



**Proclaiming God's
Grace,
Creating Community,
Serving our Neighbors**

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Northminster News

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Letter from the Pastor

Dear Northminster Community,

The theme of the 21st Century Christian continues now with the season of Lent. The practice of Lent is a well worn annual spiritual pilgrimage. For centuries the church has taken up the work of shedding the clutter that gets in the way of our spiritual life. In the recent past, Lent has been somewhat of a duty for the faithful Christian. In an effort to prepare for Holy Week, we can internalize suffering of Jesus, and sometimes even trigger a posture of suffering within ourselves. I've had many a Lenten season of releasing small habits from caffeine to bread to sugar. These annual times of giving up the small joys helped me to develop awareness throughout the day, I also found them wanting, for my true desire was to connect with God. There are of course, times for everything, and perhaps for you, this is a year of releasing a small habit in the effort to become aware of our dependence upon God.

Yet, this is not the only way to practice Lent.

The practice of Lent is rooted in the journey to the cross. But let us not forget, that in the Christian story, the cross is the way to salvation. Salvation is a wonderful, though forgotten, word. Think of the word, "salve." A salve is an ointment for the purpose of aiding healing. Salvation is ultimately about restoration, healing, and renewal. Would a salve create suffering in a wound? No! It would speed the healing! So to make the journey to the cross is to make the journey into healing, wholeness, and recovery.

What better time to practice the work of Lent? In a world that screams with loneliness and isolation, a salve would offer connection and community. In a world that suffers trauma and violence, a salve would bring understanding and mutuality. In a world of debilitating anxiety and depression, a salve would invite respite and safety. In a world that limps along with individualism, a salve would offer an entry point to what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called "The Beloved Community."

I am deeply convinced that the road to salvation is not about increasing our suffering, but about becoming agents of healing in the world.

I wonder if Northminster might be willing to take a stab at this? Might we lead the way? What about hosting a Book Group in your neighborhood? A weekly meal? Movements such as "Make America Dinner Again" have begun to change the tide from seeing our neighbor as other, to recognizing our shared humanity.

Sometimes forging a social group can be exhausting for those that are spiritually weary and naturally introverted. The question then for Lent is, what healing do you need? A weekly walk? A quiet space of meditation? As we learn to care for our spirits, we gently gain the energy to invite others along.

Friends, our tradition is rich. The depth of our Scripture is inexhaustible. Let us enter together on to the Road of Salvation. The salve for the nations, Christ himself, is our guide.

Warmly,

Faith Formation Throughout Our Lives

Rev. Jeny Carlson

Maya Angelou said, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” This can be applied to so many of life’s circumstances, but it can also be applied to our understanding of God and how we practice our faith in the world.

We have a tendency to think that because God is constant, that our ways of understanding God must also be constant but that is not at all true and I believe it can cause us to limit our faith, especially in times of trial or confusion. We allow for this kind of growth in our intellectual, emotional, and social lives with ease, yet for so many of us, we struggle to extend that same cycle of grace, reflection, renewal to occur in our spiritual lives. My hope is that through this monthly space, we can explore how to find those places in our faith and discipleship journey where we may be stuck; holding on to understandings or beliefs that suited us well when we were children or teenagers, but no longer fit the reality of our experiences as young adults, parents, empty-nesters, and seniors.

On February 17th I preached about what it means to regard ourselves as “blessed”, offering that when we choose to call ourselves blessed only when we have received an award or money or other mark of our own greatness, that we are consciously or unconsciously linking God’s love for us only with our success and prosperity. This is the opposite of what Jesus proclaimed. Jesus was clear that God sits most preferentially with the poor, the outcast, the grieving, the oppressed, and the ill. I challenged us to strive to seek ways that God is calling us “blessed” in the middle of dark times, when we feel most alone, when we are on the verge of hopelessness. And make no mistake, that an extreme act of faith. When we pray and pray for an outcome we don’t receive, when we experience the injustice of sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism, when we struggle to find a job or save a marriage that can’t be saved, we can certainly feel as though God is ignoring our pleas.

And this is where we must explore our understanding of God and how it informs our faith. The most simplistic message of our Christian tradition has been rather transactional: Believe in God, do all the “right” things and God will reward you. Yet even Jesus experienced that this is not how God works. Christ prayed the night before his arrest that God would “removes this cup from me” in Luke 22:42. Jesus prays that what is about to happen not happen, that God would stop it. What he gets, in verse 43, is “Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength.” God granted comfort, but did not intervene in the circumstances.

The promise of God is that one of love and connection. Whatever happens, happens. What God assures us is that the divine Spirit will be with us bolstering our spirit, comforting our broken hearts, grieving our losses, and standing in equally righteous anger at our unjust experiences. This is not to say that what we pray for does not happen or even that miracles cannot occur. I know too many people who have experienced that to deny their possibility. Those possibilities, while hoped for, though are not what we have been promised. Instead, we are promised unconditional love and a place in the beloved community. Amen.

Theology on Tap!

