which reminds us, more than ever, that this is God's ministry, and we get to share in it.

Tithing is one strategy to deepen our trust. We do it *because* it is not easy. We do it *because* it is counter-intuitive. There may be other strategies to deepen our trust in the future. It's our job to keep on paying attention to what God is doing, and being willing to continue adapting and joining in God's ministry bravely and faithfully with all we've been given.

2017 tithes have been shared with:

January – Immigrant Law Center of MN

February – The Council on American-Islamic Relations.

March – Central Church.

April – International Institute of Minnesota

May – we distributed 17 - \$100 bills to a randomly selected group of worshipping folks, and heard meaningful, fun, and heartfelt ways in which we all chose to spread the love of God throughout our community – and world!

June – Interfaith Outreach and Community Partners: an organization near and dear to Eva's heart, which meets emergency and ongoing needs of the community.

July – Nokomis Healthy Seniors: a neighborhood organization dedicated to advancing senior health and independent living.

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:

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

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.

Per capita apportionment approved for 2018

At presbytery in September, we voted to approve an increase of 75 cents/member in our per capita giving for 2018 – to **\$34.50**. This funds operations of our national body – General Assembly, the regional Synod, and our local (70 congregation) Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. This is a 2.2% increase from 2017:

- \$21.37 to Presbytery
- \$5.40 for Synod
- \$7.73 for General Assembly

With these funds, paid by each congregation based on membership, we support the staffing of our presbytery, the staff work which supports our committees, and grants to support congregational ministry and vitality in our presbytery. Similar support is offered to each of the other two ‘levels’ of denominational leadership. LNPC will contribute about \$3,105 (based on 90 members?) in 2018. It is expected that each member will contribute their share. (Round up to \$35! ...or \$40!)

Every Friday morning...

we hold a 30 minute service of prayer for our nation. Sometimes there are several of us gathered. Sometimes it's just one. But every week we hold the space. With scripture, meditation, silence and intercession, we move from tension to trust, from worry to hope, in grief, gratitude and grace. And we gradually pray through our country, a few people and groups each time, as we feel led. We are not rushed. We are in this for the long haul. It's an abundant God with love for all, and there's enough need that we can see a bit of it each week and hold these in love for now. For now. And when we blow out the candles, we leave in peace.

*“O Sun behind all suns,
O Soul between all souls,
grant me the grace of the dawn’s glory
grant me the strength of the sun’s rays
that I may be well in my own soul
and part of the world’s healing this day.
that I may be well in my own soul,
and part of the world’s healing this day.”*



Presbytery met in September – and you were there! (via Norm and Sue G)

#1 *Speaking of the uses of per capita giving:*

Presbytery voted in September to recognize **Chain of Lakes Presbyterian Church as a brand new congregation** in our Presbytery!! COL has been worshipping together for about a decade, and has reached the ‘critical mass’ of 85 people requesting that it move from being a ‘new church development’ to a full-fledged congregation. This is a really exciting time for this group of Jesus-followers, and we celebrate with them this new chapter in their lives. They have been receiving funding from presbytery up to this point, which has supported a good share of their clergy/staff costs, as well as land purchase for an eventual sanctuary site, and rent and furnishings on their current site. As of January 1, the new congregation will be responsible for its own financial viability, just as we are at LNPC. Our contributions to presbytery through per capita have enabled this support – which all of us received during the gestation periods of our own congregations (even if that was 95 years ago).

#2 *Also at Presbytery*

Adam Copeland, Professor of Stewardship at Luther Seminary (and supporter and workshop leader at LNPC, and a good Presbyterian), spoke about MONEY.

Why should/do we give to church?

What does the church say we *should do* about money? Professionally, prophetically, practically?

What are the stories that we share with one another about our relationship with money? How do we re-frame whatever power it has in our lives? How does it relate to our possessions, to our creation, or not, of community?

Perhaps we can offer one another space to explore – not just from a ‘give to church’ perspective, but from a wholistic, life-affirming perspective – the vision that compels us to share, the values that drive our relationships with the world around us, in this place and throughout our living.

#3 *and finally...*

We installed our ‘new’ Executive Presbyter, Rev. Dr. Jeff Japinga. Jeff has been working with us in a ‘transitional’ capacity for two years, and was elected to the permanent position in May. This service made it really, truly official. He was charged by the Lutheran Bishop of St. Paul, a local congregational pastor, the leader of Giddings-Lovejoy presbytery in Missouri, and a local chaplain to serve and be served, to ‘turn over the soil’ of the presbytery for new life, to ‘grow light,’ to live into the mystery of not *being sure*, and to ‘be ready to be astonished!’ Words to all of us as we seek to serve not our history but God’s future.

