

NORTHMINSTER NEWS

A village church in the city

Quarantine Corner

We've asked our members what they have been up to during this extensive quarantine season.

Trisha Wirta has been reading *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. "Gentle and thought provoking, a spiritual meditation for me." She's also been watching "All Things Great and Small" on Netflix, and "Anne with an E."

Safe Imposition of Ashes

Feb 17th is Ash Wednesday and ashes will be safely imposed from 1-2:30pm in front of the sanctuary doors. Drive or walk by. Zoom Service to follow in the evening, 7:00pm.

Special Thanks to Dan!

Dan Smith Derksen has been serving as our Office Manager, but is looking to move on when we find a replacement. Thank you, Dan!



Special Thanks to Sharon Steenrod, who has a photographer's eye!!!

The Lenten Invitation

Every year it seems, Lent comes at the most untimely moment. We are still recovering from Christmas, we are still hibernating in the depths of winter, we are not yet ready to wake up, much less come into a season that requires such inner attention. Yet, here the invitation of Lent speaks to us, "come, out of your slumber, and prepare yourselves for the light." Waking up is hard work. Perhaps that is why Lent is six weeks long. It takes a long time to practice attention, watchfulness, and purpose. We are not always warm to this wake up call.

Yet, year after year, Lent calls us to wake up. Perhaps it is waking up to your desire to embody social justice, perhaps it is waking up to your intention to cultivate a deeper prayer life, perhaps it is waking up to your hopes for communal intimacy, perhaps it is just waking up to every moment and accepting it as it comes. But no matter what, Lent requires us to wake up.

So, this Lent, what are you waking up to? We want to know, so that we can support and champion your work. *Warmly, Pastor Dani*

Upcoming Opportunities

Zoom learning: In what ways can we humbly, wisely, and effectively participate in seeing people escape poverty or reduce their chances of being food insecure of homeless? Let's talk about the issues underneath the symptoms that we see - and the potential outcomes of different types of responses. For this gathering, there is an assumption of basic familiarity with aid (or relief) and development (or justice) - having read a book such as *Helping Without Hurting* or *Toxic Charity* before would be helpful.

February 22 at 4 p.m. | virtually via Zoom. Contact Jonna at jonnasreeder@gmail.com for information and a Zoom link. The seminar may be *repeated*, or discussion *extended* at 7 p.m. Feb 22. Please reach out - this is a vital discussion where the issues are best considered and lived out together.

Lenten Reading:

Pastor Jeny will lead us in Lenten reflection and discussion on the book, Lent in Plain Sight, by Jill J. Duffield. Order a copy today anywhere books are sold! Discussion groups will be scheduled on **March 3rd** and **March 17th at 8pm.**

Northminster Speaks:

You spoke, we listened! Here is a little snapshot of just a handful of our leaders. + *denotes deacons*, * *denotes elder.*

Northminster Leader Snapshots

+**Beth Schmidt** chose to serve because she loves to find relationships in her faith community that inspire and sustain her. She loves outdoor activities, gardening, and music. You might find her taking a virtual field trip to one of our National Parks during quarantine!

+**Liz Tennant** chose to serve because she loves her church family and wants to do her best to love God and serve her neighbors in need. She loves reading, listening to podcasts, enjoying physically distant visits with friends, and enjoying her family! Liz is adjusting to retirement in the pandemic and finds ways to stay physically and mentally active!

***Jim Lady** chose to serve because he cares about what worship looks like at Northminster, and wants to see the church's identity survive the pandemic and beyond. Jim loves bird watching and reading. During quarantine he's been working on his Spanish proficiency, and has even read some short stories in Spanish!

***Martín Jimenez** chose to serve to grow in his faith and capacity for ministry. He loves playing the guitar, cooking, and connecting with people. Martín was late to the sourdough game, but he has found a new passion and calls it a "liturgy that is pretty empowering."