March 13th & 20th, 7pm [Brother Barrel Pub](#)

A gathering of adults ready to dive deeper into theology and what it means to practice faith in our post-modern age. We will cover a range of topics from theodicy, ethics, and how we understand our identity as followers of Jesus. Because we meet in a pub, you must be over 21.



Sight & Sound: Body || Matter

Saturday, March 23, 2019 at 6:30 PM – 9 PM

[16923 Maplewild Ave SW, Burien, WA 98166-3165](#)

Join Coastland Commons for our third house show in the Sight & Sound series, curated by Haley Ballast, who is a candidate for ministry in the PC(USA), faith leader, and community organizer. The theme of the evening, Body || Matter, will help us to explore the vitality, beauty and necessity of the body in our world and in our creative expression.

The evening will feature an art exhibit and music from several local artists, as well as a conversation about the intersections of art, the body, and spirituality hosted by members of Coastland Commons.

We will begin at 6:30pm with a gallery feature. You are invited to come have a drink and some small bites while viewing the art and mingling with the artists and others. At 7:30pm we will transition into a performance space, followed by a conversation with the artists. Tickets are available at [Brown Paper Tickets](#) or contact Zac Calvo.

What is a New Worshipping Community?

~ Rev. Zac Calvo

Building on last month's newsletter, I wanted to offer another perspective on New Worshipping Communities (NWC's) that will help clarify the vision and goal of Coastland Commons as it fits into a larger system.

An important feature of Presbyterian polity and government that allows Coastland Commons, and NWC's, to function within a larger frame, is that is it *relational*. This is essentially a way of saying that we do not exist on our own. We are always in relationship with different entities that support, encourage and exhort one another. We see this in how we are connected at Northminster to our own session which is representative of the members of our congregation, which is connected to a larger body that we call the Seattle Presbytery, which is in turn connected to another larger body called the Alaska Northwest Synod, and finally the national level at General Assembly. That is a long way of saying that NWC's are similarly in relationship with their presbyteries, and some of them have partner congregations. This is way that we can exist both practically and theologically in a space that affirms our togetherness.

Coastland Commons, for example, sees its work existing outside of a traditional Sunday morning worship space. We have realized in the midst of our processing that the church needs communities that gather in creative and innovative ways alongside more institutional forms. For us, this means not meeting on Sunday mornings, as well as not using a conventional liturgy when we do gather. This allows us to have conversations that might take more intention and shepherding in a formal setting. I believe that the kind of conversations we are nurturing at Coastland Commons are beneficial for the whole church. I also hope that these conversations will guide us in our time and social location as we acknowledge that there are some forms and practices in our institutional churches that we need to reshape and reform.

At the same time, one of the realities that we also hold is that we would not exist as Coastland Commons without the PC(USA) - aka, *the institution*. This is where I think the importance of relationality within our Presbyterian system bears out for Coastland Commons. We *need* to have formal relationships with more institutional forms of the church, not just for funding, but also because we see the value of being in relationship with others who may see things differently or have different approaches to ministry. In the balancing of innovative practices and institutional traditions, we recognize that in a messy and delicate way that we are in relationship with one another.



Community Dinners!

Please join us for this fabulous time of connection in our community!

Community Dinner: Taters And Ashes

March 6, 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

We will have a short dinner of baked potatoes and all the fixings before our Ash Wednesday Service

Community Dinner: One Pot Wonders

March 27, 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Can you get all the food groups in one pot? Time to break out your paella, gumbos, and rice dishes for your crock or insta pots and bring your favorites to share.

Community Dinner: April Fools Game Night!

April 3, 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall

Instead of food, bring your favorite game to share! We will have games for all ages and stages, prizes and pizza!

Community Dinner: Alphabet Dinner

April 24, 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall

C is for Cookie! And also couscous, Caesar salad, cranberry sauce, and chicken alfredo! Bring a dish that matches the first letter of your last name.

Community Dinner: Springtime in Paris

May 1, 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Dust off your mom's Julia Child cookbooks and bring a dish with a little French flair!

Community Dinner: Now Showing!

May 29, 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Want to try some Pumpkin Pasties or Turkish Delight? How about Schwarma or Fried Green Tomatoes? Bring a dish inspired by your favorite book or movie!

Community Dinner: Family Favorites

June 5, 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall

We end our year of Community Nights by coming together with your family's favorite dish. We will share our summer plans and take up ideas for themes for next year!

FLOWERS FOR THE SANCTUARY

We have a new flower chart located in the reception room on the counter where the library books are displayed. If you would like to donate flowers for the sanctuary you can sign up on this chart the week before you want to donate this will give time to register your name in Sunday's bulletin. You may provide your own flowers and do your own arrangement or donate flowers from your garden or provide money to buy flowers and have either Nancy Ingle or Sheila Striegl arrange them. If you have questions about vases or other arrangement needs just call Sheila.