AND FOR CONGREGATIONAL FUN... *anticipate*

Advent by signing up to see BLACK NATIVITY at Penumbra Theater with your church friends!

LNPC/Central have reserved 39 tickets – all together – to see this powerful telling of the Christmas story on

Sunday afternoon, December 3.

To reserve your spot, get in touch with Charlotte Davis or Sue G.

It’s one of those ‘must dos’ of the Twin Cities Christmas season.



Homily for Marty Christensen

June 24, 2017

Rev. Kara Root

Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church

Marty would say "You can never have too many friends." And I imagine his life like a high school cafeteria – each table a different group. His church friends, his bar friends, his Hutch friends, his Astrology friends, His Gunflint Trail friends, his OLD friends. And Marty, with his lunch tray, effortlessly flowing between them, a full part of each group.

It was like his superpower in this life was friendship.

And now here we all are, sitting at one big table – in a room together with people whose paths might never have any other reason to cross, except that in some way we all belonged to Marty, and he to us. I find that utterly enchanting.

And I believe that Marty has returned to his source, to love, to the force that made him and gave him his insatiable love for people, his boundless passion for the outdoors, his drive to get as much as he could out of life, and give as much as he could to life. There is nothing hidden in him that isn't revealed, nothing broken-hearted in him that isn't healed, no pain that he carried or caused in this life that is not released, nothing holding him back in any way from full and complete love. Marty now rests his whole being in the being that called his being into being. And that is comforting for me to envision.

Alone and afraid. Those were the two words Marty used when he learned his cancer wasn't responding to treatment and it would likely take him. It's the part he dreaded, the part that scared him the most: He felt alone and he felt afraid.

But those are also the two words I heard used in reference to the day he left this earth, "When Marty died, he wasn't alone and he wasn't afraid."

And while I believe God answered his prayer, I have to hand it to Marty for making God's job easy on that front, because Marty let us in. He let us share it with him. He let us be there for him.

We believe around here that that in Jesus, God came to take on everything inside us, between us, and thrust upon us by the world that makes us feel alone and afraid. That the cross means God bears all suffering alongside, with, and for us. And because of that, when we are alongside, with, and for each other, bearing one another's suffering, we meet God. Marty let us do that alongside, with and for him. And Marty did not hesitate to be alongside, with and for others. This is a holy, human, sacred thing. It's where God is. And when we do this we are not alone, and we are not afraid.

I loved being Marty's pastor. I learned so much from him these past 18 months. He would come to me anxious and ask, *Do people really want to hear how bad it's getting? I don't want to be a burden.* And I would remind him that he promised to share it all with us. I would tell him that if he made it look too easy, he was false advertising for the rest of us. And I would say again what a blessing his honesty – in the whole struggle of it all - was to us. And it was true. He changed this community – he showed us to be open and real even in the things you don't choose and are not glad about. He gave us a chance to live out with him another of his life mottos – *we are here to take care of each other.*

And I would sit with him in a kind of wonder as he would share about a lunch with friends, his face open with delight and joy, eyes sparkling and smile wide. And then a wave of grief would come and he would sob with the deep, heartwrenching sorrow at having to leave this life. And after a few minutes the tears would subside, his shoulders would lift, and a new story would come, one of gratitude, or hope, or wondering what dying would be like, and what would happen to him beyond. And sometimes fear would surface, and he'd talk through the flashes of terror or apprehension until that departed and the next emotion arose.

And in these times I felt like for Marty the layers we all live with, that insulate us from the raw reality of living had been stripped away, and he was awake for it all. Noticing so deeply, appreciating so profoundly, grieving so honestly, celebrating so freely. In these conversations he would let anger, sadness, joy, gratitude, hope, move through him without resisting, hiding, or censoring. He was done with games. He just wanted to live every moment of his one precious life to its fullest. And he did.

We've heard a lot today about what a great guy Marty was and how much dignity he died with. And that was all true. And there might be the feeling that somehow to do him honor we shouldn't feel sad. We should celebrate his life. We should be glad he's no longer suffering. We should avoid the small anger pressing at the base of the skull, the sorrow that claws up the back of the throat. Swallow it down and just try to be thankful for the beauty of his life and the peacefulness of his death.

