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Home
by Pastor Gina
What comes to mind when you think of “home”? Is it your house? Is it the people and pets you live with? Is it certain smells and feelings?

They say home is where the heart is – that the thing, the person, the place that you love the most is what makes somewhere a home. And while that’s certainly a large part of what I think of as home, in talking with people of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, races, and ethnicities, I’ve learned that there’s even more to it than that. Home is being somewhere where you feel safe and valued. It’s being in a place where you are able and encouraged to share your story and your voice is heard. It’s being with people that love you for simply being who you are, so that you can be comfortable in your own skin. It’s being in a place where you are given every opportunity to be who you feel called to be and do what you feel called to do. This, I think, is the essence of freedom as well as the place you call home.

One of the books that challenged me when I was a young girl was Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. I was given this book as a gift before I even knew what it meant and what it was truly about. While there are many passages I could quote from this book, I want to share one of my favorites, and probably the most famous from the book:

“The caged bird sings with a fearful trill, of things unknown, but longed for still, and his tune is heard on the distant hill, for the caged bird sings of freedom.”

The caged bird has a house, a place where he is hopefully safe from predators, but it is clearly not his home, because he is not free. He is not able to tell his story, because he is

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Adult Study: Conversations on Race
Tuesday evenings at 7 pm in February

HSLC will hold a 4-week discussion group on Zoom called “Conversations on Race”, hosted by Pastor Gina Herman, Bill Carberry, and Jeremy Herman. The goal of this group is to provide a safe, non-judgmental space to simply engage in conversation with folks who struggle to know how to talk about the issue of race. Using history, current events, videos, and guided discussion, we will learn how American culture and traditions have influenced some of the concerns we face today and why, as Christians, doing and saying nothing is no longer an option. You don’t have attend every week - it’s not a “consecutive” study where if you miss a week you won’t know what’s going on the next! Come when you can, and enjoy the discussion! If you have any questions, contact Pastor Gina at pastorgina@hslckirkland.org.

The Zoom link can be found at https://tinyurl.com/2p9e2ffh.
Pastor's Letter (continued)

alone. People may enjoy listening to him in his cage, but his voice is not valued and therefore not heard. And the bird is certainly not given every opportunity to be who he feels called to be and do what he feels called to do, because he lives in a cage.

Now if you are a bird owner and lover, I hope you are able to read in between the lines! This poem is not about birds. It is Angelou’s poetic story and perspective of growing up Black in America. While many of us can call this country our home, there are many who live in our country, our state, even our city who cannot call it home. People who are judged and mistreated because of the color of their skin, the way they talk, what they eat, where they live and go to school, and what they can afford. And many people are not safe where they live and are not given the same opportunities that many others have been given. Their stories have not been heard and many of them have not been told out of fear. Angelou also writes in her book, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” Everyone deserves to have their story heard, and everyone deserves to have a home.

I recently had the privilege of attending a Refugee Resettlement Committee Meeting through Holy Spirit and learn about the work their doing in our community. The meeting began with a devotion on Leviticus 19:34, which says, “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” (NIV) I believe Jesus echoes this in his command to love your neighbor as yourself. And in hearing the stories about the families that we are supporting, and that this group has been walking alongside for years, I believe that this committee is working hard to not only give these families a place to live, but to help them make a home here in the Northwest as well.

But the work is not done. There are several groups here at Holy Spirit, as well as in the greater Seattle area and beyond, that also work to make our country feel more like home; those who continue to work for racial justice, economic equity, equality for the LGBTQ+ community, the list goes on. And in the upcoming months, you will be invited to be a part of this important work on many levels. You can attend studies and conversations on race that highlight the stories of those for whom this country does not feel like a home for one reason or another, as well as invite you to tell your story. You can be a part of one of these committees, such as the Refugee Resettlement Committee, the Anti-Racism Task force, the Social Justice Committee, Youth and Family Ministry, and any number of other groups that are a part of or associate with Holy Spirit Lutheran Church.

So if you feel at home here in this place, in this church, in this city, in this country, and haven’t really stopped to think about or listen to the stories of those who don’t have a place to call “home,” I invite you to take advantage of the many opportunities in the coming months to get involved in a deeper way. For me, being involved in the church my whole life and being a part of ministries such as these has only made my idea and understanding of home and life all the more richer, and I pray it will for you too.