Exploring Our Faith: An Intergenerational Journey

We are excited to announce an all-ages growth and discipleship class for everyone here at Northminster! The goal of “Exploring Our Faith: An Intergenerational Journey” is to examine our Christian faith, as well as our Presbyterian roots in the Reformed tradition, in a gathering of kids, youth and adults over seven weeks. It will be a mixture of interactive small-group discussions here on site, as well as field trips that we are calling “deep dive” opportunities. Our intention is to foster relationship across ages and generations, to create a space to explore and wonder about our faith, and to provide opportunities to engage with other faith communities.

In addition, we are including an option for anyone who wants to become a member at Northminster at the conclusion of our time together. However, this is not exclusively a membership class; we hope that anyone regardless of membership, involvement or age will feel free to join us in getting to know each other better and exploring our faith. All are welcome!

We have seven different offerings over the course of this class:

~Three small-group conversations around different topics that will be held here at **Northminster from 12:30 - 2:00pm**.

~Three “**deep dive**” opportunities that will take us off-site to experience different faith communities and expressions.

Our vision for participation, if you are interested in joining us, is that you would be able to commit to our first conversation on **March 10th and concluding conversation on April 28th**, and commit to a minimum of 3 other offerings, *one of which must be a “deep dive.”* The schedule for these conversations and “deep dives” with brief descriptions are below:

“What Does It Mean to Be Reformed?” Small Group Conversation on **Sunday, March 10th, from 12:30pm - 2:00pm at Northminster**. We will explore what it means to be part of the Reformed tradition, as well as reflecting on what it means for us to say “reformed and always reforming.”

Deep Dive Opportunity 1: Shabbat Service at Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue (1111 Harvard Ave, Seattle, WA), **Friday, March 15th at 7:30pm**. We will join Bet Alef for their Purim festival, which will be portrayed in the style of the musical Hamilton (*dates and times for deep dive opportunities subject to change*).

Deep Dive Opportunity 2: Daily Prayer at Idriss Mosque (1420 Northeast Northgate Way, Seattle, WA 98125), **Sunday, March 24th at 12:00pm**. We will continue to cultivate our relationships with our Muslim friends at Idriss Mosque by visiting their daily prayer (*dates and times for deep dive opportunities subject to change*).

Deep Dive Opportunity 3: “Tschabalala Self” Art Exhibit at the Frye Art Museum (704 Terry Avenue Seattle, WA 98104), **Sunday, March 31st, from 12:30pm - 2:30pm**. The Frye Museum website describes the exhibit as examining “the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality, focusing particularly on the iconographic significance of the black female body in contemporary culture” (*dates and times for deep dive opportunities subject to change*).

“How Do We Engage the Bible?” Small Group Conversation on **Sunday, April 7th, from 12:30pm - 2:00pm** at Northminster. We will discuss our own personal interactions with the Bible and learn together as we engage both the generative and troubling aspects of scripture.

“Getting at What We Understand About God” Group Sharing Time on **Sunday, April 28th at 12:30pm - 2:00pm** at Northminster. We will take some time to hear from one another about what we learned throughout the course of our exploration and to begin articulating what we understand about God.

To register, fill out the information available in the Narthex or contact Pastor Jeny, Zac, or the office.

Outreach Guidance Team Update!

The outreach guidance team (OGT) has identified Wednesday night April 3 as "April Fool's Game Night!" Dinner will be provided 6-645pm, then let the games begin! Bring your favorite game, or join in on one already planned or available at the church. All ages welcome! Neighbors and friends will also be invited to partake.

The OGT will also help to plan a "spring cleaning" of the church either late April or May, and a community and congregation "service day," similar to the November 2018 event, planned for sometime this summer.

Contact Dana Hammer (kdhammer@comcast.net) with questions and ideas!

Prayer Thought for Lent ~ Jonna Reeder

"The reality is, my prayers don't change God. But, I am convinced prayer changes me. Praying boldly boots me out of that stale place of religious habit into authentic connection with God Himself." - Lysa TerKeurst

Ash Wednesday Service

March 6, 7pm in the Sanctuary

Join us for this special service remembering our mortality and renewing our dedication to God.



LECTIONARY FOR SUNDAYS IN MARCH

March 3 Transfiguration	March 10 Lent 1	March 17 Lent 2	March 24 Lent 3	March 31 Lent 4
Exodus 34:29-35 Luke 9:28-36	Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16 Luke 4: 1-13	Psalms 27 Luke 13:31-35	Psalms 63:1-8 Luke 13:1-9	Psalms 32 Luke 15:11-32

NORTHMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

a village church in the city

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Seattle WA 98117

206.783.3402

Please notify us with corrections if needed, or if you wish to stop receiving the Northminster News.

Looking Ahead

Community Dinners

First and Last Wednesdays 6pm

Ash Wednesday Service

March 6, 7pm

Theology on Tap

Second and Third Wednesdays, 7pm

Brother Barrel Pub

Exploring our Faith:

An Intergenerational Journey

Sundays, March 10,-April 28

12:30-2:30pm

Northminster Staff

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Associate Pastor

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Rev. Jeny Carlson

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& Youth Engagement**

Rev. Zac Calvo

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