***Jonna** chose to serve because she senses God's passion for those in either physical or spiritual pain. She has a passion for helping us build faith beyond our walls. She loves music of all kinds. She is a hiker, beginning knitter, and has learned a lot recently about "armchair public health epidemiology."

***Saskia de Vries** chose to serve because church has always been important and she considers it a privilege to help make it happen. She loves being on her bicycle, especially for long rides. Recently, she's learned a lot about birds and has taken up bird watching.

***Rodney Schmidt** chose to serve because he likes to be helpful. He loves golf and making things better through computing. During quarantine, he's learned a lot about Eastern Washington Geologic History.

***Stacy Kern** chose to serve because she loves church community and thinks it works better when we all participate. She loves the Seattle Storm, crafting, reading, and her pets. Recently she's enjoyed watching True Crime shows with her daughter, Alli.

***Ann Wightman** chose to serve because she likes to share her skills, use her music, and work with friends. She loves reading, knitting, her cat, and sewing. Recently, Ann has learned to Zoom from her computer!!

Pastoral Snapshots

Rev. Jeny Carlson chose to serve this church because she has known Pastor Dani for years and loves working with her. She loves knitting, Marvel comic (especially Captain America), genre television shows, and running swim meets. During quarantine she has taken up creative writing. But she only does it for herself, so “don’t look for her to publish anything!”

Rev. Zac Calvo chose to serve this church because it was a nurturing and gracious space while he was on the journey to accepting himself, and he wants to provide that gift in return to others. He loves Star Wars, and also “sad and disturbing” movies because he finds them to be cathartic. During quarantine he has embraced his inner child by playing video games “and feeling great about it.”

Rev. Dani Forbess chose to serve this church because the importance of the local congregation cannot be underestimated. She loves a lot of things - gardening, cooking, nutrition, CrossFit, and yoga, just to name a few. During quarantine, she has embraced the reality that the church does not have all the answers but instead that the sustaining presence of Jesus is enough. She has also learned that the Spirit of Jesus arrives in the most unexpected of ways.

Have an emergency, and need to get in touch with a Pastor? The best thing to do is call Pastor Dani at 206-883-7856 and leave a message. The message will be responded to as quickly as possible, and if she is not available, she will find someone who can attend.

Thanks to those that completed the Re-Opening Survey !!!

Special thanks to those that completed the survey, either online or in paper. The data continues to come in, and will help our Re-Opening Process Team as they work hard to make upcoming decisions. The Re-Opening Process Team is led by Elder Saskia deVries and Elder Martín Jimenez, along with other church members and leaders.

A Message from our Re-Opening Process Team: Session has formed a Reopening Committee to guide us as we approach the re-opening the church for in-person worship. This committee will be making recommendations to Session regarding criteria for when we can meet in person, what steps need to be taken to reopen safely, and what the transition back to in person worship will look like. We are eager to return to some form of in person worship for the sake of our community but need to balance that with the safety and well being of our congregation and our staff. We will be evaluating data about the COVID case numbers and vaccinations numbers in King County, and taking government and denomination guidance into account to form these recommendations. Given the high case load in King County at present, we do not expect to be able to reopen until case numbers decrease and the number of vaccinated people increases significantly. Because of this, we expect to remain worshipping remotely via Zoom for the time being. We plan to communicate regularly with Session and the congregation to keep everyone informed as this work progresses.

Deacons Corner with Liz Tennant, Moderator

Your Deacons will be meeting with Pastor Dani at the end of February 2021 via Zoom. In the meantime, we are continuing to lead intercessory prayers during worship services and offer you our support through phone calls, prayers and in whatever way we can.

I have been doing my best to stay positive during the past year, but I am struggling with the pain of not seeing all of you and not seeing my kids and granddaughter. I am ready for this pandemic to be over! I imagine you feel the same. Unfortunately, the pandemic isn't over and it won't be until enough people are vaccinated and enough people continue following public health protocols.