I am going to tell you not to do that. I am going to tell you that the anger is a gift and the sorrow and grief are a treasure. Because they point to the deeper longing for things that are wrong to be right. They point to how beloved he was, and how much he loved living. They bring us to that place where God is alongside, with and for us. And I will not downplay any of that. It's too important to skip over.

Marty was taken too soon. That's just a fact. Most of us are, and we can deal with each of those stories when our own turn comes, but I want to talk for a minute about what makes me angry about Marty's death.

Marty should have had a chance to enjoy his retirement. He was SO looking forward to it – oh the plans he had! Marty should have had a chance to turn more of us into OLD friends, and make more new ones to add to his collection. He should have gone to England, he should have traveled and experienced more of this earth he so loved. He should have taken on new hobbies and interests, he so loved diving into something new and exploring it completely. He should have married Nancy and been a grandpa. He should have grown old along with someone – he told me he always wanted that. Marty had dreams and longings and hopes that never got to be fulfilled.

And that makes me angry. It makes me sad. I wanted those things for him too. I wanted to be there alongside, with and for him in those things, and see him be alongside, with and for others here in the things we all have ahead of us – Helen's little sister or brother arriving, this generation of kids he's watched start to grow up graduating from school and heading out into the world. All the joyous and heartbreaking things that are coming in all the lives of those gathered in this room that Marty would have celebrated and grieved alongside, with and for each of us. I will wait for the loss of that. When the feelings come, I will let them come.

And only then, only once those feelings pass through and space is made for the next ones, will I turn to the gratitude.

Oh! What an incomparable honor to have known and been a part of Marty's life!

To have walked on this earth alongside his soul, to have shared this breathtakingly beautiful planet, filled with a never-ending diversity of interesting people, spectacular views, new challenges, old stories, winding trails and pounding waterfalls and crisp forest air, and lapping lakes at sunset. To be in this life, every single day - to be alive! This is a blessing beyond compare!

And to share it with others! What purpose! What privilege!

We are told that *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" And that all that separates us from love and wholeness, makes us feel alone or afraid, or keeps us from what should have been, is borne into the very heart of God. None of it is forgotten, overlooked, moved on past. It is treasured, precious and sacred, the sorrow and the loss, held with tender care by the Love that will not end. And one day all wrongs will be made right.

And Marty's being rests in that love now, and all that he just poked a finger into, just dipped a toe in, just scratched the surface of, he now knows and feels fully and completely, just as he is fully and completely known.

Marty is part of our cloud of witnesses, those who've gone before whose lives have been tangled up in ours, and, just by being human beings next to us, point us now and then to what's really real.

Marty loved rituals that opened us to God and connected us to timelessness and the cosmos and each other, so here is how we're going to finish this service and honor Marty together. First alongside, with, and for each other now, in both our gratitude and our loss, we are going to recite a poem written by another person who believed "life is meant to be lived outdoors," a few thousand years ago, a shepherd turned king, Psalm 23. We will say the words shared by people in all circumstances for millennia, words that were also read by a few of us with Marty on his last couple of evenings before he went and left all these scattered groups of friends to gather here as one.

And after that, we are going to sing Marty's favorite song, a song that expressed how Marty chose to live his life, *What a Wonderful World*, and we will let it witness to us, like his life did, a giant *Thank you. Thank you* for it all. Amen.

a n d I T H I N K t o
M Y S E L F w h a t a
Wonderful
W O R L D . . .

**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

Class of 2017:

Andy Cochrane Andy.Cochrane@MapleGroveHospital.org

Andrea Domaskin andrea.domaskin@gmail.com

Diane Hansen dianecope2002@yahoo.com

Class of 2018:

Amy Leafblad leaf2be@yahoo.com

Bill Fischer rbbt6@hotmail.com

Class of 2019:

Joyce Tesarek joycedvm@aol.com

Presbytery Commissioners (3):

Sue Goodspeed, Norm Petrik, and the LNPC Session

Clerk of Session:

Lisa Phillips Johnson

Treasurer:

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 Fall Schedule – *Parables!*
- o Great Grant News!
- o New faces – welcome Erin, Shannon, and Katie
- o BEN
- o Financial updates
- o Around the Presbytery...
- o See Penumbra's *Black Nativity!*

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*

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TO: