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James C. Parham, III
Associate Pastor for Worship and Music

Luke T. Delasin
Vicar/Pastoral Intern

Amy R. Brown, Deacon
Director of
Educational Ministries

Mandi T. Whitley, Deacon
Director of Youth
and Children's Ministries

Kay M. Cook
Office Manager

Henry W. Wilcox
Accountant and Social Media Manager

Lani F. Wise
Publications Coordinator

Karen M. Craig
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A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America

HOLDEN PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS

September 16, 2020 - 6:00 PM



Welcome to Trinity Lutheran Church

As disciples of Christ seeking peace and justice in the world, we welcome, affirm, and include all people into the fullness of God's love. We celebrate people of all races, cultures, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, physical or mental abilities, socioeconomic statuses, appearances, family status and citizenship as equally loved and valued in the eyes of God and in this place. All are invited to join this community as we worship God, grow in faith, and strive to love and serve one another. All, without exception, are welcome in this place.

**My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?**

Refrain

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.**

We are almost six months into life with the disappointments, confines, isolation, and restrictions of COVID-19. How do we make sense of this strange time in our lives?

How do we see the presence of God in this time of separation? How do we create a theological framework for this time of uncertainty, doubt, and fear?

How do we make sense of what God is doing in the world and in our lives?

There is so much pain, suffering, and brokenness in the world. The pandemic is creating strife and sickness and death.

This is also a time of racial reckoning, a time to come to terms, to make reparations for our role in systemic racism.

Fear, angst, and uncertainty plague us as we anticipate the coming weeks of campaigning and election.

Many are struggling with low grade anxiety and depression as a result of social isolation.

No one has escaped the challenges, frustrations, disappointments, and heartache of this unprecedented time in our lives.

We pray for school children and their teachers and their parents.

We pray for those whose lives have been damaged by racial injustice.

**O God, We Call, O God, we call, from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.**

We pray for the oppressed, the lonely, the confused, and the forgotten.

We relinquish our fears, burdens, and failures to you trusting that you love us, that you forgive us, that you give us grace upon grace.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
AMEN.

**O God, We Call, O God, we call, from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.**

May you emerge from this time and space at peace and free from all that burdens you.

May you enter into the evening comforted by the knowledge of God's love and care for you.

May you find peaceful rest in the night and rise with joy tomorrow to live a new day in God's kingdom.

Mothering God, bless you, keep you, and grant you peace.
Amen.

Go in peace. God is near.
Thanks be to God.

Refrain

**Bring your best to our worst, bring your peace to our pain,
God of love, heal your people.**

That those who live in fear may never walk alone:

That those who are near death may see the light of day:

That those who live with guilt may find themselves forgiven:

That those who live with doubt may find a deeper faith:

That those who live in brokenness may know they will be whole:

Praying in our homes while gathered together in the Spirit of Christ, we ask God to open our hearts and minds, give us clarity and understanding, and inspire us to love and serve our neighbor.

**O God, We Call, O God, we call, from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.**

We pray for those who have lost their way.

We pray for those who are exhausted and weary.

**O God, We Call, O God, we call, from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.**

We pray for those who mourn the death of loved ones.

We pray for those who are struggling to make ends meet.

**O God, We Call, O God, we call, from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.**

We pray for those who are anxious and worried about many things.

We pray for those who are sick, especially those who are sick with the coronavirus.

**O God, We Call, O God, we call, from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.**

**Though I am small, my God, my all you work great things for me,
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn,
You will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.**

Refrain

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.**

We have reached the point of no return. There is no turning back, no way to return to our pre-pandemic lives.

Everything is changing, transforming. It can never be the way it once was. We will have to adjust to new realities.

Whether we like it or not, our lives have been forever altered.

The way we work, the way we nurture and sustain relationships, the way we communicate and connect, the way we are church...
all of it is changing, morphing, growing.

We can no longer hide behind our wealth, our knowledge, our privilege.

As we hunker down amidst the safety of our homes, secure behind the locked gates of our neighborhoods, protected from hunger and homelessness, God will reach us.

God will change our hearts, open us to the pain of the world, help us see our role in this pain, inspire us to find ways to alleviate the pain of the world.

**From the halls of pow'r to the fortress tow'r, not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears eve'ry tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread, eve'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.**

Refrain

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.**

There is one thing of which I am sure. God is doing a new thing. God is using this time of change and transformation to do something new.

In Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, it says, "And for everyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now everything is new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Also from Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, it says, "That is why we don't lose heart. And though this physical self of ours may be falling into decay, the inner self is renewed day by day. These light and momentary troubles train us to carry the weight of an eternal glory which will make these troubles insignificant by comparison." (2 Corinthians 4:16-17)

And in Colossians it says, "Stop lying to one another. What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new self, one that grows in knowledge as it is formed anew in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:9-10)

The book of Lamentations says, "God's favor is not exhausted, nor has God's compassion failed. They rise up anew each morning, so great is God's faithfulness. "God is all I have," I cry. "So I will wait in patience." (Lamentations 3:22-24)

And from the Prophet Isaiah: "Forget the events of the past, ignore the things of long ago! Look, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth – Can't you see it? I am making a road in the desert and setting rivers to flow in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:18-19)

HYMN *Canticle of the Turning* #723

**Through the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our fore-bears heard is the promise which hold us bound,
till the spear and rod can be crushed by God, who is turning the world around.**

Refrain

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.**

Scripture helps us understand that God is up to something in our world and in our lives, that God is using this challenging time to do something new, to create a new order, to change us, to transform us into the people God is calling us to be.

What exactly are we supposed to learn?

How are we supposed to grow and change?

What parts of ourselves do we need to cast aside?

How do we plan and prepare for this new thing that God is doing?

How do we open our hearts and minds and ears and hands to fully comprehend the message God is trying to share with us?

Will it require silence, stillness, solitude?

Will it require space and time?

Will it require a new kind of listening, a new level of openness, a new modicum of vulnerability and risk?

HYMN

Listen

Listen, listen. Be open, O my heart.

**The leader may call other words to replace "Listen"*

Watching, watching...

Waiting. Waiting...

Night is falling...

God is calling...

In this moment...

A MEDITATION

Pastor Susan Crowell