Pastor Gina

February in the HSLC Library

In conjunction with upcoming classes at Holy Spirit on our work of anti-racism, the HSLC library’s focus for February is books on racism. The last two years of resurgence of the national conversation offered the opportunity to purchase many new books to add to our collection. Watch for a variety of books to be displayed in the Narthex/lobby and also in the library windows downstairs. As always, there will also be new books on the countertop in the library.
Great Decisions 2022  
Mondays at 7pm from February 7th through April 4th

Once again, HSLC will sponsor its annual Great Decisions study program of the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) where we will meet to discuss the major foreign policy issues facing our nation and world today and how it informs our faith. In the ELCA Social Statement For Peace in God's World (1995) we are reminded of our role as Christians to “challenge, debate and learn so that we might better advocate for solutions and where need is manifest, find ways to meet it.” For more information about the ELCA’s statement, please read the revised summary at download.elca.org/ELCA/Resource/Repository/For_Peace_In_Gods_World_BriefSummary.pdf, or the full statement, at download.elca.org/ELCA/Resource/Repository/PeaceSS.pdf.

For more than 100 years, the FPA’s mission is to serve as a catalyst for developing awareness, understanding, and informed opinion on U.S. foreign policy and global issues. Through its balanced, nonpartisan programs and publications, the FPA encourages citizens to participate in the foreign policy process.

We’ll meet via Zoom for at least the first two meetings, and then will evaluate switching to in-person meetings.

Resource books are $40 - please make out a check to “HSLC” with “Great Decisions” on the memo line and deliver/mail it to the church office. Books will be available for pick up at the office. Scholarships are available - contact Pastor Katy or Pastor Gina at the church office. The book is also available via eBook on Kindle (costs about $27).

To register, visit https://www.hslckirkland.org/great-decisions.

TOPICS for 2022: Changing Demographics, Outer Space, Climate Change, Russia and the U.S., Myanmar and Asean, the Quad Alliance, Drug Policy in Latin America, Industrial Policy, and Biden’s Agenda.

Questions? Contact Mary-Alyce Burleigh at 425-890-5010 or maryburl@comcast.net.

Holy Spirit Lutheran Preschool: Accepting Applications for 2022-2023

Your child can let their light shine at HSLC’s play-based preschool, which focuses on STEM, pre-literacy, outdoor play, and socio-emotional development. We welcome children from many different cultural, economic, and faith backgrounds to learn through play, art, and nature. We are fortunate to get to share HSLC’s mission of inclusive faith formation and help children to learn more about the world around them.

- 3-4 year old: “Rockets” class – Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:30-1:00
- 4-5 year old: PreK “Explorers” class – Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 9:30-1:00

Learn more about our preschool at www.holyspiritpreschool.org or email preschool@hslckirkland.org with specific questions.

Financial Status as of: **12/31/21**

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Note that the fiscal year is 7/1/21-6/30/22.
Common Hope Vision Team Brings Back Experiences from Guatemala

On Sunday evening, February 27th from 6:00-7:30 pm, the individuals from our Holy Spirit community will share their experiences from their trip to Guatemala in February 2020 to assist Common Hope. This event was rescheduled from January.

Common Hope works to end the cycle of poverty for children in Guatemala through a holistic, relationship-based model. While education is at the heart of their work, they believe a comprehensive approach is critical for children and families to reach their full potential. Holy Spirit’s team was completely immersed in these activities, including building a home for a family, filling food bags, visiting families with social workers, and interacting with students and Common Hope staff.

In addition to the country’s beautiful landscapes, we encountered a people who find joy in life's simple pleasures. More than half of Guatemalans live below the poverty line and 25% live in extreme poverty earning less than $2/day. There is limited access to health care and major causes of death still include treatable illnesses and diseases. Holy Spirit’s travellers observed inadequate housing conditions, homes without roofs or sufficient living space, crafted from scrap metal and dirt floors, and without potable water or sanitation systems.

A group will be going to Guatemala again in February of 2023. If you may be interested in joining, the program on February 27th is an opportunity to learn more about Common Hope and hear first-hand from individuals who visited Guatemala in February 2020.