I have been reflecting on strategies for navigating these challenging times. One helpful strategy is to practice **gratitude**. Practicing gratitude is a good spiritual discipline, and there is evidence that it helps to improve our mental health.

I encourage you to join me in regularly counting your blessings. Perhaps you will be grateful for some of the same things I am:

•I am thankful for God's love. As Pastor Dani reminds us every week, we have been loved from before the foundation of the world and we do not walk alone. We go through our days surrounded by the Love of God our father, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Fellowship and Communion of the Holy Spirit. Each morning and each evening I think about the things I am grateful for and offer God my prayers of thanks.

•I am thankful for our church and our church family. I am thankful for our wonderful pastors (Dani, Zac and Jeny), our wonderful musical director (Miriam), our church leaders and our whole church family. While I deeply miss seeing you in person, I am grateful that we have been able to have regular on-line worship, have been able to keep many church functions going have been able to stay connected through phone calls, outreach mailings and Zoom gatherings. I also am grateful that we have been able to provide refuge to our Shelter guests throughout the pandemic.

•I am thankful for the scientists, public health and health care workers who are working so hard to beat the pandemic. I am grateful for all that they do and the care that they give to those who suffer from COVID. I am grateful for their work to vaccinate and protect the population.

•I am thankful for the many essential workers who provide our food, deliver our mail, staff warehouses, deliver packages, staff various stores, and teach our children.

•I am thankful to have a comfortable home to bide my time. I am aware that so many people don't. I am grateful that we have a yard that I can watch evolve through the seasons and that we live in a neighborhood where I can go out on short relatively uncrowded walks. I love watching the seasons unfold.

•I am thankful for my family and friends. I am grateful to be sharing my physical isolation with Peter (my husband) and Jackson (our cat). I am grateful for the technology that allows me to remain

connected with our kids, our granddaughter, and far away family and friends, some of whom we are connecting with more than previously. I am grateful for the friends that I would see outside over the summer (masked and distant) and for the neighbors and friends (masked and distant) that we wave to when on our walks. I am grateful for the conversations I have with the church friends I call.

•I am thankful for the clean air I breathe and my ability to breathe every day. I am grateful to be alive and to be able to breathe every day. After our experience with the wildfire smoke last summer, I am particularly thankful for the clean air I breath.

•I am thankful to be able to get regular exercise. One benefit of being retired is that I have a fairly flexible schedule. A silver lining of the pandemic is that I have been able to regularly attend exercise and yoga classes. I am getting more exercise than I did when I was working, and I have enjoyed reconnecting with two prior yoga teachers. I enjoy the camaraderie of the on-line communities of the classes. (The teachers enjoy having people log in from many places across the country).

•I am thankful for interesting dinners. I appreciate that Peter wants to cook our dinners. He always is trying out interesting recipes, usually from the New York Times. I am the beneficiary! I am happy to do the cleanup!

•I am thankful for Zoom and other technology. I am grateful for the digital technology that makes it possible to connect when we have to be apart. Zoom allows me to worship, exercise, do yoga, attend town hall meetings, attend interesting presentations, and visit friends. FaceTime allows me to see my kids and Kora (granddaughter) and have some semblance of being there in person. My mobile phone allows me to call my friends and listen to podcasts on a wide variety of issues.

•I am thankful for newspapers and other news sources. I am grateful for local, national, and international news and programs.

•I am thankful for new ways of engaging. I am grateful that government and legislative bodies have adjusted how they brief the public and constituents. For example, just last night I attended a virtual town hall for my legislative district. Once I figured out how to log on it was fascinating. I had never attended an in-person town hall.

Here are a few ways to cultivate gratitude: **Count your blessings.** Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings, reflecting on what went right or what you are grateful for. It can help to pick a number—such as three to five things—that you will identify each week.

Write a thank you note. You can make yourself happier and nature your relationship with another person by writing a thank you letter expressing your appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter each month. If you don't have time to write, think of someone and thank them mentally (or call them).

Pray. Offer prayers of thanks.