For more information or to get the Zoom link, contact Doug Jacobson at ddjacobson@frontier.com.

Coffee Hour with Pastor Gina

Hi all! Pastor Gina here. I have been so blessed by the warm welcome I've received from everyone in the congregation. I have been working on names (thank you to those who have been wearing name tags!), but it's difficult to really get to know people on a Sunday morning.

So, I am hosting a small group “Coffee Hour with Pastor Gina” at 10 am on the 1st and 3rd Fridays and 2nd Saturdays of each month. Please join me in the Fellowship Hall where coffee, as well as hot water for tea and hot chocolate, will be provided. We can talk about anything you want! It's just another opportunity for me to get to know you better and you to get to know me better as well.

You can sign up by signing up on the paper form in the Narthex, or online here: https://tinyurl.com/5n84f4p6.

Sign up for Flowers!

The 2022 Flower Signup Chart is available on the kiosk in the narthex. You are invited to sign up (in person, or by emailing/calling the church office) to provide flowers for our Sunday worship services. If there is a special designation (such as an anniversary), please note that as well. You may bring flowers from your garden in a vase from home, or order a bouquet from a local florist or grocery store. Please be sure to take them home after worship on that Sunday.
Reflection on The Serenity Prayer
by Brad Paulson

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." - Reinhold Niebuhr

The Serenity Prayer is beloved by many around the world and is widely recognized for its adoption by Alcoholics Anonymous. It was written by the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr in the first half of the twentieth century and became widely circulated; in fact, it was even printed on notecards and distributed to soldiers during World War II.

This is a very meaningful prayer for many reasons – to me, the understanding of prayer that it reflects is especially powerful. The meaning of prayer is something that I've wrestled with for much of my life.

So why do we pray? One common belief is that we pray to God to change something, and then maybe (if we pray hard enough? or if we are good enough?) God will make it so. An example of this is praying for healing when a loved one is sick. If they recover, we think this is because God has answered our prayers. This understanding of prayer doesn't have to be limited to life-and-death issues: many grateful people have exclaimed that God answered their prayers with a new job, a new house, or money that showed up in their bank accounts when it was needed most.

I have never really been comfortable with this understanding of prayer. Why would God answer one person's prayer for money, but not another's prayer for his mother to survive a heart attack? Or why would God answer one person's prayer for a new job, yet not the prayers of the millions of people who die from hunger each year in the world? Please don't misunderstand: we all need to cry out for help when there is suffering. But if we believe that God chooses to answer prayers by intervening in the world, then we must also believe that God chooses not to answer the prayers of millions of others who are suffering. I guess I have a hard time believing that's how it works.

In recent years I have become aware of different understandings of prayer, thanks in large part to our wonderful pastors here at Holy Spirit. As a member of the church council and the personnel committee, I have had the opportunity to be led in prayer by each of the pastors at the beginning of our meetings. Our pastors have a gift with language, and the way in which they pray demonstrates an understanding of prayer that resonates with me. The language they use isn't about asking God to intervene in the world...to stop natural disasters, to eradicate disease, or to end world hunger. Rather, I believe their prayers are about us – that we might feel gratitude, see our neighbors' needs, and be stirred to act for peace, justice, compassion, and love.

Reinhold Niebuhr also said, "Prayer does not change things; prayer changes people, and people change things." A recent article in the Living Lutheran magazine echoed a similar belief – that prayer is not a way to "mold God to our needs", but rather is "a practice focused on being shaped by God."

As we continue to face the fear, uncertainty, and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe that positive, life-giving things have and will continue to emerge. We've already seen people find new and innovative ways to come together and to care for others. Perhaps this can be a time where many of us are able to rediscover prayer as a powerful practice for changing ourselves – giving us the "courage to change the things we can."

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Amen
Worship on Sundays - 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00 AM

Masks required for all over 2 years of age
Childcare available at 9:30 am and 11:00 am
Online Worship continues,
and Zoom worship at 7:00 pm

Go Paperless!

If you'd like to reduce waste and not receive a paper copy of this monthly newsletter, please let us know. A digital copy of this monthly newsletter comes out with our weekly enews updates, and is also available via our website. Contact office@hslckirkland.org to update your communication preferences. Thank you!